

# SAINT JOHN

COVINA, CA

VOL 28 No. 294  
September / October 2016  
A COPTIC CHRISTIAN  
BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE



"BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND  
KNOCK. IF ANYONE HEARS MY  
VOICE..." (REV. 3:20)

THIS PICTURE DEPICTS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST  
STANDING AT THE DOOR OF THE UNITED  
NATIONS ORGANIZATION BUILDING AND  
KNOCKING AT ITS DOOR.

HE DOES THE SAME AT THE DOORS OF THE  
CONGRESS, THE SUPREME COURT, THE  
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION, UNIVERSITIES  
AND SCHOOLS...ETC.,

2000 YEARS AGO, HE LAMENTED JERUSALEM  
AND ITS TEMPLE AND SAID, "O JERUSALEM,  
JERUSALEM, THE ONE WHO KILLS THE PROPHETS  
AND STONES THOSE WHO ARE SENT TO HER!

HOW OFTEN I WANTED TO GATHER YOUR  
CHILDREN TOGETHER, AS A HEN GATHERS HER  
CHICKS UNDER HER WINGS, BUT YOU WERE NOT  
WILLING!

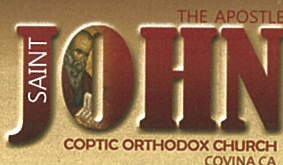
SEE! YOUR HOUSE IS LEFT TO YOU DESOLATE"  
(MATTHEW 23:37, 38).

+++

SURPRISINGLY ENOUGH, WHILE IT IS FORBIDDEN  
TO MENTION THE NAME OF CHRIST IN PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS OR TO PRAY, ACCORDING TO THE  
PRINCIPLE OF SEPARATION BETWEEN CHURCH  
AND STATE, IT IS ALLOWED TO TEACH AND  
PREACH ISLAM UNDER THE NAME OF HISTORY  
AND CULTURE!



**A CHRISTIAN COPTIC ORTHODOX  
BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
PUBLISHED BY**



(ISSN # 1530-5600)

21329 Cienega Ave.  
Covina, California 91724.

A parish of the Christian Coptic Orthodox  
Patriarchate of Egypt, and the diocese of  
Southern California.

St. John reflects the Biblical, doctrinal, and  
spiritual views of the early and modern Church  
in English and Arabic.

Editor in Chief:

**Fr. Augustinos Hanna**

Customer Service:

(626) 820-2739

Annual Subscription

\$50:00 in U.S.A

\$75:00 in foreign countries  
(as a suggested donation).

"Periodicals Postage paid at Covina, Ca.  
and additional mailing offices

\*Postmaster:

Send address changes to St. John  
P.O. Box 2144 Covina, CA 91722-8144

*Verse  
of the Month*



"I consider that the sufferings of this present time  
are not worthy to be compared with the glory  
which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:17).

**IN THIS ISSUE**

Schedule & News	3
St. John Chrysostom on the Cross/ Veneration of the Cross	4
What is the origin of the Christian fish symbol?	5
September 11 & the Nyrouz	6
Why the Apostle's Church was Strong?	8
The Love of God	10
Readers' Corner (Beautiful Masterpiece)	11
Great Evil, Great Revival	12
Dr. James Dobson on Trump's Faith/ The Islamic Taqloa	13
Refugees in the Past and Present	14
Don't Let Illness Get you down	17
The Fatal Offenses	18
Congratulations & More News	19

**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		+ Beginners' Deacons- Meeting 5: 30 p.m.
+ Arabic Liturgy 8:00 - 11:15 a.m. (In the Old Church)	+ Senior Citizen Club 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		+ Elementary Meeting 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Servants' Meeting + 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> 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.

Email your articles/comments/requests to Frhanna @mystjohn.org

Or visit us online @ www.mystjohn.org

Fax : (909) 592-5088 / Tel: (909) 592 - 0475 / Church Tel: (909) 592-8847

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



### 1. Feast of Nyrouz (Coptic New Year 1732):

On Sunday, September 11, 2016 the Church celebrates the Feast of Nyrouz, also known as the Feast of the Martyrs and the Coptic New Year 1733 of the Christian Martyrs of Egypt (hundreds of millions).



The Vespers (Raising of incense) of the Feast will be celebrated on Saturday, September 10, at 6:30 p.m.

There will be a sermon, hymns and other activities.

All the tunes of prayers, from Nyrouz to the Feast of the Cross are joyful.

### 2. The Feast of the Cross:

On Tuesday, September 27, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Appearance of the Holy Cross. Vespers will take place on Monday the 26th at 6:30 p.m. The Liturgy on Tuesday from 7:30 am.



### 3. The services of the Bishops during this summer:

St. John Church enjoyed the blessings of the summer visits of H.G. Bishop Kozman of North Sinai, H.G. Bishop Martyros of Sharabia, H.G. Bishop Abraham and H.G. Bishop Kirolos, the general bishops of Los Angeles in different activities, celebrating Liturgies, sermons to the youth and Senior Citizens.

### 4. St. John prizes in Kiraza Competition:

- |               |           |                            |
|---------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| + Pre-K       | Excellent | + Adult Arabic: very good  |
| + 1st & 2nd   | Excellent | + Adult English: very good |
| + 3rd & 4th   | Excellent |                            |
| + 5th & 6th   | very good |                            |
| + Junior High | Excellent |                            |
| + High School | very good |                            |

(See pictures inside).



### 5. Senior Citizens' Cruise to Catalina and Mexico:

St. John's Senior Citizen Club and Fellowship holds its annual cruise to Catalina Island and Mexico from May 8 to 12, 2017 by installments, \$50 monthly.



For reservation, call **Maher Saleh at (626) 222-6558** or **Hoda Ghazar at: (626) 905-4705**

### 6. H.H. Pope Tawadros:

+ Upon the request of President El-Sisi, Pope Tawadros and several bishops visited him and discussed many things. Among them was the increasing persecution and attacks from Muslim mobs and organizations against the Copts in Egypt, and the negative action of the government.



### 7. H.E. Metropolitan Serapion:



H. E. Metropolitan Serapion attended the Kiraza Competition at St. Athanasius on Saturday, August 6, and distributed prizes to the winners

+ He also ordained two new priests for St. Athanasius church

and Transfiguration church to serve the English-speaking youth.

### 8. The Biblical Studies for the Children:

On August 1-5, St. John Church held her annual circle on Biblical Studies for children. Twenty eight children attended this study under the supervision of Rita Moussa.

### 9. Harvest Day (Children Halloween Festival):

On Monday, October 31, St. John Church holds her children annual festival from 6:00 – 9:00 pm.

It was originally known as "All Saints' Day."

We encourage our children to put on good costumes of angels, prophets, saints and Biblical characters. There will be games, plenty of chocolates, candy and refreshments to keep them safe out of the streets.



### 10. The Memorial of Bishop Samuel Martyrdom:

On October 6, every year we commemorate the martyrdom of Bishop Samuel who was killed with Sadat in the same event October 6, 1981. May the Lord repose his soul and make his memory eternal.



