

SAINT JOHN

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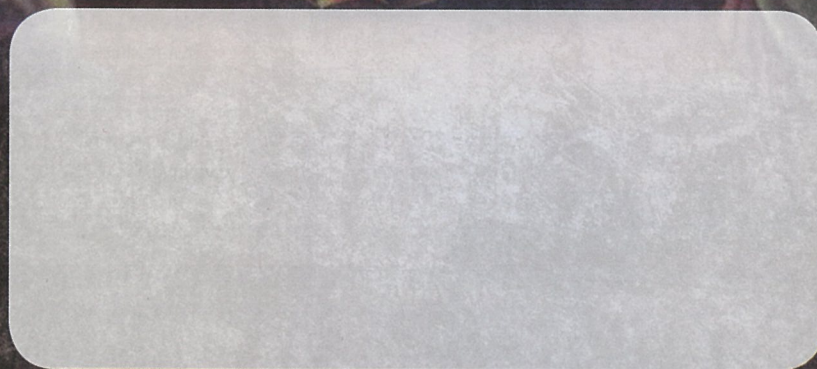
July / August 2016

A COPTIC CHRISTIAN BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

COVINA, CA



PENTECOST



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*Verse
of the Month*



*The Heavenly Father said, "This is My beloved Son,
hear Him" (Lk.9:35)*

*"His mother said, 'Whatever He says to you , do it'"
(Jn. 2:5)*

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**SCHEDULE of MEETINGS and EVENTS
for the MONTH of July & August 2016**

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
* * *	+ Thursday Morning + Senior Citizen Club 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		+ Vespers; Bible Study 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
+ Arabic Liturgy 8:00 - 11:15 a.m. (In the Old Church)			+ Beginners' Deacons- Meeting 5:30 p.m.
			+ Elementary Meeting 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.
Servants' Meeting + 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. 2nd & 4th 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	+ New members Fr. Daniel 3-4 pm + College Youth Meeting 7:00- 9:00 p.m.
	Tutoring for new students 6:00-8:00 pm for girls & boys on Thursday 6-8 p.m.		High School & J. High Meetings 7:15 - 9:00 p.m.

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Church Book Store: (562) 900 -2694 & (909) 730 - 9976

1. Apostles' Feast:

The Church celebrates the Feast of the apostles on Tuesday, July 12. The Liturgy at St. John's will be celebrated from 8-11:00 a.m.



2 - Father's Day Celebration:

St. John Church celebrated Father's Day on Sunday, June 19.

3. The Youth Graduation Party:

On Saturday, June 11, St. John Church held her Annual graduation party. The Church priests distributed gifts to the graduates from University, High School and Junior High. Our best wishes to all the graduates for a bright future in God fear and love.



4. The Youth Summer Club:

The Church summer club started Monday, June 13, weekdays from 6:00-9:30 PM. The program includes bodily exercises and sports, besides some social and spiritual activities (See 1 Timothy 4:8).

5. Martyrdom of St. James:

On Monday, July 25 the church celebrates the martyrdom of St. James, son of Alphaeus, the great apostle, the Lord Jesus' brother and the first Bishop of Jerusalem and author of the first Katholikon Letters that bears his name (Let us memorize chapter 3 of his letter).

6. Fast and Feast of St. Mary (August 7- 22):

On Sunday, August 7, 2016, the fast of the Theotokos St. Mary starts for two weeks until her feast on Monday, August 22nd. During the second week there will be daily Liturgies and revival meetings.



7. Feast of Transfiguration (August 19):

On Friday, August 19, the church celebrates the Feast of Christ's Transfiguration. The Liturgy is from 8:00-10:00 a.m. It is one of the Lord's Minor Feasts.



8. Other famous feasts during July & August:

- 1) July 1: Martyrdom of St. Moses the Black.
- 2) July 10: Departure of St. Cyril of Alexandria.
- 3) July 14: Departure of St. Shenouda the Archimandrite
- 4) July 15: Departure of St. Bishoy, the wilderness Star.
- 5) July 22: Departure of St. Ephraim the Syrian.
- 6) July 31: Martyrdom of St. Abanoub El-Neheissy.



9. H.H. Pope Tawadros II:

+ The Pope offered a message of condolences to the victims of Egypt-Air flight.

+ Pope Tawadros returned from his pastoral and medical trip in Vienna.

+ In Pentecost days, His Holiness presided the Coptic Synod in Cairo and ordained new bishops.



10. H. E. Metropolitan Serapion:

On Sunday, May 22, Metropolitan Serapion attended the Egyptian Bible Society celebration at St. John Church in Covina and talked about the Holy Bible and the Church Fathers.

+ H.E. also, attended the Coptic Orthodox Synod in Egypt on the Pentecost Feast and shared in the ordination of the new two auxiliary Bishops Abraham and Kirollos, for the Diocese of Los Angeles.

11. H.E. Metropolitan Benjamin:

H. E. Metropolitan Benjamin of Monofiah, blessed St. John Church in Covina, by celebrating the Liturgy on Wednesday, May 25, and delivered spiritual talks in the Family Convention at San Diego. They are recorded on CD's and DVD's and Flashes at the church book store.

12. Kids Summer Camp:

St. John's Kids' Camp for 3rd to 6th grades will be held this summer from July 16 to 18, in the Coptic Village at Big-Bear.

13. St. John Annual Summer Festival (Sept. 23-25): St. John Church holds her Annual Grand Festival for three days, around the Feast of the Cross, from Friday, September 23- Sunday, 25, 2016. The details will be in the next issue.

14. Other Activities:

+ The Senior Citizen Club and Fellowship every Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

+ The new Women's Meeting is growing every Saturday 5:00 – 6:30 p.m., before the vespers.

+ The Arabic youth meeting every Friday from 8:00-10:00 p.m. under the supervision of Fr. Gawargious.

+ The Family meeting continues its activities every Thursday from 7:30 to 9: 00. Fr. Augustinos, Emad Fawzy and Tamer Wadie are serving with him in that meeting.

+ The Medical office is treating freely the new comers and those who have no insurance, the 1st Sunday after the church at 1347 Grand Ave. Glendora, CA.

+ Food Bank & Botique serves during 2nd and 4th Thursdays, every month from 5:30 p.m.



10 Similarities Between Sts. Peter & Paul

By H. H. Pope Shenouda

, Translated by Fr. Augustinos Hanna

“from the Pope’s Pamphlet, “Saints Peter and Paul



The Coptic Orthodox Church celebrates the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul in the Coptic month of Abib 5, which is equivalent to July 12, and called the “Apostles’ Feast”

The Church reveres and praises these two saints so much especially in the fraction of the liturgy of the Apostles’ fast and feast. Although there are no many Churches called after their names together, there is one in Cairo and another in Los Angeles, California.

Those two saints represent two different types of personalities, messages, styles, and each of them has certain characteristics. But they have also many similarities in many essential things such as:

1. Both were Jews: St. Paul mentioned that he was from the tribe of Benjamin. But the Bible did not tell us from which Jewish tribe the apostle Peter was.

2. The Lord called the two of them: Peter was fishing with his brother Andrew at the Sea of Galilee, when the Lord said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. They immediately left their nets and followed Him” (Matt. 4:18-20).

St. Paul was called by the three persons of the Holy Trinity. The Lord Jesus Christ called him on the road to Damascus when “Suddenly a light shone around him from heaven and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me’ Then the Lord sent him to Ananias of Damascus (Acts 9:1-4). And as our Lord Jesus Christ called him, also the Holy Spirit called him saying, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” (Acts 13:2). Likewise, God the Father also called him. In that, the apostle Paul says, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...” (Gal. 1:15-17).

3. The Lord changed both their names: Peter was called Simon son of Jonah and the Lord changed his name to Peter (John 21: 15; Matt. 16:17,18), while Saul name was changed to Paul. The lord Jesus called him Saul when He first appeared to him, then called him Paul during his ministry (Acts 23:11).

4. The Holy Spirit ascended on both of them and they spoke in tongues: St. Peter spoke with tongues in the Day of Pentecost, and St. Paul said, “I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all” (1 Cor. 14:18), and each of them had the authority to give the gift of the Holy Spirit to others.

