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BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE



OUR MARTYRES IN THE ROMAN AND ISLAMIC ERAS



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*Verse
of the Month*



"But the heavens and the earth which now exist
are kept in store...reserved for fire until the Day
of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men"
(2 Peter 3:7).

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

SUNDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
+ English Liturgy 8:00 - 11:00 a.m. (In the New Church)	+ Liturgy 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.	+ Liturgy 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.	+ Liturgy from 8-10 am + Vespers; Bible Study 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
* * *	+ Thursday Morning + Senior Citizen Club 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		+ Beginners' Deacons- Meeting 5:30 p.m. + Elementary Meeting 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.
+ Arabic Liturgy 8:00 - 11:15 a.m. (In the Old Church)			
Servants' Meeting + 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. 2 nd & 4 th Sunday. + Boy Scouts 12 pm	+ THURSDAY Family Meeting 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. Fr. Augustinos	+ Arabic Youth Meeting 8:00 - 10:00 p.m. Fr. Gawargious	+ College Youth Meeting 7:00- 9:00 p.m.
			High School & J. High Meetings 7:15 - 9:00 p.m.

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1. Feast of Nyrouz (Coptic New Year 1734)

On Monday, September 11, 2017 the church celebrates the Feast of Nyrouz, also known as the Feast of the Martyrs and of the Coptic New Year 1734 of the Christian martyrs of Egypt. The Feast's Vespers on Sunday, Sept. 10, at 7:00 pm. All the tunes of prayers, from Nyrouz to the Feast of the Cross are joyful.



2. The Feast of the Appearance of the Cross:

On Wednesday, September 27, the church celebrates the Feast of the Appearance of the Holy Cross. Vespers is on Tuesday, the 26, at 7:00 p.m. The Liturgy starts Wednesday 7:30 am with the procession of the cross (Palm Sunday joyful tunes).



3. St. John, 28th Annual Grand Festival & Fair:

Under the auspices of H.E. Metropolitan Serapion, the church starts her 28th Annual Festival for **three days from Friday, September 29 to Sunday, October 1, 2017**. It is a great opportunity to show the activities of all the church wings (youth, ladies, seniors, kitchen and book store), along with daily Liturgies and spiritual meetings and tours for the guests, and fund raising.

4. The church Summer conventions and camps:

1) Kids Camp:

Held at the Coptic Village in Big Bear from July 14-16. Seventy children attended with Fr. Gawargios and many of Sunday school teachers.



2) New comers' convention:

Held at Big Bear from August 4-6, seventy two persons attended.

3) Arabic Youth Convention:

105 youth attended in the Coptic Village from August 25 – 27. Fathers Kolta and Paul Baky served.

4) Servants Convention:

Will be held at Big Bear from September 8-10, 2017. The guest speaker is Fr. Daniel Azer

6. H.H. Pope Tawadros:

+ The Pope travels to Australia, God willing, for the first time in a pastoral trip. On Sunday, August 27, 2017, he will stop in Japan to consecrate our first Coptic Orthodox Church there.



7. H.E. Metropolitan Serapion:

+ His Eminence Metropolitan Serapion will accompany the Pope to Japan and share in the service of consecrating our first Coptic Church in Japan.

+ H.E. blessed St. John church by attending the vespers on Friday, August 11, with H.G. Bishop Moussa.

7. H.G. Bishop Moussa:

H.G. Bishop Moussa of the youth, blessed St. John Church on Friday, August 11, and preached in the vespers about, "My soul magnifies the Lord" from St. Mary's Song known as the "Magnifica".



8. H.G. Bishop Abraham

ON Friday, August 4, H.G. Bishop Abraham blessed St. John's Youth Arabic Meeting..



9. Senior Citizen's Crouse:

The Senior Citizen Fellowship Club of St. John Church will have a Crouse to Hawaii from October 25th to November 9, 2017. For information and reservation call: Maher Saleh (626) 222-6558.



10. The Children Harvest Party (Halloween):

On Tuesday, October 31, St. John church will hold her annual Halloween Party from 6:00 – 9:00 pm. The church encourages the children and their parents to use religious figures and not of magicians and goblins. And the church will provide cookies and chocolates.





Why Martyrdom is linked to Christianity?

By H.E. Metropolitan Serapion



While we celebrate the Feasts of the Apostles and Nayrouz (the martyrs), the first tells us about the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the second about the Feast of Martyrdom. We remember the martyrs of the church across the ages, especially the events in recent times.

St. Peter and St. Paul were crowned with the crown of martyrdom during the reign of Nero, both apostles were arrested and St. Paul was beheaded, and St. Peter was crucified upside down.

Some would ask why martyrdom is linked to Christianity. And why do the church and her children live in continuous persecution? The church may have some periods of peace, but why is it short-lived and new kinds of persecution appear? Why doesn't God protect His children and those who believe in Him from evil persecution? So many questions; especially following the most recent events of martyrdom like that of St. Peter's church, St. Mark in Alexandria, St. George in Tanta and the terrorist attack of El-Minya.

Martyrdom now is not simply a historic event that we read about in the books of the church, or something we hear about when we read the Synaxarium, but they are live events we experience and whose details we are highly aware of. We suffer with those who are suffering and are consoled by the steadfastness of the martyrs in the faith and the consolation of their families despite the pain of separation and the harshness of the trauma, the this question still remains: Why!

If we reviewed what Christ said to His disciples before His crucifixion we find the following:

1. That persecution is not an unexpected event, but an expected one. There is a story of one of the martyrs in El Minya bus shooting, his name is Bishoy. One of the eye-witnesses said that he asked, "Why do you kill us?!" One of the terrorists said, "Because you're infidels." Bishoy answered, "We are not infidels, but we are Christians," So; they shot him and killed him! Why? The answer is because we are Christians. But why do evil people hate Christians despite our call to love everyone including our enemies! Christ our Lord gave us the answer, ***"If you were of the world, the***

world would have loved his own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (Jn. 15:19). Thus we see that denying the faith by either offering incense to idols in the Roman era, or saying the two testimonies in Islamic era makes a person "of the world", thus the world will love him and won't kill him. But he who insists not to be of the world and persists in his Christian faith is hated by the world.

2. To be Christ-like. Christ did good for all, for His was going around doing good deeds; but what did the world offer Him? It offered Him the cross! ***"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you"*** (Jn. 15:19). ***"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours."*** (Jn. 15:20, 21). One of the historians wrote on the martyrs of the Roman era saying that they were good citizens serving the Roman Empire in good faith and had virtues of love, honesty and kindness. ***But they were persecuted simply by virtue of their Christian faith. They deserved no punishment, but their sin to the world is that they are Christians! Thus St. Peter says, "But let none of you suffer as murderer, a thief, and evildoer, or as a busy-body in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter."***

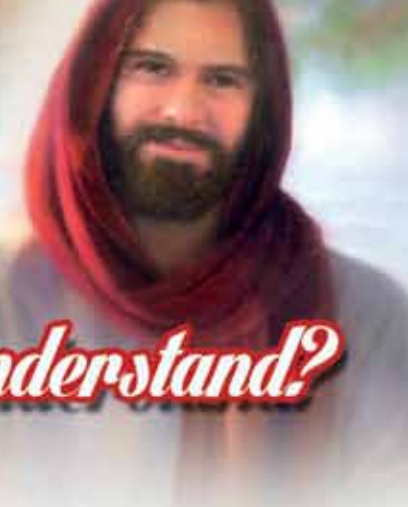
Let us rejoice with our brethren the martyrs, and rejoice in carrying the cross for the sake of Christ. And let us not be surprised by the hatred of the world towards us, for as St. Peter said, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you, but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Pet. 4:12, 13). May the Lord grant us joy and continuous peace and give consolation to the families of the martyrs and confessors, and grant the confessors who were hurt in the sectarian events a quick recovery. May the Lord bless your generous offering to the support of Santa Verena Charity programs to help the families of the martyrs.