### 13. St. John's Annual Grand Festival & Fair:

St. John Church in Covina holds her 27th Annual Festival and Fair, from Friday, September 30 until Sunday, October 2, 2016. The program contains daily vespers and morning Liturgies, Book Fair, Mediterranean food. Missionary tours for the guests and Fund-Raise to pay off the church debts and complete her Icons.





## St John Chrysostom on *the Cross*

The Cross has dissolved hatred towards man, has brought reconciliation, has made the earth heaven, has mingled men with the angels.

The Cross has conquered the bastion of death, has neutralized the strength of the devil, has dismissed the power of sin.

The Cross has rid the earth of error, has restored the truth, has driven away the demons, has torn down pagan temples, Has upset sacrificial altars.

The Cross has dispelled the smell of burnt offerings, has planted virtue, has founded churches.

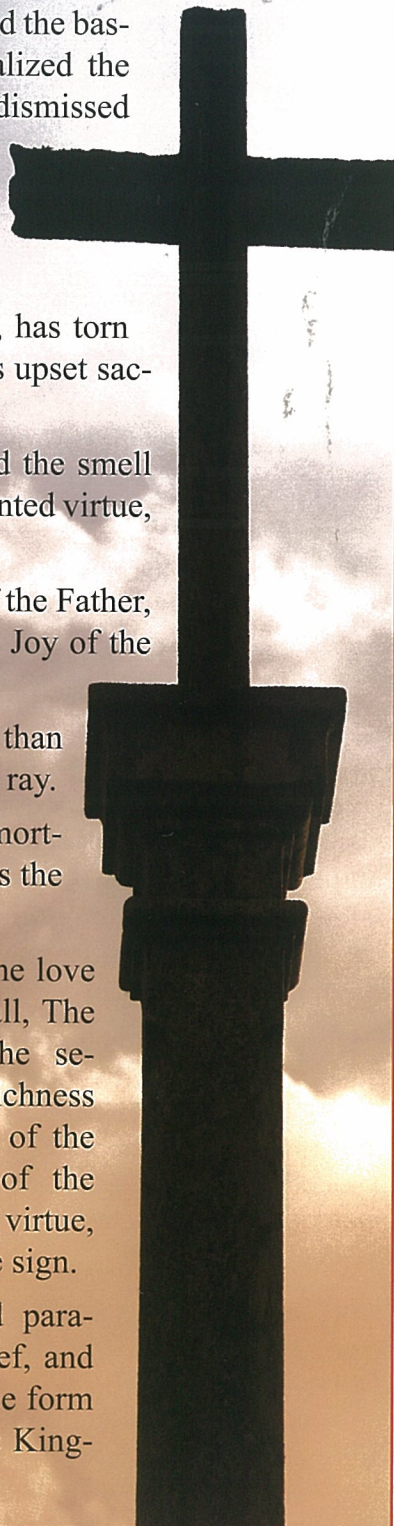
The Cross is the Will of the Father, the Glory of the Son, the Joy of the Spirit, the Pride of Paul.

The Cross is brighter than the sun and gayer than its ray.

The Cross has torn our mortgage, has rendered useless the prison of death.

The Cross is proof of the love of God, the unshaken wall, The unconquered weapon, the security of the rich, the richness of the poor, the weapon of the threatened, the rebuke of the passions, the kingdom of virtue, the wonderful and strange sign.

The Cross has opened paradise, has admired the thief, and has guided the human race from impending disaster to the Kingdom of God.



## Veneration of THE CROSS OF CHRIST *The Feast of the Cross*



Through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which had previously been a method of punishment, humiliation, and disgrace, became a symbol of glory, honor, and spiritual joy. Matthew (24:30) calls it the sign of the Son of Man. Hence the veneration

in that Christians came to feel toward it, using it as their distinguishing emblem and deriving courage, endurance, and fortitude from it. They blessed themselves with its sign; they wore it round their necks; they decorated their buildings with it; they erected it over the graves of their dead. It also became an object constantly in the hands of their priests.

The Coptic Church designates two days for the Holy Cross: 17 Tut (September), to commemorate the discovery of the cross by Empress Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine I the Great, in 326, and 10 Batamhat (March), to commemorate its restoration to Jerusalem in 628 following the defeat of the Persians by Emperor Heraclius, who released the cross and liberated Patriarch Zachariah of Jerusalem.

The veneration of the cross, by bending the knee, bowing down before it in reverence, and kissing it, is a mark of respect and homage of the Savior's cross, not in worship but in veneration.

Christians honor the cross for various reasons:

(1) It is their own sacred emblem.

(2) It is the symbol of redemption.

(3) It was on the cross that God revealed Himself to us in the person of the crucified, enabling us to witness God's consummate love, His perfect sanctity, His boundless mercy, His superior justice, His sublime wisdom, and His transcendent authority over nature and the entire creation.

(4) It is the symbol of unity and peace, which broke down "the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14-16); the cross has brought about full reconciliation, not only between God and man, but also between man and men.

The essential significance of the miracle of the Crucifixion is summed up in the words of Saint ATHNASIUS: "It was fitting for the Lord to spread out His hands...that with the one He might draw the ancient people, and with the other the Gentiles, to unit both in Him."



# What is the origin of the Christian fish symbol?

A closer look at the ancient Ichthys  
Elesha Coffman



The Greek word for fish is “ichthys.” As early as the first century, Christians made an acrostic from this word: Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter, i.e. *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.*

The fish has plenty of other theological overtones as well, for Christ fed the 5,000 with 2 fishes and 5 loaves (a meal recapitulated in Christian love-feasts) and called his disciples “fishers of men.” Water baptism, practiced by immersion in the early church, created a parallel between fish and converts. Second-century theologian Tertullian put it this way: “We, little fishes, after the image of our Ichthys, Jesus Christ, are born in the water.”

Greeks, Romans, and many other pagans used the fish symbol before Christians. Hence the fish, unlike, say, the cross, attracted little suspicion, making it *a perfect secret symbol for persecuted believers.* When threatened by Romans in the first centuries after Christ, *Christians used the fish mark meet-*

*ing places and tombs, or to distinguish friends from foes.* According to one ancient story, when a Christian met a stranger in the road, the Christian sometimes drew one arc of the simple fish outline in the dirt. If the stranger drew the other arc, both believers knew they were in good company. Current bumper-sticker and business-card uses of the fish harken back to this practice.

Critics of the fish symbol either decry it as tacky tokenism or point out that the fish still carries baggage from the days when pagans used it to represent fertility or, more specifically, the female reproductive organs. Though I agree that ichthys symbols in phone-book ads seem to commercialize faith, I don’t find the pagan argument compelling. No symbol means the same thing to all people at all times. That early Christians succeeded in transforming an already powerful symbol proves their interpretive creativity, not their ignorance or a tendency to syncretism.