5. Each of them performed miracles and Signs: It was said of St. Peter; “They brought the sick out into the streets

and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them” (Acts 5:15). It was also said of St. Paul, “God worked unusual miracle by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them” (Acts 19:11, 16).

6. Each of them raised the dead:

The Apostle Peter raised a certain disciple named Tabitha from the dead. He prayed and said, “Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes...then he gave her his hand and lifted her up and presented her alive” (Acts 9:36-41).

Also the apostle Paul raised a young man named “Eutychus who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, “Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him...And they brought the young man in alive” (Acts 20: 7-12).

7. They were both, fervent and full of fiery Zeal in preaching: Each of them preached, taught and sacrificed a lot in ministry. Since the Day of Pentecost, Peter was preaching and witnessing to the resurrection of Christ in the temple and everywhere. From Joppa, he moved to Caesarea where he preached and baptized Cornelius and all those who were with him (Acts 9:22,31; 10:1). Also, he preached to the Jews, “the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” (1 Per. 1: 1).

Regarding St. Paul, he said, “but I labored more abundantly than they all” (1 Cor. 15:10).

8. Each of them was bold and courageous in his preaching: The apostle Peter did not care of the Jewish threats and said, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:19). He rebuked the Jews and accused them with ignorance, betrayal and murder of their Messiah (Acts 3:13-15). And the apostle Paul was very brave when he talked to his judge Felix about Righteousness, self-control and judgment to come, Felix was afraid” (Acts 24:25). He did the same with king Agrippa and the governor Festus (Acts 26).

9. They both were strict in punishing the sinners: We see that from St. Peter’s punishment to Ananias and his wife when they lied to him and they fell dead (Acts 5:4, 11, see also 8:18-23). St. Paul also was so strict with the sinner of Corinth (1 Cor. 5), and also with Elymas the sorcerer and false prophet (Acts 13:6-12).

10. They both were humble, exposed to many severe persecutions and finally were martyred by Nero: (Luke 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:13; 1 Cor. 15:8, 9; 2 Cor 11).

Arrows

in the Hand of a Warrior

By Fr. Augustinos Hanna



Congratulations to all the graduates of the class 2016!

Solomon, the wise king says in Psalm 127, "Like arrows in the hand of a mighty warrior, so are the children of the youth" (Ps. 127:4).

Youth are like "arrows" for many reasons:

1. Powerful Weapon:

The arrow was the most powerful weapon in the days of David and Solomon. It is very fast, very sharp, strong and fatal to the enemy if it is aimed right. St. John says to the youth, "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." (1 Jn. 2:14).

Also, David, the Psalmist, says, "Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies" (Ps.45). You are the soldiers of Christ, members of His body, the children of the Coptic martyrs, St. George, St. Mina, St. Demiana. The secret of their glory, faith, courage, success and victory was due to considering God as their top priority. They loved Christ more than their own lives. They kept His commandments and had great zeal for his Church.

2. Mighty Hands:

The arrow, in order to be effective, must be put into strong and skillful hands. Our verse says, "Like arrows in the hand of a mighty warrior, so are the youth". When you put yourself in the mighty hands of God, He will use you in a miraculous way for His glory. Your life will be greatly useful, extraordinary and sharp. Therefore trust in the Lord and give Him your heart and let your eyes observe His ways. You will not miss the target.

3. Right Target:

With prudence and in the mighty hand of God, which never fails, you as an arrow, will be directed aright to the mark, God's glory and the service of your generation. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). This goal must be crystal clear before you. It is not money, not earthly pleasures, but it is eternal life (Phil. 3:14).

4. No Turning Back:

Since the arrow has been shot from its bow, no one can stop it or change its direction or withdraw it. Remember the song, "I have decided to follow Jesus...no turning back". Advance; make progress, "Grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord".

The 7 Keys of Success (Psalm 1:1-3)

These are some golden advices to our dear graduates to guarantee their continuous success and happiness:

1. Put Christ First:

"Jesus said, "I Am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (Rev. 22:13). Remember that the first and the greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord your God from all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). When you break this commandment, then you are committing the first and the greatest sin.

2. Honor God by reading the Bible daily:

The Bible has all the keys of success, blessing, safety and happiness. God said to Joshua, the Commander in Chief of His armies: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night...For then you will make your way prosperous, and you will have good success" (Josh. 1:8, 9). Jesus said, "He who loves Me keeps My commandments" (Jn.14). Yes, on daily basis, day and night, No matter what how much you are busy or sick or...or...etc. Let Not the devil steal one single day without reading your Bible.

3. Be Attached to the Church:

Always be involved in her worship, fellowship, meetings, Communion and activities:

4. Keep the 5th commandment to honor, serve and respect your father and mother.

5. Avoid bad company:

The Bible says, "Evil company corrupts good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33 & memorize by heart Psalm 1).

Select carefully good and righteous friends. Not everyone who goes to church is good; Satan himself goes to church! (Matt. 13:47).

6. Be always organized, love order, cleanliness and morals: Let these be part of your personality, make a schedule for your time and keep your room clean and neat.

7. Have Good Hobbies: Select your hobbies, some sports, some arts like good music, painting, reading and helping others.

Support Increases in Congress To Designate Muslim Brotherhood as Terrorist Org.

By Ryan Mauro
Tuesday, May 3, 2016



Over 60 members of Congress are cosponsoring the bill or have voted in its favor. It now has bipartisan support and has passed the House Judiciary Committee. Four organizations representing persecuted Christians are also pushing for the bill.

The next steps are for it to come to a vote in the House of Representatives and to be approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where it is currently stalled.

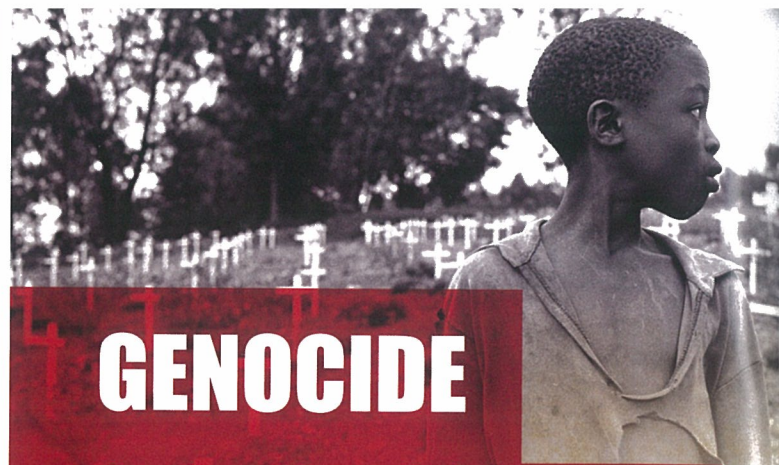
Regardless of whether it passes or not, the legislation is an unprecedented opportunity to educate congressmen about the Muslim Brotherhood's involvement in terrorism. The legislation also outlines how the Brotherhood is linked to the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT).

See below for a list of members of Congress who have endorsed the legislation, those who have declared opposition to it and those on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who have yet to take a position.

If passed, the bill would state that Congress believes that the Muslim Brotherhood meets the criteria of a Foreign Terrorist Organization under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1189).

It gives the secretary of state a period of 60 days to provide a detailed report explaining whether the Brotherhood meets the standard to be named as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and why. The legislation contains a mountain of evidence in support of designation.

<https://www.clarionproject.org/analysis/support-increases-congress-designate-mb-terrorist-org#>



GENOCIDE

Against Your Faith

Gen'o'cide noun. We are (N) i.e., Nassara = Christians

The deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially those of a particular ethnic group or nation. Synonyms: mass murder, mass homicide, massacre; annihilation, extermination, elimination, liquidation, eradication, decimation, butchery, bloodletting; pogrom, ethnic cleansing, holocaust.

BEHEADINGS

If ISIS has a "signature" style of execution; it is the highly publicized beheading, complete with world-wide video coverage via the internet- one of the most sickening forms of terror ever conceived.

