

# ST. JOHN

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## "Let us Give Thanks"

"Let us give thanks, by which we may serve God acceptably" with reverence and Godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28).

In the occasion of celebrating "Thanksgiving Day" on November 28th, we better not concentrate our attention on the "turkey", but rather to think of the "million thanks" we ought to offer God.

### The Golden Thanksgiving Psalm No. 103

The Book of Psalms is full of praises, spiritual songs of thanksgiving, but PSALM 103 is one of the masterpieces which every believer MUST MEMORIZE BY HEART. In this psalm, king David expresses his gratitude, praising the Lord for His mercies, and selects some benefits of great importance to thank God for, saying:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul; and do not forget all His benefits. Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases. Who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies you with good as long as you live, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As the father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust....."



## St. John Coptic Orthodox Church

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## The Orthodox Thanksgiving Prayer

*"Let us give thanks unto the beneficent and merciful God, the Father of our Lord God and savior Jesus Christ. For He has covered us, supported us, preserved us, accepted us unto Him, had compassion on us, helped us and brought us unto this hour..... We thank You upon every condition, for any condition and in whatever condition...etc."*

- The Coptic Orthodox Church follows the same Biblical method of David's Psalm 103, selecting some important samples of God's daily kindness, goodness, and benefits to us, to thank Him seven times a day in her seven prayers of Agpeya based on David's psalm 119:164 "Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous judgments".

- The church uses this thanksgiving prayer as an introduction to all her services and sacraments, to teach us to thank God FIRST and before everything, as St. Paul says: "FIRST, I THANK MY GOD..." (Romans 1:8), and to thank Him in all circumstances even in what may seem difficult, bitter and unfavorable, like sickness, loss, or death of loved ones, taking the example of Job when said: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed is the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

- Since thanksgiving shows our gratitude and appreciation, God always expects it. Lacking of thanksgiving spirit, proves ungratefulness and unworthiness. When the Lord Jesus healed the ten lepers, but only one of them came to thank Him, He asked disappointedly: "Where are the nine?" (Luke 17:17).

### *From The Coptic Encyclopedia:*

**ANIANUS**, the immediate successor as patriarch (68–85) to Saint MARK I the Evangelist and his first convert to the new religion in the region of Alexandria. When Mark I entered Rakotis, a suburb of Alexandria, following his journey from Cyrene in the Pentapolis, the strap of his sandal broke off. He found a cobbler named Anianus to repair it. While working on the sandal, an awl slipped and pierced Anianus' hand. He then cried "Heis ho Theos," the Alexandrian Greek for "God is one," an utterance that opened the way for Mark to preach monotheistic Christianity to him while miraculously healing his wound in the name of Jesus.

It is difficult to know whether Anianus was Jewish or a pagan native under the influence of the opulent Jewish community and its monotheistic teachings in Alexandria. Consequently, Mark was invited to Anianus' home, where he taught his family the Gospel and baptized them all. This proved to be the beginning of a rich harvest of other converts in this area, which provoked the pagan citizens to defend their local gods against the intruder.

Thus Mark decided to disappear for the time being from the scene of imminent strife. He ordained Anianus as bishop, together with three presbyters and seven deacons, to watch over the spiritual welfare of the flock during his absence. He was away for two years and is said to have gone to Rome, Aquileia, and the Pentapolis, performing miracles and baptizing an increasing number of converts. He returned to Alexandria to find that the new faithful

had multiplied and were able to build their own church at Bucalis on the shore of the eastern harbor—the Portus Magnus of the Ptolemies. The HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS describes that place as "the Cattle-Pasture, near the sea, beside a rock from which stone is hewn" (Vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 145 [47]).

After Mark's martyrdom on the 30th of the Coptic month of Baramūdah, the second day after Easter, which happened to be the same day as the festival of the Alexandrian god Serapis, Anianus assumed the leadership of the nascent church as its second patriarch. He remained in this capacity for seventeen years, six months, and nine days, during which the believers in Christ increased in numbers and he ordained new priests and deacons for them. It is not known whether other churches were built in addition to Bucalis, but we must assume that most of the missionary work was limited to Alexandria and that it was conducted secretly to avoid the hostility of the pagan population. At any rate, the new patriarch survived the rule of the Roman emperors Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, and Titus. During the reign of Domitian (81–96), he died in his bed, probably in 83 or 85, and was laid to rest next to Saint Mark in Bucalis.