# September 11 & Nyrouz

By Mark M. Hanna

(Reprint from September 2002)

September 11, 2001 is bound to live in our memories as one of the most horrifying days of all our lives. However, long before the events of September 11 impacted our way of life, the Coptic Church had long-before memorialized that day—since the early centuries of Christianity. This occasion that the Coptic Orthodox Church memorialized every year on September 11th is the Feast of the Martyrs, aka, the Feast of Nyrouz. In Egypt where palm dates are red and are ripe for eating in September, the Copts traditionally eat them on this Feast so that the red color of the dates reminds them of the blood of the martyrs.

The Church designated the beginning of Diocletion's reign as emperor, AD 284, to begin its calendar because his reign was the bloodiest of all emperors before him. He commenced a great persecution—"The Great Persecution" (303-313 AD)—against the Christians world wide, but Egypt's Copts were among the foremost of its sufferers. September 11th of every year was the first day of the New Year—the Year of the Martyrs. It is noteworthy that while the persecution was so brutal/ treacherous/great, the Church grew and flourished. The Church was built on the blood of Christ and 'the Great Persecution' allowed the martyrs to carry their cross and follow Christ. Their blood was the seed of the Church.

## *How did the Church Flourish Under Persecution?*

One aspect that held the Christians of that time

steadfast in the faith was their unmovable faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The martyrs looked to Him, at His weakest moment—crucified on the cross—and saw strength and were strengthened realizing that all the torture that could be inflicted on them could not compare to what the Lord endured. ***"For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you"*** (2 Cor. 13:4). Our heroic forefathers and mothers believed, ***"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."***

***Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*** (Rom.8:35-37). They wholeheartedly believed in the words of St. Paul, ***"if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"*** (Rom. 8:17-18).

The reality of our Christian faith is that despite all the persecutions waged against it, it endured, endures and continues to flourish. Christ is still able to win and liberate souls in every corner of the world unhindered by any war waged against His children.



## ***Persecution Today!***

The attacks on America on September 11 were in a not-so-obvious way attacks on Christianity. To the Arab world the “West” is where the Christians are from. Osama Bin Laden in one of his rambling video taped messages tried to rally Muslims around the world to war against the Christians. In his perception this war is between Muslims and Christians. While this may not be the case, the attacks of September 11 were perceived to be a decisive strike against the Christians.

Persecution of the Christians today takes many different and non-obvious ways. For example, the worldwide ban on the name “Jesus” from all media and educational curricula for different reasons. The teaching of the theory of evolution, in schools and universities, as fact while totally disallowing any teaching of the creation Intelligent Design—is another form of persecution. Requiring the teaching of acceptance for same-sex unions and parenting and at the same time labeling those who do not accept this lifestyle “bigots,” is another form of discrimination. Legislation in several states seeks to allow a child to be placed in a foster home where the guardians are cohabitants of the same gender, but to oppose such legislation is labeled an act of “bigotry.” The attacks on the Christian faith are validated everyday that the Koran or Islamic teachings are allowed in American schools and campuses while Christianity is virtually tabooed. A recent Time magazine article [TIME, August 19, 2002, pg. 37] described the newly introduced reading of the Quran to incoming students at the University of North Carolina on Chapel Hill. The author of this article actually defends the University’s practice and chides critics. The author of that TIME article takes a jab at Christians and Jews by reminding them that that they too have skeletons in their closets, so to speak. He reminds the Christians of the Inquisition and the Jews of the bloody wars of the Old Testament, of course, he makes statements like those without any contextual explanation of either one. Both are levied against Christians generally as the Inquisitions were committed by the Roman Catholic Church, perceived to be Christian and the Old Testament wars are part of the Christian Bible.

All these forms of modern-day persecution of Christians and Christian values occur everyday in our communities around us. The modern-day methods have the same effect that Egypt’s Coptic Christians endured under Islamic rule whereby they were denied openly practicing their faith, denied teaching and preaching their faith, denied teaching of their pre-Arab-Invasion

History, and denied the practice of their native language—effectively wiping out their culture.

## ***Reassurance in Christ:***

Planes slamming into buildings, skyscrapers larger than mountains crumbling, thousands dying in two separate locations in a single day, letters that kill, going to war against an enemy that is not really known and dropping bombs worth millions of dollars on a country that does not have enough money to equal a single one of those bombs—to list a few of the strange occurrences that took place since September 11, 2001. If there is any answer to this madness it is to turn to God for refuge, for security, for stability, for sanity, for justice.

Christians, who feel that they are still the targets of persecution, need to always remember that they are sharing in the pain and suffering of Christ. St. Paul reminds us, ***“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake”*** (Philippians 1:29).

We may get anxious about our safety and our rights but like King David reminds us in Psalm 20:7, ***“some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”*** Our minds during tough times as these needs to be focused on God. This is how the early church, although not intentionally, defeated the Roman Empire rather than the other way around. No kind of persecution was able to withstand the love our forefathers had for Christ. They considered it nothing to be deprived of human rights, arrested, tortured, and even killed for the sake of Christ. They kept their faith fixed on Christ and they endured as Isaiah promises, ***“You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You”*** (Isaiah 26:3).

We may petition, and warn the government and our colleagues at work and school and they may think we are telling interesting stories and do nothing about it. God, however, sees our plight and our ultimate protection is in His hands and therefore, ***“we will remember the name of the Lord our God”*** (Ps. 20:7).

The millions of our forefathers who suffered and were killed for the faith before us did so and in Christ they found peace. Christ forewarned us and promised us, ***“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”*** (Jn. 16:33). ***“Even so, come Lord Jesus!”*** (Rev. 22:20).





# WHY THE CHURCH OF THE APOSTLES WAS VERY STRONG?

by Fr. Gawargious Kolta



When we read the book of Acts, the Epistles, and the church history, we will find out that from the day of Pentecost on, many of those who heard the word believed and the number of the believers increased enormously every day (Acts 4:4). The church was so strong that many people of men and women were added to the Lord (Acts 5:14). There are many reasons that made the church of the apostles that strong. These are:

## **1- Life of Teaching and Preaching with a Fervent Spirit:**

The apostles spoke the word of God with boldness in the temple every day, giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Acts 4:33). They had holy zeal that they preached the Gospel in season and out of season (2 Cor. 4:2). The Lord granted them to speak His word, confirming it with signs and miracles. They did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ every day, in the temple and in every house (Acts 5:42), and considered that necessity was laid upon them to preach the gospel, despite of the threats of the elders of the Jews. Thus, St. Paul said: "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). He presented the gospel without charge, making himself a servant for all, in order to win all people and save them. He served the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to him by the plotting of the Jews (Acts 20:19). The apostles were courageous and did not fear the threats of the Jewish Sanhedrin, who were marvelled as they found the apostles speaking with boldness. We also find that St. Peter in his first sermon, did not defend himself but he strongly accused them of crucifying the Lord (Acts 4:10).

## **2- Life of Liturgical Assemblies:**

The apostles experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in liturgical assemblies every day in the Temple (Acts 2:46), following the Lord's commandment that Men always ought to pray and not lose heart (Lk. 18:1). They continued with one accord in prayers and supplication. It was mentioned that they (the believers) continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread (Holy Communion), prayers and praises from house to house (Acts 2:42-47). The apostles and all the believers used to gather on the first day of the week (Sundays) to break the bread and preach the word of God (Acts 20:7, 11).