TORTURE

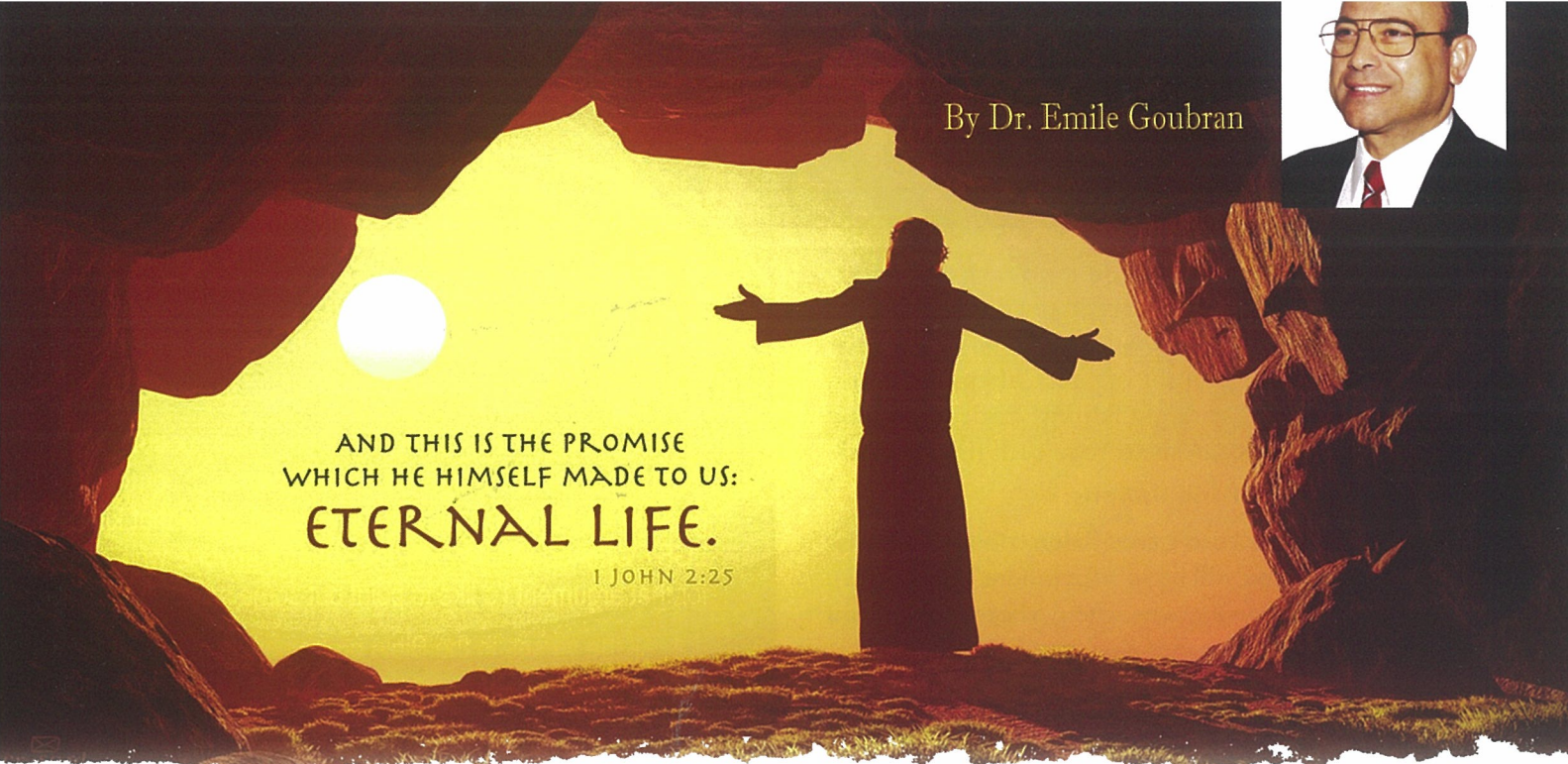
ISIS engaged in monstrous types of torture, mass rape, sexual enslavement-in addition to the most brutal possible forms of execution, including burning victims alive.

MASS KILLINGS

Whole towns and villages have been wiped out, their entire populations exterminated like insects by ISIS vigilantes.

CONVERT OR DIE

Options offered by ISIS to Christians caught in the crosshairs: convert to Islam, or pay a fine so devastating that life cannot go on. Your only other alternative; run for your life.



By Dr. Emile Goubran



AND THIS IS THE PROMISE
WHICH HE HIMSELF MADE TO US:
ETERNAL LIFE.

1 JOHN 2:25

Some people interpret eternal life as everlasting existence. While this is one element of it, this interpretation misses the most important part of its vast and deep meaning. The word “Eternal” only describes the quantitative component, while the word “Life” refers to the qualitative component of this existence. A quality life must have a purpose, meaning, significance and value. Without these elements, life is not worth living and it becomes a mere existence.

This is what non-believers and evil doers will ultimately end up with; “into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.” (Mat 25:41). In this case, these people will have everlasting existence but no life. This condition is described as “eternal death”.

On the other hand, life is a purposeful, meaningful, significant and valuable existence. What imparts those qualities to life are two important attributes, namely; Love and Truth. Any existence not associated with Love and Truth does not have life in it. Love is a meaningful relationship between two entities for the purpose of spending everlasting union together where each entity is very significant and valuable to the other. The Bible tells us that “God is love, and he who abides

in love abides in God and God in him.” (1 John 4:16).

How does Truth fit in this picture? Life without free choice is not meaningful and is not worth living. However, making choices requires knowledge, and knowledge must be true or else we lose our way in getting where we want to go. Adam and Eve accepted false information/knowledge from the serpent (the devil) and lost their eternal life. Truth is necessary in finding our way to eternal life. So the question now is “how do we find our way to the Truth so we may achieve eternal life?” The answer is in the Bible and was given to us by the Lord Himself when He said “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me.” (John 14:6).

In conclusion, eternal life can only be attained through Love and Truth. God is Love and Truth. Therefore, communion with God gives us eternal life, while separation from God results in eternal death. This is why God, in His love to us, has sent His Son to redeem humanity and open the door to eternal life for those who believe and abide in Him. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16).

In the World you will have TRIBULATIONS

By Fr. Gawargious Kolta

On the 12th of July we celebrate the feast of martyrdom of Saint Peter the apostle, and Saint Paul by the gentiles (Gal. 2:8). Both were martyred in Rome in the year 67 ad., under Emperor Nero. The rest of the apostles, except St. John, were also brutally martyred. One may ask, is it fair that Christians should face such tribulations?

1. The World is full of tribulations:

Few hours before the Lord's crucifixion, He told His disciples: "In the world you will have tribulations" (Jn. 16:33). He added, "The time will come when whoever kills you will think that he offers a great service to God."

• **Tribulations play an important part in the lives of the believers:** It is written, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Psa. 34:19). For everyone will be seasoned with fire and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt" (Mk. 9:49).

• **Tribulations happen with God's permission:** Satan needed permission from God to attack Job and test him (Job 2:9, 10). God is faithful and does not allow anyone to be tested beyond his/her ability (1 Cor. 10:13).

• **God is just and perfect in His wisdom and gives rewards** to the point that St. Paul said, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecution, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).

2. God helps His people in tribulations:

As tribulations come with God's permission, He cares about us (1 Pet. 5:7), for He Himself, who has suffered, being tempted, is able to aid those who are tempted. The Lord who defeated His enemies, leads us in triumph and gives us hope and faith that we defeat the world. He will preserve His people and strengthen them, comfort them and wipe away every tear from their eyes (Rev. 7:17; 1 Cor. 15:57). That is why, when the Lord said, "In the World you will have tribulations...He added, But be of good cheer I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). "In all their affliction, He was afflicted and the angel of His presence saved them" (Isa. 63: 9).

3. The Benefits of Tribulations: They are many:

+ They lead us to repentance and test our faith and love.

+ To escape the condemnation of hell.

+ To gain the virtue of patience.

+ To offer constant fervent prayers as the early church did (Acts 12)



BY MARY H. SARKIS, MFT

It really upsets me to see Christianity once again being bashed for something it had NOTHING to do with...

I'm speaking of the Orlando shooting. Many posts and comments are taking swings at Christianity and comparing its position on homosexuality to the Radical Islam that killed the LGBT Orlando victims. For the sake of anyone who may fall for that argument I'd like to point out some basic differences...

1. All the verses in the Bible on homosexuality put together consistently refer to homosexual behavior as sin. But the Bible doesn't stop there.

2. All sexual behavior outside of marriage is sin.

3. Biblical marriage is between a man and a woman.

4. The wages of sin (heterosexual, homosexual, and non-sexual) is death. All who take sin lightly and live a lifestyle of sin, without repentance, have an eternal death sentence.