The Western view that Anianus was the first patriarch of the Coptic church is denied by the Copts, who place him as the second, insisting that their first patriarch was Saint Mark, the founder of their church. The official church view is the one adopted throughout this work.

← **100 Samples of Benefits To Thank God For**

Here is a list of spiritual, physical, and material benefits and advantages that deserve to thank God for most of them day and night:

<u>SPIRITUAL</u>	<u>PHYSICAL</u>	<u>MATERIAL</u>
1. God the Father	41. Existence	80. Money
2. The Lord Jesus Christ	42. life	81. Work
3. The Holy Spirit	43. Health	82. Education
4. The Church	44. Mind	83. Profession
5. The Holy Communion	45. Sight	84. Possessions
6. The Bible	46. Hearing	85. Houses
7. The Cross	47. Smelling	86. Furniture
8. The seven Sacraments	48. Taste	87. Land
9. Salvation	49. Safety	88. Live stock
10. Grace	50. Family	89. Gold & Jewelry
11. Love	51. Virtuous wife or husband	90. Books
12. Faith	52. Children	91. Music
13. Hope	53. Relatives	92. Arts
14. The angels	54. Friends	93. Entertainment
15. The saints	55 Rest	& All modern inventions which God gave man power and intelligence to make, such as:
16. Prayer	56. Sleeping	94. Flight
17. Fellowship	57. Motion	95. Space shuttles
18. Forgiveness	58. Emotions	96. Telephone
19. Freedom	59. Speech	97. Computers
20. Providence	60. Memory	98. Radio & T.V.(controlled)
21. Guidance	61. Forgetfulness	99. Recorders, video & cameras
22. Peace	62. Laughter	100. Eye glasses & artificial limbs, organs and teeth etc.....
23. Joy	63. Tears	
24. Healing	64. Air to breathe	
25. Restoration	65. Water to drink & wash	
26. Comfort	66. Food	
27. Free will	67. Clothing	
28. Talents	68. Residence & shelter	
29. Spiritual gifts	69. Medicine	
30. Fruits of Spirit	70. Light	
31. Adoption	71. The Sun, moon & stars	
32. Discipline	72. The beautiful nature	
33. Ministry	73 Oceans & seas	
34. Help & aid	74. Rivers & lakes	
35. Conscience	75. Insight	
36. Dominion	76. Instincts	
37. Spiritual Knowledge	77. Birds	
38. Resurrection	78. Animals	
39. Eternal life	79. Good circumstances	
40. Heavenly inheritance		

**Kindness is the Oil that takes the Friction  
Out of Life**

*“My kindness shall not depart from you ” (Isa. 54:10).*

When David wanted to honour someone in Saul’s household for Jonathon’s sake, he said, “Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?” (2 Sam. 9:3). His kindness reflected the kindness that is part of God’s character.

Do you know someone who needs an act of kindness? Go ahead and do it! It is, after all, the way God continuously treats us.

# Do you know these Difficult People?



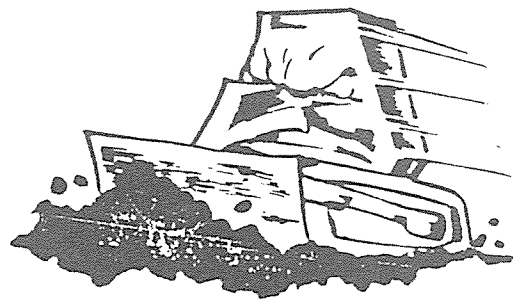
## The Complainers

Feel powerless over their lives. Believe what happens is due to luck, the weather and fortune. Whine and string sentences together with “ands” and “buts.” Have a vision of how things should be, but look to others to solve problems.



## The Indecisive

Unable to make decisions when the decisions make a difference. Fear making unpopular decisions. Believe problems will go away if they wait long enough.