Their prayers were so strong that when they prayed, "the place where they assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:31). Thus, through the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were done among the people. The people esteemed them highly (Acts 5:12, 13), and the number of the believers increased daily, and many of the Jewish priests believed. The apostles did not count their life dear to them so that they might finish their race with joy, and the ministry which they received from the Lord to testify the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

## **3- Life of Delegation of Authority:**

The apostles delegated the authority of serving the needy to the deacons. They ordained deacons to serve the needy widows. They chose seven deacons of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom and they appointed them over that business, so that the apostles gave themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word (Acts 6:1-4).

Thus, St. Paul wrote his disciple Timothy a special chapter asking him to take care of the widows and the elders (1 Tim. 5:1-16). Deacons were also ordained to help the apostles in Evangelism. St. Paul also mentioned the qualifications of deacons to his disciple Timothy, saying: "Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless" (1 Tim. 3:8-10).

## **4- Life of Charity:**

The church of the apostles was also strong because they willingly did what was necessary for the wellfare of the community. They preached the life of charity, as mentioned in the book of Acts: "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common" (Acts 4:32).

There was none of the believers who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles'



feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had needed.

Barnabas was an example of those who gave everything willingly (Acts 4:34-37). St. John the Baptist had taught the same thing to the Jews, saying: "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and He who has food, let him do likewise" (Lk. 3:11).

The apostles thus followed the Lord's command that to take care of the needy (Mat. 19:21), because we are all organs in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:25, 5:30), and He called them His least brethren (Mat. 25:40). St. John said that whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 Jn. 3:17).

### **5- Life of Discipleship:**

The church of the apostles was strong because they kept the Lord's final commandment which He delivered to them after His resurrection, saying: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Mat. 28:19). This should be the theme of the church until His Second Coming. The power of His resurrection is granted to all believers, helping them to live a Christian life and preach His name. The apostles made disciples not only in Judea but also all over the world. They followed the steps of our Lord Jesus, who appointed 12 apostles and 70 disciples, and sent them to preach the kingdom of God and gave them the power to perform miracles (Lk. 9:1, 2, 10:1). They planted the church throughout the world and most of them labored for Christ unto death. They were faithful servants of the Lord and of the church. St. Paul also appointed many disciples, such as Timothy, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, Tychicus, Archippus, Artemas, Titus, Aquila and Priscilla. They were faithful disciples and helped St. Paul in his mission, to preach the gospel and proclaim Christ to the world.

### **6- Life of Martyrdom:**

The apostles suffered many tribulations, hardships and persecutions during preaching the word of God. They rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name, knowing that the reward of the Kingdom of glory far outweighs any sufferings on earth (Acts 5:41).

They carried the cross willingly, remembering the Lord's words: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Mat. 16:24, 25).

St. Paul said: "... We also glory in tribulations" (Rom. 5:3), and he said that he was ready not only to be bound, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:13). When St. Peter was arrested by Herod and put in prison to be killed the next day, he did not fear death, but slept peacefully till the angel of God struck him on his side and raised him up (Acts 12:5-10). Martyrdom

was the desire of the apostles, to be with Christ. When St. Paul was in jail, he said: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

The apostles had good testimony through faith in Christ's commandment, who said: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.... But be ware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles" (Mat. 10:16-18).

Our Lord Jesus encouraged the believers to stand tribulation, because it is enough for a disciple that he be like his Teacher. He said to them: "Therefore do not fear them. ... And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat. 10:26-28). They knew that they had to confess Him before men awaiting the reward in heaven, as He said to them: "Do not be afraid little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk. 12:32).

St. James mentioned that the believers must be prepared for tribulations. We must count it all joy when we fall into various trials. And if we endure temptation, we will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him (Jam. 1:2).

### **7- Life of Parousia:**

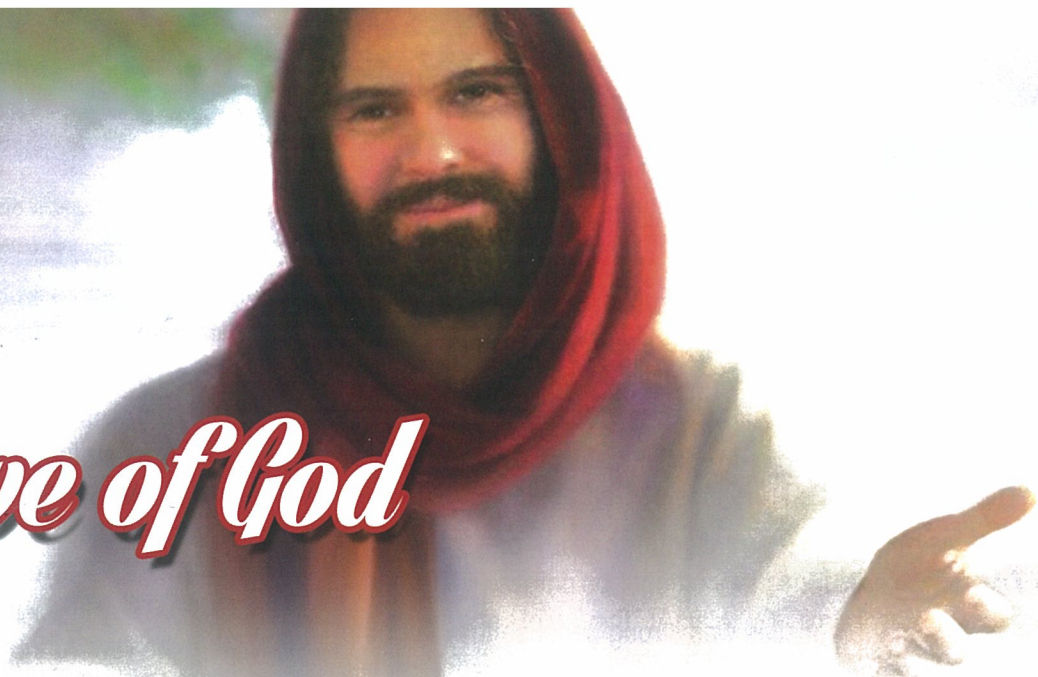
Parousia means the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples before His crucifixion, about His Second Coming in the fullness of time. They believed the words of the Lord: "... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn. 14:2, 3). In the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, the Lord said: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (Jn. 11:25). St. Paul lived by the hope of the resurrection, and he said: "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens...For who we are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life" (2 Cor. 5:1-4). He knew that God created us not to die, but to be transformed from mortality to life, when the union of the soul with the glorified body is done, to join the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:8). The apostles believed in the Second Coming of the Lord, which was affirmed by Christ, who said: "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (Jn. 5:28, 29). They also remembered the Lord's promise, who said: "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn. 6:40).