5. Christ died to pay that death sentence on my behalf so I don't have to die. That same hope is extended to every sinner who repents.

6. God does not wish the death of the sinner but rather that he/she repents and lives. He calls all to repentance and salvation.

7. God not only calls us all to a holy life but gives us the Holy Spirit to give us a new nature, to sanctify us, transform us, deliver us, and redeem our sinful nature.

8. In His MERCY, God not only saves us from the consequences of sin but gives us the POWER to overcome sin itself, no matter how deeply rooted it is in us.

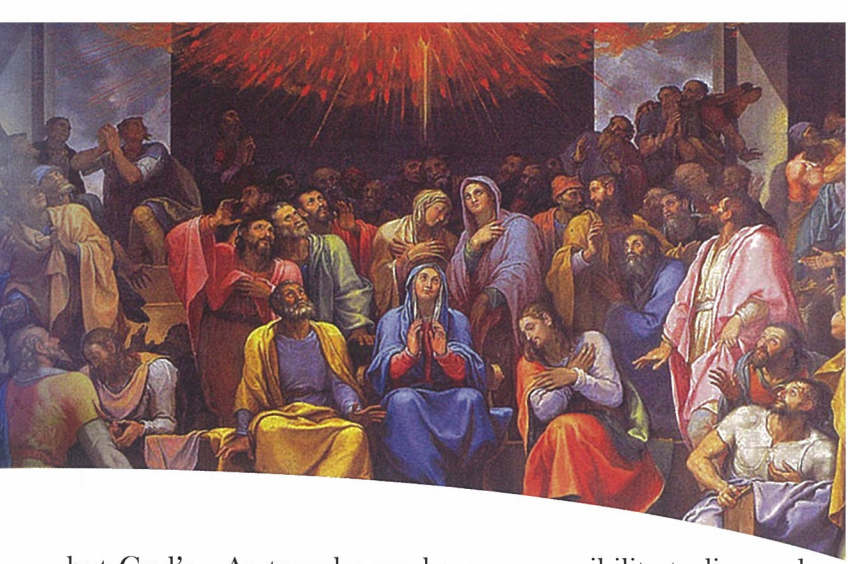
9. We all need God's grace and a chance to repent (those in the LGBT lifestyle are no different). They need our prayers and our compassion. Their struggle is tough and can last a lifetime.

10. Christians make mockery of the gospel when we compromise our own purity and take liberties in our own conduct while singling out a group of people and condemning them. We need to first take the log out of our own eye.

The Bible teaches us to speak the truth in love, to build up, empower, and give life and healing to a broken humanity... Not to kill... whether with guns or with words. This is Christianity.

PENTECOST is GOD in Us

By Gigi Barsoum



If Christmas is God with us, and Good Friday is God for us, then Pentecost is God in us.

God in His love for us, gave us His only begotten Son to be born for us, to suffer and be crucified for us and to die and be resurrected for us that we may have eternal life. But God also gave us more. On Pentecost, God gave us the Holy Spirit to dwell and remain with us. St. Athanasius said that “The Word took flesh, that we might receive the Spirit”.

GOD GAVE US HIMSELF:

We have been given a great and blessed gift, the Spirit of God Himself! But do we realize the importance and significance of this gift and the responsibility that goes along with it? The Holy Spirit is God within us. It is our direct connection with God because He is dwelling in us. This is a great honor and blessing to not only have God with us but also within us. But what do we do to pay tribute and respect to this blessing? Do we realize the privilege, the sanctity and holiness of the gift we have been given?

THE TIMING OF PENTECOST HAS A SIGNIFICANT MEANING:

The disciples did not receive the Holy Spirit until after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ because it was through Christ's blood that we were saved, washed and made clean (Jn. 7:37, 38). Hence, it was not until after we were cleansed that we were prepared to receive the Holy Spirit. This demonstrates to us the purity of the Holy Spirit and how we who are filled with Him must also be pure and holy in order to have Him remain in us.

YOUR BODY is the TEMPLE of the HOLY SPIRIT:

St. Paul says, “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in spirit, which are God's” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). St. Paul states clearly that our bodies are sacred because they are vessels of the Holy Spirit and due to that, our bodies are not our own

but God's. As temples we have responsibility to live and remain pure.

THE DOVE of the HOLY SPIRIT MAY FLY AWAY:

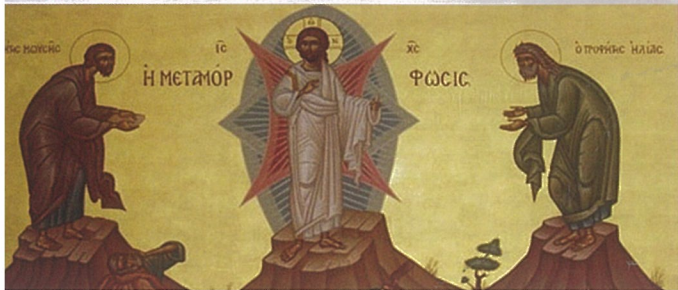
This great privilege of having the Holy Spirit within us, may be taken away if we neglect it, “the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, distressing spirit troubled him” (1 Sam. 16:14). That is why David prays, “Create in me clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me” (Psa. 51:10).

THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH:

God will not choose to dwell in a place that is not pure and holy. Therefore, when we are granted the gift of the Holy Spirit, we take on the responsibility of keeping ourselves pure and free from sin. The flesh must be subjected to the spirit, so that we may be led by the Spirit, “because those who are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). St. Paul tells us also, “To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace... those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:6-8). He makes a clear distinction between the spirit and the flesh. He goes even further in Galatians 5:17 when he says, “For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another.” Then the Holy Spirit cannot fill us and take full authority and guidance over our lives if we are walking according to the flesh. It is clear that we cannot have it both ways. We cannot live a worldly, carnal life and have God remain in us at the same time. We have a choice to make and if we choose to have God in us, we must become spiritually minded and provide a healthy spiritual environment for the Holy Spirit to flow to fullness.

“BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT” (Eph. 5:18): Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a state of sanctification and at the same time a constant thirst for prayer, reading God's word and having Communion, love for all and joy in the Lord. It is a flow to the depth like a stream or a fountain of living water,” (Fr, Bishoy Kamel).

"And We BEHELD His Glory



When God wanted to tell Moses His life-giving word, such as the Ten Commandments, he asked Moses to climb up Mount Sinai, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever" (Exodus 19:9). When God's glory settled on Mount Sinai, the Israelites were terribly frightened of God's presence. The people saw a very frightful scene while Moses was on the mountain speaking with God. "There were great thunderings and lightnings, so that all the people trembled... Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly" (19:16, 18). Exodus 24:17 further described, "The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel." Because of the various signs accompanying God's voice, the trembling Israelites told Moses in Deuteronomy 18:16 "Let [us] not hear again the voice of the LORD [our] God, nor let [us] see this great fire anymore, lest [we] die." In response to this demand God said to Moses, "I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him" (Deuteronomy 18:18). This promise was incarnate of the Virgin St. Mary, nearly 2000 years ago, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Christ was born of the Virgin St. Mary, St. Paul described this seeming delay of God in fulfilling His promise as "the fullness of the time." In Galatians 4:4 he wrote: "When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman." This was the beginning of God's fulfillment of the promise He made long ago to Moses, "I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him." But thousands of years went by and no one like Moses stepped on to the world stage; someone who delivered his people from bondage, which again the Jews were in by the Romans, or divided the Red Sea, or brought out water from a rock, brought down bread from heaven or spoke for God as Moses did. The Israelites always wondered about God's promise as recorded in their law that a

Prophet like Moses would again come.

Nearly two thousand years ago, God approached humanity in a completely different manner. He did so in the calm cry of a Child born in a cold stable. His mere presence no longer shattered the rocks, caused the earth to quake, appeared as a consuming fire or thundered to the terror of all those around. Shepherds came to see Christ—Messiah—the Lord wrapped in swaddling cloths, just as the angel had told them (Luke 2:8-20). I imagine those Jewish shepherds were taught the Law of Moses and though they were not the best-educated, they knew that the Lord God was a fearsome presence, a consuming fire who manifested Himself to men of old in fire, storms, thunder, wind and earthquakes. Perhaps they expected to approach the area specified by the angel from afar and see it engulfed in flames, or feel the earth tremble, etc. and know that God had finally come, but they saw nothing of the sort. As they drew closer to the location they found the "Babe" Jesus. This was perhaps more amazing to them than the appearance of the announcing angel.