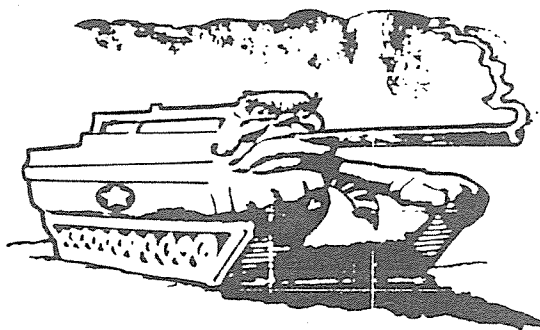
## The Bulldozers

Expert know-it-alls. Bombard people with facts and figures. Take a difference of opinion as a personal insult. Believe they always have the right answer to every problem.



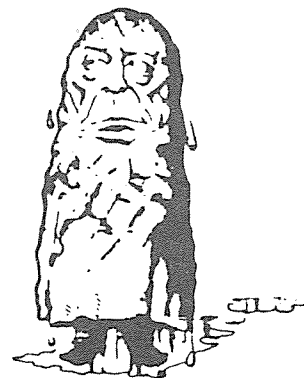
## The Super-Agreeables

Want to be liked by everyone. Super-nice people that won't come through for you when you need them to. Afraid to be honest because they don't want to lose your acceptance.



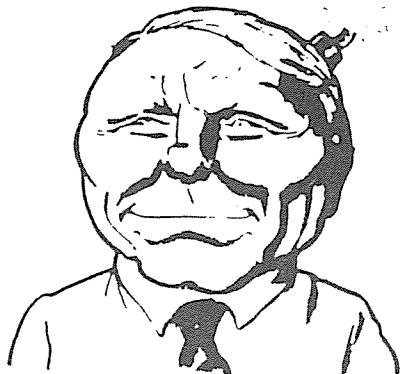
## The Sherman Tanks

Bully co-workers. Use physical means to intimidate. Base decisions on facts of the moment. Have a deep need to prove they are right. Will stop at nothing if you get in the way.



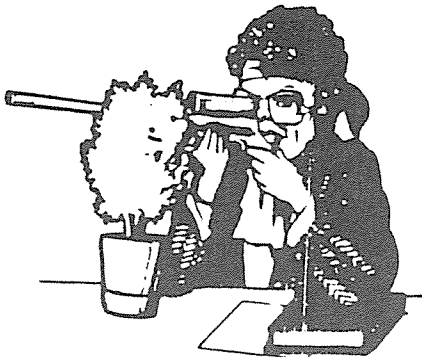
## The Wet Blankets

Extremely negative. Say “no” to just about everything. Unhappy and want everyone around them to be just as miserable. Douse others' hopes and dreams by dampening spirits. Feel powerless and are suspicious of those with power.



## The Exploders

Composed and gentle one minute...out of control and throwing tantrums the next. Explode when they're threatened, frustrated, or when under pressure. Yell, insult and cut others down.



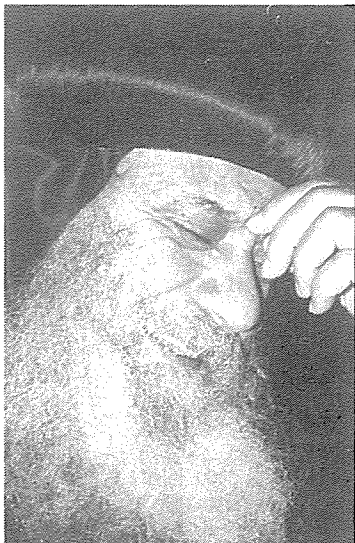
## The Snipers

Strike from behind cover. Skilled in criticizing with sarcasm and humor. Will not attack openly because of the costs involved. Must prove to everyone that they are right.



## The Clams

Taciturn and unresponsive. They make a mystery out of getting their opinions. Use silence to render you powerless, because they won't tell you what you need to know.



## D I V I S I O N S

By  
His Holiness Pope Shenouda  
Published in St. George Youth Magazine-Australia

One of the saints once said, "If ten thousand angels assembled together, they would have one opinion, but when a few humans gather together, they disagree!"

Division could be evidence of the existence of the self. The self that works on its own, far from the Spirit of God:

- Which aims at enforcing its own opinion, no matter what the outcome would be.
- Which does not care about the dangerous results that are caused by division.

What are these consequences? One of the writers said, "Two eagles had a fight over a prey; it was taken by a fox!"

