

SAINT JOHN

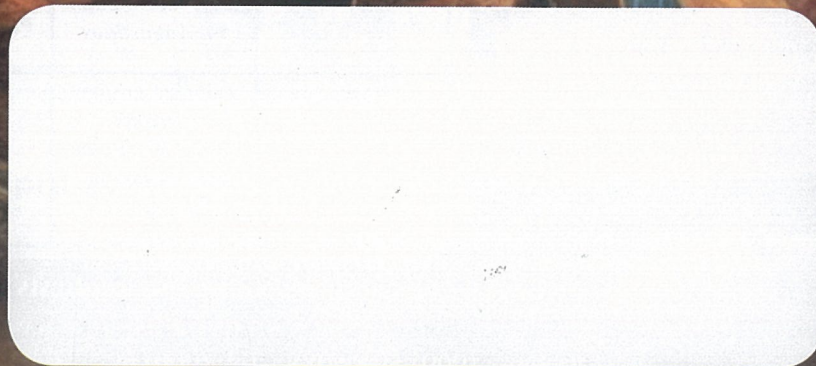
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"Truly Risen"



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Fr. Augustinos Hanna

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*Verse
of the Month*



"All things must be fulfilled which were written in
the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms
concerning Me...It was necessary for the Christ to suffer
and to rise from the dead the third day." (1k 24:44).

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

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

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Or visit us online @ www.mystjohn.org
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Church Book Store: (562) 900 -2694 & (909) 730 - 9976

NEWS of March & April 2019

1. The Holy Lent

The Holy Lent started on March 4, 2019 and continues until the Feast of Resurrection (Easter) on April 28, 2019.

Liturgies during the Lent are as follows:

+ **Wednesday & Thursday: from 9:00 a.m.–12:00 noon.**

+ **Friday: 12:00 – 3:00 p.m.**

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



2. The 7th year Memorial of Pope Shenouda III:

St John church celebrates the 7th year commemoration of H. H. Pope Shenouda for two days; on Saturday, March 16

H.E. Metropolitan Serapion and HG Bishop Kirollos will bless us in the Liturgy and servants' meeting. And also on Sunday 17, followed by Agape meal in the hall, with a choir, short talks, video and gifts.



3. Feast of Appearance of the Glorious Cross:

On Tuesday, 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. Departure of the prophet Hosea (March 5):

Hosea is the first of the 12 minor prophets.

5. Martyrdom of St. Polycarp: (Friday, March 8)

He was the disciple of St. John and the bishop of Smyrna, the persecuted church, to whom the Lord Jesus said, "Be faithful until death and I will give you the Crown of Life" (Revelation 2:10). Also, he was one of Apostolic Fathers and was killed by fire.

6. Martyrdom of St. Sidhom Bishay of Domiat:

March 26, he was killed by burning with fire.

7. March Famous Modern Saints:

1) Saturday, March 9: Departure of Pope Kyrillos the Six.

2) Sunday, March 17: Departure of Pope Shenouda III.

3) Thursday, March 21: Departure of Fr. Bishoy Kamel.

4) Tuesday, March 26: Departure of Fr. Mikhail Ibrahim and martyrdom of Sidhom Bishay of Domiat.



News of April 2019

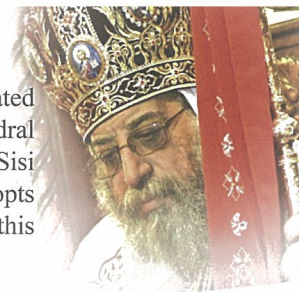
8. Departure of the great prophet Daniel (April 1):

The forth of the Major Prophets.

9. Tuesday, April 2nd: The Apparition of St. Mary in Zytoun Church, Egypt.

10. H.H. Pope Tawadros II:

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



11. H. E. Metropolitan Serapion:

+ HG Bishop Suriel joined the Diocese of Los Angeles, upon the request of H.E. Metropolitan Serapion to Pope Tawadros and the Pope's approval

+ On Saturday, March 16, H. E. Anba Serapion celebrates the Liturgy of the 7th year Memorial of Pope Shenouda at St. John Church in Covina, as well as HG Bishop Kirollos. + On Monday, Feb. 18, HE blessed St. John Church celebrating the first Liturgy in the Fast of Nineveh.



12. The 38th Anniversary of Fr. Gawargious Kolta:

St. John's priests, congregation and Board of Deacons congratulate the very Rev. Fr. Gawargious on his 38th Anniversary of his ordination on March 15, 1981. May God grant him health, strength, fruitful service and long life.



13. Annunciation Feast: (Sunday, April 7)

with Sunday of the paralytic (5th week of the Lent); festal tunes.

14. Departure of the prophet Ezekiel (April 13):

The 3rd of the Major Prophets.

15. Sunday of Baptism & Lenten Luncheon: (April 14)

On April 14, 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 (\$5 or more as a suggested donation) for the needy.

16. Last Friday of the Great Lent: (April 19):

Liturgy 10:00 a.m., and general Kandeel (Unction of the sick).

17. Lazarus Saturday: (April 20)

Liturgy 8–10:00 a.m

18. Palm Sunday: (April 21)

St. John Church celebrates this Major Lord's Feast on April 21, 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.



19. Covenant Thursday: (April 25)

Pascha prayers start at 8:00 a.m., followed by the rite of washing the feet, then the Liturgy of the Eucharist to 2 p.m +The evening Pascha is from 5:30-9:00 pm.



20. Good Friday: (April 26)

The church celebrates this great Day of Christ's Crucifixion all day long from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.



21. Feast of the Resurrection (April 28):

The Easter Liturgy on Saturday, April 27 from 7:00 p.m. until midnight, followed by an Agape meal.

22) Easter Picnic: (April 28)

at Bonelli Park in San Dimas from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Food is served by Pot-Luck.



The Power of the Crucified SAVIOR



By Pope Shenouda III

The Cross is our boast, as we say with St. Paul, "But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). "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" (1 Cor. 1:18).

If the cross had been a sign of weakness, it would have never been our boast and we should have never taken it as our symbol. If the cross had been a sign of weakness, we would have never erected it on our churches and our towers or hanged it around our necks, tattooed it on our hands and drawn it in our writings...The Cross to us is a sign of power, the power of love, sacrifice, self denial and endurance. This is the real meaning of power.

Many said to the Lord Jesus Christ, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross...and we will believe..." Had He accepted that challenge, it would have meant the destruction of humanity and loss of salvation. But He was too powerful to be stirred up and He remained on the cross.

The Lord Jesus Christ was not overcome by this vain glory: save Yourself to prove You are the Son of God, or to prove your power and amaze the world by the miracle. He was not overcome by such flattery nor by the wrong concept of power...He was able to come down from the cross, but He did not do so that we might be saved.

The Lord Jesus Christ never thought of Himself, but of us. He did not care about saving Himself from death, but He was concerned about saving us, by redeeming us. He did not yield to crucifixion out of weakness but out of love.