By Dr. Emile Goubran

# The Love of God



When Apostle John said "God is love" (1Jn 4:8), he was referring to God's loving nature. God's love manifests itself in two ways; the first is the high moral code of love called "Holiness" and the second is the good deeds of love called "Righteousness". In the entire Bible we can see that all God's thoughts and actions are driven by His Holy and Righteous nature.

The underpinning of all God's commandments is "Love". When Jesus was asked by a lawyer "Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?", Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matt. 22:37-40).

God's love was the main and sole motivator behind all creation. God created man to be the recipient of His love, with the ultimate goal of being one with Him as mentioned by the Lord when He prayed to the Father saying "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, **that they also may be one in Us**, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me." (John 17:21). The rest of the creation was made to accommodate man and his descendants and give them the time to experience God's love and make one important decision, and that is whether man accepts the loving invitation of God, to be one with Him for eternity, or not.

God has expressed His love to man in a variety of ways as we can see in the following verses;

- "I was a workman at His side; and **I was daily His delight**, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the world, His earth; and **my delight was with the sons of men**." (Pro 8:30-31),

- "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet **I will not forget you**" (Isa 49:15)

- "Behold, **I have carved you on the palms** of My hands; **your walls are forever before Me**." (Isa 49:16), and

- "For so says Jehovah of Hosts: He has sent me after glory, to the nations who stripped you; **for he who touches you touches the pupil of His eye**." (Zec 2:8).

Even after the fall of man, God's love never ceased but rather revealed itself strongly when God decided to come by Himself, in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, to redeem humanity and open the door once more to those who love and believe 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).

After all the unlimited and unconditional love that God has shown to us in words and deeds, the question before us is this; are we willing to reciprocate by loving our God and Savior back and submit ourselves to Him completely? The answer will determine our eternal destiny whether we live with our loving Creator for all eternity or be separated from Him eternally.

The choice is ours, and what happens after that is a consequence to our choice rather than a punishment by God. God has given us the choice as well as His counsel regarding this issue when He said "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, **choose life**, so that both you and your seed may live" (Deut. 30:19)





## READER'S CORNER

*Dear FR. AUGUSTINE,*

### **The Beautiful Masterpiece God is Making You!**

"But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand". (Isaiah 64:8)

A huge chunk of beautiful marble lay in the courtyard of the Florence, Italy cathedral for almost a hundred years. The sculptor commissioned to carve it had made a mistake while attempting to carve the stone, and most people thought it was beyond repair.

But in 1505, another young sculptor by the name of Michelangelo came across the piece and thought he could do something with it. For three years, he worked steadily, carefully shaping the marble into an 18-foot tall image of the young shepherd boy David - a sculpture that would define the great artist's career.

Much like Michelangelo, God is our Sculptor. He finds us broken, lost, and in desperate need of work. Then, after putting our faith in Christ, He begins to chisel us - scraping and chipping away our imperfections and making us more and more into the image He wants us to be.

This sculpting we undergo isn't always a pleasant experience. That's because sometimes we have idols and imperfections chipped away to which we've grown very attached. But our Master Sculptor knows what He's doing. Trust Him to mold you throughout your life into the masterpiece He's created you to be and thank Him that He's set you free from the imperfections that hinder you!

Prayer Challenge: Ask God to help you submit to His daily sculpting in your life as He transforms you into His image.

*With love & prayers*

*Mona & Bhupinder Singh*



## Chocolate-Fueled Car!

Many people like both the sweetness and the energy they get from chocolate. Yet British auto technicians have found a surprising use for this sweet food. Scientists at the University of Warwick have built a racecar that runs on vegetable oils and chocolate! The fuel provides energy so that the car can reach top speeds of 135 mph.

The Bible also records a surprising source of energy from a food. When Elijah had been used by God on Mt. Carmel to call fire down from heaven, this spiritual high was followed by persecution and melancholy.

In response to Elijah's depression, God sent an angel to provide food, drink, and rest for the weary prophet. The sustaining power of that food, from heaven was remarkable: "So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God" (1 Kings 19:8). Just as we need food to sustain our physical lives, we also need nourishing food for our spiritual lives. God's Word is "sweeter...than honey and the honeycomb" (Psa. 19:10) and feeds our souls. It makes "wise the simple" (v. 7) and provides both nourishment and energy for life's long journey.

The word of God is likened in the Bible also with all of these items of food:

**+ Milk:** "As newborn babies, desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).

**+ Bread:** "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

**+ Solid food:** (1 Cor. 3: 2; Heb. 5: 13, 14).

**+ Fruit and apple:** (Song 2:3).

**+ Honey:** (Psa. 19:10).

Take time to feed on it every day.

God's Word provides the nourishment

That every Christian needs to grow,

Supplying strength from day to day

By teaching what we need to know.





# Great Evil, Great Revival

(BY A SYRIAN PRIEST  
WHO LIVES AND  
SERVES IN A WAR  
ZONE)

No suffering is like the suffering in Syria right now. Syria was a very beautiful country, with a population of more than 20 million. Christians were over 20 percent of the population, but right now they are only 7 percent.

Whatever evil things you can imagine are nothing compared to what is really happening in Syria: the destruction, the killing, the kidnappings.

*The Muslim extremists kidnapped one of my relatives; they cut off his head and started to play soccer with his head!*

*They take the children and put many of them in the oven to kill them. They kidnap the women and rape them and leave them naked in the streets. When they take any women, they declare, "Allahu akbar" [God is great]. Maybe 10 men take turns on one woman and rape her. They do that until the woman dies. They do this everywhere especially to Christians.*

The suffering is very huge in Syria, and it is dangerous everywhere. There is fear in the hearts of the people. The extremists entered the house of a Christian family I know.

*The 85 year-old woman is so old, she*

*can't walk. Her husband is 94 years old. The terrorists entered and raped the woman in front of her husband. The husband went crazy with grief.*

There is great evil! But at the same time, our God is great! God can turn all the evil to good. All the bad things in Syria, God will turn it to good; that is our belief! This is our prayer. God has a special factor; He takes all the bad things and puts them inside that factory and brings out blessings and good things to His people.

Before the war, not many people attended our church. We could not have imagined or dreamed about how the churches are right now. Thousands of families attend the Catholic, Orthodox and evangelical churches. They came as refugees to Damascus.

We are distributing hundreds of thousands of Bibles to people, mostly to Muslims. These are signs on the main door of the churches, which say, ***"The church offers a New Testament as a free gift to anyone who wants one."*** Every day, many people pass by and take a New Testament.

Right now there is a big revival inside the church, and the churches cannot seat anymore people. All the families, the people sit on the chairs, on the floor, in the backyard, everywhere. At the beginning of the war, one pastor came to me and said "I want to leave the country not for me, but for my children. Only 5 to 10 people attend my church right now, so it is not worth it to stay here." So he left, but right after he left, the church filled up with people.

One lady shared this testimony before she got baptized: "I lost my house, I lost my furniture, but I won the Lord as my Savior. I am the daughter of the Lord. I am going to heaven." All her family came to the Lord.