By Dr. Emile Goubran

**Do we have to understand in
order to believe Or**

Believe in order to understand?



I was contemplating this question for some time and tried to reason through the answer since there are two points of view regarding this question.

At one hand, some feel that our belief/faith should be based on reason, evidence and understanding so we could make an informed and intelligent decision before we adopt and follow a lifelong belief that shapes our way of life. This will also guarantee that our faith is based on a deep personal conviction that will help us defend our faith and answer questions that we might be confronted with from those who ask us about the basis for our faith. There is actually a biblical command that apostle Peter asked us to heed as followers of Christ: "be ready always to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason of the hope in you, with meekness and fear;" (1Pet 3:15 NKJV)

On the other hand, some feel that we need first to believe and have faith (trust) in God and His Word in order to be able to understand some of the challenging spiritual questions that we may encounter as we study the Word of God. This is achieved through the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells in all Christian believers. Whatever questions a believer may have could be asked from God who will deliver the answer as He promised. The Lord said "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you." (Mat 7:7 NKJV)

So the question is; which should come first? Is it the understanding upon which faith will be built, or the faith through which understanding can be achieved through the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God? Actually, both are necessary since it is not either one or the other.

In the world there are many beliefs and religious faiths that make contradictory claims and they can't all be true. As a basic rule of logic, there could only be one true claim and the rest are false or all are false. How can any person determine which religion is true? Ideally the person should first reason through the claims of each one, follow the evidence from credible sources, and reach a logical conclusion. Credible sources may include historical, archeological, cosmological, biological or any other scientific evidence relating to the claim under examination.

At the conclusion of this examination, one can make an in-

formed decision based on proper understanding. This kind of faith is an "intelligent faith" based on deep personal conviction and not simply a "leap of faith".

Once in the faith, the believer grows further in his faith through understanding the depth of the Word of God with the help and direction of the Holy Spirit. This was clear when the Lord said to the disciples "But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said to you." (Joh 14:26 NKJV)

As for those who were born and raised in the Christian faith, they must learn how to reason in the defense of their faith, so that their faith is based on their personal conviction and not simply because they were born in the faith of their parents. But how could this goal be achieved?

This brings us to an issue in today's culture that our church youth is facing. This culture throws doubts, raises questions about the Christian faith, and challenges our youth in schools and colleges to give a defense for their faith. If our youth are not equipped to defend their faith based on evidence and reason, they themselves will begin to doubt and may end up losing their faith. Recent statistics show a decline in Christian faith especially among the millennial generation*.

What is lacking in our churches today is a "Christian apologetics" service that responds to those cultural pressures by providing our youth with reasonable and convincing answers to any of these challenging questions. This will require equipping a team of interested servants to attain higher degrees in various fields of Christian apologetics, and are willing to serve as educators and counselors to church youth in matters concerning the defense of their Christian faith.

Correction: In the July/August 2017 issue of St. John church magazine the article on page 13 was posted in error under the name of Emile Goubran. The author of this material is Dr. William Lane Craig, a professor of Christian Apologetics in Biola University and founder of online apologetics ministry ReasonableFaith.org



Unique Characteristics of the Coptic Orthodox Church & Her Contributions to Christianity

Fr. Augustinos R. Hanna

(Translated from Arabic by Dr. Magdy Botros)

In this synopsis we are going to state, briefly, the main facts about what distinguishes the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt and about its contributions to Christianity all over the world. Every Copt should know, keep in mind and be proud of these brief points.

1. It is the only church in the world that has prophecies in the Old Testament concerning its foundation. Isaiah the prophet, in chapter 19, verse 19 says,

2. "In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border." Matthew Henry, one of the greatest Bible commentators in England in the 3rd century, said that Isaiah 19: 19 is a prophecy about Christianity being introduced into Egypt, and the Church being founded by St Mark the Evangelist, who wrote the Second Gospel, in the middle of the 1st century. It is well known that the Jewish altar exists only in the Temple at Jerusalem, An altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Pharaonic pagan Egypt can only be the Christian altar and the founding of the Church of Egypt.

3. Isaiah 19 includes two other prophecies about the Church of Egypt and its people, in the first and last verses of the chapter. In the first he says, **"Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; the idols of Egypt will totter at His presence."** (Isaiah 19: 1). This prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus visited Egypt with the Holy Family to escape the massacre by Herod (Matthew 2), St. Cyril the Great

described that cloud carrying Christ as Virgin Mary. The last prophecy says, "Blessed is Egypt My people" (Isaiah 19: 25). This prophecy includes a blessing for Egypt as the people of God, after the whole of Egypt converted from paganism to Christianity in the third century AD.

4. The founder of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt is St Mark, Evangelist, who wrote the Gospel of Mark. This makes every son of this church proud of it, and more trustful of its genuine creeds and doctrines.

5. It is the church that founded the oldest theological school in the history of Christianity by Saint Mark in the 1st century. This was the school of Alexandria, the most famous deans of which included Clement of Alexandria, the scholar Pantanaeus, the scholar Origen and Saint Didymus *the Blind*.

6. It is the church which produced the greatest Bible scholars, like Clement of Alexandria, Pantanaeus, Origen, Didymus the Blind and Saint Athanasius the Apostolic, Pope St. Cyril (Pillar of Faith) and many others who taught the whole world the Holy Bible and its interpretation.

7. It is the church which produced the greatest theologians, like Saint Athanasius the Apostolic, defender of faith, who set the formulary of faith (Nicene Creed), without which the divinity of Christ doctrine would have been lost, and consequently Christianity would

have been lost as well, and the whole world would have become Arian, and like the Saints: Cyril the Great, Pope Dioscorus, and others.

8. The Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt founded monasticism in the 4th century at the hands of Saint Anthony the Great, called the Father of Monasticism in the whole world.

9. It is the church that set the formulary of faith (the Nicene Creed), in the Ecumenical Council of Nicea AD 325 under the leadership and dictation of Saint Athanasius the Egyptian, who was still a young deacon with Pope Saint Alexander of Alexandria. This is still used in most churches of the world up till present.

10. It is the church that has suffered the horrors of persecution since its rise in the 1st century and up till now. It presented the largest number of martyrs in the history of Christianity, more than a million, killed at the hands of Pagan Romans and Muslims, especially during the reigns of the Roman Diocletian's, Decius, and Al-Hakem bi-Amr Allah, up to the reign of Anwar El Sadat and Hosni Mubarak, and Mohammed Morcy, and even El-Sisi. Persecution and martyrdom are still going on.

11. It is the church whose Popes were chosen to preside over the Ecumenical Councils, because of their great knowledge and virtue, the depth of their piety and spirituality, and their wise leadership.

12. The Coptic Orthodox Church contributed to formation of the Holy Bible. For instance, the Epistle of Jude remained the subject of doubts and controversy for two centuries until the Church of Alexandria settled the matter and convinced the churches of the world of its authenticity early in the third century AD, at the hands of Pope Demetrius the Vinedresser, Pope of Alexandria. It was included in the Canonical Books of the New Testament (Commentary on the Epistle of Jude by William Barkley, Professor of the New Testament at Glasgow University).

13. It is the church which has the most and longest fasts, as the number of two thirds of the year, while the fasts of the other churches are almost lost and extinct, and have become scanty and superficial.

14. Translation of the Holy Bible (the Old Testament) from Hebrew to Greek, known as the Septuagint, took place in Egypt in the year 285 B.C. It is the translation that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself used, and so did the Apostles after Him (Simeon the elder, men-

tioned in Chapter 2 of the Gospel of Luke, took part in this translation).

15. It is the church that has the most and the longest prayers and liturgies. Some of its services, up till now, continue, nonstop, from 8 am to 6 pm; 10 continuous hours, followed by the Abu-Ghalamsis night service on the evening of Good Friday, with prayers continuing throughout the night, from 11 pm to Bright Saturday 6 am. All the hymns and praises of the Holy Bible are read and chanted, and the whole Book of Revelation is read that night. This is not practiced in any other church (total is 17 hours of worship and service out of 24 hours).