He was not selfish, for ***"Love is neither self-seeking nor provoked"*** (1 Cor. 13:5). Had He been

thinking of Himself and of how to be glorified according to the world, He would not have emptied Himself and taken the form of a slave (Phil. 2:5-11). He did not think of Himself because He came to give Himself up for us and thus He proved to the world the power of His love and sacrifice, ***"No one has greater love than this; to lay down His life for His friends."*** (Jn. 15:13). That is how the Lord Jesus set an example of power and overcoming oneself in the Cross. It was amazing how the Lord Christ accepted all their iniquities. ***"As a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth"*** (Isaiah 53:7).

He was aware of the plot against Him, but He did not resist evil...He calmly said to Judas Iscariot, "Do quickly what you are going to do." (Jn. 13:27). The only justification for what the Lord Christ did is His desire to die for us. He had the power to destroy the Cross and whose who wanted to crucify Him, but His power was greater; the power of love and sacrificing. This power which accompanied Him all through the journey of the cross will be the subject of our contemplation.

He was Powerful in Accepting Death:

The Lord Jesus Christ was powerful in approaching death. People did not attack Him secretly or take Him by force. He knew that He would be arrested and knew the time, as He told the disciples, ***"You know that after two days the Passover will be celebrated and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."*** (Matt. 26:2). It would not be wrong to say He knew the exact hour and moment and even the place, and still He went to where they would arrest Him, and at the fixed time. And when the time He knew came, He went to wake up His disciples who were asleep at Gethsemane, saying, ***"Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? The hour has come, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. See, My betrayer is at hand"*** (Matt. 26:45, 46). When the enemy approached, he went with his disciples to

meet him... He wanted to give Himself up for our sake... so He said, ***"I lay down My life in order that I may take it up again"*** (Jn. 10:17, 18).

The Lord Jesus Christ walked towards the enemy in power and courage, and we walk by His side saying, ***"Thine is the Power, the Glory and Blessing and Honor, forever Amen."***

The Lord had the power to put away death, but He was content in accepting it." to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

He was Powerful While being Arrested:

The Lord Jesus was powerful when He was arrested, while the soldiers who came with sticks and swords were afraid of Him. St. John the Beloved who followed Him till the Crucifixion, explained this situation saying, ***"Then Jesus, aware of everything that would befall Him, went out and asked them, 'for whom are you looking?' They replied, 'Jesus of Nazareth' When He said to them, 'I am He', they went backward and fell to the ground."*** (Jn.18:4-6).

The Lord's enemies fell to the ground and could not face Him unarmed power which was more effective than their armed attack! Jesus could have gone away at that time, but instead He remained calm and brave.

When they stood up, once more He asked them, ***"Whom do you seek?"*** And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth". He replied, ***"I told you that I am He, so if you are after Me, let these others go."*** (Jn. 18:7-9).

That is how the Lord Jesus Christ was powerful when He was arrested. Other facing the same situation could have been shaken with fear, while with the Lord, it was the opposite: He was not afraid but those who came to arrest Him were too scared to face Him, till He presented Himself to them saying, ***"I am He"***.

Another example of the power of the Lord Christ when arrested was the healing of the ear of the chief priest's slave. Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave severing his right ear" (Jn. 18"10). But our meek Lord who disagree the violence, turned to Peter and asked him to sheathe his sword. He refused to defend himself or let others defend Him. He rebuked Peter saying, ***"Return your sword to its place... or do you think I cannot appeal to My Father and He will at once send Me more than twelve legions of angels?"*** (Matt. 26:53). The Lord refused to do anything to save Himself, but faced death in courage for our salvation. As for the slave's ear, it was healed by the powerful Lord

who was to be arrested, ***"And touching the ear He healed him."*** (Luke 22:51). The Lord showed mercy to his enemies even at the most critical times. We stand beside the arrested Savior who healed the slave's ear, whispering in His holy ear, "Thowk Teti Gom."ie. "Thine is the Power". This act of mercy put to shame the soldiers, Judas and the Chief priests. It was also a witness against them or an invitation to believe in Him later on... After being arrested, He walked among them as a king among His slaves or the Creator with His creation...He could have destroyed them all, by He wanted our salvation.

The Lord could have done what Elijah did with the Captain of the fifty who asked him to meet the king, "Let fire come down from heaven and consume you and the fifty. And there came down fire from heaven and consumed him and his fifty." (2 Kings 1:10).

The Messiah could have simply done what Elijah did, but He came to die for Man. His power was in controlling Himself not to destroy them. It is the power that saved us and the courage that made Him face death without fear.

He was Strong during the Trial:

The chief priests were afraid of Him, so they held His trial at night. They were confused and..."Looked for a false testimony against Him, in order that they might execute him, but although many false witnesses came forward, they found none." (Matt. 26:59, 60). They were amazed to see Him calm and silent (Matt. 26:62). Evil accusations did not upset the Lord Jesus, neither did false witnesses. His silence was more powerful than words, it made them feel that their accusation and false witnesses were trifles. When they charged Him under oath by the living God to tell them whether He is the Christ the Son of God...He could have kept silent but He answered-according to the Law-powerfully, ***"It is as you said, Nevertheless, I tell you that shortly you will see the Son of Man sitting at the Right Hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven"*** (Matt.26:63, 64).

He was powerful in facing Pilate as well as Caiaphas. His dignity overruled that Roman Governor who repeatedly confessed, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man"... "I find nothing in Him that deserves death" (Lk. 23:4, 13 & 21). No words were said to convince Pilate, but it was the lord's silence and the power that radiated from Him....finally, he washed his hands announcing his innocence of the blood of Christ. For that we praise Him during the Passion Week saying, "Thine is the Power, the Glory and the Blessing forever. Amen.

Fasting CHANGES GOD'S MIND!



By Fr. Augustinos Hanna

+ *“Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping...Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, and He relents from doing harm” (Joel 2:12-14).*

+ *“As the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand...The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.” (Jeremiah 18: 6-8).*

+ *“The People of Nineveh believed God , proclaimed a fast....Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them” (Jonah 3:5-10).*

The power to prevail with God was never more clearly demonstrated in Bible times than when a pronouncement of Divine judgment was averted or deferred through prayer and fasting. “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown”, cried the Hebrew prophet Jonah. The king of Nineveh proclaimed an absolute fast for man and beast, while the people cried mightily to God and turned from their evil way.

The Ninevites’ repentance, expressed in prayer and fasting, moved God to change the decree of judgment He had pronounced against them. This action on the part of God presents us with a theological puzzle. God is revealed as Omniscient, as One who sees the end from the beginning. His foreknowledge is complete and infallible. His character and councils are immutable. “I the Lord do not change” (Mal. 3:6). All Scripture affirms that these are the attributes of the Almighty, and our common sense tells us that without them God would not be God.

Why, then, do so many Old Testament Scriptures affirm that “the Lord repented or relented?” Or changed His mind!? God certainly foreknew, when He sent Jonah, that Nineveh would repent

and that its destruction would be averted. This was God’s purpose in sending him, that he might extend mercy towards this people. Jonah’s message of impending judgment was therefore conditional, though this was not clearly revealed to Jonah or declared to the Ninevites. God has inflexible laws in dealing with men. Sin is visited with judgment, but repentance with mercy. God has declared himself on this point in the plainest of terms:

“If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do to it” (Jer. 18:7, 8).