For that reason, the Lord Jesus said, "Every city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Matt. 12:25). Splitters always forget this saying.

Very often, a group would take an action of division and leave behind a ruined atmosphere, then go its own way as if it had done nothing. But God seeks the blood of what its actions destroyed.

Division among brothers is a sign of a lack of love.

The division of the young against the old, proves revolting, a lack of obedience and of respect to superiors...these are all sins. Division also proves pride in oneself or self-importance. Most likely, ones father confession is left out of all this; he is not consulted.

In St. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, he rebuked them for their division and described them as being carnal, as the splitters are far from the unity of the spirit (1 Cor. 3).

Members of the one body collaborate together for the good of that body. If they all felt this unity, they would work jointly for the good that everyone is aiming at.

Unity means respecting other's opinions, or at least training oneself to deal with such a view, without revolt, anger, defamation, or destruction.

- Try to gain others instead of splitting from them.
- Be objective and stay away from personal affairs.
- Train yourself to co-operate with the spirit of a group.

### **3 Things God Cannot Do !**

Everyone knows that God is almighty, omnipotent and all-powerful. Yet there are three things, still, even God cannot do.

#### **1. *God Cannot do sin:***

God is Holy and perfect, His Divine nature hates sin and cannot commit sin. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is described in the letter to the Hebrews 1:1-3 as the "Creator of the worlds, the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint (or the express image of His person)", "COMMITTED NO SIN" (1 Peter 1:22). Also it is written, "WHO KNEW NO SIN" (2 Cor. 5:21).

#### **2. *God Cannot Remember Our Sins When We Repent:***

God says "I will forgive their iniquity, and REMEMBER their SINS NO MORE" (Jeremiah 31:34). Hear Him saying: "I have swept away your transgression like a cloud, and your sins like mist" (Isaiah 44:22). When we repent and confess our sins, God forgives us our sins, cleanses us and forgets these sins forever (1 John 1:9). In baptism, our sins were buried with Christ in His tomb (Romans 6:4). The tears of repentance as the fathers of the church say- are like the baptism, because repentance activates and renews the work and power of the baptism. The word of God assures us, then, that God will tread our iniquities under foot..."WILL CAST ALL OUR SINS INTO THE DEPTH OF THE SEA" (Micah 7:19).

#### **3. *God Cannot Please Everyone:***

This is the reason why He was crucified in the person of Jesus. In fact, the Lord Jesus did not even try to satisfy everyone. His purpose was to please only ONE PERSON, God the Father. He said: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me" (John 4:24). If God Himself, could not satisfy and please all people, do you think we can? We often try to do so and we get into trouble. Every person is different from the other in mind, education, mood, character, opinion and circumstances, so it is IMPOSSIBLE to satisfy all people. The apostles taught us a great principle that, "WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN" (Acts 5:29). It is thousand times better to please God, even if some people disagree or get mad, rather than to please some people and disobey God. St. Paul also reached the same conclusion when he said: "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still Pleas'd men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). (There is a famous interesting fable that confirms this fact).

## **It Is Impossible To Please All People** (The fable of Goha and his donkey)

The fables of Aesop (the same our Egyptian figure Goha), tell us the following story. Once, a miller and his son were driving their donkey to a neighbouring market to sell him. They met a group of girls laughing: "Look there!" cried one of them. "Did you ever see such fools trudging along the road on foot, when they ought to be riding!" So the man put the boy on the donkey, and they went on their way. Soon they came upon a group of old men who were discussing something. "There!" said one of them. "That proves exactly what I was saying. No one pays respect to old age these days. Look at that lazy kid riding the donkey, while his poor old father has to walk. Get down, you lazy bout, and let the old man rest his weary limbs."

The miller made his son get down, and got on the donkey's back. After a while they met some women and children:

"Why, shame on you lazybones!" they cried, "How can you ride while that poor little boy can hardly keep up with you?"

The good miller wishing to please all people, took up his son to sit beside him. But as they reached the edge of the village, a townsman called out to them:

"I have a good reason to report you to the humane society for overloading the poor beast. You big hulking fellows should better be able to carry that donkey than the other way around."

