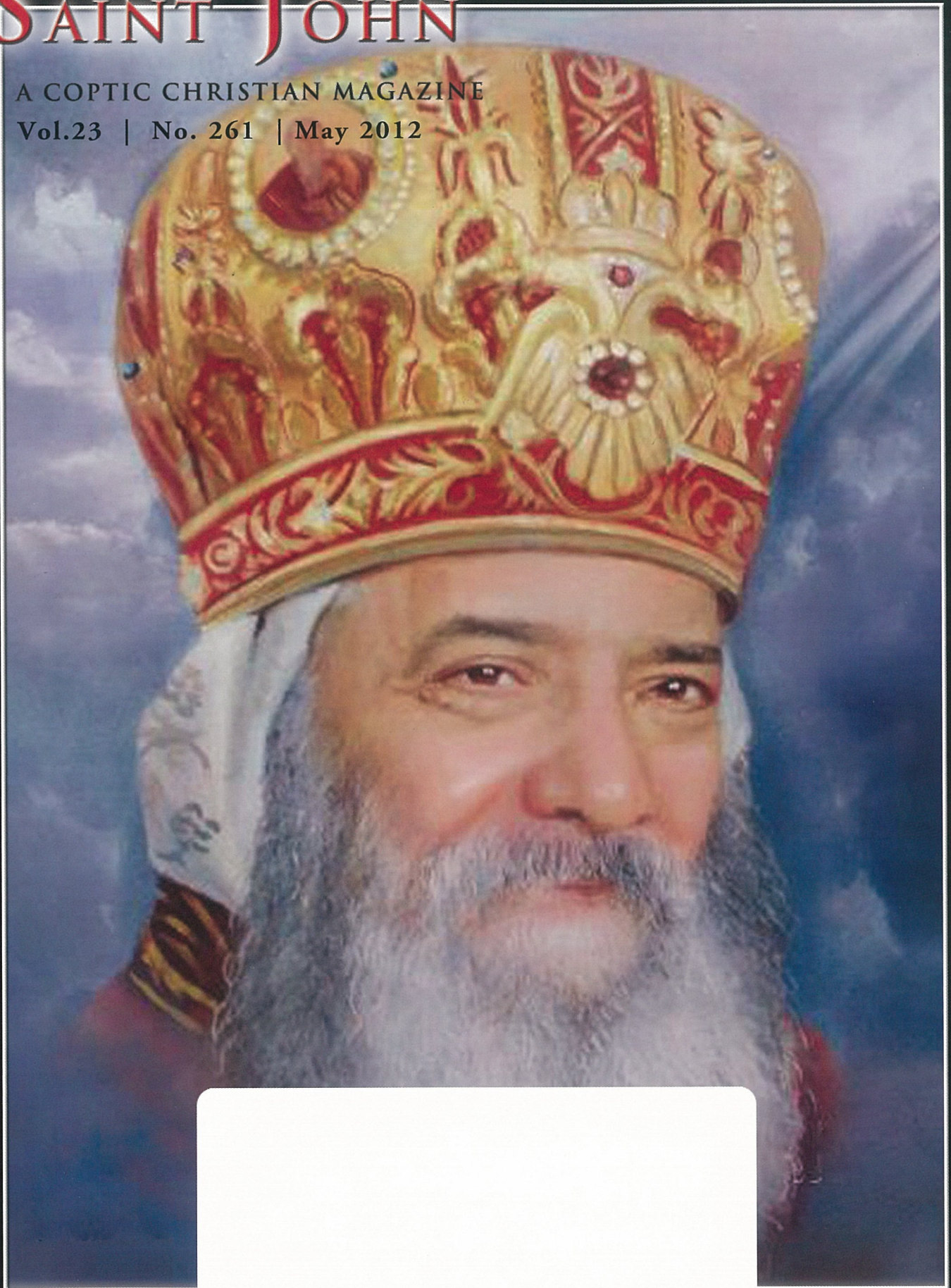


SAINT JOHN

A COPTIC CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

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Verse of the month:

*"If I deart, I will send
the Holy Spirit to you"
(John 16:7)*

SAINT JOHN

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The 117 Patriarch of Alexandria and 116th successor to the See of St. Mark the Evangelist and the Diocese of Southern California and Hawaii under

H.G. Bishop Serapion.

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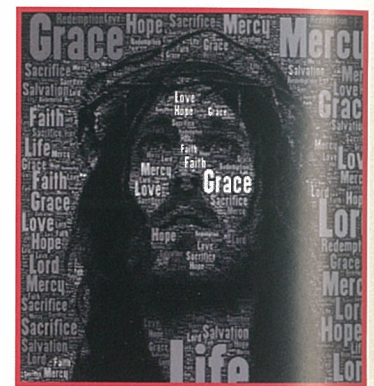
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May, 2012 Schedule:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
English Liturgy 8:00 - 11:00 AM	Liturgy 10:00 - 1:00 PM	Liturgy 10:00 - 1:00 PM	Liturgy 8:00 - 10:00 AM	+ Senior Citizen Club 11:00 - 4:00 PM	Liturgy 8:00-10:00 AM	Liturgy 8-10 AM Vespers & Bible Study 7:30-9:00 PM + Beginners' Deacons- Meeting 6:00 PM + Elementary Meeting 7:00 - 9:00 PM
Arabic Liturgy 8:00 - 11:15 AM				+ Family Meeting 8:00-9:30 PM	Arabic Youth Meeting 8:00 - 10:00 PM Followed by refreshments	College Youth Meeting 7:00 - 9:00 PM High School & J. High Meetings 7:00 - 9:00 PM
Servants' Meeting 12:00-1:00 PM						

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NEWS of May 2012



1) The Feast of St. George (May 1)

2) The Feast of St. Mark, the Evangelist and the Founder of Christianity in Egypt (May 8).

3) The Feast of Job's Departure, the hero of patience (May 10)

4) The Feast of St. Athanasius the Apostolic: On Tuesday, May 15, the church celebrates the Feast of St. Athanasius, the Defender of Faith, Author of the Christian Creed and the 20th Patriarch of Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, Egypt. Liturgy from 8:00 a.m.

5) The Feast of St. Demiana and the Forty Virgins who were martyred with her: (Sunday, May 20).

6) The Feast of Christ's Ascension:

The Church celebrates this Major Lord's feast on Thursday, May 24, as well as the feast of St. John the Evangelist. The Liturgy is from 8:00–10:00 a.m.



7) The Feast of Christ's Entry into Egypt:

On June 1st, the church celebrates this Lord's Minor Feast of the visit of the Holy Family to Egypt. The Liturgy is from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m.



8) The Feast of Pentecost (June 3):

On Sunday, June 3, the Church celebrates the Feast of Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. At 1:00 p.m. the Prayer of the *Sagda*, worship until 3:00 p.m.



9) H.H. Pope Shenouda III:

+ The Egyptian Post Office decided to make a stamp in memory of Pope Shenouda as a man who affected the history of the country.

+ The mother Church in Egypt celebrated the 40th Memorial Day of His Holiness Pope Shenouda at St. Mark Cathedral in Cairo, Egypt. Many dignitaries and Bishops spoke highly of him as a great saint, leader and patriotic man.

+ St. John church in Covina, California celebrated also this occasion with a Liturgy, a choir and obituary words.



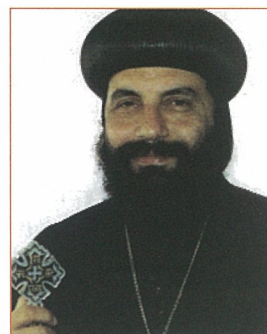
10) H.G. Bishop Serapion:

His Grace Bishop Serapion attended the 40th Day Memorial celebration for the departure of the Pope in Egypt and in St. Bishop Monastery as well as the meetings of the Holy Synod.



11) H.G. Bishop Tadros:

Bishop Tadros of Port-Said bless St. John Church on Wednesday, May 2 and talked about H.H. Pope Shenouda and his great influence on the revival of the church.