This repentance of God, therefore, does not imply any caprice on His part, but is wholly in keeping with His intentions declared beforehand. Because man repents in respect to sin, but God repents in respect to judgment. Strictly speaking, then it is not God that really changes, but man. Man’s change of heart makes it morally possible for God to behave differently towards him, yet acting consistently with His Holy character and principles.

Why, then, does Scripture say that God repented,

or changed His mind? This is an example of a common figure of speech in the Hebrew Scriptures by which God's person or action is viewed from the human standpoint. We may think of this as the Holy Spirit's use of language which is an accommodation to our finite understanding. So far as His declared intentions are concerned we may say that God repented, and principles are concerned, ***"God is not man that He should repent"*** (Num. 23:19).

Ahab: After the murder of Naboth and Ahab's compulsory acquisition of his vineyard, God sent Elijah to pronounce divine judgment upon him. "When Ahab heard those words, he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted." God then declared, "Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring evil in his days; but in his son's days" (1 Kings 21:27-29). Judgment was deferred because even such a man as Ahab was prepared to humble his soul with fasting. How great is God's mercy! How great is the power of fasting!

David had evidently grasped this fact concerning prayer and fasting. Because of his grievous sin in the matter of Uriah, God had said that his baby son, born of Bathsheba, would die. When the child sickened David knew that if there was anything that could alter the decree of judgment it was prayer and fasting. "David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in and lay all night upon the ground." After the death of the baby David explained: "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me that the child may live?'" (2 Sam. 12:16, 22).

Among the nations of the West we are witnessing a rising tide of godlessness and lawlessness, similar to that which culminated in the wiping out of civilization by the flood. The sins which brought fire and brimstone from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah are fast becoming socially acceptable! Surely the writing is upon the wall. The overtones of coming judgment are clear enough to those who have ears to hear.

Even if heaven has issued the decree and the

wheels are already in motion, there is still a mighty weapon to which we may have recourse. ***"Yet even NOW," says the Lord, "Return to Me with all you heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments."***

And then the prophet Joel adds, as though by way of explanation: ***"Who knows whether He will not turn and repent and leave a blessing behind him...?"*** (Joel 2:12-14). It seems clear from the prophetic Scriptures that ultimately judgment must fall upon the Christ-rejecting nations. Even Nineveh was ultimately overthrown. But if God can find those who will stand in the gap, even in this eleventh hour, and humble themselves with prayer and fasting, there may yet be a lengthening of our tranquility. God may yet turn and repent and leave a blessing behind Him, giving us mercy instead of wrath, and revival instead of judgment. Such a deferring of the evil day could mean the salvation of multitudes, but there no time to be lost.

* * *

Force yourself!

Mar Isaac the Syrian said,

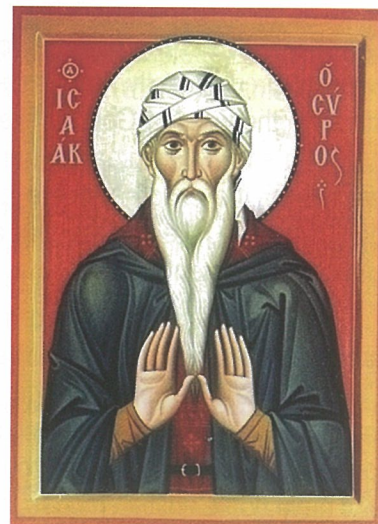
+ ***"Force yourself to pray and fast. Force yourself to spend more time in prayer and increase your prayer more psalms."***

+ ***"Force yourself to control your thoughts and senses."***

+ ***"Avoid creating false excuses to yourself, and remember that the way to hell is full of excuses!"***

+ ***"Avoid laziness and carelessness"***.

+ ***"Forcing self is just the first step in the narrow way, but later on, it will turn to a pleasant and holy desire."***





BRING THEM UP IN THE TRAINING AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD (2) TWELVE MISTAKES PARENTS COMMIT AGAINST THEIR CHILDREN

by Fr. Gawargious Kolta



There are many mistakes committed by the parents against their children; most of those mistakes happen, not intentionally, but due to unawareness of the needs and the characters of the children in their different age stages. We are going to mention with frankness and sincerity twelve mistakes that many parents commit, hoping that it could be avoided. It needs courage and sincerity, in order to offer successful saints to the Lord Jesus and to the church. This is the main goal for the parents in bringing up their children, remembering that they are gifts from God, who entrusts the parents to raise up in His love and fear. The parents will give an account of this trust, showing how much they made profit of this gift, in order to hear the reward in that day: "Well done good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things ... Enter into the joy of your Lord" (Mat. 25:21).

1-Some parents are not good models for their children:

Children always look for a good model to follow. They, from their childhood till full maturity, expect that their parents are a good example, which they follow. This is a normal behavior in most people, even spiritual people try to follow the life style of saints, who were good models of faith and conduct. Thus boys try to follow the patterns of their fathers and the girls try to follow the patterns of their mothers. Both boys and girls admire their parents and honor them. They try to imitate them in the way they talk, the way they dress, and the way they behave.

Being a bad model for our children has a drastic effect on the kid's lives. When one of the parents is not living a good Christian life, but living an immoral life, or being an addict to smoking, alcohol, or any type of drugs, the children cannot live as good Christians. When the parents do not live the life of purity, not walking circumspectly, not attending the church services, not studying the word of God, not keeping the church traditions, or having a shallow spirituality, their children will be crooked. It is difficult for the children to live a godly life when their parents don't have the love and the fear of God and do not keep and live His commandments.

How we ask our children to have Christian morals while we are hypocrites or lukewarm? When the parents don't live a true-Christian life and don't engage heartily in the church life and tradition, they will be a stumbling block for their children, who will look for worldly models. That could make them live a carnal life and have non-Christian morals, and thus it will be difficult for the church to discipline them.

Many parents give excuses that they are busy and work-

ing hard to have a good income for their children's sakes and welfare; and so they don't have time for spiritual activities. They want the church to do their parts and their responsibilities in bringing up their children. This is not fair, and the church cannot take the whole responsibilities of the parents. The time the children spend in church is very limited compared to the time they spend at home. Parenting is necessary to raise up healthy children mentally and physically.

There are some stories in the Bible that show that some parents were not good models for their children; so the children fell in the same mistakes of their parents. Abraham didn't say the truth and he told Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister (Gen. 12:11) likewise his son Isaac did the same mistake, saying that Rebecca was his sister (Gen. 26:7). Rebecca made her son Jacob lie and to deceive his father in order to lay hold of the birthright of his brother Esau, when Isaac his father blessed him (Gen. 27:6). Likewise Jacob deceived his uncle Laban in the speckled flock (Gen. 30:39). We find that many kings of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord as their fathers who were not good models. (1 King 22:53 & 2 King 23:23).

Children grasp their parents' behavior without the parents noticing. They become a copy of their parents in their way of speaking, in the relation of other people, and in their spiritual lives. If the parents do not pray, fast, confess, attend the church services, or have Holy Communion, the children will do the same. If the parents are not honest and loving, the children will do the same. Parents should study the Word of God daily with their children, and practice what they read, in order that the scriptures and the love of God would be engraved on the tablets of their hearts from their early childhood. Parents ought to walk circumspectly in the fear of God imitating the Lord in every deed, in order that their children might be blameless and children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Story: A father met me and told me that his eldest son, who was a university graduate, wanted to marry a non-Christian girl with whom he fell in love. The father was very sad and told me, with tears, that he took good care of his son since he was a baby and he never neglected him. He allowed him to study in private schools and live a luxurious life, giving him all his needs. All that he desired was given to him.