Theological mysteries were unfolding for this was the fullness of time when God sent His Son. The very first verse in St. John's gospel narrates the timeless existence of the everlasting and ever-present unity of God the Father and God the Logos (the Word) as revealed to everyone in the person of Jesus Christ: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). St. John Chrysostom in his commentary on this verse wrote: "Having ascended to 'the beginning,' [St. John] enquires what 'beginning'; and then finding the 'was' always outstripping its imagination, has no point at which to stay its thought; but looking intently onwards, and being unable to cease at any point, it becomes wearied out, and turns back to things below. For this 'was in the beginning,' is nothing else than expressive of ever being and being infinitely."

The "Word" is the Logos or Mind of God and the Word is the Lord Jesus Christ incarnate at the fullness of time. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" Skipping to verse 14, the Evangelist writes of this beginning moment in God's infiniteness: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we

beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The Gospel reading of the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of Theophany (the Feast of the Divine Appearance), in the Coptic Orthodox Church begins with this breathtaking declaration from God: “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:18). The three synoptic gospels of Sts. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, describe the scene of the Lord Jesus Christ being baptized in the water, the Holy Spirit descending upon Him, and the voice of the Father from heaven saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:22). When else in history was the Triune God revealed as in this first instance!

St. John the Evangelist, the author of the fourth gospel and formerly a disciple of St. John the Baptist recorded a curious set of questions that the Jewish hierarchy had for the Baptist. He wrote:

Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” (John 1:19-22).

This exchange demonstrates Israel’s anxiousness for the coming of God’s messenger. They understood that the Messiah was coming. They also knew that Elijah would return at one point for God had expressly said so in His Prophecy to Malachi the Prophet (see Mal. 4:5). Then there was this promised Prophet. God had promised to again communicate to the Jews through Him.

St. John the Evangelist also was privy to the testimony of St. John the Baptist about the heavenly and Divine Appearance at The Lord Jesus Christ’s baptism:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.”

And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God” (John 1:29-34).

The Evangelist recorded these Holy Spirit-inspired declarations in order to introduce the gentle Lord Jesus Christ to humanity. He recorded it for you and I, in order to spread the gospel—the good news—to everyone that God had

come for His people.

The birth of Christ from the Virgin St. Mary, this was the beginning of God’s fulfillment of the promise He made long ago to Moses, “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.” The Lord Jesus always declared, “I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak” (John 12:49). Reviewing the prophecy: “And will put my words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”

In Exodus 33:20 God said, “no man shall see Me, and live,” but, in fact, we were all dead until God sent His Son to give us life. St. Paul said, “For in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28) and “you are complete in Him” (Ephesians 2:10). God sent His Son Jesus Christ because returning to our original created state, i.e., created in the image of God, was impossible from our side. So, you can say in short that the Father sent His Son to reconcile us to Himself again and restore us to our former glory and open the gates of His kingdom for us. St. Paul sums it up so well in 2 Corinthians 5:20 when he wrote, “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

In conclusion, the following verses also by St. Paul put the points of this article together:

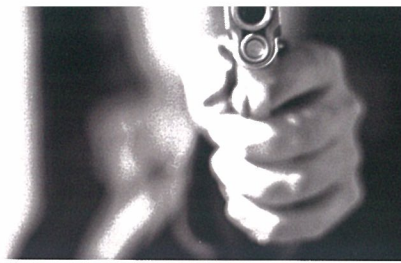
“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power ... Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away... [If] every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation... (Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:1-3).

In the fullness of time Jesus Christ came for us.

Both, St. John and St. Peter said the same testimony, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

St. Peter described Christ’s transfiguration and said, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain” (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Who Would Die for a Lie?



Jesus' followers, including his twelve disciples, spoke as actual eyewitnesses to the events they described. John began the last portion of his account by saying, **"The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book."** But if Jesus had only died and not come back to life, why record the story of Jesus at all?

When Jesus was crucified, his followers were discouraged and depressed. They lost all confidence that Jesus had been sent by God and they quickly dispersed. But then shortly after this, everything suddenly changed. They abandoned their occupations, came back together, and committed their lives to spreading a very specific message—that Jesus was God's Messiah who died on the cross and then came back to life. They spent the rest of their lives suffering beatings, ridicule, hunger, and imprisonment, and then most of them were executed for their faith and faithful testimony. Though not-all- recorded in the Bible, tradition tells us this is how Jesus' disciples died:

1. Peter was crucified upside-down.
2. Andrew was crucified on an X crucifix.
3. James, son of Zebedee, was killed by the sword of Herod (Acts 12:1).
4. John, the son of Zebedee, was the only one who died a natural death.
5. Phillip was crucified.
6. Bartholomew was crucified.
7. Thomas was killed by a spear.
8. Matthew was killed by the sword.
9. James, son of Alphaeus, was stoned to death.
10. Thaddaeus was killed by arrows.
11. Simon the Zealot was crucified.

Did they suffer all this just to perpetuate a lie?

The only reasonable explanation for the disciples' action was that they were convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They had personally seen Jesus Christ alive many times and in different places for forty days (Acts 1:2). They listened to Him and talked to Him and ate and drank with Him after His resurrection (Acts 10:41)!

We can trust their claims because they were so willing to die a martyr's death. And who would die for a lie?!!



BEHIND EVERY GREAT MAN IS A GREAT WOMAN

Thomas Wheeler CEO of the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company, and his wife were driving along an interstate highway when he noticed that their car was low on gas. Wheeler got off the highway at the next exit and soon found a rundown gas station with just one gas pump. He asked the lone attendant to fill the tank and check the oil, then went for a little walk around the station to stretch his legs.

As he was returning to the car, he noticed that the attendant and his wife were engaged in an animated conversation. The conversation stopped as he paid the attendant. But as he was getting back into the car, he saw the attendant wave and heard him say, "It was great talking to you."

As they drove out of the station, Wheeler asked his wife if she knew the man. She readily admitted she did. They had gone to high school together and had dated steadily for about a year.

"Boy, were you lucky that I came along," bragged Wheeler. "If you had married him, you'd be the wife of a gas station attendant instead of the wife of a chief executive officer."

"My dear," replied his wife, "if I had married him, he'd be the chief executive officer and you'd be the gas station attendant."

(From Chicken Soup for the Couple's Soul)

Dan

Edited by Fr. Augustinos Hanna



A Lesson about God's Judgment

"From Dan to Beer-sheba" is a phrase often used in the Bible. Beer-sheba was considered the southernmost city of Israel, and Dan the northernmost. So the expression figuratively meant, "From one end to the other." However, Dan was not always the northernmost city. How it came to be so is a story of intrigue and disobedience.

When the Israelites had conquered the land of Canaan, the 12 tribes were allocated portions of land. Dan was given a small portion that was sandwiched between Ephraim, Judah, and Benjamin. Its southern border fronted the land of the Philistines.

Judges 18 tells the story of Dan's migration from the southern region to the far north, to the city of Laish, an unconquered city located in the land of Naphtali. As Dan passed through the land of Ephraim, they came upon the large estate of a man named Micah. Micah had hired a levitical priest to be their private, family priest. He also had an ephod (an article of attire worn only by priests),

household gods, a carved idol, and a cast idol (metal).

The men of Dan stole all these and convinced the priest to come with them and be the priest for the entire tribe. Because this provided more prestige, the priest agreed. His decision was not unlike some modern-day pastors who leave small churches primarily for the additional money and reputation of a larger church.

The Danites continued on to Laish, where they attacked a city that was peaceful and unsuspecting. The victory was quick, easy, and complete. They rebuilt this city and named it "Dan". Located several miles north of the Sea of Galilee, it became the northernmost area of Israel.

With its priest-for-hire and stolen idols, Dan soon became known as a cult center.

When the nation divided after the death of Solomon, the king of the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam, set up a golden calf at Dan as well as Bethel to keep the people from returning to Jerusalem to worship.