16. Egypt is regarded as the most religious country in the world. It was visited by the first patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, and Joseph spent most of his life there. Moses, the greatest Jewish prophet, was born in it, and so was Joshua. And Prophet Jeremiah came to it. From it came Apollos of Alexandria (Acts 18). The greatest visitor was the LORD Jesus Christ Himself, the Holy Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, who stayed for almost three and a half years in Egypt.

17. In Egypt is found the Church where Virgin Mary appeared numerous times in Zeitoun, and also in Shoubra, in the period from 1968 and 1994, and then in Assiut and El Warrak, and performed miracles in Port Said and other places up till now.

18. It is the church that spread Christianity in Africa, Switzerland, Germany and Ireland. In Africa, Pope Athanasius the Apostolic ordained Bishop Fromentius for Ethiopia in the 4th century. He was known there as Anba Salama. At present we have four bishops and dioceses in Black Africa. We have numerous Coptic Orthodox churches in Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Congo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe, and Johannesburg, in addition to Nubia, the Sudan, Atbara, and Eretria.

Missionary work of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt took place in the 4th century too, at the hands of St. Maurice, the Theban Legion, and St. Verena. Besides, some Coptic monks undertook missionary work in Ireland in the 4th century too.

19. It is the church that was assigned by the world churches to determine the date of celebrating Easter, and specified it as the Sunday following the Jewish Passover.

20. It is the only church in the world that has

preserved its heritage, traditions, creeds, and Sacraments, besides “its faith, passed once to its Saints and Patriarchs” through the Apostles, for twenty-one centuries without any change to form or subject. This persistence has had its cost: sacrifices and terrible persecutions amounting to shedding of blood of its congregation and Popes. Pope Shenouda III called it “The Living Museum”.

21. It is the church that has presented multitudes of saints, monks, known as the Fathers of the Desert, and female saints, whose sayings and wise experiences fill huge books and volumes that are still a source of inspiration to Christendom and seekers of perfect conduct up till now (so much so that these days a thousand of Protestant pastors of Illinois’ Wheaton University graduates joined it when they read the sayings of its Patriarchs, prior to and following the Ecumenical Council of Nicea).

22. The oldest copies of the Holy Bible, dating back to the second century, such as a manuscript of the Gospel of St John in the Coptic language, was found in the Fayoum Desert in Egypt in the year 105 AD.

In the 3rd and 4th centuries, manuscripts of the Scripture were found in Egypt in the Coptic and Greek languages on papyrus plants that grow on the banks of the Nile in Egypt. Moreover, there are the parchments, some of which are found in the Coptic Museum in Egypt and in Museums of the Vatican, London and Moscow and others.

23. The Rosetta stone, by means of which the scholar Champollion solved the mysteries of the Hieroglyphic language, was found in Egypt. It is that stone that threw strong light on the monuments which support authenticity of the Holy Bible and its incidents stated in the books of Genesis, Exodus and Kings.

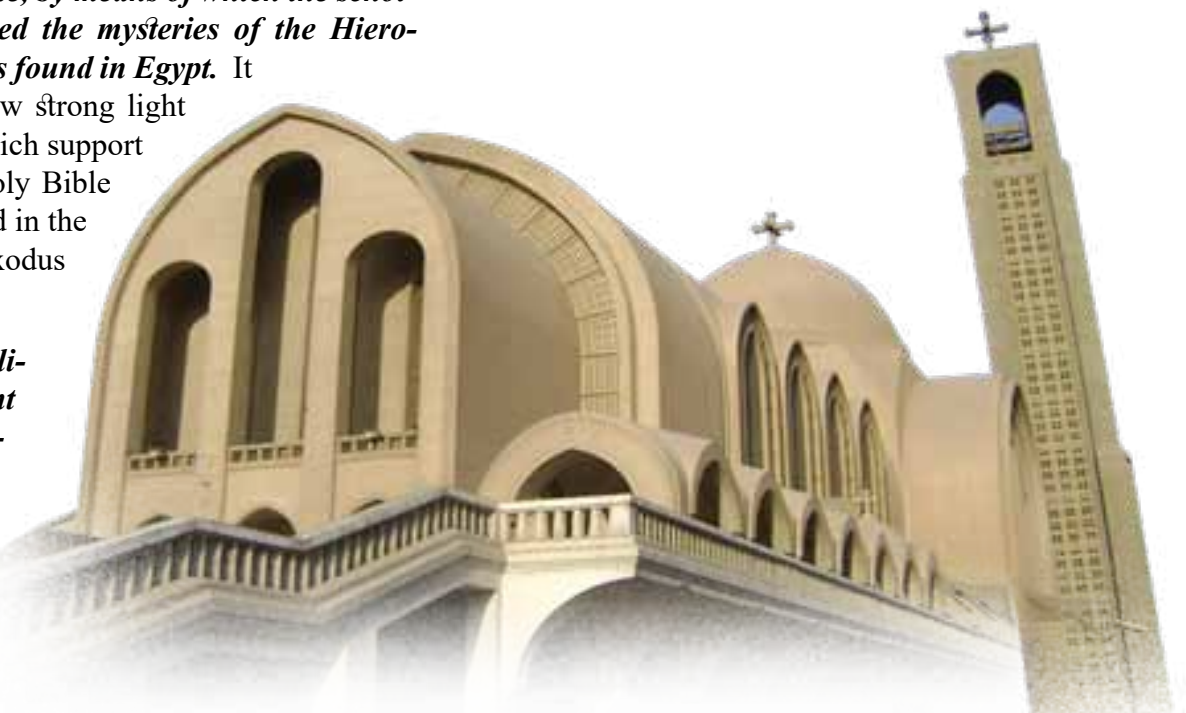
24. The greatest library in the ancient world, which enlightened the whole world with knowledge and connected the ancient world with the new world was the library of Alexandria, which was burned in

the 7th century AD at the hands of Muslim invaders, Amr Ibn El Aas at the orders of Caliph Omar Ibn El Khattab. Through this infamous ignorance the greatest source of knowledge in the ancient world was lost.

25. Egypt is the second most mentioned country in the Holy Bible after Israel. The Garden of the LORD was likened to the land of Egypt: “like the Garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt” (Genesis 13: 10), the second river of the Garden of Eden was the River Nile, with its old name “Gihon” (Genesis 2:13). It was stated in St. Ephraim (Ephrem) the Syrian’s commentary on the Book of Genesis that the four rivers of the Garden referred to the four Gospels, which watered the whole world with the water of life, and it was meet that the writer of the Second Gospel (Saint Mark) should undertake missionary work in the country of the second river “Gihon” (i.e. River Nile).

Pope Shenouda III aroused renaissance in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The period of his patriarchy (41 years) is considered one of the greatest golden epochs of the Church in modern history. He aroused a great renaissance in education, preaching, authoring, construction, watchful pastoral care, missionary trips to all continents of the world, ordination of thousands of bishops, priests, monks and deacons, and foundation of churches, seminaries and satellite channels. He was a rare extraordinary phenomenon, who revealed, kept and sprad the great heritage of the Coptic Orthodox church; and these lines are not sufficient for writing about him. Many have written large books about him.

That was a bird’s eye view of the unique characteristics that distinguish the Coptic Orthodox Church, and how it influenced Christianity in the world, and what every Copt should know and hold dear and be proud of.



Who Ya Gonna Call?



GOD'S 9 1 1

*How to get
God's help 24/7*



One of the most important telephone numbers you will ever learn is “911.” Each year thousands of lives are saved because someone knew how to dial that number.

Not every call that comes in to the 911 line is an emergency, however. There are those who have called it for weather reports, traffic updates, or to find out how long to cook a pork roast. They’re not supposed to do this, of course, “911” is for life-or-death situations only.

If you dial it to order one of my recipes, they’ll probably disconnect you (even though some of my recipes do represent a life-or-death situations).