I asked the father if he was a good Christian model for his son; in keeping the Word of God and living the church life. He said that he didn't practice any spiritual activity, because he was

busy and his work consumed all his daily time. He added that his son attended Sunday school till he entered the university. After that whenever the father asked his son to go to church, he didn't go and he gave many different excuses, while the father himself didn't go to the church.

I told the father that he took care of his son, giving him all his carnal needs, but he didn't nourish his soul by spiritual food. That is why he did not know the Savior to love Him, why to follow Him, nor why to go to His house. He took care of his son materially and physically, and enabled him to become an engineer, but not a true Christian or a good believer. When the father knew that his son got married to that girl, he got a heart attack and passed away, leaving a widow and two little orphans.

2- Absence of peace in the family:

The multiple fights and arguments between the parents in our homes destroy the personality and the mentality of the children, who look for peace and calmness in their homes. When the children find that their parents are always fighting, calling each other bad names, or disrespecting each other, or having continuous miscommunication, they hate to live in that house. Those frequent fights and disagreements in the family make the children feel that their home is not safe.

Some husbands fight with their wives with a loud voice to show their children that they are the boss of the family, and usually their wives try to retaliate, calling their husbands disrespectful names. Their children are the ones who suffer from that non-peaceful home. It is written: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer. 31:29).

The spirit of division in the family means that there is no oneness, and this leads to unhealthy children. Homes which lack love, peace, and self-denial make the children miserable and they hate to live there. The Lord said: "A house divided against a house falls" (Lk. 11:17). Such suffering children, especially the adolescents, cannot stand to live in a divided home. They don't only escape from such houses, but they are also subjected to mental and psychological diseases, such as unsociability and distracted minds, which lead to low grades in schools. Others become violent with their family members and school colleagues, commit crimes or become drug addicts. Others seek unlawful relations with the other gender, where they imagine to find warmth and a peaceful life and fulfill their sexual desire. In those divided families, the parents blame on each other, and accuse each other of being the cause of their children's going astray. They deny that they neglect bringing up their children, and some of such parents come to church asking for help in order to save their children.

Story: A father accompanied by his wife, met me and told me that their eldest son was hanging with a girl, spending most his time with her, and neglecting his studies. When the father rebuked him, saying that this was not accepted in our traditions (but he did not tell him that that deeds was sinful and would

disappoint the Lord), the son left his father's house and went to live with the family of his girl-friend. The father blamed his wife of not raising up her son well. When his wife heard his blame, she insulted and cursed him in front of me, instead of thinking how to solve the problem of her son. The father did the same accusing her of spending most of her time either fighting with him in front of their sons, or chattering with her friends for a long time. I advised them to take care firstly of their spiritual life, to love each other, to keep the Lord's commandments, to pray together, and to come regularly to the church; at least they would become a good model for the other two sons. I asked them to practice self-control and try to communicate successfully with each other. Then I took their son's phone number.

The son came and met me in the church, and he told me that his parents did know how to communicate with each other, and they always fought with each other in front of their kids. He added that they were not acting like husband and wife, but they were like two enemies, and thus he was living in the midst of hell. I was astonished when he told me that he advised his parents to discuss their problems in their bed room away from the kids, but they did not listen to him. He felt that they enjoyed fighting in front of their children. In addition, he did not feel any warmth all his life, in their relations towards each other and even towards their kids.

The son added that he had good relation with a good American girl, whose family lived in peace, love, and respect. Her family knew his sufferings, sympathized with him, and showed great love and respect to him. He said that since he lived with them, he got a peaceful mind, did well in his college without any distraction. He said that he enjoyed living with that family. He added that he was sure that there would not be any good parents who would give their daughter in marriage to someone whose parents had a bad reputation.

I tried to convince the son to return back to his family if they changed their life style, and behaved as good Christians, but he insisted that he would never go back to the hell of his family. He added that he would not even invite them to attend his wedding. He said that he wanted to be detached completely from his parents, who were not living in peace and in the same time ignorant of parenting.

Although he promised to bring his girl-friend to our church in order to learn the beliefs and the traditions of the Coptic Church, yet the tone of his voice was full of discomfort, because he did not want to meet any member of his family in the church or outside the church.

When I met his parents, I told them the reason of the escape of their son from his home, and I advised them to change their life and live as good Christians in harmony, so that they gain their eternal life, as well as their other two sons. Meanwhile, the church would take care of the eldest son, and try to help him overcome his trauma through Christian counseling.

(To be continued)

Every Week is Holy Week

By Mark M. Hanna



No one ever throws or goes to parties during Holy Week. No one ever decides that this year they will not spend holy week in church, but rather they will invite all their friends over to their home and celebrate it there. No one ever plans on coming to church for Holy Week dressed to impress, or wearing a revealing dress during that most sacred week! My confusion is over why our behavior that week is different from any other time of year? My aim in this article is not to diminish in any way our reverence for that week, but to show that God deserves and expects the same devotion and holiness from us throughout the year.

You must be thinking that this writer is either confused or depressed to be thinking of Holy Week now! I am, in fact, confused and depressed by the bad performance we repeat year after year. The bad performance is the pattern of broken promises we make to God . . . the inconsistency of acting "holy" on certain occasions and places, while acting differently on other occasions and places. We realize very well what causes us to sin and yet we repeat the same mistakes over and over, knowing that our actions break the heart of God.

The Crucified Life

The Coptic Orthodox Christian Church has no teaching on how to live life other than to live a 'crucified-life.' A life that measures every action, behavior and thought from the base of the cross looking up, always focusing on the suffering and agony which my sins personally caused my loving Lord. If sin is, by definition, separation from God, then anything that separates me from Christ, no matter how momentarily is sin. After seeing Mel Gibson's famous *The Passion of the Christ*, a friend told me "it certainly curbed my potential to sin for a while." You see, contemplation on the passion of our Lord Jesus has the effect of killing our sinful desires, and transforms our tendency to grieve His heart to a drive to please Him.

So . . . if living every day of the year as if it were a day in Holy Week brings glory and pleasure to God, then I will gladly dedicate my entire being here on earth to remembering His sufferings, crucifixion and death.

The Fraction Prayer to the Son of the Coptic Orthodox liturgy, from which I will quote at length here, summarizes the rationale for living the "crucified life" and how we should live it:

"We are the ones who sinned and He was the One who suffered. We are the ones who were indebted to the divine justice as a result of our sins, and He was the One who paid off our debts... So my God, it is my sins that are the thorns that plunged into Your holy head. It is I who saddened Your heart by indulging in the worthless pleasures of the world... So then grieve O my soul, for your sins which have inflicted all this pain

on your compassionate Redeemer. Visualize His wounds before you and take refuge in Him when the enemy is stirred up against you. O my Savior let me cherish Your suffering as my treasure, Your crown of thorns as my glory, Your pains as my joy, Your bitterness as sweetness in my mouth, Your blood as my life and Your love as my honor and gratitude.