12) St. John's Annual Family Convention, Book Fair and Revival Meetings:

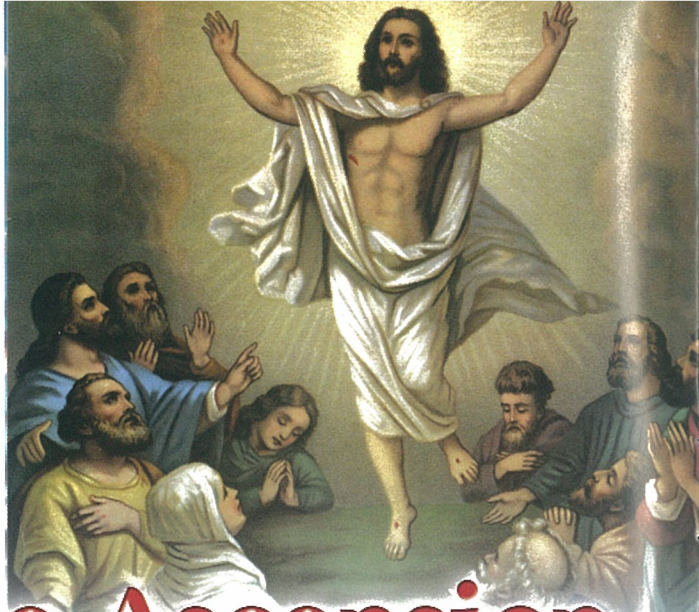
+ **The Family Convention:** On the Memorial- Day long week-end from Saturday, May 26 to Monday, 28 at Sheraton, Harbor and Marina in San Diego. The Guest speakers are H.G. Bishop Boulos of Africa and Dr. Magdy Isaac.

+ **The Annual Book Fair:** Starts from Wednesday, May 30 until Sunday, June 3rd, day and night.

+ The 4 day-Revival Meetings:

Dr. Magdy Isaac will talk every evening from 7:30 p.m. from Wednesday, May 30 to June 3, 2012.





Lessons from the Ascension



By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

On Thursday, (May 24), the Church celebrates the Feast of the Lord's Ascension. We need to know deeply its spiritual meanings to have more blessings.

The Lord Jesus spent forty days with His disciples after His resurrection, then He promised them that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon them (Acts 1:8). Then *"when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.'*" (Acts 1:9).

What do we learn from that?

1. Christ did not leave us in His Ascension:

Jesus was with His disciples at first by the flesh, then He ascended into heaven, but still, He did not leave them! He promised them to be *"with them always, even to the end of the age"* (Matt. 28:20). The Book of Revelation presents to us the image of Christ among the seven Churches (Rev.2:1). He is with the Church now by a higher level than the level of sight and senses. It is true that we do not see Him but we believe in His presence and *"faith is the evidence of things not seen"* (Heb.11:1). After maturity we can see and touch Him by the work of the Holy Spirit through faith.

2. The Glorified body of the Ascension:

The Lord Jesus ascended to heaven with a glorified body of which the laws of gravity have no control. This glorified

body could leave the tomb while it was shut, and could enter into the upper room and appear to the apostles while the doors were shut (Jn.20:19-26). The apostle Paul revealed to us a great mystery that the Lord *"will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body"* (Phil.3:21). He explained this fact in full detail in 1 Cor., the chapter of the resurrection, and said that, *"As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man"* (1Cor.15:49).

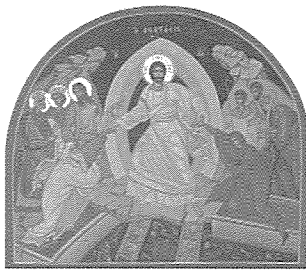
By the ascension of our Lord we have received the deposit of the glorified body, and the means of that will be through death. Therefore, we do not fear death because through it we will be qualified for the spiritual, eternal and glorified body. Who among us desires to stay in the dust without being transformed to glory?!

3. The end of word "Emptied Himself" :

In His great Ascension, the word, *"emptied Himself"* mentioned in Phil.2:7 was finished. He is now in His glory, all the insults and sufferings which He was exposed to in the world are ended. He ascended above the clouds and sat down at the right hand of the Father in Majesty and power (Heb.1:3).

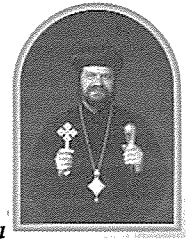
4. Ascension served as a "weaning" for the disciples:

Before the Ascension, the disciples were just bystanders. The Lord did everything alone. But after His Ascension and sending the Holy Spirit to them, they started to witness, teach and preach, heal and cast out demons and minister by themselves (Mark 16:15).



Paschal Message for the

Feast of Resurrection 2012



By H.G. Bishop Serapion

My Beloved, Blessed Children of the Holy Church

Christ is Risen.....Truly He is Risen

Today, we rejoice in the Resurrection of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. Indeed, today is the day which the Lord has made. The Resurrection of Christ is not just a historical event, but is a living event which we live and rejoice in it. The Resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of all of us, as St. Paul said, *"Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* (Eph. 2: 5-6)

+ We were dead because of trespasses, and we were under the sentence of death and the control of Satan, the evil enemy. But what does it mean that we were dead because of sins? St. Macarius the Great explains the meaning saying, "For the wicked one has defiled the entire person, soul and body, and dragged him down and subjected him to the old man, polluted, impure, and an enemy of God, *"not subject of God's law"* (Rom. 8:7). That is, man is under sin so that he no longer can see freely but sees evilly, hears evilly, and has swift feet to perpetrate evil acts (Ps. 58:3). His hands work evil and his heart meditates evil deeds."

+ Who can liberate man from this bitter bondage? St. Macarius said, "For just as the sun shines and the wind blows together, each having its own body and nature, yet no one can separate the wind from the sun unless God alone who can calm the wind so it blows no more, similarly sin is also mixed with the soul even though each has its own nature. It is, therefore, impossible to separate the soul from sin unless God should calm and turn back this evil wind, inhabiting both the soul and body."

+ The Lover of Mankind, our Lord Jesus Christ, through His incarnation, death on the cross, and resurrection liberated us from slavery to sin and ended the power of the evil enemy over us. He granted us a new life, since He is the One who said, *"Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin....Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."* (Jn. 8: 34, 36). Only our Lord Jesus Christ is capable of uprooting sin and evil living within us. St. Macarius said, "To uproot sin and the evil that is so imbedded in our sinning can be done only by divine power, for it is impossible and outside man's competence to uproot sin. To struggle, yes, to continue to fight, to inflict blows, and to receive setbacks is in your power. To uproot, however, belongs to God alone. If you could have done it on your own, what would have been the need for the coming of the Lord?"

+ Our resurrection with Christ means that we live the new

life, as St. Paul the Apostle said, *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."* (Col. 3: 1)

The new life in Christ means:

First: the death of the old man. St. Paul the Apostle said, *"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."* (Col. 3:5)

Second: that we put on the new man, *"that you put on the new man, which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."* (Eph. 4:24); that we put on the Lord Jesus, *"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts."* (Rom. 13:14); and that our life agrees with our calling, *"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering."* (Col. 3:12). St. Macarius said, "all who have put off the old and earthly man and from whom Jesus has removed the clothing of the kingdom of darkness have put on the new and heavenly man, Jesus Christ, so that once again the eyes are joined to the new eyes, ears to ears, head to head, to be completely pure and bearing the heavenly image." St. Paul the Apostle summarized for us the meaning of death and resurrection with Christ when he said, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."* (Gal. 2:20)

+ But what is our role, we, who have believed in Christ, were baptized, have received the new nature, and have become temples of the Holy Spirit? St. Macarius said, "Those who strive to live the Christian life with great zeal must above all else develop with greatest care their soul's faculty of understanding and discerning so that, having acquired an exact discernment between good and evil, always distinguishing those things with which nature has been unnaturally tainted, we may conduct ourselves properly and without offense. By using this faculty of discerning as an eye, we may avoid any depravity and binding union with evil. And thus we may receive the divine gift and become worthy of the Lord." Let us pray to our Risen Lord that He may grant us the gift of discernment to lead a life of holiness and righteousness, so that we may have a share to sit with Him in the heavenly places. Let us pray for the peace of the Holy Church.

Let us pray for the soul of our beloved father, H.H. Pope Shenouda III. May Our Lord repose His blessed soul with His saints and grant to appoint for us a good shepherd to shepherd us in purity and righteousness wishing you many happy returns.

- Bishop Serapion





The Pontificate of Pope Shenouda III

By Dr. Otto F. Meinardus

Professor in the American University in Cairo, Egypt and
Authority on the history of the Coptic Church

From his book 'Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity'

The unprecedented revival of the Coptic Church toward the second half of the twentieth century is one of the great historical events of world Christianity. Whereas in many parts of the world, historians recognize a certain stagnation of the Christian witness, the sons and daughters of the pharaohs are filled with an unheard-of enthusiasm for the establishment of the kingdom of God and for evangelization through their Coptic Church.