There’s another number you need to know how to call in emergencies, too. God’s number. It’s not 911. In fact, you don’t even have to dial a number at all. It’s an automatic connection as soon as you call on his name. God’s line is open twenty-four hours a day, and it can handle all life’s problems, from life-threatening emergencies to everyday concerns.

So the next time you’re in need of some divine “emergency assistance,” the next time you have some emotional cuts or bruises that need to be attended to STAT, who ya gonna call?



PICKY, PICKY, PICKY!

Do you have overly critical people in your life? People who find something wrong with everyone and everything around them?

They visit Mount Rushmore and all they see is the bush growing out of Lincoln’s nose! They gaze upon the Mona Lisa and wonder why someone doesn’t give her an updated hairstyle! They go to Niagara Falls and complain because no one’s made a water park out of it yet....!

Complain, complain, complain.

If they were with Joshua and God caused the walls of Jericho to fall down, they would have whined, “All this dust is going to be murder on my asthma!”

Had they been with Moses at the parting of the Red Sea, they would have said, “This is nice, but couldn’t God have been a bit more creative and zigzagged it or something?”

The biggest problem with critical people is that they hate suffering alone. They feel lousy and they’ll do their best to make you feel lousy, too. But don’t let them get the best of you.

Keep yourself focused on uplifting things and surround yourself with positive people. After all, you only get one chance to weave the tapestry of your life. Don’t miss all its beauty by hanging around the moths.

What was the greatest event you ever attended in your life?



Edited by
Fr. Augustinos R. Hanna

Was it a concert! Could it be a sporting event? Or maybe it was a family affair like a wedding?

As you were searching to find an answer, **did you think of Divine Liturgy?**

The first word itself-divine-tells us that something is different with an event. No one would call a sporting event or a concert divine! Divine means something from God. This is why the Divine Liturgy is set apart.

The word "liturgy" comes from two ancient Greek words, leitōs (people) and ergon (work). It means "work of the people." The ancient Greeks would use the word liturgy (leitourgia) to denote any service to the state undertaken by a citizen for the general welfare of the people or public. In other words, the Divine Liturgy is a "public work" that occurs for the benefit of the people, so that God's people are cared for through the work of God. In these "services," we serve God through our work at the Divine Liturgy.

God cares for all of creation and wants to be with the people He loves. He wants to instill in us hope and faith in Him, and we want to worship Him and thank Him for all that He has done and does for us.

This happens in every worship service of the Church, but especially the Divine Liturgy.

"We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty."

According to tradition, this quotation dates from 987 AD. There is a story that says that Prince Vladimir of Kiev (a city in today's Ukraine) wanted to choose the religion for his people. He sent teams to visit different cities and religions. One group visited Constantinople and witnessed the Divine Liturgy in the Great Church of Holy Wisdom, the Hagia Sophia. The team returned and reported to the prince what they had experienced. Because of this report, the Prince decided that his people would be Orthodox Christians.

Think about it, that prince had wealth and power. He lived a life of comfort – the type of life that allowed him to behold all



human-made beauty and find all pleasures in the world. Yet he had never experienced the type of beauty that his emissaries described to him.

When we say that heaven meets earth, what do we mean? To answer this question we have to remember how God has acted through history.

First, we believe that God created "everything visible and invisible."

Second, God gave us so much that "He gave His only Son" so that we would have life eternal (John 3:16).

Third, God is always with us because He sends His Holy Spirit to us.

The Bible is filled with many images of God. One image of Him is the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son. We believe that God wants to have a close relationship with His children, even though many of His children struggle to make time for Him.

The Lord Jesus says **"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them"** (Matthew 18:20).

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is present at the Divine Liturgy. How this happens—how heaven comes to earth—is what we call a mystery, something beyond our understanding. We believe that when we do our part during the Divine Liturgy, God surely does his part, and that even though Christ is unseen by humans during the Divine Liturgy, He is still present.

It is important to remember that the Divine Liturgy is not a production, a spectacle, or a theatrical performance. **As its core, the Liturgy is about God and people, Creator and the created spending time together, with the faithful worshipping and thanking God and God offering Himself back through Holy Communion.**

Yes, you can spend time with God at home, but God wants His family together and this happens during the Divine Liturgy. And when we attend the Divine Liturgy, we are called to be actively involved. We are coworkers in "the work of the people."

The Coptic Orthodox Liturgy:

The Coptic Orthodox Church (of Egypt) celebrates three Liturgies: The first historically was written by St. Mark the Evangelist and Apostle, the author of the second gospel who preached Christianity in Egypt and was martyred in Alexandria, Egypt in the midst of the first century.

St. Mark's gospel and the church history and tradition say that the Lord Jesus instituted the Eucharist, the Last Supper, in the upper room at St. Mark's and his mother Mary's house, in which He also washed the feet of His disciples, and the Holy Spirit came upon them in the Day of Pentecost in his house that St. Peter went to it after the angel had released him from prison (Acts 12:12).

The second Liturgy of St. Basil is addressed to the Heavenly Father. The third one is the Gregorian Liturgy addressed to the Son.

The three Liturgies tell the story of the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation starting with the incarnation and His virginal birth from Saint Mary the Virgin, the institution of the sacrament of the Eucharist, His sacrificial death on the cross, His victorious resurrection and ascension to heaven and His second coming to judge the living and the dead.

They all contain so many prayers (about 50 prayers), such as the thanksgiving prayer, the litany for the sick, the travelers, the oblations, the departed, and introduction to the gospel and readings from the Pauline letters, the Catholic (Katholikon), the Praxis (Acts of the Apostles), reading from the Synaxarion (church history), the Trisagion hymn (Holy, Holy, Holy).

Then the Litany for the Gospel, a reading from the Psalms and from the Gospel followed by a sermon. The Liturgy starts with three long Litanies for the Peace, for the Fathers and for the Assemblies.

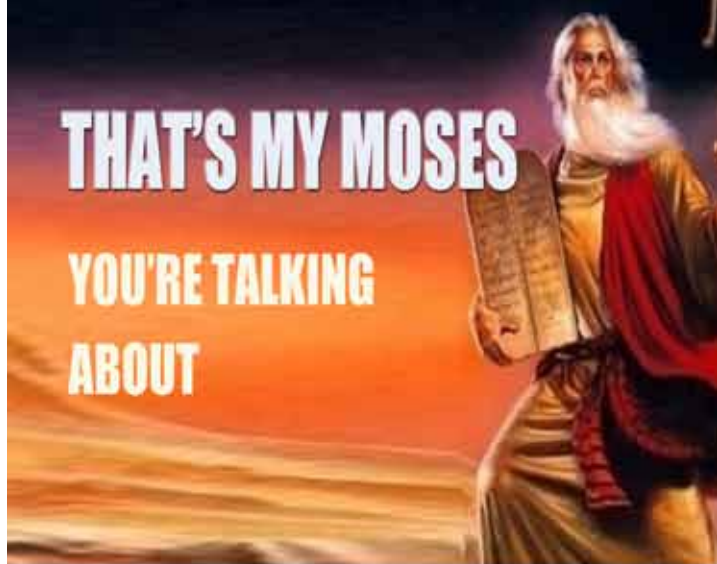
After that comes reciting of the Orthodox Creed by the entire congregation, then the Reconciliation Prayer, the Apostolic holy kiss, greeting one another and the Anaphora, followed with seven short Litanies (prayers) including the leaders of the church, the Patriarch, the Metropolitan, the priests and all the servants, the monasteries, for the blessing of the waters of the rivers, the seeds, the herbs and the plants of the fields, the air of the heaven, the fruits of the earth.

We ask God to bless the crown of the year with His goodness for the sake of the poor, the widow, the orphan, the traveler and the stranger. We pray that God may deal with us according to His goodness, to give food to all flesh and to fill our hearts with joy and gladness that we too having sufficiency in everything always, may abound in every good deed.