So, think of His sufferings and think of them often at the slightest awareness of sin's approach.

St. Paul said it best in Philippians 3:10: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

We all love to focus on "the power of His resurrection" yet we are not willing to participate in "the fellowship of His sufferings" or to "being conformed to His death" more than one week. Yet we will never experience "the power [that victory] of His resurrection" unless we experience "the fellowship of His sufferings" and become conformed to His death." If the meaning of the "crucified life" is too abstract for you, then consider yourself standing actually at the foot of the cross during Holy Week.

The Year of Our Lord

Societies of all walks of life, of all races and faiths world-wide, still mark the calendar year as beginning with the Lord Jesus' birth which split history into B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini or In the Year of our Lord). Every year we live is the Year of Our Lord. St. John the Evangelist tells us: "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6). The Lord Jesus did not frivolously walk through His years on earth but, St. Paul writes, "for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame..." (Hebrews 12:2). The Lord Jesus came "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Isaiah 61:2) and St. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 6:2 "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Dear reader,

In the New Year, let us commit to making every week a holy week. Let us think of how we can bring God honor and glory every day, week and year of our lives. Let us all support one another in discovering the fellowship of His suffering and conformity to His death. "Let us laying aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:1-2). Let us say with St. Paul "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20). Then and only then will we know Christ and the power of His resurrection. Let us make each year we have on earth a truly acceptable year of our Lord.



You Can't Buy Manna at Costco

Betsy Childs Howard Christian Living

One of my favorite Bible stories is God's provision of bread in the wilderness. The Israelites grumbled because they had no food, so God gave them manna from heaven. The flaky food would appear on the ground in the morning. They could gather as much as they liked, but it didn't do any good to store it up. With the exception of the Sabbath eve when they were allowed to gather the next day's portion, if they kept manna overnight it became full of worms with a terrible smell. I'm sure they didn't make that mistake more than a couple of times.

It may have taken a while for the children of Israel to trust that the manna would be there the next morning. They had to adjust to going to bed with full stomachs but empty cupboards. You might have thought that once they learned the lesson, God would have started feeding them some other way, but Exodus 16:35 says: "The people of Israel ate the manna 40 years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan."

One Day at a Time

It's a great feeling when you can stock up on food and paper products at a wholesale store and know you won't have to go back for months. But God doesn't allow us to stock up on his grace. He gives it to us one day at a time, just as he gave his people manna. And just as they waited for daily bread for 40 years, we wait on daily grace for a lifetime.

You see, once you start walking in daily dependence on God, you have to keep walking in it. God's desire is to be in fellowship with us, and one way he draws us into that fellowship is by meeting our needs one day at a time. He doesn't just give us what we need; he wants to give us himself. He gives us himself through his Word. The trials that make us crave the life-giving sustenance of the daily nourishment of Scripture are like the hunger pains that drive us to the daily food our bodies need to survive.

Your needs for today may not be all that daunting, but the thought of what it will take to persevere for a lifetime can be overwhelming. Maybe singleness isn't so bad today, but can you bear it for the rest of your life? Maybe you have peace in the face of your cancer diagnosis, but where will you get the strength to cope with seemingly endless cycles of chemotherapy?

If you feel like you don't have enough fortitude for the future, that's because God doesn't give grace in a lifetime supply. He provides it one day at a time. If you doubt God has given you the capacity to endure your trial for a lifetime, you can rest assured he hasn't. But he has given you exactly what you need to flourish today.

Jesus sought daily strength from his Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:15–16), expecting him to provide what he needed day by day (Luke 11:3). God promises us the same timely help in Christ:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb. 4:15–16)

God has promised to supply what we need, when we need it. He hasn't equipped us for hypotheticals. As C. S. Lewis wrote in a letter, "It is seldom the present and the actual that is intolerable. Remember one is given the strength to bear what happens, but not the 101 different things that might happen."

Three Decades From Now

Whatever your need is, God can meet it day by day. If you're walking through infertility, my question for you is, can you live for the next 24 hours without a child? Can you trust God to get you through today? If the answer is yes, then you have what it takes to survive for the long haul. You just need to ask yourself the same question tomorrow.

You may have a disabled child. While caring for him today isn't easy, you have what you need to make it through the day. Still, the thought of what it will be like to care for him for the next 30 years may terrify you. Take heart at the thought that 30 years from now, you will be walking with the same loving Father, and he will still be giving you exactly what you need for each day.

The Israelites didn't have enough manna to last them for 40 years. They had only enough for that day. But they had a relationship with the almighty, all-providing God, and they trusted him to provide just what they needed, one day at a time.

Every Saint has a PAST & Every Sinner has a FUTURE

*I was shocked, confused, bewildered
As I entered Heaven's door,
Not by the beauty of it all,
Nor the lights or its décor.
But it was the folks in Heaven
Who made me sputter and gasp...
The thieves, the liars, the sinners,
The alcoholics and the trash.
There stood the kid from 7th grade,
Who swiped my lunch money twice.
Next to him was my old neighbor,
Who never said anything nice.
Bob, who I always thought
Was rotting away in hell,
Was sitting pretty on cloud nine,
Looking incredibly well.
I nudged Jesus, "What's the deal?
I would love to hear Your take.
How'd all these sinners get up here?
God must've made a mistake!
"And why is everyone so quiet,
So somber – give me a clue."
"Hush, child," he said, "they're all in shock.
No one thought they'd be seeing you."*

JUDGE NOT!

*Remember...Just going to church doesn't
make you a Christian any more than stand-
ing in your garage makes you a car,*

*You need a personal relationship with the
Lord Jesus Christ.*

Every saint has a PAST...

Every sinner has a FUTURE!

Now it's your turn...Share this poem.

10 Good Reasons to Go to Church

1. God says so! (Heb. 2:12; 10:25 & Matt. 21:13)

2. It is the holy place in which you wor-
ship God and practice the holy sacraments
of baptism, confession, communion and
matrimony.

3. It's a great place to find Christian
friends.

4. It is a way to show your world that
spiritual things are very important to you
and to them.

5. You need to be associated with other
members in Christ's body and practice a
Christian fellowship.

6. You need to love and encourage other
brothers and sisters in Christ.

7. You need to serve the Lord and invest
your talents in teaching or preaching, in
Sunday school classes or youth activities
or Bible Study or family meetings.

8. You need to be a part of a group that
can have some good influence in our
world, and spread the love and peace of
God around you.

9. The church offers good opportuni-
ties for Christian service to needy people,
whether the poor or sick or widows and
orphans.

10. The church is the best place to find
some quiet time to say, "I love you" to
God.

Use these lines to add some reasons
of your own.



What gave the Coptic Martyrs such steadfast courage? Francis Phillips

Martin Mosebach opens up a world unknown to the West - a Church that has been a persecuted minority for over 1,000 years

I have recently read *The 21: A Journey in the Land of Coptic Martyrs* by Martin Mosebach (translated by Alta L. Price), an acclaimed German novelist, essayist and poet. He is a Catholic which makes sense when you read it; his reflections are too perceptive to have been written by someone without religious belief.