Archaeological digs at the site have yielded some interesting results. One such item was the discovery of two towns on either side of a triple-arched entrance. This destroyed the theory that the Romans invented the arch, for this was built 1,000 years before the rise of Rome.

Another item was found in 1993, when a stone, containing an inscription in Aramaic, was found. The inscription was fragmented and not easy to read. Two phrases however were plainly visible: "Kind of Israel" and "House of David." That is the first mention of King David anywhere outside of the Bible. Dating back to the ninth century B.C., this is the first extra biblical evidence of David's kingdom. From its beginning, everything about the city of Dan indicated rebellion against God, and gross idolatry. Yet, God's judgment upon the people there was slow to come. Even when the Assyrians invaded the Northern Kingdom and carried the people away as captives, Dan somehow managed to escape destruction and continued to function as a city until the Babylonians destroyed it in their conquest of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.



In fact, Jeremiah warned Judah of coming judgment by prophesying the destruction of the city of Dan: "For a voice declared from Dan, and published affliction from mount Ephraim" (Jer. 4:15). Again, "The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones" (Jer. 8:16).

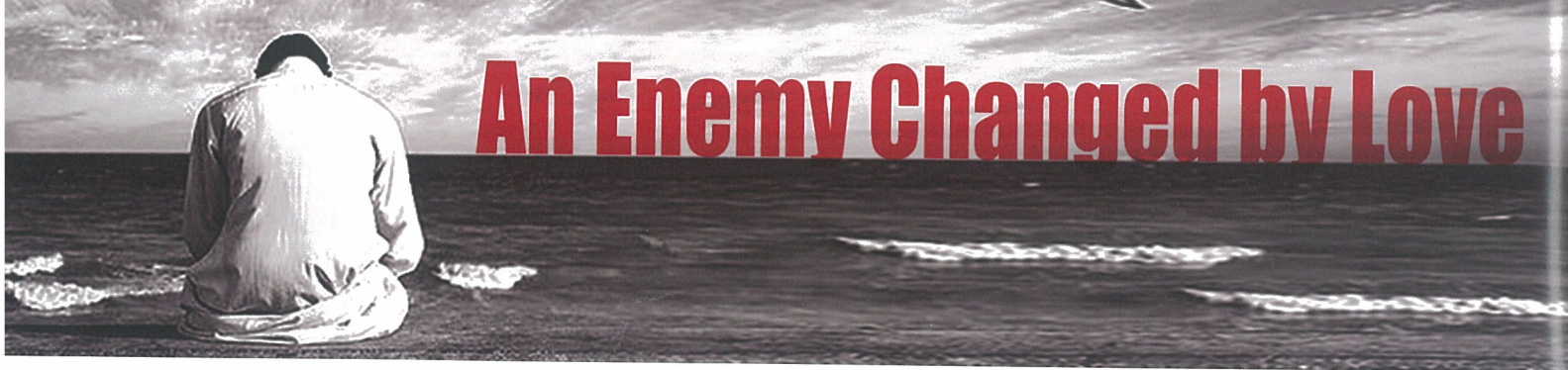
Indeed, Dan was the first of the Israelite cities to fall to the Babylonians. Judgment had finally come. What an important lesson we learn from Dan. God's judgment is not always immediate. It does not follow a timetable. But it is sure, and it is certain.

At the same time, it served as a warning to the Jews in Jerusalem. Even in God judgment, we see His merciful acts to His people. It was in the context of God's judgment and discipline that Paul wrote, "Now these things were our examples..." (1 Cor. 10:6). The warnings of God are an act of grace. Like parents who warn their children about dangerous activities, God uses examples to keep us from wrongdoing. May we still learn from the example of Dan.

Finally, let us notice that the tribe of Dan, was NOT mentioned among the twelve tribes of Israel, which were considered the 144,000 elected and sealed (Rev. 7:4-9).

Some scholars think that the Antichrist will come from the tribe of Dan. They connect and dots with the prophecy of Jacob mentioned in the book of Genesis 49, about Dan which said,

"Dan shall judge his people. As one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a SERPENT by the way. A VIPER by the path. That bites the horse's heels, so that the rider shall fall backward." (Genesis. 49:16, 17).



An Enemy Changed by Love

After dragging the bloodied pastor out of 10-foot hole and lifting his body onto his shoulders, "Raji" walked home carrying a heavy burden.

Earlier that day, Raji and about 20 other Hindu radicals had attacked pastor "Suta" with sticks and rocks for sharing the gospel in their Hindu village in Rajasthan, India. They beat the pastor until he lost consciousness and left him bleeding in the ditch.

Following the attack, Raji was overwhelmed with guilt. As an informant for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a nationalistic organization that supports Hindu supremacy, he was paid to inform Hindu radicals about any Christian activity in his village. He wasn't supposed to feel this way.

"What happened?" asked his wife, "Asya," sensing something was wrong. "I have persecuted an innocent man," he said. "We have beaten him seriously and we threw him in a ditch. I never felt so guilty in my life. He was innocent and we have beaten him."

Raji's admission of guilt led to an argument with Asya. She didn't understand how her husband could assault another person. She also feared the wrath of Suta's God.

"If he is a good man, then why did you do that?" she asked him. "Go bring that man into our home. We have to take care of him."

Spilled Blood, New life

After Raji returned with the pastor, Asya began treating his wounds. She wiped blood from his face, bandaged his wounds and gave him pain medicine. He couldn't talk or eat until the next day.

Once he could speak, Asya asked him the question that had been nagging her: Why did he visit their village?

"I came to tell you about Jesus Christ," the pastor said, "the Jesus Christ who healed sick people, who helped the poor and delivered them."

Hearing this, Asya brought her sister-in-law, who had been sick for months, to Suta for prayer. In her presence, Suta again shared the gospel and prayed for her healing. Two days later, she recovered.

News of the healing spread throughout the village. Those who had attacked Suta came forward to ask his forgiveness.

A total of 40 villagers, including many who had attacked Suta, accepted Christ. They even started a church.

Now a Christian, Raji knows that he, too, could be attacked. There are others in the village who are angry about the recent

conversions. For Raji, though, the risk is worth it. "I am happy in the presence of the Lord," he said.

A Relentless love

The day of the attack wasn't Suta's first visit to this village.

Four days earlier, he had brought 50 Bible tracts and attempted to share the gospel, but he was quickly turned away.

"We don't want to see you in this village," Suta remembered hearing.

"Don't come here. We are a Hindu village and we don't want to become Christian. We don't want to see you."

Suta walked the seven miles back home, feeling defeated.

"Why are they telling me not to come in their village when You told me to go?" He asked God.

As he considered whether to return, he remembered the gospel's purpose. He had to go back, even if it made people angry. Having grown up Hindu himself, he knew how much they needed Christ.

"Again, I took courage and I took literature and I went and took the gospel to that village," he said.

By returning to the village and sharing God's love, Suta put himself at risk. But in turn, he saw God use it to expand His kingdom.

"If I had not gone for preaching, I would not have got persecuted," he said. "But I did, and now there is one more church."

Suta is one of many front-line workers VOM supports in India who also boldly share God's love. In addition to supporting these workers, VOM provides legal help to imprisoned pastors, training for evangelists, and Bibles and other ministry tools where needed. We also have rebuilt churches destroyed by Hindu activists.

VOM gave Suta a bicycle so he can more easily visit Raji's village, where he preaches every Sunday, and reach more people in distant areas with the gospel. The same love that motivated Suta to visit Raji's village and, later, to share God's love with his attackers, continues to draw him to new villages. He still experience opposition from Hindu fundamentalists, but he's seen what God can do in response.

"Always, there is one question that I think," he said. "I know these people could kill me or whatever they will do, but who will tell them about Jesus? This is the responsibility that belongs to me. Whatever may happen, I have to go and share with them the gospel message."

Martyrs of Maspero

How could I reconcile my faith with the suffering I witnessed?

I grew up quietly. My mother was an unswerving volunteer at the Coptic Orthodox church, and I was a Sunday-school teacher throughout my teen years. Our parish priest was a great inspiration of mine. I believed in God and the four walls of my room and my parents and my friends. That was all I knew and that was all I needed and I was content. I learned Bible verses. I studied Coptic hymnology. I told myself I was going to become a deaconess. Things changed after the Maspero attacks. Months after the ousting of Hosni Mubarak, then the president of Egypt, the air of the January 25 Revolution, as it is known locally, still hung thick in Cairo. It was October 2011 when the media released brutal footage of the Copt-led protests at the Maspero building, which houses the state-run Egyptian Radio and Television Union in the Egyptian capital. Proceeding past hostile Islamist crowds, a group of Copts had gathered to peacefully protest the destruction of a church in Aswan. The peace did not last long.