This spiritual renaissance had its beginnings half a century ago—in the forties and fifties—in the Coptic Sunday School movements in Cairo, Giza and Asyut. Inspired by the challenges they experienced in the Sunday School classes, young men consecrated their lives to God and joined the desert fathers. Especially in the monastery of the Syrians under the able leadership of Anba Tawfilus (Bishop Theophilus), they were prepared for the work of rejuvenating their church.

Following the enthronement of Pope Cyril VI in 1959, some of the former Sunday School teachers and monks and hermits were called to the episcopacy in order to occupy responsible positions in the life and organization of the church. Among these young men was Nazir Gayyid, later known as Abuna Antonius al-Suriani (1954-62), then Shenouda, Bishop for theological and educational institutions of the Coptic Church (1962-71), and now as Pope Shenouda III, the present pope and Patriarch. Both the pontificate of Pope Shenouda III and a dynamic, deeply spiritual, and capable episcopate have succeeded in providing an almost lifeless ecclesiastical institution with new visions and life, thereby retaining the much cherished and long established traditions of the church and filling them with a new sense of spirituality.

The spiritual and educational background of Pope Shenouda III has largely determined the direction of his present movements of the church. At the young age of sixteen he had joined the Sunday School at St. Antony's Church in Shubra. Later he became its teacher and drew thousands of young Egyptians to faith in Christ.

In more than one way, Nazir Gayyid became the leader of an altogether new youth ministry in the Coptic Church. In 1947 he received his B.A. in English and history from Cairo University. To this day, his speeches, sermons, and books reflect his impeccable use of the English language. At the theological college he completed the course of studies with academic brilliance, which led to his appointment as lecturer in the



Old and New Testaments. In 1953 he was appointed full-time lecturer at the monastic college in Helwan.

On July 19, 1954, he was made a monk by Bishop Tawfilus of the monastery of the Syrians and received the name Antony and offered the following pledge:

"I acknowledge that monasticism is a complete death to the world and all that is in it in the way of wealth and possessions, and in the way of relatives and friends, and in the way of appointments and occupations, and that it is a life of worship and dedication to God, a life of penitence and deprivation and perfect obedience and exclusion and poverty. And before God and his angels and his holy altar, and in the saintly presence of my father, the bishop, and the assembly of my fathers, the monks, members of this holy congregation, I dedicate my life to God, that I may live in virginity and continency and estrangement from the world, promising that I will follow the life of true monasticism and obey its canons, even as our saintly Fathers have set for us, who have followed this angelic manner of life...." A year later he was ordained priest. Throughout his life as priest, bishop, and patriarch, he has faithfully kept the monastic vows he made.

In the monastery he was placed in charge of the library. These duties enabled him to devote his studies to the reading of the church fathers and doctors. Meanwhile, though, his longing was for the solitary life. First he selected a cave three kilometers from the monastery, then he exchanged it for a cave at Bahr al-Farigh, some ten kilometers from the monastery! As early as 1948 he had written a poem entitled "The Hermit" which was published in 1954 in the Sunday school magazine:

Alone am I in the desert minding my own affairs, I have a cave in the crevasse of the hill where I have hidden.

And I will leave it one day, dwelling where I know not.

In 1959 Pope Cyril VI appointed him to be his personal secretary, but Abuna Antonius preferred the life of solitude. Then, in September 1962, Cyril VI summoned the hermit to the patriarchate in Cairo by a trick. While kneeling, the Patriarch placed his hands on the head of the hermit, thereby consecrating him bishop of theological and educational institutions of the Coptic Church.

The ordination took place in the patriarchate on September 30, 1962. In reply to my letter of congratulation, Bishop Shenouda wrote:

Grace and peace from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ be upon you. I thank you for your gentle words of congratulation sent to me. I can never forget your friendship and love. As a matter of fact,

however, a letter of consolation-not of congratulation - was fit for the occasion. How a monk may be congratulated on leaving the calmness of the wilder-ness and abiding again

amidst the disturbance of the city? How can anyone congratulate Mary if she leaves her place at the feet of Christ and goes to labor with Martha in the kitchen? For me, it is, indeed, a matter of shame. I remember that day of my consecration to the Episcopacy in tears and lamentation. Indeed, the glory of solitude and contemplation is above measure. It may not be compared with that of the Episcopacy or even that of the Papacy. The true consecration, my dear friend, is the consecration of the heart as a holy temple for the Lord, Who on the Last Day will not ask us for our pastoral grade but for our purity of heart. I write this letter from my beloved cave at Bahr al-Faregh in Wadi al-Natrun, in which I expect to stay tell Epiphany, and then return to Cairo...

Nevertheless, whenever possible the bishop retired to the monastery. His leadership in the field of Christian education was rewarded when he was elected president of the Association of Middle East Theological Colleges in 1969. An important aspect of his ministry was the innovation of his weekly sermons, in which he responded to theological and social questions. Thousand of young people attended these services. After lecturing and preaching for half of the week in Cairo and Alexandria, Bishop Shenouda would retire for the second half of the week to the monastery.

During these years one of the aims of the Coptic Church was to free itself from its century-old theological isolation. Bishop Shenouda represented his church at several ecumenical conferences. The last conference he attended as bishop for education was the First Pro- Oriente Consultation between the Oriental Orthodox and the Catholic Churches in Vienna in September 1971, just one month prior to his election as pope and patriarch of Alexandria. At this conference Bishop Shenouda espoused the Christological formula of Saint Cyril of Alexandria. This was the text that was later officially accepted by Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III:

We all believe that Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Word. We believe that He was perfect in His Divinity; and perfect in his Humanity and that His Divinity never departed from his Humanity not even for a single moment. His Humanity is one with His Divinity without commixture, without confusion, without division, without separation.

Following the death of Pope Kirellos 6, on March 9, 1971, the Holy Synod decided on March 22 to prepare the election of a successor. On October 29, 1971 and official election reduced the five candidates to three. Then on October 31, young blindfolded child Ayman Munir Kamil chose one of the pieces of paper with the names of the candidates and gave it to the Metropolitan Antonius. He declared God's chosen shepherd for the Coptic Church: "Bishop Shenouda!" Two weeks later, on November 14, 1971 the bishop was enthroned as His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of Alexandria.

As Pope he continued lecturing at the theological college



and the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies. An additional eight branches of the theological college were established in Lower and Upper Egypt, and three more were founded in the United States and Australia.

As a scholar, Pope Shenouda III encouraged the various fields of Coptic studies, including the publication of the monumental Coptic Encyclopedia. In April 1988 he signed a contract with al-Ahram news agency to have the archives of the Coptic patriarchate put on microfilm.

As head of the church he has consecrated more than eighty bishops (now 116) and over five hundred priests for the Coptic churches in Egypt and the Diaspora. Through periodic seminars with members of the clergy, he has encouraged the pastoral, spiritual, and educational life of both bishops and priests. His special attention to young people has led to the establishment of a very dynamic youth ministry under Bishop Moussa. Because of the unprecedented increase of churches, especially in the Diaspora, Pope Shehouda has consecrated large quantities of the holy Myron, or sacramental oil (seven times)!

Because of his deep commitment to Christian unity. His emphasis has always been that Christian unity; should be founded on unity of faith rather than on jurisdiction. To this end he initiated the theological dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Swedish Lutheran, and Reformed Churches.

In May 1973 Pope Shenouda III was invited by Pope Paul VI to visit Rome, which was the first meeting between an Alexandrian and a Roman pontiff since 451. At this occasion they signed the confession of their common Christological faith. In 1979, 1987, and 1995 Pope Shenouda III met with the archbishop of Canterbury to discuss their mutual understanding on the basis of the Scriptures. In November 1988 Pope Shenouda initiated the Coptic-Presbyterian theological dialogue, which could pave the way for reconciling some of the theological problems between the Orthodox and the Protestants in the Middle East. Regarding relations with the other Orthodox churches, Pope Shenouda III visited the Orthodox patriarchates in Damascus, Istanbul, Moscow, Bucharest, and Sofia. As head of the largest church in the Middle East and the oldest church in Africa, he has given particular attention to his church's involvement in the Middle East Council of Churches and the All-African Council of Churches.

In February 1991 he led a delegation of eleven Copts to the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra, Australia. At the conclusion of the assembly he was elected one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches. In November 1994, at the assembly in Cyprus, he was elected one of the four presidents of the Middle East Council of Churches. Although he has spent much time and effort serving world Christianity, in his heart Pope Shenouda remained a monk. At Saint Bishoy monastery, he spent half of

each week in contemplation.