So, coming down, the miller and his son tied the beast's legs together, and with a pole across their shoulders, carried the donkey over the bridge that led to the town. This was such an entertaining sight that crowds of people came out to laugh at it. The poor animal, frightened by the uproar, slipped off the pole and over the rail of the bridge into the water and drowned!

The goal of this story is: *When you try to please everyone, you end up pleasing none.*

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### **A Giving Spirit**

*"... though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9).*

As the Cadillac owner walked to his car, he saw a boy about 10 years old staring intensely through the windows. Wondering what he was up to, the man put his hands on the youngster's shoulders, pulled gently, and asked him what he was doing. The boy said he was interested in cars and had read a lot about different models. He then told him many details about this particular year and body style.

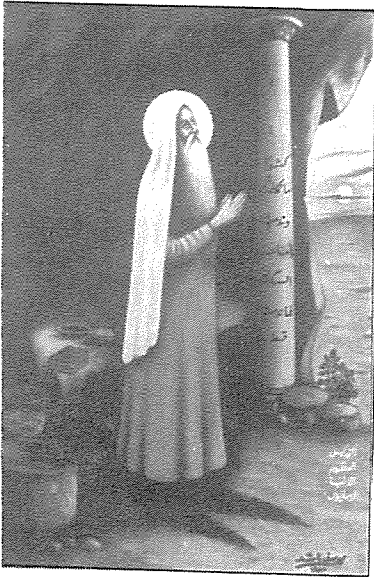
After a bit, the boy asked, "Mister, how much did you pay for this car?" the man replied, "Nothing. My brother gave it to me."

The boy responded, "I wish . . .", but stopped in mid-sentence. The man concluded, "You were going to say, 'I wish I had a brother like that?'"

"No, I was going to say, I wish I could be a brother like that? You see sir, I have a brother who is crippled and I'd like to do a lot of things for him".

What an unusual boy!? What an unselfish attitude!?

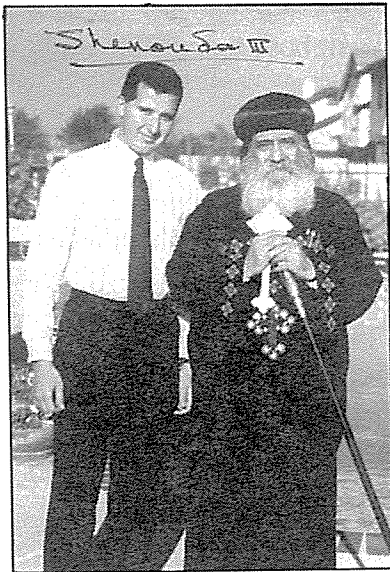
by  
*Mary Habib*



*Abba Arsenius*

When Abba Arsenius was living at Canopus, a very rich and God-fearing virgin of senatorial rank came from Rome to see him. When the Archbishop Theophilus met her, she asked him to persuade the old man to receive her. So he went to ask him to do so in these words, 'A certain person of senatorial rank has come from Rome and wishes to see you.' The old man refused to meet her. But when the Archbishop told the young girl this, she thought to herself, 'I trust in God that I shall see him, for it is not a man whom I have come to see (there are plenty of those in our town, but a prophet.' When she had reached the old man's cell, by a dispensation of God, he was outside it. Seeing him, she threw herself at his feet. Outraged, he lifted her up again, and said, looking steadily at her, 'If you must see my face, here it is, look.' She was covered with shame and did not look at his face. Then the old man said to her, 'Have you not heard tell of my way of life? It ought to be respected. How dare you make such a journey? Do you not realize you are a woman and cannot go just anywhere? Or is it so that on returning to Rome you can say to other women: I have seen Arsenius? Then they will turn the sea into a thoroughfare with women coming to see me.' She said, 'May it please the Lord, I shall not let anyone come here; but pray for me and remember me always.' But he answered her, 'I pray God to remove remembrance of you from my heart.' Overcome at hearing these words, she withdrew. When she had returned to the town, in her grief she fell ill with a fever, and blessed Archbishop Theophilus was informed that she was ill. He came to see her and asked her to tell him what was the matter. She said to him, 'If only I had not gone there! For I asked the old man to remember me, he said to me, "I pray God to take the remembrance of you from my heart." So now I am dying of grief.' The Archbishop said to her, 'Do you not realize that you are a woman, and that it is through women that the enemy wars against the Saints? That is the explanation of the old man's words; but as for your soul, he will pray for it continually.' At this, her spirit was healed and she returned home joyfully.