His book concerns an event that made world-wide news in February 2015, when 20 Coptic migrant workers from Egypt (the 21st, from Ghana, was “adopted” as a Copt when he chose to die with them) were beheaded on a Libyan beach on 15 February that year by black-clad, masked ISIS terrorists. It wasn’t possible to read the book quickly, or skip sections; this was partly out of respect for the story itself and partly because on nearly every page Mosebach has worthwhile things to say. This is not glib, dramatic or sensational journalism but a sober and insightful investigation into what lay behind the lives of these young men.

Mosebach is essentially asking the question we would all pose when confronting the fact of their martyrdom (it is reported that during their 43-day captivity before their executions they were offered the choice to live if they abjured their faith and embraced Islam but refused): what gave them the courage and the steadfastness to face their gruesome end with such patience and dignity, murmuring “O my Lord Jesus” as the knives were held to their throats?

All this has been captured on video, unedited and uncensored, made by the terrorists in order to inspire fear in those who watched it. That this purpose misfired spectacularly is evident in the behavior of the martyrs. Mosebach is not interested

in investigating ISIS. His purpose is to discover the power of the Coptic Church in the lives of its followers – a power he makes clear is not that of a death-embracing cult but that of a vibrant, joyful Church.

Indeed, reading this account gives the reader a glimpse of what it must have been like to be an early Christian during the persecutions in ancient Rome, singing hymns in the catacombs as they were led into the Colosseum.

It seems the 21 young men sang and prayed during their captivity before their deaths; daily beatings and torture could not quell their ardent love for their faith. Reading of their individual character traits in the official martyrology read by Mosebach when he visited their families in the village of El-Aour in Upper Egypt in 2017, is to be confronted by a strange spiritual beauty: “He gave alms even though he was poor”; “He was a man of prayer and liturgy”; “He was quick to forgive, argued with no-one”; “He was an honest worker and treated his parents with respect” – and so on. The migrant workers were clearly men of great and humble virtue.

Some of them were married, with children; some were illiterate; all were poor, which is why they had gone to Libya as migrant workers and stayed on even when its low-level civil war made it extremely dangerous to do so. Mosebach (an advocate of the Tridentine rite of Mass) intriguingly describes the men as “homines liturgi” – “men of the liturgy.”

The Coptic Church, traditionally thought to have been founded by St Mark in Egypt in the 1st century, is not in communion with Rome but its liturgy and hierarchy are venerable and ancient: Mass lasts for almost three hours with a continual sung liturgy. Some of the martyrs were in the church choir; all of them would have known the prayers of the liturgy by heart.

It is when Mosebach visited the village where



An Interview with an African American Coptic Convert

Regina, who prefers to go by her baptized name Monica, is a Coptic convert with a kind voice and wise eyes. She works in the public health field where she helps people control their diabetes through stress reduction and stress management techniques.

She is also a black woman, with caramel skin and African locks. We had met each other before at a bible study, but we came friends when I found out she was friends with my mom, and we got even closer after we went on a service trip to Egypt.

Growing up among Egyptians however, I was disappointed but not surprised to hear that she had experienced several instances of racism from our Coptic brothers and sisters when she first came to the faith.

Five years have passed since her conversion and Regina has become a pillar of our community, but there are still people out there in the church who have no idea how badly their actions and judgement have hurt non-Egyptians.

What brought you to the Coptic church?

I was looking for the African roots of Christianity. In Acts 8:27 I found one of the first

conversion stories. An Ethiopian Jew received the Gospel from Philip and was baptized. I assume he then evangelized the rest of Ethiopia, which is one in the same with the Coptic church. In my research, I found that this church was what most closely paralleled the early Christian Church. I've always been an inquisitive and curious person. I have a Protestant Baptist, Messianic and Pentecostal background, I've practiced other faiths, but I've always been fascinated by the doctrinal politics that drove discussion. It's interesting that I didn't find what I wanted when I came to the Coptic church, but I found what I needed.

You know, you guys are incredibly blessed to have such a rich foundation and you don't even realize what you have. It amazes me that many people don't appreciate the spiritual depth that is available in our church. I am still in awe every time I go to church and bible study. Just the amount of information, the spirituality, the Desert Fathers, the martyrs, the saints. I had never heard about any of these individuals in our Christian Ancestry!

And while I encourage exploration, when people say they're bored I'm shocked, I mean, I drove 80 miles a week twice a week to St. John to go to church! I was spellbound, and many times, in tears after Abouna Daniel would teach a lesson or share a homily. I love the culture and the Coptic songs.

When did you decide to convert? How was the experience?

It took me 18 months. I wanted to make sure that this is what I wanted to commit to. In 2013, I decided to get baptized, and my life was transformed. I learned so much about silence, stillness, serenity, meditation and being in God's presence. It was just such a different way of life that made me feel complete.

I had a very powerful prayer life before, but the idea of silence and listening to God was not a component. I loved the idea of being still so much that 3 years ago I went on a silent retreat by myself for three days where I didn't speak once.

What was the baptism like?

Oh my goodness, let me tell you. Literally the best experience in my life I've ever had. I'm not exaggerating. To be honest you guys are robbed of the experience because you had it as babies. But the holy oils, the holy water, the prayers and the declarations. It was the most sacred experience ever. I had a friend record it. I still listen to it from time to time, to take me back there, and remind me of my transformation. I can remember that day like yesterday. I also truly appreciate the time and seriousness the priests dedicate to it.

What was it like the first time you entered the church as an Orthodox woman?

It was a privilege. I felt like I had really become the bride of Christ.

How has your background influenced you to make the decision to convert?

I was ready to go deeper. I had a burning desire to live a consecrated life, like the desert fathers. I was in awe of the insight.

When I first entered, I didn't understand why people were so quiet and reserved, compared to the charismatic churches that I am most familiar with. But I get it now, they want us to focus on God in a way that allows our spirit to be still and hear what He has to share.

Did you have any bad experiences with the congregation? If so, how did it make you feel?

My experience with many of the parishioners was mixed. I obviously looked different than 98% of the rest of the population. The older congregation were not approving. They wouldn't even give me



the sign of peace during the liturgy (where we take blessings from each other's hands). One lady was even like, "can I help you with something?" kind of like, "what are you doing here?" I also had one lady come and tell me that any one who wanted to attend church either had to learn Arabic or Coptic, and should not expect an English translation. She even told me that she had nightmares where the Church was completely in English.

So let's just say I did not have the warm and fuzzies okay? It was very hurtful. However, there is a Pentecostal minister named William Seymour whose story I read once. He was a black man from the south who came to a sermon once to hear the word of God, but they wouldn't allow him in since it was an all-white congregation. But instead of leaving, he waited outside in the hallway to listen to the sermon, and he changed and received the word of God because of it. I was inspired as I read his story, and I was like "I'm not going to let the rude people stop me from receiving God's messages for me." No matter what the racist members think or say, it is God's word and God's house. I am God's daughter and He welcomes me.

There were many others that were extremely loving and went the extra mile to make me feel comfortable and included. I love and appreciate them for sharing God's heart.

I've made many friends now, and I've even shared meals with them outside of the church. Two sisters drove 100 plus miles to see my baptism, which made me feel so special because I had no family that supported me or understood why I was doing this.