In 1971 there were only seven Coptic churches in the Diaspora. Today there are almost one hundred and fifty churches in the United States and Canada, about twenty-six churches in Australia, and over thirty churches in Europe. Twenty five Coptic bishops serve overseas.

In 1994 the nineteen parishes of the Orthodox Church of the British Isles were received into full communion with the Coptic Orthodox Church. On Pentecost 1994 Anba Seraphim was consecrated metropolitan of Glastonbury. Following Eritrea's gaining political independence from Ethiopia, the president of Eritrea, Isayas Afewerki, requested from Pope Shenouda III the establishment of an independent Eritrean Orthodox Church under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the See of Alexandria. At the meeting of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Church on September 28, 1993, it was decided to accept the request of the Eritrean Christians. On Pentecost 1994 Pope Shenouda III consecrated five Eritrean bishops, thus laying the foundation for an independent Holy Synod of the Eritrean Orthodox Church. On May 7, 1998, the Pope consecrated the 93-year old Bishop Philippus as first Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Eritrea. More than fifty Coptic bishops and seven Eritrean bishops participated in the ceremony in St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo.

Meanwhile, due to several misunderstandings and (false) accusations against Pope Shenouda made by President Anwar al-Sadat, especially in his speech before Parliament on May 14, 1980, the political climate between the Coptic Church and the Egyptian state had seriously deteriorated. This tragic situation culminated in the presidential decree of September 3, 1981, in which Sadat ordered the exile of Pope Shenouda III to the Monastery of Saint Bishoy, while at the same time imprisoning eight bishops and twenty-four priests, as well as numerous Coptic notables. Sadat then created an administrative committee of five bishops for the Coptic Church. The Coptic Church, although President Sadat continued to refer to him as the 'ex-pope, kept recognizing him as the only Pope, until Sadat was assassinated on October 6, 1981 (after one month)!

During his enforced exile in Saint Bishoy's Monastery, Amnesty International officially named him a 'Prisoner of Conscience' on August 26, 1983.

On January 2, 1985, President Mubarak revoked President Sadat's decree of 1981. Accompanied by fourteen bishops, Pope Shenouda left his exile on January 4. The following day he celebrated Coptic Christmas at Saint Mark's Cathedral, where over ten thousand people welcomed him as the Pope.

Pope Shenouda has repeatedly refused to be identified as the leader of a Christian minority. "As Copts," he has emphasized, "we are Egyptians, part of Egypt."



Moving From Tent to Home



by Outreach of Hope

No matter how much we treasure it, our earthly body is a very temporary thing. As a reminder of this truth, the Bible uses the image of a tent to describe our body. It's not a particularly flattering image. Tents leave a lot to be desired. They leak. They tear. They wear out. Eventually they are cast aside.

The whole image could be discouraging to us, but that's not how the Bible intends it. The apostle Paul actually found hope in the idea that his body was merely a tent. In 2 Corinthians 5:1 he writes, "We know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands."

What a promise! In the midst of fear, doubt, and worry that so often accompany the failure of our earthly tent, we can find comfort and rest in God's promise of an eternal, heavenly dwelling. In the following poem, Roselyn Aronson describes the pain and the promise of being tent dwellers. We hope it will be an encouragement to you.

O Mr. Tentmaker

It was nice living in this tent when it was strong and secure and the sun was shining and the air was warm. But Mr. Tentmaker, it's scary now.

You see, my tent is acting like it is not going to hold together; the poles seem weak and they shift with the wind. A couple of stakes have wiggled loose from the sand; and worst of all, the canvas has a rip. It no longer protects me from beating rain or stinging fly. It's scary in here, Mr. Tentmaker.

Last week I went to the repair shop and some repairman tried to patch the rip in my canvas. It didn't help much, though, because the patch pulled away from the edges and now the tear is worse. What troubled me most, Mr. Tentmaker, is that the repairman didn't even seem to notice that I was still in the tent; he just worked on the canvas while I shivered inside. I cried out once, but no one heard me.

I guess my first real question is: Why did you give me such a flimsy tent? I can see by looking around the campground that some of the tents are much stronger and more stable than mine. Why, Mr. Tentmaker, did you pick a tent of such poor quality for me? And even more important, what do you intend to do about it?

O little tent dweller, as the Creator and Provider of tents, I know all about you and your tent, and I love you both. I made a tent for Myself once, and lived in it on your campground. My tent was vulnerable, too, and some vicious attackers ripped it to pieces while I was still in it. It was a terrible experience, but you will be glad to know they couldn't hurt me; in fact, the whole occurrence was a tremendous advantage because it is this very victory over my enemy that frees me to be a present help to you.

O little tent dweller, I am now prepared to come and live in your tent with you, if you'll invite me. You'll learn as we dwell together that real security comes from my being in your tent with you. When the storms come, you can huddle in my arms and I'll hold you. When the canvas rips, we'll go to the repair shop together.

Some day, little tent dweller, some day your tent is going to collapse; you see, I've designed it only for temporary use. But when it does, you and I are going to leave together. I promise not to leave before you do. And then, free of all that would hinder or restrict, we will move to our permanent home and together, forever, we will rejoice and be glad.





A Shepherd without His Flock

By Dena Seif-Beshai

Like everywhere else, the sun rises and sets on the desert stretch of Wadi el-Natroun, Egypt. But to those who call Wadi el-Natroun home – desert villagers, merchants, and the hundreds of monks who inhabit the holy desert – the heat of the sun will one day disappear as one of many fleeting earthly struggles, when they eventually reach the heavenly kingdom. Wadi-el-Natroun is a docile span of wilderness, reachable by driving the Cairo-Alexandria road 62 miles northwest of Cairo. Wadi-el-Natroun, is known for its historical and spiritual heritage. It's history began when Joseph the Carpenter, Virgin Mary, and baby Jesus traveled by donkey as they fled into Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod.

St. Anthony – who is regarded as the father of all monasticism – established the first Christian monastery in the world in Egypt near the Red Sea around 300 A.D., but Wadi-el-Natroun (also known as the wilderness of Scetis) is where the monasteries flourished shortly thereafter. Today, Wadi-el-Natroun is home to four monasteries, among the holiest and most antiquated, thriving monasteries in Egypt: Baramous Monastery (“Monastery of the two Romans,” Saints Maximus and Dometius), Sourian (or Syrian) Monastery, the Monastery of St. Macarius and the Monastery of St. Bishoy.

Wadi el-Natroun not only claims the dense population of monasteries, but it also claims ownership to the highest-security prison in Egypt. The coexistence of the monasteries and the prison in the desert present a paradox. Wadi-el-Natroun has become a place where the best and the worst of humanity reside. It wasn't too long ago that the merging of these elements occurred.

In 1981, the prison of Wadi-el-Natroun became the place where seven bishops, twenty-four priests and one hundred-five laymen of the Coptic Orthodox Church were imprisoned, under the decree of the late President Anwar el-Sadat. Not too far away, their Pope, His Holiness, the late Pope Shenouda, III, would be exiled to his papal residence at the Monastery of St. Bishoy in a crackdown that would prove to be Sadat's demise.

The crackdown was the climax of what had been ten years of tension between President Sadat and Pope Shenouda III. Sadat's declaration came in what journalists described as a rambling speech that the President had delivered during the late hours of September 5, 1981. Egypt's Parliament, had convened to sit as an audience to three hours of Sadat's presidential display of tyranny. Not only had he announced the arrests of close to 150 prominent figures of the Coptic Church, he had also declared the detainment of some 650 others, who included Islamic religious leaders, leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, intellectuals, journalists and professors, whom Sadat accused of creating religious and political discord. In detaining everyone he classified as “opposition”, Sadat outraged his country, including the Copts, who had already faced hundreds of years of oppression.

The Coptic Church has endured a long history of persecution since St. Mark first established it in 64 A.D. The Bible and church tradition teach that after Pentecost, the disciples went to spread the gospel to all nations. The book of Acts in the Bible tells that St. Mark came to Alexandria to preach the word to the then pagan Copts, the native people of Egypt. There he established the Church, where it has since remained resilient despite persecutions by Barbarians, Romans, and Arabs. St. Mark himself was martyred in Alexandria. Martyrs that defended the faith are commemorated in the Church's liturgical services, in its hymns and Synaxarium (a collection of saint stories that are read to commemorate a saint that lived/died for the faith each day of the Coptic year). Even elements in the church building remind the faithful of their bloody past: The red carpet found covering the floors of Coptic churches symbolizes the blood of martyrs which preserved the faith throughout generations.