*Growing 20 with  
His Holiness Pope Shenouda III*

I was just a couple of months old when our Lord saw it fit to call upon his servant Bishop Shenouda once again. It was the Lord's will to fulfil His promise, "*Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things*" (Matt. 25:21). So on November 14th, 1971, the Education Bishop Shenouda became the 117th Pope and Patriarch of the See of the blessed Apostle, St. Mark.

I can't recall exactly when I first saw him, but I know that he was always there every Friday, sitting in the midst of thousands in a big Church. I didn't really know why my family and all these other people went to see him every week, but as long as I had to go, I brought a pencil and some paper and kept myself busy drawing cars and airplanes. On the big feasts our whole family got dressed very nicely and went to that same huge Church to attend a strange liturgy. You see this liturgy was much longer, it was at night, many bishops and hundreds of priests and deacons attended, all dressed in very nice looking vestments. But I didn't understand, after all I was only about 5. I remember I would see Pope Shenouda and notice how tired he is, yet he always brought joy to everyone by his words and through his loving eyes even I sort of enjoyed the long period of time I spent in that big Church.

The occasions that I saw him increased and I was beginning to understand more and more. When he and I turned 10; as Pope and I, 10 years old, he was exiled by the late president of Egypt, Anwar El Sadat and I wound up living in the U.S.

I would only hear very little about him in the years to come, until our blessed President Mubarak set him free in 1985. Then every feast we would hear Abuna read a letter to the congregation from Pope Shenouda sending his prayers and best wishes. It was finally in 1989 that I saw him once again and heard him speak in every occasion during his historical visit to Los Angeles. We both had completed 18 years. I was very amazed at his spirituality, knowledge, wisdom, humility, and last but not least his sense of humour. In various occasions his words touched my heart and in other occasions his tiredness overwhelmed me as if he was a superhuman.

In his 1991 visit he had more of the same effect on me. He came and went both times taking my heart with him both times.

This summer I went back to Egypt for the first time in 10 years. I had just turned 20 and I was seeing things that I saw 10 years ago and couldn't understand. I attended Pope Shenouda's weekly meeting the six weeks that I was there and now I understood. I was once again amazed at his spirituality, knowledge, wisdom, humility, and most of all the enormous crowds that he drew weekly. That big Church from a long time ago is still full every week, except that at age 20 I now know it is St. Mark's Cathedral.

In a few days His Holiness Pope Shenouda will catch up to me and complete 20 (years as Pope). Between his first visit and now I read a few of his books, but the most memorable is "The Release of the Spirit" which set my heart aflame with love for my Lord and respect for my Pope, who through this work inspired many to the monastic life and to a humble life with God in general. Through my personal readings and religious studies in the Coptic Church History, I have been inspired by the lives of our Church fathers and I take pride in being a Copt due to their great accomplishments and contributions to the Church and to all Christianity. I take pride in the accomplishments of our first Patriarch, St. Mark and his successors, St. Athanasius, St. Cyril, St. Dioscorus and also in our fathers the monks the founders of monasticism: St. Antony, St. Macarius, St. Pachomios, St. Shenouti, St. Pambo, St. Amoun, St. Bishoy, to name just a few. Pope Shenouda III fits right in with all these great men. His spirituality, zeal, knowledge and wisdom are those of St. Athanasius, St. Cyril, St. Dioscorus. He was fought by rulers as did these 3 heros of the Church. He lived the monastic life and the life of hermitage "alone with the Alone", like our righteous fathers the monks.

I thank God for him and for bringing glory to the Coptic Church as in the days of our fathers the heros of the faith. I also thank God that He showed us His Mighty Hand in restoring His Holiness Pope Shenouda to his throne and for destroying the enemies of the Church and dispersing them that rise up against Him and His chosen. I ask You my Dear Lord and God to grant His Holiness Pope Shenouda III long life in good health, to bless Your Children the Copts and to destroy all the enemies of the Church. Bless him, O Lord who in the good times and the bad times preached his motto "Rabbena Mawgood" or "God Exists".

*by Mark Hanna*