We, as Orthodox people do not forget our roots, so we pray for the Commemoration of the Saints, and ask for mercy for our own departed people from our own congregation.

The Liturgy ends with a Fraction according to the season and the Lord's Prayer, the last confession, then the

Distribution of the Holy Sacrament, the Body and the Blood of Christ with joyful hymn of Psalm 150.



Picture this: Your best friend does something to hurt you. You're so offended that you immediately sit down and write a letter telling her off. You get everything off chest, even bring up a number of her past offenses (you've been saying them all on your computer anyway). Satisfied, you rush out and mail the letter.

The next day your "former" best friend says that she feels bad about what happened, and apologizes to you. Of course, you say that you understand and forgive her. You even say you're sorry back, for having doubted her friendship. You both vow to let nothing ever come between you again ... that is, until you remember (gulp!) the letter!

There's no way to retrieve it now. You can't go back to that mailbox, reach in, and start pulling out letters until you find yours (that's a federal offense). You can't hide out at your friend's house and tackle her letter carrier as he makes his delivery (that's an even greater federal offense). No, that letter's destined to be delivered, and there's not a thing you can do to stop it.

When we're feeling angry or hurt, our first instinct is often to even up the score, right then and there. The smart thing to do, though, is to allow things to simmer down. If we take our time responding and make decisions with a clear head, instead of in the heat of the moment, we'll have fewer regrets later on.

It's quite possible that after thinking and praying about it, we still may need to confront someone who's hurt us. But then we can do it calmly, in a spirit of love and genuine concern, and not out of anger or retaliation. That's the best way anyway, because words spoken or written in a loving spirit seldom have to be taken back.

WHY YOU CAN TRUST THE BIBLE



We live in a world that, for the most part, has no absolute standard for life and behavior. We are under a system of morality by majority vote—in other words, whatever feels right sets the standard for behavior.

That philosophy, however, runs contrary to everything we know about our world. For example, in science there are absolutes. Our entire universe is built on fixed laws. We can send satellites and other spacecraft into space and accurately predict their behavior.

Science – whether biology, botany, physiology, astronomy, mathematics, or engineering—is controlled by unalterable and inviolable laws.

Yet in the moral world many people want to live without laws or absolutes. They try to determine their points of reference from their own minds. However, that is impossible. When we move from the physical to the spiritual realm, fixed laws still exist. We cannot exist without laws in the moral and spiritual dimensions. Our Creator built morality into life. Just as there are physical laws, so there are spiritual laws. Let me give you an example.

People have asked me whether I believe that AIDS is the judgment of God. My response is that AIDS is the judgment of God in the same sense that sclerosis of the liver is the judgment of God or that emphysema is the judgment of God. If you drink alcohol, you're liable to get sclerosis of the liver. If you smoke, you're liable to get emphysema or heart disease. And if you choose to violate God's standards for morality, you're likely to contract venereal disease—even AIDS. It is a law that the Bible describes in terms of sowing and reaping.

I'll explain this principle in another illustration.

Gravity is a fixed law. You may choose not to believe in gravity, but regardless of what you choose to believe, if you jump off a building you'll fall to the ground. You don't

have an option. It's not a question of what you believe; it's a question of law. The law will go into effect when you put it to the test. That is true in any other area of physical law.

The same thing is true in the moral and spiritual dimension. To segment life into a physical dimension in which fixed laws cannot be violated and a moral or spiritual dimension in which laws can be violated is an impossible dichotomization. The same God who controls the physical world by fixed laws controls the moral and spiritual world.

Where, then, do you find the laws of morality? Where do you find the fixed standards of human behavior?

How do you determine what is right and what is wrong? Has our Creator revealed such standards to mankind in a way we can understand?

The Bible claims to be the revelation of God to man. Although I have spent many years of my life studying the Bible, I wasn't always committed to it. That commitment developed after my freshman year in college, when I came to grips with my life and future and wanted to know the source of truth. I found that there are several compelling reasons for believing that the Bible is God's word. Let's look at five basic areas that help to prove its authenticity, going from lesser to greater.

The Authenticity of the Bible

1. Experience:

One reason I believe the Bible is true is that it gives us the experience it claims it will give us. For example, the Bible says that God will forgive our sin (1 John 1:9).

I believe that, and I can truly say that I have a sense of freedom from guilt. The Bible also says that "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17). That's what happened to me when I came to Jesus Christ. The Bible changes lives. Millions of people all over the world are living proof that this is true. Maybe you know one or two of them. They've experienced the Bible's power.

Now that's an acceptable argument in one sense but it's weak in another. If you base everything you believe on experience, you're going to run into trouble. Someone people have had some pretty wild experiences. Followers of Muhammad, Buddha, and Krishna can point to various experiences as the basis for their beliefs, but that doesn't necessarily mean that their beliefs are correct. So although experience can help validate the power and authority of the Bible, we will need more evidence.

2. Science:

Switching to objective evidence for the authenticity of the Bible, note that it presents a most plausible understanding of the universe and the existence of life. It presents a God who creates. That makes more sense than believing that everything came out of nothing—that nobody times nothing equals all things – which is essentially what the theory of evolution says. I have an easier time assuming everything was produced by some-one. And the Bible tells me who that someone is: God.

The study of creation helps explain how things became the way they are from a geological standpoint. The Bible tells us of a supernatural creation that took place in six days and of a catastrophic worldwide flood. These two

events help explain many geological and other scientific questions, some of which we will soon explore.

You will find that the Bible is accurate when it intersects with modern scientific concepts. You can read, for example, in Isaiah 40:26 that it is God who creates the universe. He holds the stars together by His power and not one of them is ever missing. In this way the Bible suggests the first law of thermodynamics—that ultimately nothing is ever destroyed.

We read in Ecclesiastes 1:10: “Is there anything of which one might say, ‘See this, it is new’?” The answer immediately follows: “Already it has existed for ages which were before us.” Ancient writers of the Bible thousands of years before the laws of thermodynamics had been categorically stated were affirming the conservation of mass and energy.

The second law of thermodynamics states that although mass and energy are always conserved nevertheless are breaking down and going from order to disorder, from cosmos to chaos, from system to non-system.

The Bible, contrary to the theory of evolution, affirms that. As matter breaks down and energy dissipates, ultimately the world and universe as we know it will become dead. It will be unable to reproduce itself. The Bible frankly states that. Romans 8 says that all creation groans because of its curse, which is described at the beginning of the Bible (Genesis 3). That curse – and God’s plan to reverse the curse—is reflected throughout biblical teaching.

The science of hydrology studies the cycle of water, which consists of three major phases: evaporation, condensation, and precipitation. Clouds move over the land and drop water through precipitation. The rain runs into creeks, the creeks run into streams, the streams run into the sea and the evaporation process takes place all the way along the path. That same process is described in scripture. Ecclesiastes 1 and Isaiah 55 present the entire water cycle: “All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again” (Ecclesiastes 1:7). “For the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth” (Isaiah 55:10). Also, Job 36:27-28 speaks of evaporation and condensation—centuries prior to any scientific observation of the process: “He [God] draws up the drops of water, they distill rain from the midst, which the clouds pour down, they drip upon man abundantly.”

In the 1500s, where Copernicus first presented the idea that the earth was in motion, people were astounded; they previously believed that the earth was a flat disc and that if you went through the Pillars of Hercules at the Rock of Gibraltar you’d fall off the edge. In the seventeenth century, men like Kepler and Galileo gave birth to modern astronomy. Prior to that, the universe was generally thought to contain only about one thousand stars, which was the number that had been counted.

However, in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, the number of the stars of heaven are equated with the number of grains of sand on the seashore. God told Abraham, “I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand on the seashore” (22:17). Jeremiah 33:22 says that the stars can’t be counted. Again God is speaking: “As the host of heaven cannot be counted, and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David.” Today several million stars have been catalogued, through hundreds of millions remain unlisted.

The oldest book in the Bible, the book of Job, predates Christ by about two thousand years. Yet Job 26:7 says “He... hangs the earth on nothing.”