This contemporary version of the Copts' struggle was largely a result of President Sadat's contentions with Pope Shenouda. Pope Shenouda was accused by Sadat of crossing the line dividing church and state and interfering in politics. In 1977, the Pope called on Copts to undergo a three-day fast to oppose instituting Islamic Sharia Law as the law of the land.



This infuriated Sadat.

His Holiness often expressed concerns that the government did not do enough to protect Copts from violent attacks by Muslim fanatics. After a series of church burnings, attacks on clergymen, kidnappings and forced conversions of Christian women to Islam in the late 1970s, and in 1980, Pope Shenouda canceled all Easter celebrations except liturgical services. Sadat's and Pope Shenouda's strained relationship reached another level at a time when the western world celebrated Sadat, and the Arab world simultaneously shunned him for signing the Camp David Accords. While Sadat signed the peace agreement, alienating himself from the rest of the Arab world, Pope Shenouda took the stance that Copts would not visit Jerusalem except with their Muslim/ Arab brothers. While Sadat aligned himself with Israel and the U. S., he slapped the face of the Arab world in a blatant betrayal of the Palestinian cause and pan-Arabism. The betrayal gave birth to opposition groups. Sadat, who was a bald man of average height, was much more menacing than he looked. But he understood the threat these groups presented to his regime, and on the night of September 5th, 1981, he set out to eliminate his opposition.

As with many leaders under pressure, Sadat showed signs of paranoia. His speech provoked both the Christians and the Muslims, but many of his sentiments targeted the head of the Church: "Shenouda erred because he wanted to make himself a political leader," Sadat said. "He [the Pope] had his own aims and felt the Copts were being persecuted." Sadat had no shame, but as much as he wanted to, he couldn't fire the Pope. The Pope was elected by the Coptic Church for life. Even if the Pope wanted to retire or resign, he was unable. This, according to the Church, was an ordination that was bound by the Holy Spirit, and could not be broken. So, Sadat banished the Pope to St. Bishoy's Monastery and appointed a committee of five bishops to steer the Church.

At St. Bishoy's Monastery, the papal residence was the epitome of peacefulness. Outside the residence, military tanks and countless soldiers stood guard to ensure that nobody went in or out. But under house arrest, Pope Shenouda had very few visitors, and found himself spending much of his time writing books under a fruit tree in his garden. The Pope was prolific, and was noted as the most published Coptic pope to date. He wrote practical, spiritual books that were published for the church's benefit. During his time in exile, he wrote more books collectively than at any other period in his life. In addition to his books, the Pope wrote candid personal letters during his exile. Such letters often encouraged others through this tough time, and surely must have provided comfort for the Pope as he wrote them. In one letter to one of his spiritual children, Maher Hanna, now known as Father Augustinos Hanna, Pope Shenouda wrote about God's purpose for suffering:

To my blessed son Maher,

Peace to you and your family. May God keep you all in His way. So many times I've questioned our father and teacher, King David when he says in Psalm 70, 'Make haste to me O God; You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord do not delay.'

Surely God never rushes things nor slows things down, but rather, God's timing is always perfect because He knows the unknown. When we say, 'hurry,' we don't literally mean hurry, but what we are truly asking for is for God to treat our anxiety. That is why God tells us in the daily prayer of the third hour, 'My peace I give to you; do not be troubled in your heart.'

In every situation, we should look for the joy in it, and when we find it, our hearts will only be filled with joy and peace for us and others.

God be with you,

H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Sadat was assassinated one month later by radical Islamists angered the peace treaty with Israel. His Holiness didn't return from exile until Sadat's successor, Hosni Mubarak, released Pope Shenouda from exile on January 2, 1985 – Three years and three months after Sadat's assassination. The Pope returned to Cairo to celebrate the Coptic Christmas Liturgy at St. Mark's Cathedral to a cheering crowd of thousands. It was a very moving reunion that marked a turning point for the Church. His first sermon after his release was about love. Ever since, the Pope has been received with cheers and applause as a testament to the suffering he endured for his people.

In retrospect, the Pope and the rest of the clergy involved in Sadat's crackdown see the experience not as an agonizing duration of cruel imprisonment – but rather, a time of blessing. "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Phil. 1:29) Despite the horrible conditions, the Pope and many others suffered for Christ – just like those who preceded them. Like His Holiness said in this letter, "In every situation, we should look for the joy in it, and when we find it, our hearts will only be filled with joy and peace." His Holiness surely saw the joy in it, to the point that he described that period to one of the Journalists, when he was asked about his feelings during this time of house arrest, he said, "I was so happy, because I love the monastery and the life of solitude, reading, writing, praying, meditating, teaching the monks... It was as if I was imprisoned in the Paradise!"

For countless others, the Church's prevailing struggle to remain bold and carry the cross is the only way for it to survive throughout the ages, as it survived the crisis of the early eighties under the spiritual leadership of Pope Shenouda III.





EXPERIENCES IN LIFE

(1)

By H. H. POPE SHENOUDA III

[1] The Appropriate Time

If you want your words to have their full effect, choose the appropriate time to say them. Put before you the words of the wise man, Solomon, who said: **"An apple of gold in a setting of silver is a word spoken at the right time."** (Proverbs 25:11)

If there is a matter which you are concerned about, do not speak about it to anyone who is busy or tired, or is not in the mood to talk. Do not speak to anyone about it either if he is annoyed or sad about something,

Speak when the ear is ready to listen to your words, and more preferable when it is eager to listen to you.

An exception to this is a word of reprimand, like that spoken by John the Baptist to Herod. The important thing to keep before you is that you say **your word when it finds an ear ready to listen.**

[2] Silence

Sometimes silence is more effective than words and more beneficial and useful, or at the very least it may be less harmful than to speak... In silence there may be wisdom and strength, there may be nobility and dignity.

Sometimes we keep silent in order that God should speak, for the word of God is more powerful than any-

thing we might want to say...How beautiful are the words of the Bible, *"The Lord will fight for you, you have only to be silent and still"* (Exod. 14:14)

Our Lord Jesus Christ remained silent before Pilate. He did not open His mouth or defend Himself. During His silence Pilate said, *"I find no reason to condemn this righteous man"*.

Silence can be profitable sometimes, but it is not a fixed rule.

The golden rule is this that the person should speak when it is right to speak and keep silent when it is right to keep silent.

When he is silent then let his heart speak with God and ask Him to speak on his behalf.

[3] My Eyes and My Ears

They would come to me saying, "Such and such a job has been completely finished and done thoroughly". As I thanked them I would smile at them and say jokingly, **"I am used to believing my eyes more than my ears!"**

Then I would go and see how it was by my-self.

[4] A Shattered Mirror

He was a person I had known for some-time, and all his life he had been frank and truthful. It was not his nature to praise or flatter anyone when it was not due.



He came to meet me and I asked how he was, and he said to me: "My fault is that I am a mirror which offers to everyone who faces it, a true picture of himself, and people, very sadly, do not like to see their real face..."

They wanted me to be not a mirror, but make-up, to make them look better.

Since I am not like that, they have shattered me. Because I spoke truthfully and frankly to them, they ruined my name describing me in the worst possible ways. So here I am now: I have become a shattered mirror."

[5] Sunset

I used to be in the habit of taking a walk in the desert at sunset. Whenever I saw the sun on the horizon going down to set, I would say to myself at the time of the sunset:

"It is not the sun which has hidden its face from the earth, but the earth which has turned its back on the sun".

[6] It has a Will

A huge chunk of wood cannot resist the flood, but is swept along by it wherever it goes. But a small fish **can** resist the current and is able to go where it wants to go.

[7] Every Goliath has a David

Do not be afraid at the spread or apparent victory of something that is false or untrue...

Such things will inevitably be defeated if made to stand before the Truth, however long it takes. Every Goliath has a David waiting to conquer him in the name of the Lord of Hosts...

[8] A common Error in Announcements of Condolences

Many people when they are speaking about a loved one of theirs, who has departed this life, refer to him as 'the lost one'. They say for example: "we announce the death of our dear 'lost' so and so!!"

Yet those who have left our world are neither lost, nor dead, because they are alive in heaven. They have only moved from one world to another.

It is better to use the expression 'dear departed' than the 'lost' one.

Some also say, "Mr. or Mrs. so and so has moved on to heavenly glories", but this is also a mistake from the

theological point of view, because the heavenly glories do not come until after the resurrection and the second coming of Christ in the Last Day. (Matt. 25:31-46)

A better expression for us to use instead of saying he has gone to 'heavenly glories', is that he has gone to the 'land of the living' or to 'Paradise' or to the 'Congregation of Saints'. Or we could say, "He has passed from our vain world to the eternal world"...