God is working in a mighty way in Syria. We have a special protection from the Lord; there is big danger anywhere we move, but we feel the Lord's hand upon us. Rockets and mortars fall down inside the city everywhere, and one day, a rocket hit a wall of our church. Inside the church there was a meeting happening, but God protected us.

One day, the terrorists announced on Facebook that they wanted to attack our city. They said about 30,000 of them were ready to attack as soon as they finish Friday prayers at 1 pm. It was a very terrible day, but a few believers in the church were praying and fasting. We woke up very early and spent all day until noon fasting and praying. It was a sunny day, the first week of June. At 1 p.m., thousands of them entered the mosque to start to pray. Suddenly the weather changed from sunny to cloudy, in one minute. They finished praying at 1:15 p.m. They went out into the streets shouting, and started walking toward the city. Then it started raining—not just raining, but hailing huge hailstones. It was the first time that had happened in Syria in many years. After 15 minutes, no one was left in the streets. All of them ran away. Even the secular Syrian media took a picture of the hail and showed it on the evening news, saying, ***"God fought with us."***

Many Christians in Syria right now are choosing to stay on the frontlines, and it's difficult. You can stand beside us by battling through prayer.



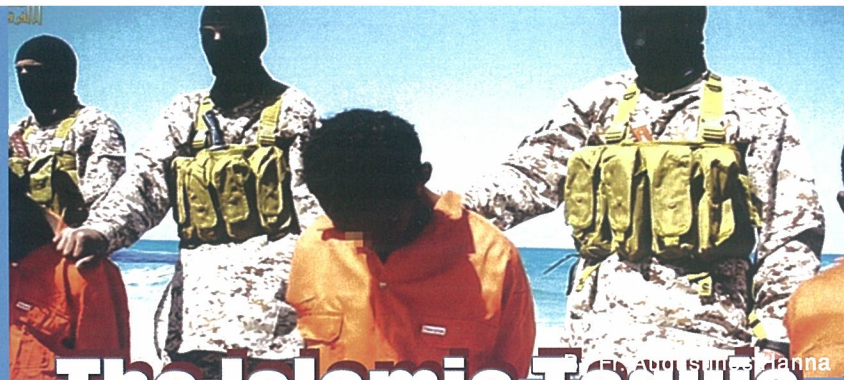
Dr. James Dobson on  
**Donald Trump's  
Christian Faith**



Only the Lord knows the condition of a person's heart. I can only tell you what I've heard. First, Trump appears to be tender to things of the Spirit. I also hear that Paula White has known Trump for years and that she personally led him to Christ. Do I know that for sure? No. Do I know the details of that alleged conversion? I can't say that I do.

But there are many Christian leaders who are serving on a faith advisory committee for Trump in the future. I am among them. There are about 25 of us that include Jerry Falwell, Jr., Robert Jeffress, Jack Graham, Ben Carson, James Robison, Michele Bachmann, and many others whom you would probably know. We've all agreed to serve. How will that play out if Trump becomes president? I don't know. It is a good start, I would think.

If anything, this man is a baby Christian who doesn't have a clue about how believers think, talk and act. All I can tell you is that we have only two choices, Hillary or Donald. Hillary scares me to death. And, if Christians stay home because he isn't a better candidate, Hillary will run the world for perhaps eight years. The very thought of that haunts my nights and days. One thing is sure: we need to be in prayer for our nation at this time of crisis.



# The Islamic Taqiya

(PERMISSIBLE LIES)!

JIM CROFT

*Islam has a principle that is foreign to Christianity in regard to the necessity of always speaking the truth. It is called Al Taqiyya.*

*The term means to guard against or to prevent harm. It absolves Muslims of guilt from telling lies in certain situations.*

*A Muslim can lie to extend the purposes of Islam; for self-preservation; and to restore harmony to argumentative factions. It is Al Taqiyya that permits Islamic nation diplomats to tell bald-faced lies to the press core of free democracies and the exact opposite to Arabic and Farsi journalists. (Koran 2:225; 3:28-29)*

*Al Taqiyya also permits oaths to be taken and vows made that are not kept provided they were not spoken with sincerity of heart. For instance, a person who embraces the taqiyya concept could vow to uphold and to defend the US Constitution and then deliberately avoid it with no pangs of conscience.*

*Americans need to demand answers for: Why this administration tries to eradicate all references to Islamic Terrorism from the US conversation? Is it because it wants to give appearance that they have brought Al-Qaida and Islamic Terrorism to an end?*

*A response might be that our President has low tolerance for terrorists. After all, didn't he oversee Osama Bin Laden's execution? That he did. However, Muslims routinely kill far more Muslims annually than those killed in years of firefights with War on Terror forces.*

*For the Islamic mindset, acceptable cause for Muslims to kill other Muslims can be minor doctrinal issues. Is it possible that a US politician with formative year Islam sympathies could dismiss the deaths of a few Muslims as necessary collateral damage?*

*President Nixon faced impeachment in relation to lies told about Watergate. US citizens were not killed and sovereign American soil was not torched and ransacked in the Watergate incident. Some high profile nonpartisan voices are suggesting that Obama might have Benghazi gate knocking at his door.*





# Refugees

## in the Past and Present

Samuel Rindlisbacher & Edited by Fr. Augustinos Hanna

For many Christians, the tension in our world is almost unbearable. How should we react?

The refugee problem is a chance for Christians. Behind the bad news in the world, there is a unique encouragement. It is the prophetic work of the Bible which can give us stability in difficult times. Believers in Jesus have no reason to despair, but every reason to grab the possibilities that the Lord gives them. The mission field is coming to us. The return of Jesus is drawing nearer, and Biblical prophecy is proving itself to be true.

**The Bible is full of refugees. God is not silent concerning the questions which disturb His children. The Biblical answer is as challenging for Christians as encouraging.**

**For the year 2015, the number of refugees worldwide has been estimated as 60 to 100 million.** There are more people fleeing today than there have been since World War 2. Quite a lot of these refugees are coming to Europe.

**Germany alone estimate that in the same year, 800,000 to 1.5 million refugees have come to Germany.**

**The ranking of the countries of origin is: Syria first, then Albania, Afghanistan, Iraq, Serbia, Eritrea, Macedonia, Pakistan and Montenegro. These people not only bring themselves but also their culture, way of living and religion. All this affects our society.**

Ziet Online writes under the heading, "God of the others": **Nobody knows in these wild days what Germany will be like in five years' time, but one thing is certain: it will be more Islamic. Of the 800,000 refugees that are estimated for 2015, 'at least 80% are Muslim.'** says Aiman Mazyek, the chairman of

the central council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD). What does this mean for Islam here? **Already, fears and rumors are buzzing around. In front of many large refugee centers in the country, Salafists are appearing and offering the new arrival from the Middle East comfort, food and the Koran. It is said the Saudis want to build 200 mosques in Germany for refugees. And some people are rightly asking, what about women's rights among the new arrivals? What about the separation between church and state, with homosexuality, Judaism and satire?"**

Die Welt writes under the headline, **"Islamists are threatening Christians in refugee centers"**: "Saeid from Iran is sitting under a picture of Jesus on the cross with Persian writing under it. There are Bible verses such as John 8:12, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' Saeid is a kick-boxer. He walked across Turkey on foot. He never thought that his problems would only really begin in Germany. 'In Iran, the Revolutionary Guard arrested my brother in a home church. I fled from the Iranian Secret Service because I thought that in Germany I could finally practice my religion freely,' said Saeid, **'but I cannot say here openly that I am Christian. Then I would be threatened.'**"

These are just a few quotes from the secular press. "Our society is changing. Whether we want to admit it or not," our politician verify, **"Islam belongs in Germany."** Chancellor Angela Merkel confirmed on the occasion of the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan, **"It is clear now that Islam undoubtedly**





*belongs in Germany.”*

***Our cities look completely different from how they looked 10 years ago, and no one can imagine what they will look like 10-20 years from now.***

The previous quotes awaken fears which are being stirred up through the various disturbing media reports, and so thousands of people are talking to the streets.