In the sacred books of other religions you may read that the earth is on the back of elephants and that they produce earthquakes when they shake. The cosmogony of Greek mythology is at about the same level of sophistication. But the Bible is in a completely different class. It says, “He.... Hangs the earth on nothing”

Job also says the earth “is turned like the clay to the deal” (38:14, KJV). In those days soft clay was used for writing and a seal was used for applying one’s signature. One kind of seal was a hollow cylinder of hardened clay with a signature raised on it. A stick went through it so that it could be rolled like a rolling pin. The writer could, therefore, roll his signature across the soft clay and in that way sign his name. In saying the earth is turned like clay to the seal, Job may have implied that it rotates on its axis. The Hebrew word translated “earth” (hug) refers to a sphere.

It’s also interesting to note that the earth maintains perfect balance. If you’ve ever seen a basketball that’s out of balance, you know that rotates unevenly. You can imagine what would happen if the earth were like that. The earth is a perfect sphere, and it is perfectly balanced. The depths of the sea have to be balanced with the height of the mountains. The branch of science that studies that balance is called isostasy. In Isaiah 40:12, centuries before science even conceived of this phenomenon, Isaiah said that God “has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and marked of the heavens by a span, and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, and weighted the mountains in a balance, and the hills in a pair of scales.”

English philosopher Herbert Spencer who died in 1903, was famous for applying scientific discoveries to philosophy. He categorized that which is knowable in the natural sciences as time, force, motion, space and matter. However, Genesis 1:1, the first verse in the Bible, says, “In the beginning [time] God [force] created [motion] the heavens [space] and the earth [matter].” God laid it all out in the very first verse of Scripture.

The Bible truly is the revelation of God to mankind. He wants us to know about Him and the world He created. Although the

Bible does not contain scientific terminology, it is amazingly accurate wherever it happens to refer to scientific truth. Now someone might say, "Wait a minute. The Old Testament says that the sun once stood still, and if that happened, the sun didn't really stand still; the earth stopped revolving." Yes, but that statement is based on the perception of someone on earth. When you got up this morning, you didn't look east and say, "What a lovely earth rotation!" From your perspective, you saw a sunrise. And because you permit Scripture to do that as well.

3. Miracles:

A third evidence for the authenticity of the Bible is that it is a book of miracles. That's what we would expect of a revelation of God himself, who by definition is supernatural. Miracles are supernatural alteration of the natural world—a great way to get man's attention.

The Bible includes supportive information to establish the credibility of the miracles it records. For example, Scripture says that after Jesus had risen from the dead more than five hundred people saw Him alive (1 Cor. 15:6). That would be enough witnesses to convince any jury. The miraculous nature of the Bible demonstrates the involvement of God. But to believe the miracles, we must take the Bible at its word. So to further validate its authenticity we must take another step and consider its incredible ability to predict the future.

4. Prophecy:

There is no way to explain the Bible's ability predict the future unless we see God as its Author. For example, the Old Testament contains more than three hundred references to the Messiah of Israel that were precisely fulfilled by Jesus Christ (Christ is the Green translation of the Hebrew work Messiah).

Peter Stoner, a scientist in the area of mathematical probabilities, says in his book *Science Speaks* that if we take just eight of the Old Testament prophecies Christ fulfilled, we find that the probability of their coming to pass is one in 1017. He illustrates that staggering amount this way:

We take 1017 silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet

deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly... Blindfold a man and tell him.... He must pick up one silver dollar.... What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them come true in any one man. ([Chicago: Moody, 1963] , pp 100-107)

And Jesus fulfilled hundreds more than just eight prophecies!

The Bible includes many other prophecies as well. For example, the Bible predicted that a man named Cyrus would be born, would rise to power in the Middle East and would release the Jewish people from captivity (Isaiah 44:28-45:7). Approxi-

mately 150 years later Cyrus the Great became king of Persia and released the Jew. No man could have known that would happen; only God could.

In Ezekiel 26 God says through the prophet that the Phoenician city of Tyre would be destroyed, specifying that a conqueror would come in and wipe out the city. He said that the city would be scraped clean and that the rubble left on the city's surface would be thrown into the ocean. The prophecy ended by saying that men would leave their fishnets there and that the city would never be rebuilt.

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon laid siege to Tyre three years after the prophecy was given. When he broke down the gates, he found the city almost empty. The Phoenicians were navigators and colonizers of the ancient world; they had taken their boats and sailed to an island a half mile offshore. They had reestablished their city on the island during the years of siege. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Tyre. This left the prophecy partially unfulfilled.

About 250 years later Alexander the Great came into the area of Tyre needing supplies for his eastern campaign. He sent word to the island city, but they refused his request. Alexander was so infuriated at their response that he and his army picked up the rubble that was left from Nebuchadnezzar's devastation of the mainland city and threw it into the sea. They used it to build a causeway, which allowed them to march to the island and destroy the city. That exactly fulfilled what Ezekiel had predicted hundreds of years previously.

If you travel to the site of Tyre today you'll see fisherman there drying their nets. The city was never rebuilt. Peter Stoner said that the probability of that prophecy happening by chance is one in 75 million.

The Assyrian city of Nineveh is another example. It was one of the most formidable cities in the ancient world. It reached its apex during the seventh century B.C. Yet the prophet Nahum predicted that it would happen soon be wiped out. He said an overflowing river would crush the gates and that the city would be destroyed (Nahum 1:8, 2:6).

In those days when people walled in their cities, they tended to build gates down into the rivers nearby. The water could flow through the bars and the gates and keep out intruders. In the case of Nineveh, a great storm and flooded the river, carrying away a vital part of the city walls. That permitted besieging Medes and Babylonians to enter the city and destroy it, just as the prophet predicted.

5. The Life of Christ: Additional evidence for the authenticity of the Bible is Christ Himself. As we have already seen, He fulfilled many detailed prophecies and did many miracles. It is important to note that He also believed in the authority of the Bible. In Matthew 5:18 He says, "Until heaven and earth shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished."



Stories of Changed Life

STORY OF KADAMBARI JOURNEY FROM HINDU ROYAL FAMILY TO CHRIST



I hail from the Hindu royal family. My uncle Fidel Ramos was the former president of Phillipines and my aunt Leticia Ramos Shahani is the senator. My father was a prominent business man and owned huge properties. I have two sisters Shanta and Anita. I was blessed and had the best of everything in life. I went to college and it was fun studying there. I was the pet student of my principal and teachers, and they all loved me. I was very good student and often won prizes for my college in the inter-collegiate music, dance, and drama competitions. During my vacations I enjoyed visiting my aunts and meeting Bollywood personalities, because many of the stars stayed at my aunt's hotel in Mumbai. I was young and naïve and enjoyed hearing them gossip and tell stories. I desired and dreamed to be popular and make it big one day like them. I had inborn talent since childhood and had a lovely voice but that was not sufficient.

In the meantime I had completed my Masters in Philosophy, and then we moved to Mumbai, where I later obtained the Diploma in Advertising and Public Relations. I knew I had to work hard to make an impact. I started my music training under the guidance of Ustad Fiaz Ahmed Khan and later Taj Ahmed Khan. Within a short span of time I became very popular and started doing concerts all over India and abroad. I then joined hands with L B Private Ltd. and launched my career as an independent Bollywood film producer. At this same time I started Sai Baba Textile garment manufacturing company to supply garments to U.S and Russian markets. I was smart intelligent and prosperous. The Director of Devidayal stamping Industries Sanjay fell in love with me. Soon we became close friends. As the years passed by our love grew fonder and we realized we were made for each other. But God had a different plan. I came to know the intentions of his parents and that point I opted to break off with him. It was tough and heartbreaking but I had decided it once for all. Eight months passed and I refused to meet him or receive his call. Then one night he came over to my place and said I have come to marry you I love you and I can't live without you. That night we got privately married in the temple according to the Hindu rites. Life was a bed of roses I had it all career business and the love of my life. I couldn't ask for more. It was then in the tragic year 1993 that I lost my precious mom my sweet aunt and my cousin brother. I was devastated and left for England. I tried my best to get

over the loss, not knowing that life had more to offer. In my absence Sanjay was forced by his parents to desert me and marry the girl of their choice. He cried his heart out and tried his best to convince them but all was in vain. They threatened to disown him as a son and the heir to their estate. He had no choice left, so in the presence of his mother he jumped from the 9th floor of his building and committed suicide.