As a senior in high school, I watched with my fellow church volunteers as Egyptian state forces ran over peaceful Coptic protesters with military vehicles. Their crime: demon starting against the government's failure to provide protection and against the church attacks. The massacre resulted in the death of 27 Copts. Fourteen of them were crushed by military armored vehicles.

National news networks aired the footage until they tired of it. Each time I saw it became angrier and angrier with God. It was God who had formed these people in their mother's wombs. It was God who ordained that these people be born in a developing country that recognized them as sub-par citizens. It was God who allowed these people to be born under an oppressive regime. It was God who, at God's disposal, could have prevented such a thing from happening. Worst of all, 18 years of Christian education told me I had to love the men who

drove the army tanks that flattened and crushed the bodies of those innocent youths.

"They are martyrs now," my priest said. "They have their reward in heaven." A fellow Sunday-school teacher said, "They should have rallied in front of the Lord instead of in front of people." My mother simply said, "This was God's plan." Their answers, however, did not do justice to the nature of this injustice. I was not to peace. Issues of heaven, free will, politics, religious pluralism and all had a name: Maspero. The same faith that had remained so vibrant and unshaken throughout my years of Egyptian Orthodoxy showed signs of crumbling in a matter of months. I began asking myself questions about every concept I knew.

Why did God allow this to happen?

Because it was God's plan.

Why was this his plan?

God's ways are mysterious. Why?

God is divine and those his ways.

Where does it say that?

In the Bible.

Why do I believe in the Bible?

Because it's God's word.

How do I know that?

Because it says so in the Bible.



When I entered university, I took a class called Faith and Critical Reasoning. It never occurred to me until then that the believers of faiths outside of Christianity had the same reasons for believing in their faith as I did for believing in mine. I rebelled against the faith of the minuteness of my childhood and cursed my Sunday-school lessons and their Jesus stories and my priest who accepted their bloody deaths and my God who let this happen.

This past summer, before my senior year of university, I paid a visit to the Orthodox monastery of St. Antony. My mother was elated, but I just wanted to interview monks for a research paper I was writing. As I sat down to speak to Brother Mina, he asked me the last question I wanted to hear: "Do you love your Christ?" (Bethabey rabena? In Arabic). I wanted nothing more than to bleat out a Sunday-school reply of "Yes!" and be done with it. But I could tell that the monk already knew my real answer. Without warning I collapsed and cried in front of him and told him I knew nothing. It was there in the middle of a desert in California that everything came undone. Under tired eyes, the old Egyptian monk looked at me and said, "My daughter, faith can only exist in a pained world. "It was like the snap of a rubber band. All these years of internal struggle, I needed to be reminded that to show doubt was not to lose faith. The simple Arabic of the Coptic monk had pushed me to regain my trust in God.

I stayed for five days at St. Antony's. Everyday, Brother Mina asked me if I wanted to attend a liturgy service in the morning, and every morning I kindly declined. It was my last day in the desert when I finally knocked on the brother's door and told him I wanted to pray. We walked together to the church and began the Twelfth Hour prayer of the Agpeya, the Coptic Book of Hours: With my voice to the Lord I cried; with my voice to the Lord I made supplication. I will pour out before him my supplication. My affliction I will pour out before him, when my spirit was fainting within me, and You knew my paths. *It was the first time I had prayed in almost four years.*

Pray With Confidence

by Anne Graham Lotz



A Prayer That Is Confident

Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God? — John 11:40

Great God of Creation, Lord of the Universe, the God who parted the Red Sea, You are the God of the impossible who makes a way when there is no way. We worship You as our God. We exalt You as One whose Name is above every name. You have no equal. You stand in the solitude of Yourself.

Your righteous right hand hung the stars in space, shattered Your enemies, and holds us, Your children by covenant, safe and secure. Who is like You — majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

By Your word everything was made that is in heaven or on earth or under the earth. You formed us from the dust of the ground, breathed Your breath into us, and gave us life. When we disobeyed, rebelled against You, and lived in bondage to sin, You sent the Deliverer to give His life to set us free. By Your great power, You raised Him from the dead so that through faith in Him we are rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of Your light and life and love.

We worship You as One who maintains Your faithfulness to all generations. Just as You were faithful to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to Moses, Jeremiah, and Daniel; to Peter, Paul, and John; You will be faithful to us and to our children and to our grandchildren. You can't be less than Yourself, and You are faithful. You keep Your "covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love [You] and keep [Your] commandments."

And we praise You as One who is never wrong. You are always right. As we witness unspeakable disasters, atrocities and evil, we are confident that the Judge of all the earth does right. And will do right. All the time.

We know Your timing is perfect. If we see no outward evidence that You are intervening in the affairs of men, we trust You. If we see no sparks of revival in the church, we trust You. If we see no cessation in hostilities and persecutions against those who are called by Your Name, we trust You. If we do not receive an answer to our prayers when we want it, the way we want it, how we want it, we trust You.

We are confident that Your greatness and power are the same yesterday in Creation, in the Exodus, in Daniel's day, as it is in our day, as it will be at the end of time. Your greatness has not been diluted or depleted over the ages. You cannot be

more great than You are. You are the All-Mighty God. And we worship You.

Thank You, loving Lord, for being a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. Thank You that through the broken body and shed blood of Your Son and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, we can enter into a covenant with You that will never be broken. Thank You that we are Yours, and You are ours... forever. Thank You for the confidence that our covenant relationship with You gives us as we approach You in prayer.

You have said that You are holy, high and lifted up, but that You are moved to come down — to dwell — with those who are contrite and lowly in spirit. We believe You! You have said that You will revive the heart of the contrite. We believe You! You have said that if we repent of our sin, times of refreshing will come. We believe You!

So now we want to honestly confess that in our previous prayers we have not been focused on You. We have focused on our circumstances and have therefore been defeated. We have focused on others and have therefore been deluded. We have focused on ourselves and have therefore been deceived. We compare ourselves with others so that our perception of who we really are therefore is distorted. We are so sorry. We turn to You now and ask that You shine the light of Your truth into our hearts and what we feel and into our minds and what we think so that we see ourselves as You see us, and truly repent of our sin.

Strip us, most Holy Lord, of any pride or self-righteousness or judgment as we pray for others. Teach us to first take the plank out of our own eye before trying to remove the splinter in someone else's eye. We long for You to send revival to the hearts of Your people. Let it begin with us. Teach us to pray in such a way that Heaven is moved and hearts are changed.

We pray in the name of the One who was so confident in Your Word that when facing the threats of His accusers, He issued a solemn warning that in the future, their roles would be reversed. He would be their Judge. They would see Him sitting at Your right hand and coming back on the clouds of glory...

We pray in the name of the One who was so confident in You that He placed His very life in Your hands, and then refused to draw the next breath.

We pray in the name of JESUS. For the glory of Your Name. Amen.

Don't Be a Jerk



“Coarsened” is a word you’ve probably heard more and more frequently in the past few years. It’s most often applied to the state of public discourse in our country particularly in the political sphere.

Lately, some of our political candidates have been calling one another names, using schoolyard taunts and names, and shouting over one another during televised debates. There have even been articles written that used insights from child psychology to aid parents hoping to teach their children that this is not how adults should behave. On top of that, your social media feeds (Facebook, Twitter and the like) may be filled with increasing levels of invective. Even in our churches many seem to call another person by bad names!

You can be excused for feeling that having a conversation on a controversial topic might prove dangerous for your emotional, psychological, spiritual and maybe even physical health. You might get sluggish.

All this reminds me of some great advice I once heard from a wise old man, author of several books. They were three rules for getting along in community:

- (1) *You’re not God;*
- (2) *This isn’t heaven;*
- (3) *Don’t be a jerk.*

That last one was originally said in saltier language—using a synonym for a kind of donkey—but it still works. The first two are essential for life in general. “You’re not God” has multiple implications. First, you can’t change most things, so stop trying. Second, you’re not in charge, so stop acting as if you were. And third, you don’t know everything, so stop acting as if you do. It brings calm, perspective and humility.