[10] The Wisdom of Abigail

When we have to give some people reproof or direction, we need to have that spirit of wisdom in which Abigail spoke to David...

She combined indirect reproach with appreciation, respect and obvious praise, which opened his heart to her. (1 Sam. 25:18-33).

She said all that she wanted to say but in a very humble manner without hurting David's feelings. Therefore she really deserved it when David said to her, "May you be blessed for your good judgment."

[11] All the Sins

It was in June 1959 when a man from the countryside came to me on a Communion day in order to confess, and he said to me, "To put it short, I have committed all the sins in the world!"

I realized that he did not want to say anything specific and so I asked him.

- "Have you killed anyone?" He answered,

- "No".

- "Have you been unkind to a poor widow?" — And he replied, "No".

- "Have you stolen the National Bank?"

- And he again replied, "No".

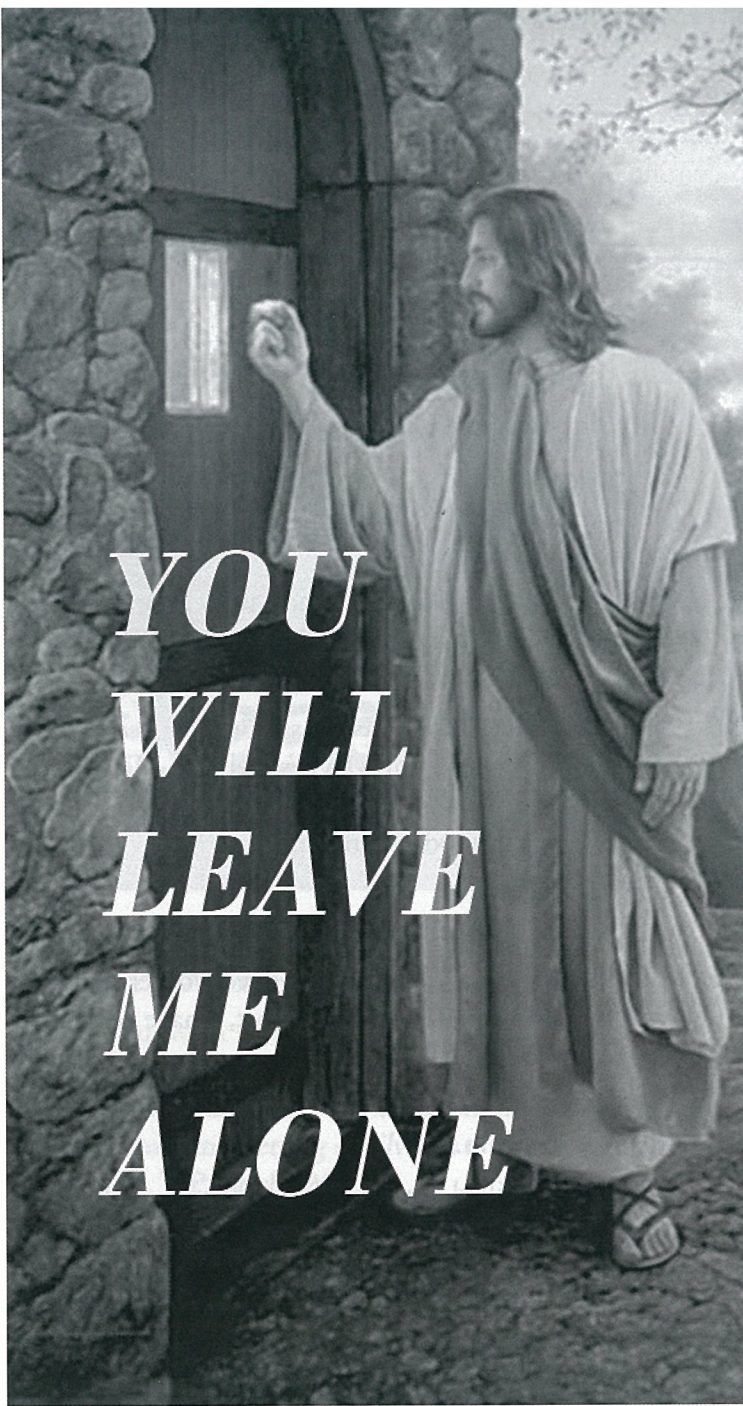
So at that point I said to him: "why then, my son, do you condemn yourself unfairly by saying that you have committed all the sins in the world?"! Tell me exactly what have you done?"

[12] The Devil said to God

The Devil said to God: Leave me the strong, I can cope with them (Prov. 7:26)

But as for the weak, since they are conscious of their weakness, they will ask for your strength and will fight me with it and I shall be defeated before them.





"Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone."

(JOHN 16:32)

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

(Translated by Mary Hanna Sarkis)

Christ Stood Alone.

He, the loving and compassionate One, "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). He moved from one village to another and from one city to the other, "preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people" (Matt. 4:23). However, he passed a life

full of suffering. He was left alone by all in His kindness He left none. Thus He was alone in His troubles and pains and faced oppression and persecution. No one defended Him or supported Him.. He had trodden the winepress alone (Is. 63:3).

In the Garden in Gethsemane He prayed and spoke to the Father earnestly "*And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground*" (Luke 22:44). He cried out in agony, "*Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me*" (Luke 22:42). But, His disciples, who were His friends and beloved ones left Him alone and slept. Three times did He return to them and ask them to watch but they could not watch one hour with Him (Matt. 26:38-45). When He was arrested, His disciples were scattered, each to his own and left Him alone as He had said before (John 16:32). And when He was questioned, no one defended Him though He defended the most evil sinners. In His passion, no one came to comfort Him. It is indeed a lesson we take from the Lord when we find ourselves persecuted by others and forsaken by all, even by our disciples, and we find ourselves standing alone. Not only in His passions was He left alone but throughout His life also. Once He was in the temple talking to the Jews about giving them His flesh and blood but many of His disciples could not understand this; so, as St. John says, "*From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also want to go away?'*" (John 6:66-67).

Another time, He invited some people, but one of them asked to be excused because he bought a piece of land and wanted to go see it. Another asked to be excused because he had bought some oxen and was going to test them. And the third was too busy because he had married. The three made excuses though the invitation was for their own good! (Luke 14:18-20) The time would fail me, dear reader, to tell you about the Lord Jesus Christ who stood alone. "*He came to His own and His own did not receive Him*" (John. 1:11). He was the light that "*had come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light*" (John. 3:19).

All this took place in the past and still takes place now. The same old picture: the Lord Jesus Christ is standing alone, while the world is involved in its pleasures, its delights and its trivial pursuits. No one cares for the Lord Christ, not even one. No one sits at His feet as Mary the sister of Martha did, or leans on His bosom like John the beloved, or washes His feet like the woman who was a sinner. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself feels this loneliness and knows that the majority are away from Him. He even wonders saying, "*When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?*" (Luke 1 8:8). What about you, do you also leave the Lord Jesus alone? Is there anything taking you from Him? Ask yourself.

He Was Alone in His Thoughts: Few only thought of Christ. Even those who thought of Him, talked with Him and



listened to Him, those also had their own way of thinking, which opposed that of the Good Teacher. When the Lord went to a Samaritan village and they did not receive Him in that sinful city, the two disciples that were with Him (James and John) said to Him, “*Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?*” But He rebuked them and said, “*You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them*” (Luke 9:52-56).

Those two disciples were thinking in a way which was very different from that of their Good Teacher because He knew that He had many chosen in that city. This feeling of enmity towards the Samaritans was implanted within the disciples from their contemporaries the Pharisees, the Scribes and others. But the Lord Jesus was unique in His way of thinking. He loved the Samaritans, pitied them and wanted to attract them to Himself. So, He told the story of the good Samaritan, and walked a long distance to restore the Samaritan woman who was a sinner. He talked to the people of that city also. The Lord had His own way of thinking concerning the gentiles as well. Those were despised by the Jews but the Lord Jesus Christ praised the Roman centurion openly saying, “*Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!*” (Matt. 8:10). He praised also the faith of the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:28). In dealing with others, the Lord often had His own way while all others had a different way. When the Jews gathered with one thought around a woman caught in the very act of adultery, wishing to stone her, Christ’s thinking was different. He said to them, “*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first*” (John 8:7). So, all of them withdrew and He said to the woman, “*Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.*”

The Lord Was Alone in His Loving Heart, while the cruel world, which cared only for appearances, was amazed at Him. This is quite evident from the following two events: The two blind men and the children. Once, the Lord was leaving Jericho, when two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out saying, “*Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David*”. Here, the multitude with their worldly thoughts feared that their cries would disturb the Lord, so they warned the blind men that they should be quiet. But the Lord Jesus called them and opened their eyes (Matt. 20:29-34). He does not get annoyed with the cries of people or their requests as others do.