What also helped me understand and overlook the hurtful behavior was the fact that these people come from a history of persecution. They are weary of people who look different and are rightfully suspicious of strangers and their intentions.

Why do you think people might have treated you like that?

I think it was because of several factors. First, I realized that most members are related. As I became more involved I saw that they're all related and came from Egypt together. Also, the Coptic church is not mission-focused, it's more about protecting the community, and they don't want to lose their culture, like that woman who told me that she has nightmares about an english liturgy.

They are also the products of a colonized mind. They deny their brown skin and curly hair. Many are shocked to see how I embrace the way God created me.

Don't get me wrong, these things happen in African American culture too. The slave masters taught them to hate each other and hate their skin color. This is one of the issues I have. It still bothers me when I see Saint Mary with blue eyes and blonde hair. I'm like really? That is a historically inaccurate illustration of the Blessed Mother. I am in an African church and people don't want to embrace the truth.

Even my abouna said that there is virtually no other ethnic group that worships a god that doesn't look like them. For people to go so far through a learned behavior of self hatred to deny themselves is just sad.

But I've spent many years learning to love

myself. I celebrate and love all cultures, but I'm not going to deny myself. Because it's subtle. We never realize the brainwashing and indoctrination involved.

How long have you been orthodox now? Do you still get treated differently?

It's been about five years now. Most people know me now and people treat me better. Even when they don't recognize me, when they see me serving, I can see them relaxing. I feel like I'm finally a part of the family.

It's interesting that I didn't find what I wanted when I came to the Coptic church, but I found what I needed.

What is your advice to those people, and/or what is your advice to their children, and/or what is your advice to the church?

I stayed despite the treatment, but not everyone has the same fortitude.

The Coptic church may not be for everyone. But there are people like myself looking for something richer and more fulfilling. It's not fair to withhold sharing our beauty with others. So don't judge outsiders too harshly. If someone is genuinely seeking, let them attend the bible study. God loves us all; he created us all different on the outside, but the same on the inside.

We all desire to be loved, we all experience pain, we all need each other. Allow the Holy Spirit to help you practice discernment. Don't be suspicious nor naive. Don't dislike people because they look different, or keep people out of your click. I understand maintaining a strong church community is vital, but evangelism is equally important. Street ministry may not be the focus, however when people voluntarily desire to learn about our church, they should not be rejected.

When I first started coming, Many of my friends were asking, "I don't understand, why would you go to a church that's racist?" I stayed despite the treatment, but not everyone has the same fortitude. So be careful how you treat people, Jesus said that people will know we are Christians by the way we love one another. We need to represent God well.



Life, Free Will and Truth

Is there a relationship?

In a speech before a Virginia Convention in 1775, right before the revolutionary war, Patrick Henry said ***"Give me liberty, or give me death!"*** What he was saying is that life has no meaning or purpose without free will, and it is better to be dead than living without freedom.

Freedom gives us control and ownership of our lives. Without freedom we are under control of the one who exercises his will over us and we become slaves to this master who, in effect, owns our lives. So even though we exist, we don't own our lives and we are socially dead. Therefore, the mere existence does not necessarily mean life. This understanding has its spiritual application in Christianity, which is the purpose of this article.

When God created us he gave us life and freedom of will. However, to exercise our free will we need to be able to make the right choices that lead us to the intended goal we are willing to achieve. Since our choices have consequences, some of which may be fatal. It is important to acquire the information and knowledge that guide our choices in order to avoid any negative consequences, i.e., we should be able to make informed decisions/choices. Consequently, the information/knowledge has to be accurate or "True". False information could lead us in a totally different direction from what we originally intended. Therefore, we need to be sure about the credibility of the source of information before we accept and put our confidence (trust) in that source.

We have a good example in the book of Genesis, which tells us the story of Adam and Eve. They were commanded and warned by God who said to them "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 2:17).

However, the serpent (devil) said "You shall not

surely die, for God knows that in the day you eat of it, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil." (Gen 3:4-5). Adam and Eve had opposing statements from two sources, and had to make a choice which to believe. They trusted and accepted the information given by the serpent (devil) and disregarded

the knowledge (warning) given by God. Even though the will of Adam and Eve was to live and not die, however, by accepting false information and trusting in the devil, they made a deadly choice.

Accordingly, in order to really exercise our free will, we need to base our choices on true knowledge.

This relationship between freedom of choice and truth has been highlighted in the Bible in this verse: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The next logical question would be "where do we find the truth?" According to the Bible, the truth is found in our Lord Jesus Christ who said "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). He also said "Therefore if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36). This means that the Lord Jesus (the son of God) is the truth, and He is the one that makes us free indeed. And if we are free then we also have life since without freedom we don't own our lives.

After Adam and Eve, chose to follow the counsel of the devil, the human race became enslaved to the devil and lost their freedom and hence their life. This is described in the Bible as eternal death.

However, the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ and His subsequent resurrection broke our bondage and slavery to the devil and brought back our freedom and eternal life for everyone who puts back his trust (faith) in the Lord.

Mother Teresa .. An Egyptian Christian who devoted her life to care for Children including Muslim children



More than 30 years ago, # Maggie Gabran, a professor of marketing at American University visited Al-Zabaleen area in Mokattam, district of Cairo, Egypt, and this visit led to a comprehensive change in the course of her life.

In this area, garbage is collected from everywhere in the capital. Cleaners from Cairo collect around

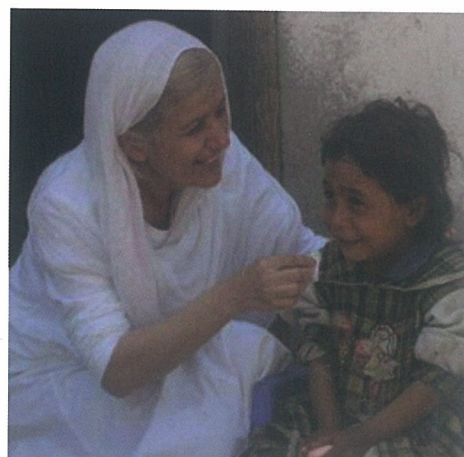
15,000 tons and transport them to the area for sorting and recycling. These families living in the Dr. Maggie visited the area, and there she saw children living a marginalized life. She left everything for them and decided to devote herself to them and work for them and raise their status.

The university professor, who comes from a wealthy family in Upper Egypt and is married to a businessman, decided to give herself and her life and money to the children of the Zabalin neighborhood and founded a charity called Stephen Children to care for children in slums and marginalized areas. They have been involved in caring for more than 33,000 children, including Muslims,

and caring for more than 5,000 families till they called her Mother Teresa.

She says she likes to be called the "Mama". She says that the mother's title is the highest of titles and when a child calls her Mama, her heart beats and shudders to meet his wishes and fulfill his wishes.

Egypt's Mother Teresa stresses that she is happy with what she does because she does so for the sake of the humanity that God has given her and her generosity without looking at religion, sex or color, adding that human value is the most precious, and when she decided to care for these children she did so because these could be her children Personally.





Mama Maggie" seeks to offer humanity something beautiful, When you present to the community a child who is well behaved and educated, you are giving

the most beautiful in existence. You see that when you see happiness on the faces of these children, you feel that you are truly happy.