The second dictum, “This isn’t heaven” can help to reduce the complaining you do. For example, if you live in a community where the roof leaks, or where the elevator apparently runs up and down on a stream of molasses, you are reminded to complain less because, well, this isn’t heaven.

But it’s that last one that I wish more people remembered when they enter into public discus-

sions: “Don’t be a jerk.” Now, I’m the first to admit that I break that rule from time to time. But today a surprising number of people think nothing of attacking people anonymously on Twitter, calling fellow politicians terrible names and maligning their integrity, posting mean comments on Facebook and shouting over one another on talk shows—basically, being a jerk. And jerkiness is contagious, I think. Seeing public figures shouting on television probably encourages people to do it in their private lives. At the very least, it does not encourage charitable behavior.

How does one avoid that infection?

Here’s where some other traditional bits of wisdom can help:

First, always give people the benefit of the doubt. Believe it or not, St. Ignatius placed that simple maxim at the beginning of his Spiritual Exercises, where he called it a “Presupposition.” “Every good Christian,” he wrote “ought to be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor’s statement than to condemn it.”

Second, avoid ad hominem arguments—that is, attacks on the person. The difference here is between “I think your argument is incorrect because...” and “You’re a bad guy.” Avoiding that will ratchet down emotion significantly and help all interactions go more smoothly.

Finally, an overly spiritual approach: Ask God to help you see others the way God sees them. The old adage that everyone is fighting a battle (or carrying a cross) is helpful. In the Spiritual Exercises, try to imagine the Trinity looking down at all of humanity with love. The next time you’re angry with someone, think of the Trinity gazing down on the person you’re about to flame. None of this should prevent people from discussing things, whether one-on-one, online, in public, on television, even on debate nights. You can always disagree. You can even disagree vehemently.

But, remember:

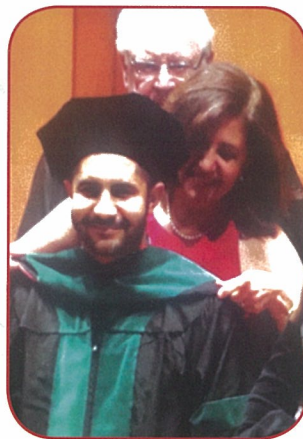
“Ask God to help you see others the way God sees them.” And, “Just don’t be a jerk.”

Marian Gayed



For passing your Clinical Comprehensive Exam from Azusa Pacific University and having Master degree in Clinical Psychology with Emphasis on Marriage & Family Therapy and Professional Clinical Counseling with honors, Glory be to God- Your husband Bassem, your children Steve, Adel and Julie, Mom Madeline, brother Shenouda, Tasony Marcelle, Rana and family

Dr. Andrew Karas



My dear son Andrew: Congratulations for your graduation from St. George Medical School and got accepted in Internal Medicine Residency in Arrowhead Hospital. You have taken on the most incredible, amazing journey becoming the man I see today. May the Lord continue to bless your future with love and pride -Love, Mom Dr. Randa, Michael, John Paul, Teta and family.

Monica Youssef



Congratulations Monica for your great achieving with the excellence success on your graduation and having a Master of Science in Psychology. We wish you all success in life. We are so happy and proud of you. May God bless you always- Love, Mom, Dad and Paul.

Sandra Guirguis



Congratulations on receiving your BA in Sociology from California State University, San Bernardino. We are proud of your accomplishment. May God continue to bless your future and guide you in His way and in all what you do- Love, Dad Mouris, Mom Lilian, sister Marina, Tasony Marcelle, Mary, Albert, Mark Hanna; Madeline, Marian, Bassem and Shenouda.

Sameh Zakaria



For passing your Clinical Comprehensive Exam from Azusa Pacific University and having a Master Degree in Clinical Psychology with Emphasis on Marriage and Family Therapy and professional Clinical Counseling with honors. May God shine on your life with His grace and loving kindness- Love, Your wife Eva and your daughter Elina, family and friends.

Marina Guirguis



Congratulations for receiving her BA in Sociology from the University of California, Irvine. Marina graduated with honors through the National Society of Leadership and Success. Best wishes for a blessed, bright future- Love, Dad Mouric, Mom Lilian, Sister Sandra, Tasony Marcelle, Mary, Albert and Mark Hanna; Madeline, Shenouda, Marian and Bassem.



Graduation.2016



Justin

On your graduation from the University of La Verne, College of Law. May God bless you and your future- Your Mom, Lola

Marena Michael

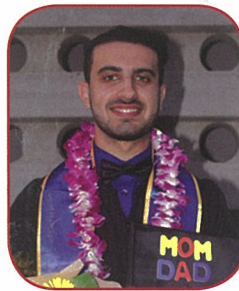


Praise the lord who supported you, Marena! You did a great job and we are proud of you and blessed to have you. May God continue to guide you from success to success. Congratulations on your Bachelors of Science in Biology from UCR. Love, dad and mom



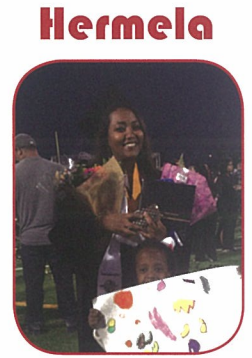
Abram Estafanous

Dear Abram, Congratulations for your accomplishments. May God continue to bless your steps with His grace. Love, Dad, Mom, and Merai



Michael Girgis

Congratulations Michael. We wish you a very happy and successful future. -Love, Baba, Mama and Marian.



Hermela

St. John Church congratulates her children, the graduates from High School, Junior High and Elementary, praying the Lord to grant them continuous success in God's love and obedience.

Peter Soltan High School



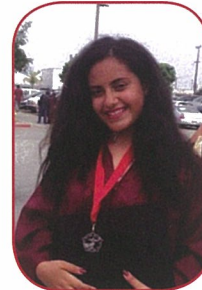
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George Soltan Middle School



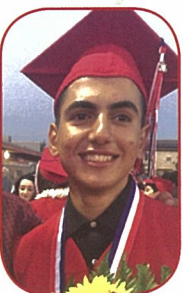
Kermina Hony



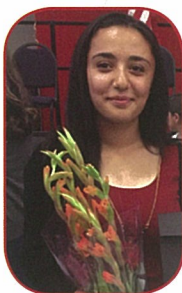
Sandra Ashak



Peter Naeem High School



Merna Naeem Middle School



marina kest 5 grade



George Bolis



George Hanna



Merro Mikhael



Congratulations

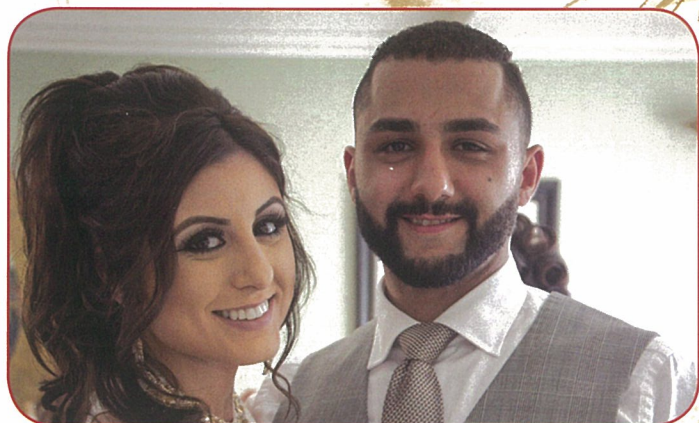
Weddings & Engagements



St. John Church congratulates,

Wael Loutfalla & Neveen Farag

For their marriage; wishing them a blessed life together full of joy, peace, and harmony, in God's fear and love.



St. John Church congratulates,

Andrew and Araxia

On their blessed engagement. May the Lord complete their marriage in joy and peace.

Baptism



The church congratulates

Mina Ehsan and Mirola

On their marriage. May the Lord Jesus bless their life and grant them health, joy and a Christian home built on the Rock of God's word and church.



Congratulations to Dr. Sherif Emil and Mary
For the birth of their new baby girl

Elyiana Emmanuelle Emil

May the Lord Jesus bless her life and grant her grace, health and growth