***Worried citizens warn of an infiltration of foreigners, the danger of an islamization of our “Christian” West.***

***What does the Bible say about these developments?***

***Interestingly enough, the Word of God speaks of many people who for various reasons were refugees, on account of wars, famines, family feuds or political disturbances. All these people had to leave their familiar surroundings, flee their homelands, leave behind family members, and separate from their friends.*** Cain was the first refugee. His fratricide was the reason, and so it says of his life, “...a fugitive and a vagabond you shall be in the earth” (Genesis 4:12).

***Abraham and also Isaac were economic refugee,*** “And there was a famine in the land: beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar” (Gen. 26:1; 12:10).

***Jacob fled on account of a family conflict:*** “Behold, your brother Esau, purposing to kill you. Now therefore, my son, arise, flee to Laban my brother to Haran” (Gen. 27:42-43).

***Moses was a political refugee,*** “But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian” (Exodus 2:15). The list could be longer: Naomi, Ruth, David, etc.

***In the New Testament, the first refugee was none***

***other than Jesus Christ Himself. Mary, his mother, and Joseph had to flee to Egypt from the politically motivated murderous plans of Herod*** (Matt. 2:13-14). ***The first Church also had to flee,*** “...At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:1). So, the refugee problem is not unknown in the Bible.

As the Church of Jesus Christ, we have here on this earth ***“no continuing city, but we seek one to come”*** (Hebrews 13:14). For this reason, since its existence the Church of Jesus Christ has always been a part of the worldwide stream of refugees.

***Today also, thousands of Christians are in flight: from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Egypt, Eritrea, Sudan, etc.*** Let us not forget our fathers in the faith, of whom it says in the epistle to the Hebrews, “And others had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the word was not worthy, They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb. 11:36-38).

Think of the refugees among the Waldensians ***or the many thousands who fled from Communism, as today from Islam. We see what God expects of refugees in the Bible, in the deportation of Jews from their homeland to Babylon.*** There they sat, as the Psalmist describes, “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst of it. For there those who carried us away captive required of us a song; saying, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?’” (Psalm 137:1-4).

The Jews were refugees in a strange culture, a strange religion, and under foreign rule. God said to them through the prophet Jeremiah, “Seek the peace



of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it: for in its peace you will have peace" (Jer. 29:7).

**This Biblical principle still applies today:** Refugees should seek the best of the city of their refuge and its inhabitants. We find a further principle in the New Testament in Romans 13:1-2, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power resists the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." **Yes, the refugee should, just as every citizen, be subject to the government and the laws of their guest country.** In view of the streams of refugees that are coming to our countries, questions arise in us Christians too. We are worried. Fear can come upon us. Our Lord Jesus knows this, "...In the world ye shall have tribulation [or fear]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). But let us not stop here. The divine reality which confronts this fear is the Lord Himself, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). **Whatever happens, no one can take the peace of God from us. He Himself, the Good Shepherd, watches over each one of His children. Let us not be intimidated. He is there and He holds our lives too in His mighty hand. In this knowledge, we may meet the refugees with open hearts and open arms.**

**Concerning our dealings with refugees,** God's Word emphasizes, **"Take counsel, execute judgment; make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day; hide the outcasts; Do not betray him who escapes"** (Isaiah 16:3). Or, **"O inhabitants of the land of Tema bring water to him who is thirsty, with their bread they met him who fled"** (Isaiah 21:14).

Particularly in view of the end times, the Lord Jesus said, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matt. 25:35-36). **Many refugees are disappointed and disoriented. Muslims have escaped from Islamic terror, and are horrified at what is**

**done in the name of "their" religion. These people are ready and open when others meet them in the love of Jesus. Moreover, many of them have never met a true Christian. Few of them have ever heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason, we can and should treat them as Christians who love them, reaching them with the message of Jesus Christ, the message of love, redemption, forgiveness and hope.**

*And so this flood of refugees is a tremendous mission field. Let us take advantage of it to reach these people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His salvation.*

As Christians, we must do the following: pray for our government. St. Paul says in this respect, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1). Then he emphasizes, "For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Tim. 2:2-3). **Our government needs our prayers more than ever today.** When we consider our own land and people, we have to admit what the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel lamented over, "The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy: **and they wrongfully oppressed the stranger**" (Ezekiel 22:29-30). In accordance with the situation, God searched for a man who could stand in the gap for His people, "And I sought for a man among them, who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none" (Ezekiel 22:30). The question arises, where in our land, in our people, in our church, the prayers are. Christians should stand in the gap for their country, people and government, and plead to God for mercy, wisdom and salvation.

**Let us not forget one thing: it is God who is sitting on the throne. He writes history, and not us.** Let us also remember what the Bible says in Daniel 4:17 that **"the Most High rules in the kingdom of men."** Also, Amos 3:6, **"Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"** The prophet wants to say with these words that God allows certain things to happen to write His spiritual history. **"Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance"** (Isa. 40:15).

Have we ever thought that there could be a connection between the moral, social and spiritual decadence (corruption) of the "Christian West," and the increasing Islamization of Europe? The prophet Jeremiah said to the godless state of the people of Israel, "Thus says the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words" (Jer. 19:15). Europe is the continent of the Reformation. The first Bible which was made available to the general public was printed there in Germany in the 19th century.





Europe experienced wonderful revivals and became the starting point of many missionary societies.

If we look at our present Christianity, we see an increasing spiritual corruption, a Christianity that often lives without Christ. Many theological colleges are full of wrong criticism. We have an increase of lukewarm Christianity, adapted to suit the times, lacking in knowledge and without devotion.

In our society things are increasingly regarded as normal which a few years ago were taboos: abortion, euthanasia, greed, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, divorce, adultery, transgender, drugs, pornography, crimes, false prophets, apostasy etc.

Our Lord Jesus said about the end times, *“And as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be”* (Matt. 24:37, and *“there shall be signs.... upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken”* (Luke 21:25-27). Today, the people are afraid; governments are perplexed. The sea of nations is full of unrest. But then Jesus added the wonderful words of comfort, *“And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draw nigh”* (Lk. 28-29).