When I got back from England he was gone. I was shocked, shattered and cried my heart out but nothing could bring him back to me. I realized life was meaningless, all was in vain. I went into a state of depression and fear. I was physically and mentally sick. My business started failing and I had huge financial losses. I ultimately decided to shut down both my Film Production Company and Textile Company. I stopped doing my concerts, expenses increased and income decreased. The storm came, the wind blew and all was lost. I knew I had no purpose to live now.

A close friend of mine had been telling me about Jesus on many occasions, but I would not listen to what she had to say. I was a Hindu and was praying to my gods for help, but none of them answered my prayers. My friend kept urging me to come to a prayer meeting to see for myself that Jesus is the One true living God. I decided to go. At the meeting the Holy Spirit moved me.

It was at that moment Jesus came to my life and touched me. He became the purpose and strength of my new life. I fell at His feet and asked for forgiveness. The Bible became the source of all my joy. I loved reading it and claimed every promise of the Lord. Every promise came to pass in my life and I became a living testimony of the true God Jesus Christ. I was full of joy, peace prosperity, hope and faith. In the year 1999 I was baptized. Life became beautiful once again. The more I read the Word of God the more I yearned to hear his voice and wait on him. I knew he would not forsake me and all would be perfect in His time. Things changed; the most popular Zee TV channel signed a contract with me as their singing artist. I was excited and signed the contract. They were preparing to make my music albums. They wanted to release my Sai Baba bhajan album which I had recorded before I knew the Lord with world renowned artist Anup Jalota. It was a very tough decision to make. Satan lured me with all types of worldly gain but I opted to be faithful to The Lord. I

gave up the contract and burned all the fliers that were to be pasted in Mumbai. The Word of the Lord came to me through visions and dreams. He asked me to go to the United States. I didn't know a single soul and thought it must be my own idea and not the Lord's plan. I prayed and asked the Lord for a sign saying if He provided me with the air ticket and the dollars I needed then I would go. The Lord answered my prayer. I got the dollars and a free Delta airline ticket to travel. I then came to the U.S. not knowing a single soul. I travelled by first class and the Lord opened the doors for my ministry. I did concerts all over America glorifying God and sharing my testimonies. The Gospel was preached to thousands who attended my concerts. People from different Hindu backgrounds wanted to know about the Living God Jesus. Soon the Lord opened doors for me to perform in India, Singapore, Malaysia, Melbourne and Sydney Australia and many locations all across New Zealand. I started recording albums for the Lord. I was blessed with the gift of composing and writing lyrics also. Many albums became super hits and were appreciated by one and all. I then recorded songs for Vishwavani in the Sindhi language and later some in English. My concerts drew large crowds and the presence of the Lord was always with me wherever I performed. I did concerts to raise funds for building churches, for the poor and needy and also for the Blind Association. My testimonies have been broadcast over Voice International Australia, Sunrise Radio London, Radio FM, Jeevanathan Radio, Dhivya Vision, Vandana TV, Transworld Radio Vishwavani and the BBC. I was also blessed to be honored by the Indo American Christian Federation of America to receive the Lifetime MILLENNIUM STEWARDSHIP AWARD for preaching the Word of God through my music ministry with unwavering devotion. In the year 2004 the Lord spoke to me that I would be married by the end of the year. He kept his promise. In him all is yes and amen. By Nov 2004 the Lord sent his chosen one David Davidson to Mumbai. He proposed to me and I was married to him on 28th Dec. 2004. I am blessed to be married to this anointed man of God, my husband. I have a wonderful life and our desire is to do God's will and spread the Gospel across the Nations and to bring from the four corners of the earth, all his lost sheep back together in the Garden of Renown.



DON'T BLAME THE MAILMAN!

By Fr. Augustinos

Picture this: Your best friend does something to hurt you. You're so offended that you immediately sit down and write a letter telling her off. You get everything off chest, even bring up a number of her past offenses (you've been saying them all on your computer anyway). Satisfied, you rush out and mail the letter.

The next day your "former" best friend says that she feels bad about what happened, and apologizes to you. Of course, you say that you understand and forgive her. You even say you're sorry back, for having doubted her friendship. You both vow to let nothing ever come between you again ... that is, until you remember (gulp!) the letter!

There's no way to retrieve it now. You can't go back to that mailbox, reach in, and start pulling out letters until you find yours (that's a federal offense). You can't hide out at your friend's house and tackle her letter carrier as he makes his delivery (that's an even greater federal offense). No, that letter's destined to be delivered, and there's not a thing you can do to stop it.

When we're feeling angry or hurt, our first instinct is often to even up the score, right then and there. The smart thing to do, though, is to allow things to simmer down. If we take our time responding and make decisions with a clear head, instead of in the heat of the moment, we'll have fewer regrets later on.

It's quite possible that after thinking and praying about it, we still may need to confront someone who's hurt us. But then we can do it calmly, in a spirit of love and genuine concern, and not out of anger or retaliation. That's the best way anyway, because words spoken or written in a loving spirit seldom have to be taken back.



Daily Meditations

By Mark Hanna

[The previous articles published during the last five years were written by Mark Hanna from twenty years ago, before he got the terrible disease of MS.

But this daily short meditations and quotations are recently emailed by him –with eye gaze to his I Pad- which is the only thing he could do- to his relatives and friends.]

+ Every weakness you have is an opportunity for God to show His strength in your life.

+ It is really beautiful when someone prays for you without you knowing it. God not only wants us to pray, but if possible to fast for whatever matter is troubling my brother/ sister. The point is to help our fellow man to divide his burden, hence, the Bible tells us, **“Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Romans 12), to be a “Good Samaritan” (Luke 10) and in the book of St. James he writes very important things, “Pure and undefiled religion before God...to visit widows and orphans in their time of need and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27); and “He who knows to do good and does not do it is a sin” (James 4).**

+ There is no battle that God won't you win, no bridge that God won't help you cross. He is SO MUCH bigger than anything you may face. Leave everything confidently in His hands and He will take care of you and it.

In the Bible, king Jehoshaphat was in a war and all odds were against him until he let God take care of the matter crying to God saying, **“Lord we don't know what to do but our eyes are on You” (2 Chron. 22:20).** King Jehoshaphat won the war.

+ Don't mix bad words with your bad mood. You will have opportunities to change the mood, but you will never get the opportunity to replace the words.

Our Two Hands

(Based on the parable
of the rich fool Luke
12:16-21)



This is a good lesson for the youth: Ask them. “Why do you think God gave us two hands?”

Some may answer that we may receive more! This was the answer of the rich fool!

Add to their answers: God gave us two hands so that with one we may RECEIVE from Him, and with the other we may GIVE to others.

How many hands did the rich fool have in the parable? He may have two hands physically, but in God's eyes, he had only one hand, because he only took the many crops God gave him. He never gave anything to help anyone. Do you remember the story of the Good Samaritan? (Lk.10:30). How many hands did the Good Samaritan have? He also had two! With one he received from God, with the other he gave to help people in need. If we asked them, “Name some of the gifts they receive from God”, most probably answer:

1. The air we breathe.
2. Our food and drink.
3. Our parents.
4. The earth.
5. God's love.
6. His forgiveness.
7. His Son Jesus Christ.
8. The Holy Bible and the church.
9. His Holy Spirit.
10. His body and His blood.

If we asked them, “Name some ways by which we give to help people in need. They will come up with many answers.