Through its association, Mama Maggie has established 92 centers providing care and education for children, visits to more than 13,000 children, counseling and training, and the treatment of more than 40,000 patients a year.

Mama Maggie calls for good and prosperity for all. She says that when she sees a needy child reaching out to him immediately without knowing him, humanity is to heal his wounds first without waiting to know his religion, adding that she has a volunteer team that provides services to all children Without discrimination, and proud of it and all its members.

She concluded by commenting on the interview of the Vatican Pope and the Sheikh of Al-Azhar in the UAE by saying that she is a proud Coptic, and as a human being, she says that this interview and this visit is the greatest example of tolerance and rejection of fanaticism. She affirms that human beings are the most valuable in existence and those who do not tolerate and accept each other will hurt themselves more. Without man loving his fellow man.

To be followed Coptic Martyrs...

many of the young men had come from that their heroic behavior becomes (almost) explicable. The Copts describe themselves as "the Church of the Martyrs", a constant succession down the centuries, into which the 21 find their own place; now venerated with crowns of martyrdom, their icons are everywhere. Whatever grief or sorrow their families must have felt, the author tells us that "the household was not in mourning." The young widows left behind would not consider remarriage such was their reverence for the dead.

Again, Mosebach emphasizes that "These were not Spartan mothers celebrating some rigid ideal, but rather believers whose faith had been forged and strengthened by adversity." Later, interviewing the Coptic Metropolitan, the author records his impression of his "undisputed greatness" and of his "strength and power". He drily wonders how Nietzsche, who thought of Christianity as the religion of slaves, would "spare off against this particular priest."

As a German Catholic, Mosebach is forced to make comparisons between the Western Church and this formidable Church which, since the Muslim invasion, has been in the minority in Egypt for over 1,400 years. He reflects that after Constantine, Christians "had to learn to withstand the temptations of pagan culture and engage in intellectual battle with it". The implicit message is that in the West the pagan culture has won. We are reminded that the first hermits and monks, hermitages and monasteries were established in Egypt, in the desert, far from the cities. Subsequently the Copts learned to cope with a long history of withstanding oppression and thus gain "an intimate knowledge of martyrdom." Reading these pages opens up an unknown world; that of a Church, barely known in the West and as little understood. Mosebach's final reflection is that we need to become better acquainted with it as western secular society becomes a more hostile environment to those still determined to bear witness to Christ.

The Resurrection of Christ



“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up” (John 10:18).

The Center of our Faith

The Resurrection of Christ stands at the center of the Christian faith. It is the supreme confirmation of His Messiahship. It verifies all that had gone before; His miraculous birth, the Divine revelations which accompanied Him, the truth of His moral teachings, His wondrous works, and His complete identification with God. It lends unshakable confidence to all that lies ahead: the coming of the holy Spirit according to His promise, the inauguration of the church, and the final end of the ages. Only as the Son of God, having life in Himself, could He lay down his life voluntarily, and then take it up again.

At the time of His death and burial, the Disciples of Christ were a broken and thoroughly discouraged band. In their still limited view, all their hopes in Christ had been in vain. They locked themselves behind closed doors out of fear that their lives, too, were at stake. They went nowhere and preached nothing about anyone. There would be no Christianity today had not some tremendous event taken place to move them.

Stories which attempt to falsify the Resurrection of Christ therefore lack credibility. It seems incredible that the disciples could have spread the Christian faith in the way they did—based on a falsification. Only the Resurrection and subsequent descent of the Holy Spirit made the disciples apostles: people sent into the world with the knowledge, courage and power to carry on the work of Christ.

In the doctrine of the Apostles, the Resurrection of Christ was everything. Their first sermons (Acts 2-4) speak almost exclusively of this event. The apostles considered bearing witness to the Resurrection as their primary function. At the time of the election of Mathias to replace the fallen Judas in the original twelve, Peter said: “...one of these men must become with us a witness to His resurrection” (Acts 1:22).

As St. Paul so clearly states: “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain”

(1 Cor. 15:14).

Post-Resurrection Appearances

After His Resurrection, Christ appeared to His disciples in a new glorious form. He appeared suddenly, often through closed doors. He blessed and breathed upon them. He admonished them for not believing that he would rise. At the same times He ate and drank with them and allowed them to touch Him to see that He was not a ghost: “...for a spirit has no flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Luke 24:39).

After the Resurrection, the disciples often did not recognize Christ. Physical means of recognition, however important, were no longer enough.

“So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown in perishable, what is raised is imperishable... it is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:42). Christ was recognized by his disciples when He spoke their name (John 20:16), when He issued them commands and conversed with them, (John 21:4-14); when He broke the bread and gave it to them (Luke 24:35).

On these occasions the disciples said such things as this. “Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened for us the Scriptures? Then they told...how He was known to them in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:32-35). The Resurrection of Christ was therefore not a biological upgrading of His physical body. The angel rolled away the stone from the sepulcher not to let Christ walk out, but to reveal that He was no longer there. “He is not here; for He has risen, as He said”. (Matt. 28:6).

The Universal Resurrection

In His Resurrection Christ is “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20). He is the first fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the resurrection of all (Ezekiel 37), and the assurance of the future resurrection of all who live in Him. I believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen. (Nicene Creed)

The Feast of Feasts

In the Church Easter is in a class by itself. It is called the Feast of feasts. About one-third of the Liturgical year is devoted to it, either in preparation or celebration. It was the first Christian feast and to this day remains the unchallenged center of the Church’s liturgical life. Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

The Easter greeting became: “Christ is risen”... “Truly He is risen”

Short Stories & Comments

1- Like angels in heaven

(Matt. 22:30)

A crippled boy sat in his wheelchair, and a sympathetic lady pitying his helplessness, exclaimed to her friend, "Poor fellow! What has he to look forward to?"



The cripple overheard it and turning his head, said, pleasantly: "Wings, some day"!

One of the saints once said, "If I had wings...

I would find no obstacle too great to conquer,

I would find no pain too great to suffer,

I would find no loneliness too great to bear."

But let me tell you my friend that "You do have wings!

+ The wings of faith.

+ The wings of hope.

+ The wings of the Holy Spirit: St. Macarius has written, "When God created Adam, He did not give him bodily wings like the birds but prepared for him in advance the wings of the Holy Spirit to lift him up to the heavenly thoughts, and to the throne of God"

+ The wings of prayer and fasting...

+ The wings of Scriptures; the word of God.

+ St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, added: "The wings of Christ's inner presence through the Eucharist."

+The wings of waiting upon the Lord (Isa. 40:31).

2. Not a Sparrow but an Eagle

President Theodore Roosevelt was proud of his first three sons when they announced their intention to join the military service. But when his fourth son also decided to go into uniform, the tough man resisted: "Not all my boys." To which his wife replied, "Ted, if you raise them as eagles you can't expect them to fly like sparrows"! (See Isaiah 40:31).



3. Sin makes our wings useless

But, un-confessed, un-forgiven sin holds us down, preventing us from flying, just as an eagle with one-hundred-pound weight around its neck, will not be able to fly.

Through repentance, confession and forgiveness, God releases the burden of sin, enables us to fly.



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