The same happened when one day the children surrounded Him. The disciples rebuked them thinking that He might be annoyed. But He said, “*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for to such is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 19:14).

He Stood Alone in His Understanding of Ministry:

While everyone thought that the Lord came to rule over Israel as a sovereign king who would deliver the Jews from the persecution of the Romans, the Lord Himself was thinking of a spiritual kingdom by which He would rule over the hearts of the people.. He told them, “*My Kingdom is not of this world*” (John 18:36).

Thus, He understood ministry to be a cross carried by the one who ministers, along a land wet with sweat and tears... But such thoughts were not grasped even by His disciples. So, we find that when He began to show His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem, to be delivered to the hands of the people and be killed and buried, Peter the Apostle took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying “*Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!*” But the Lord turned and said to Peter, “*Get behind Me, Satan!*” (Matt. 16:22-23). I wonder how the world would have been saved, had the Lord followed the advice of the poor Peter! On another occasion, while the Lord was getting ready for the cross, the disciples were discussing among themselves who would be first! Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking Him that the two sons might sit, one on His right hand and the other on the left in His Kingdom! But the Lord trying to explain to them the true concept of ministry, said, “*You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*” (Matt. 20:20-22).

The Lord was unique in His understanding of true service. When He received the multitudes and spoke to them the words of grace for long hours, the disciples came to Him, when the day began to wear away, saying, “*Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food*” (Luke 9:12, Matt 14:16). The disciples were not yet mature in their way of thinking. It seems that they thought that ministry was mere sermons given to people, not love shown through works! So, the Lord replied, “*They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat*”.

He Served Alone.

The world is crowded with those who serve it, even those who rival each other. Every entrepreneur finds many to join him and partner with him, while the Lord stands alone. He said twenty centuries ago and still says “*The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest*” (Matt. 9:37-38). No one assists the Lord in His work, everyone says, “*Am I my brothers’ keeper?*” (Gen. 4:9).

Here are some cases I have seen myself:

- A family consisting of a poor woman and her husband and eight children: The income of the family was pennies which the husband earned from selling lemons or something like that, which covered only the cost of some bread, which



did not satisfy the hunger of the children. They often had nothing to eat and the mother took some of them to a charity to beg for food for them. I need not tell you also about their clothes which covered only parts of their bodies. God only knows how they could bear the cold of the winter and the heat of the summer! Add to this the rent of the room where they lived, which they were often unable to pay and thus had to face threats of eviction from the landlord.

- Another woman, a widow and her children, worked as a seamstress for a religious institution. She fell ill for two months — perhaps due to malnutrition and as a result the institution dismissed her. I do not know how she found medical treatment or how she got the cost of the medicine, but when she became well she found herself alone surrounded only by darkness.

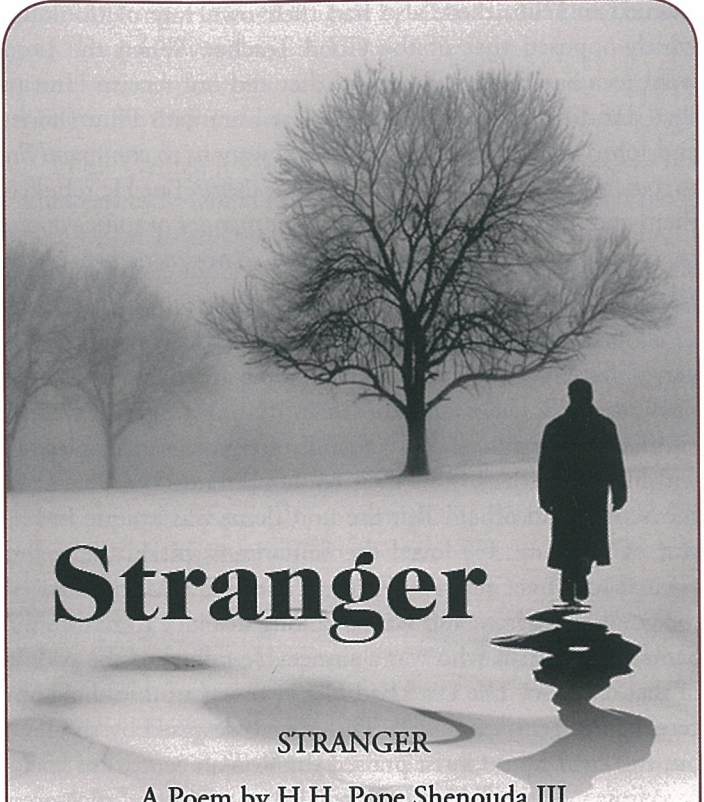
- A third example... a young widow with two children lived in a humble damp room in a basement, for which she paid cheap rent. They were at risk of getting tuberculosis or some other disease. Moreover, she was tempted to abandon her faith, and to live a sinful lifestyle. How else would she make a living? Would she work as a maid? She was weak and could not find anyone to employ her.

There are many similar instances but the Lord Jesus Christ stands alone, taking care of all, giving them food, relieving them of their pain, comforting them and teaching them patience and long-suffering. He wants some of us to share with Him the honor of such a service though we are sinners. However, He finds the harvest truly plentiful and the laborers few. He finds all of us scattered, each to his own, **leaving Him alone.**

Who Suffers The Loss Of Leaving Him Alone?

Not the Lord Jesus of course, because He is not alone but the Father is with Him. "You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me." (Jn 16:32) Besides, He is not in need of our service but we are in need of His Lordship. When He calls us to stand beside Him in His loneliness, He seeks our good because *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* (Rom. 8:31). Certainly, he who walks with Christ will find spiritual pleasure. Therefore it is said, *"I sat down in his shade with great delight"* (Song 2:3). With the Lord one fears no evil, as the psalmist says, *"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."* (Ps. 23:4) Also, *"Though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident"* (Ps. 27:3). Behold, Christ is still standing at the door and knocking, waiting for you to open that He may come in to you and dine with you and you with Him (Rev. 3:20).

Do you still insist on leaving Him alone?



Stranger

STRANGER

A Poem by H.H. Pope Shenouda III
(Translated by Mary Hanna Serkis)

I lived my life as a stranger a guest like my fathers
A stranger in my ways, thoughts, and desires
People wonder about me but never understand me
People live in amusement, disorder and turmoil
And I stay here alone, with a quiet heart, tranquil
A stranger who couldn't find a corner or a home to accommodate me I left the charms of the world
and I didn't enjoy what it offers
And I took off travelling far, far away
from its attractions Empty-hearted,
not chasing after any of its aspirations
With clear ears not listening to the noise of its people
With my harp and my flute and hymns that I sing
And holy hours I spent in solitude with my Creator
I say to every demon, who now wants to tempt me
Stay away because I live a stranger like my fathers





Pope Shenouda, the Greatest Reformer



By Fr. Augustinos R. Hanna

H.H. Pope Shenouda III, the 116 successor of St. Mark the Evangelist and the head of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, was given so many titles, more than any other Pope or Patriarch in history, whether in the Coptic Orthodox Church or in any other church in the world. The most famous and great Patriarchs, were granted one or two titles. For instance, St. Athanasius was given the title of "The Apostolic", or the "The Defender of the Faith". St. Cyril the Great was granted the title of "The Pillar of Faith"; and St. John Chrysostom was given the title of "The Golden Mouthed."

But H.H. Pope Shenouda III, was given more than twenty (20) titles! In this brief article, I will focus on some of these titles with mentioning some explanations and some numbers and achievements.

Pope Shenouda III spent 31 years in his worldly service as a teacher of English, Arabic languages and history.

He spent few years as an Army officer in the Egyptian military service.

His Holiness spent 58 Years in monasticism, even during his Papacy.

He spent 9 years as a Bishop of Christian education and Theological School.

The years of his Papacy were forty years and half.

The number of years he taught in the seminary was about 60 years.

His trips around the world were 15.

Pope Shenouda III ordained 116 Bishops.

He ordained about one thousand 1,000 priests, and thousands of monks and deacons.

He established more than 300 churches outside Egypt, in America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia.

Pope Shenouda instituted 12 seminaries, inside and outside Egypt, and he taught in many of them personally, and more than 4000 students were graduated from them.