Everything we have, comes from God. We do not really own anything. What we think we own had been merely loaned to us by God. One day we shall be called upon to give it back to Him. And Jesus tells us that we shall be judged on how we used what God loaned us. Did we have two hands, or just one? Did we just take, or did we take and give?

Sowing and Reaping



Fr. Augustinos Hanna



This is the law of nature, which God set from the beginning of creation when He declared, ***“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease”*** (Genesis 1:11, 12 & 8:22).

This is a lesson which the student learns in his school and the farmer learns in his field. Everyone can sow the seeds of health or sickness, the seeds of blessing or of curse, and the seeds of success or failure, of freedom or slavery, of life or death... and of eternal life or everlasting condemnation.

Our short life on earth is the time of sowing and eternity is the time of harvest. When we apply the rules of sowing and harvesting on our spiritual life, we learn these four important lessons:

1. The harvest is the fruit of the same seeds:

The Lord Jesus asked, ***“Do men gather grapes from thorn-bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit”*** (Matt. 7:16, 17). St. Paul confirmed the same fact saying, ***“Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”*** (Gal. 6:7). He explained it in other words, “For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he

who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Gal. 6:8, 9).

1) In the field of evil: Some examples.....

A) Jacob deceived his father Isaac and lied to him; he reaped exactly the same when his children deceived and lied to him and made him believe that a wild beast had devoured him and kept weeping years!

B) Pharaoh killed the male babies of the children of Israel, by throwing them into the River Nile, he reaped the same kind of deed when the Lord struck his son and every firstborn of the Egyptians and finally Pharaoh himself and his army were drowned in the Red Sea (Exod. 14 & 15).

C) Adoni-Bezek, the king of Bezek, used to humiliate the kings he defeated by cutting off their thumbs and big toes of their hands and legs!

When he fell captive in the hands of Judah, the first thing done to him was to cut off his thumbs and big toes! And Adoni-Bezek said, ***“Seventy Kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off***

used to gather their food under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me” (Judges 1:6, 7).

2) In the Field of Good: Joseph sowed the seeds of chastity and honesty, rejecting the evil offer of his master’s wife to commit fornication. The Lord rewarded him openly and he became the second man in the land of Egypt after Pharaoh. The same thing happened with Daniel who ***“purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the King’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank”*** (Dan. 1:8). He reaped good health, a great position, visions and prophecies about Christ. God saved him from the lion’s den and called him the beloved man.

2. Sowing is little while the Harvest is Plenty:

The sower puts the seeds in the palm of his hand or in a small bag and scatter them everywhere, while in the season of reaping we find the wide fields are full of great harvest of crops, plants, fruits and trees full of seeds. This principle is applicable also in both good and evil.

(1) The Lord Jesus praised the widow’s two mite donation and Mary’s gift of the alabaster flask of the fragrant oil and rewarded them generously here and thereafter a hundredfold.

(2) Ananias and Sapphira his wife lied to Peter and they both reaped an immediate condemnation and fell down and breathed their last at once (Acts 5). And ***“whoever says to his brother, ‘You fool’ shall be in danger of hell fire”*** (Matt. 5:22). Also few words of gossip, cause much damage to the reputation of a lady or a servant of God, a family or a church. The murderer may kill with a bullet which cost him a few cents, commits his crime in a second, but the harvest of his evil deed will cost him a judgment of a lifetime sentence or execution and eternal hell.

3. The seed is Hidden But its Harvest is Manifest:

The sower digs in the ground to bury the seeds, then “the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head” (Mark 4:28). No one can see the seeds while underground, but at the time of the harvest everyone can see the fields full of golden corn or huge and high trees.

(1) David committed adultery and murder in secret, but he reaped the same return within his family tenfold. Nathan the prophet delivered to him the judgment of the Lord: ***“You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor... For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun”*** (1 Sam. 12:9-12).

+ King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel plotted secretly to kill Naboth and take his vineyard. But God, who watches from heaven, sent Elijah the prophet to them with His judgment: ***“Have you murdered and also taken possession? Thus says the Lord: In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.”*** (1 Kings 21:19-24).

(2) On the other hand, the Bible is full of applications to what the Lord said, ***“Your Father who sees in secret (your charitable deeds, prayers and fasting) will Himself reward you openly”*** (Matt. 6)

4. Each Has a Season

Solomon the wise man said, ***“To everything there is a season, time for every purpose under heaven”*** (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

This world is the field of our sowing time, and the whole eternity is the everlasting time for reaping. This fact is confirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ when he said to the rich man in Hades about Lazarus, ***“Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented”*** (Luke 16).



Congratulations

UNITED IN MARRIAGE



St. John Church congratulates

Dr. Henry Kirolos & Maria Zamary

Dr. Henry and Maria were united in Holy Matrimony on Saturday, the 22nd of July 2017 at St. John Coptic Orthodox Church in Covina, California. Congratulations and many years to the newlyweds and their families. May Christ our Lord bless their life together with health, harmony and happiness.

Baptisms



St. John Church congratulates Dr. John Josephson and his wife Dr. Nancy Selim-Josephson for the baptism of their baby-girl

Isabella Mary

On Saturday, August 5, 2017 at St. John Church in Covina. May the Lord bless her life as she got the Heavenly Citizenship (Phil. 3:20), grant her health, growth in stature and grace. Congratulations to her grandparents.



Andrew Kaldas and Araxia

Andrew and Araxia were united in Holy Matrimony in June 9th 2017. Congratulations and many years full of blessings, happiness and prosperity in God's love. Congratulations to their families.



St. John church congratulates Dr. Magdy Tawadros and his wife Courtney, Geddo Dr. Foad Tawadros and Teta Paulette, for the baptism of their daughter

Ella Kate Tawadros

On Saturday, July 29, 2017. May the Lord Jesus bless her life with health, strength and wisdom

Congratulations



Dear Dr. Benjamin M. Kamel

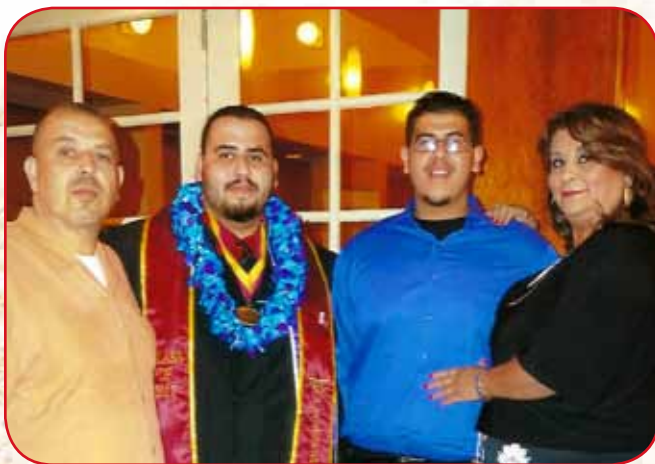
Congratulations Dr. Benjamin, we thank God for your Accomplishment and we the Lord to continue blessing every aspect of your life. *Love, Mirvet, Basim and Nicholas Mom, Dad, Nathan, Dina and Monica.*

* * *



Congratulations graduate. No matter where you go, or how successful you become never lose faith in God. As for your education, reach for the stars because the sky is the limit. May God continue to bless you in all your endeavors. May this day be the beginning of a future filled with much success and happiness- *Love, Mirvet, Basim and Nicholas*

* * *



Congratulations Nicholas Wassif. We are proud of your accomplishment in your life. God gave you strength to overcome so many obstacles, but nothing ever stopped you. May the good Lord continue to bless your journey with happiness and lots of strength. You are my Rock and my backbone. *-Love, Mirvet Basim, Peter Wassif.*

* * *



Congratulations *Andrew* on graduating from High School. We are so proud of you and all your accomplishments. May God continue to bless your life in every way. Good luck in college.

- Love, Mom, Dad and Brothers Brandon and Matthew.

زيارة الانبا موسي اسقف الشباب