He was the chief editor of two Coptic Christian

Magazines, Sunday School and Keraza Magazines.

Pope Shenouda had a weekly meeting attended by 7000 to 10,000 people and continued from 1962 until one week before his departure to heaven on March 17, 2012.

This great Pope wrote 130 books in all the branches of religion and human knowledge, and his books were translated from Arabic to five languages, which are English, French, Italian, German and Dutch).

He has more than 6,000 sermons recorded on CD's, DVD's and cassettes.

Pope Shenouda III was a multi-talented person, a great theologian, teacher and preacher, poet, journalist, a philosopher, leader, administrator, eloquent speaker, a shepherd, author and a High Priest.

Pope Shenouda was a living and moving encyclopedia.

Pope Shenouda III was the most popular Pope, that he was called the "Beloved of Millions"; his funeral was described as the "Funeral of the Century", attended by millions of Christians and Muslims.

He was an authority in the Bible, Theology, history, dogma, literature, poetry, sociology and humor.

He was the only Pope who made the Myroun Oil seven times.

Pope Shenouda was elected a chief of the World Council of Churches, and the Middle East Council of Churches.

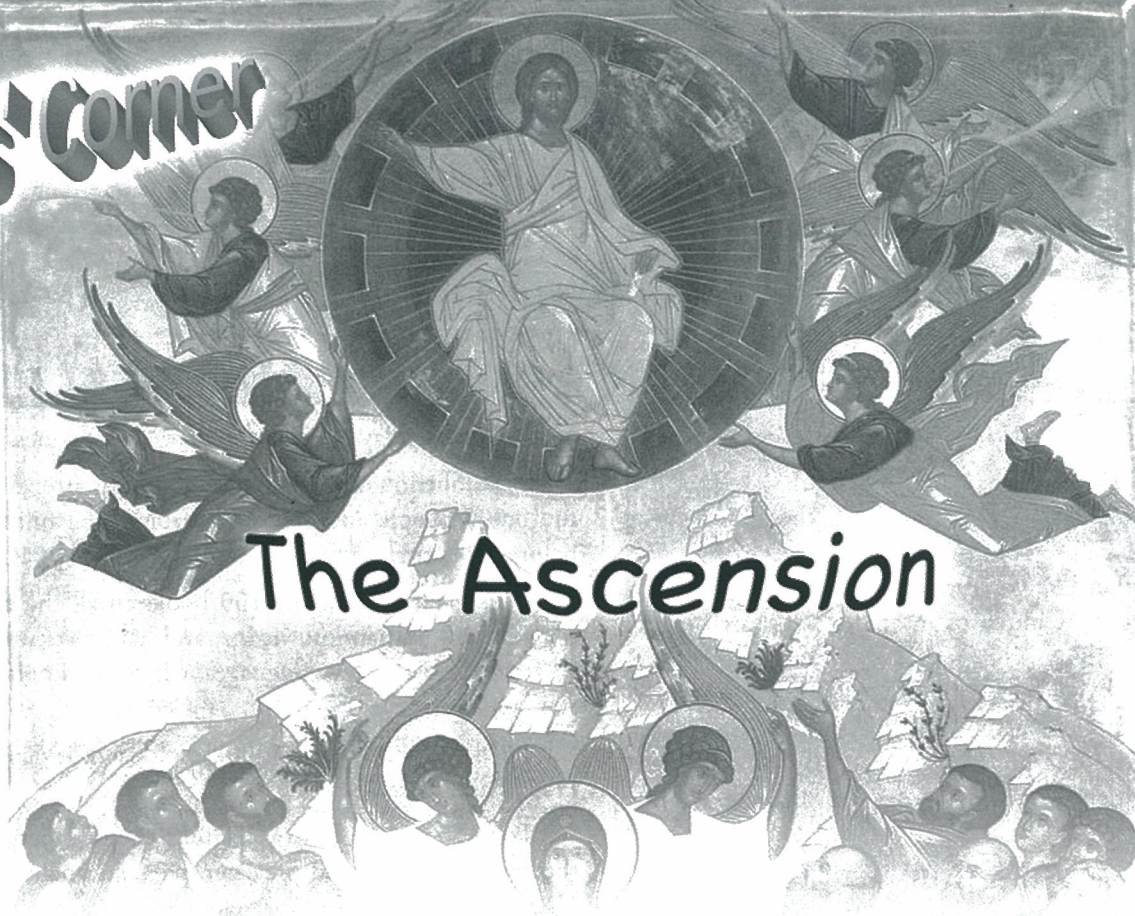
He was granted 8, eight Honorary Doctorate Degrees from America and Europe and prizes for peace.

Pope Shenouda III is a scholar in Christianity, Judaism and Islam and law.

He was called "The Miracle of the Era", a "Legend", "The Genius of Love", "The Golden mouthed" etc.

Pope Shenouda III was called, "The Greatest Reformer", "The Lover of his Enemies", "The Defender of the National Unity and Human Rights", a "Peace Maker" and "True Disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ", "The father of the poor, widows and orphans", who is filled with the Holy Spirit and virtues. The Egyptian Islamic government made a memorial stamp in his honor. May his prayers be with us. Amen.





The Ascension

50 "And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51 Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen." Luke 24:50

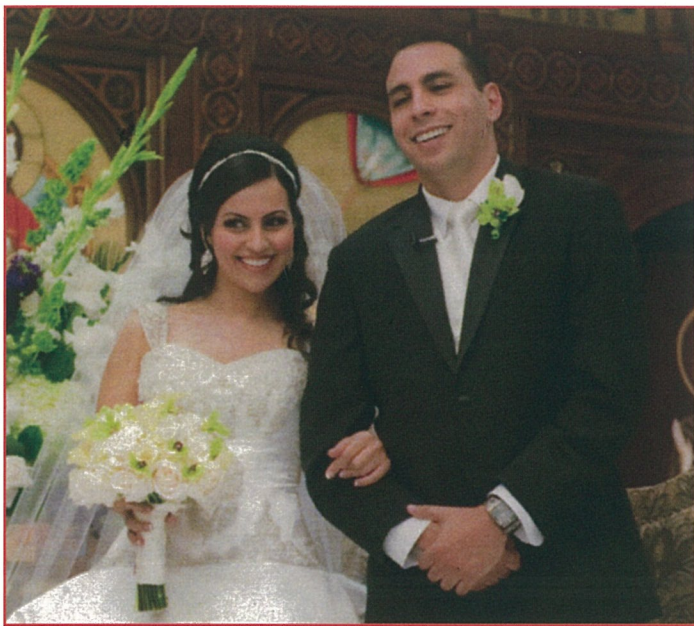
This year, the Ascension is celebrated on May 24. The Ascension is when our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ went to heaven after spending forty days with the disciples. During the forty days, He was teaching His disciples about the "things pertain to the kingdom of God." Acts 1:3

When we finish the school year, our teacher wants us to remember the things he/she taught us. It would be such a waste if we would not apply what we Learned for the next school year. If that were to happen, we would not grow in our education.

It is the same idea with the disciples. They were commanded "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. Acts 1: 4,5. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..."Acts 1:8

When our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ went to heaven, the Holy Spirit came after ten days to help them in their mission. They grew in faith during hard times and sacrificed their life for our Lord. May our Lord help us to keep the kingdom of God in our hearts and grow in the love of God.

Congratulations



Congratulations

St. John Church in Covina Congratulates

Peter Eskander & Eiriny

On their marriage

May the Lord Jesus Christ who blessed the wedding of Cana of Galilee, bless their life together and grant them health, happiness, harmony and a good Christian home built on the Rock and filled with the fruits of the Spirit.

Congratulations to their two beloved families.

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The church congratulates her blessed children

Sarah Michael and Mario Nakhla

For their blessed marriage wishing them every heavenly and earthly blessing in the love of God, the church and the Bible. May God grant them health and plenty of fruits.

Congratulations also to their two blessed families.



St. John Church congratulates the two families of Albaiady and the Padres, for the baptism of their beloved children,

Jonathan Cyril & Emily Marie

Wishing them physical and spiritual growth, strength and long happy life in Christ. Congratulations also for their grand-parents, and special thanks to Fr. Gawargious Kolta and Fr. Augustinos Hanna.



St. John Church congratulates Basem Wasef and Anna for the baptism of their first baby-boy

Augustine

May the Lord Jesus bless him and grant him growth in the grace, health and a long happy life.

Congratulations to his grandparents.



Congratulations to the twin babies

James and Jacob Salama

For their baptism. May God bless them with their parents Nancy and David Salama and grandparents.