The Lord Jesus is speaking here expressly of the whole earth. When fear and perplexity increase worldwide, and the whole sea of nations is shaken, this is when we believers should lift up our heads, because we are in the final stage. The end-times vision in the book of Daniel is very interesting in this context. It says of the final kingdom that will dominate the world. *“And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron break in pieces and subdue all things:*



*and as iron breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas you saw the feet and toes, part of potters’ clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas you saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay”* (Daniel 2:40-43).

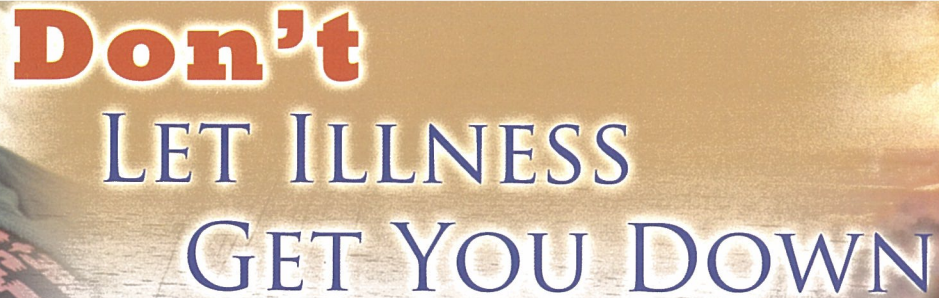
This means that in this end-times kingdom, the people will mix with one another and yet not stick together. This is just what is happening today before our eyes. Tremendous floods of refugees are entering Europe. All these people are coming with the hope of a better life, of security and affluence. It is an interesting fact that these refugees are coming mainly from the catchment area of the three kingdoms mentioned by Daniel (the ancient kingdoms Babylon, Persia, and Greece; see Daniel 2 and 7). Perhaps the many people who are coming to us today are a renewed, possibly end-times speaking of God, one of the last signs that will precede what Daniel further proclaims, *“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, for it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever”* (Dan. 2:44).

The return of Jesus is imminent. The events of this world should make our eyes look up. As Christians, we may look with hope to the future, as it says concerning the increasing unrest and worries, *“When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draw near.”* **Maranatha, Jesus is coming.**

**Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Amen.**







# Don't LET ILLNESS GET YOU DOWN

Good health is undeniably one of our greatest blessings from God. Be it minor aches and pains, an annoying chronic condition, or a debilitating illness, health issues are welcomed by no one.

How we deal with our body ills—whether with a joyful heart or a crushed spirit—can be far more an important factor in the successful management of our health than any medicine, therapy, or physician could ever be.

This was all brought home to me one night last year when I was whisked away to a hospital after suddenly becoming seriously ill. During the next several months of treatment for a previously undetected health issue, I found great support in my faith, secure in the knowledge that no matter what course my health would take, Jesus would be at my side through it all.

So often when we pray during my poor health, we ask only to be made well again. During the course of my treatment, I encountered numerous opportunities, both positive and negative, that actually served to strengthen my relationship with God and God's people.

***Here are five ways that can help you maintain a joyful heart in the midst of medical challenges.***

**1) Turn to God:** No matter the nature of the health issue facing us, shock and disbelief at our diagnosis are often our first reactions. We might ask ourselves, How did this happen? Could it have been found sooner? And of course the ubiquitous, Why me?

When coming face-to-face with your diagnosis, resist the common reaction of turning away from God, especially in anger. God is also saddened by your illness. God already knows that the road ahead of you will, at times, be difficult one. Realize, however, that God is ready to carry you along this journey. Be open to God's comforting embrace. As I lay in the emergency room that night, tethered to a host of machines that beeped and bussed with my every breathe, my prayer was not "Jesus, I know that you will save me," but "Jesus, I know you will stay with me." Thankfully, he did both.

**2) Give yourself a break:** We are often quick to blame ourselves for our health problems. Some thoughts that might race through our minds: I should have stopped smoking. Did I really need to drink so much? Why didn't I exercise like the doctor told me?

While we may speak of the importance of forgiving others, we often forget to forgive ourselves. Give yourself the gift of reconciliation. Recognize your past mistakes, wipe the slate clean, and ask for God's help in adopting whatever measures are necessary to improve or control your health situation. By showing yourself the same amount of compassion that Jesus shows us, you will be honoring both the life and the body that God has given to you.

**3) Always be thankful:** Though appointments, tests, and proce-

dures may seem annoying at best, offer prayers of gratitude for the incredible knowledge and abilities with which God has gifted our physicians, nurses, technicians, and all other health-care workers.

The nurse who makes certain you are comfortable, the doctor who successfully completes your surgery, the pharmacist who puts your prescriptions in order, the receptionist who works you into the doctor's busy schedule: they are today's co-ministers of Jesus.

**4) Step up your faith:** Frequent attendance at Mass, reception of the Eucharist, and prayer are tired-and true ways to find solace through our faith. But do not hesitate to seek out new ways of increasing your faith experience. A powerful way of maintaining a joyful heart through illness is to involve yourself with a local community of consecrated religious. If you cannot physically connect with a community you probably can electronically. Nearly all religious communities maintain interactive websites that allow followers to join in prayer, petition, readings, videos, live chats, streaming liturgies and prayer services, commentaries, and more. By involving yourself with a community, you will not only add a new dimension to your own faith experience, but also draw continual comfort and support. You might even find that your presence and contributions are providing the same comfort and support to others whom you are touching with your life.

**5) Always pray:** Prayer should be at the center of our existence, no matter where we are on our life's journey. A favorite of many in need is the beloved Serenity Prayer, which may provide just the right combination of acceptance, strength, and hope needed during any trial:

***Lord grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.***



# The Fatal Offenses



Fr. Augustinos Hanna



## What is an offense?

Offense is the opposite of the good model and idealism. It is everything that caused stumbling blocks and obstacles in the path of God so that it prevents the spiritual growth of others. Offenses cause failure and frustration to the children, in age, knowledge and spirit, they make it easy for them to fall and imitate the bad example and break the Lord's commandments and lead them to sin and destruction.

The offense is originally the sin and bad conduct of the believers, ministers, and leaders; not the sin of the evil doers. An evil person lives a life of sin and his evil acts are seen by all and it is expected of him. On the other hand, people expect to perceive the image of Christ, i.e. honesty, wisdom, love, purity, good example, and living according to God's commandments.

## The danger of offenses:

The dangers of offenses are clear from the following facts:

1) From the angry and threatening language of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

2) The Horror of offense is obvious from the punishment, "BUT WHOEVER CAUSES ONE OF THESE WHO BELIEVE IN ME TO SIN, IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR HIM IF A MILLSTONE WERE HUNG AROUND HIS NECK, AND HE WERE DROWNED IN THE DEPTH OF THE SEA" (Matt. 18:6) It seems as if the Lord prefers a person who offends others to die alone rather than to cause others to lose their eternal life.

3) The necessity to cut off offenses from the life of the Christian as if it were a malignant cancer and get rid of them no matter how much they were his dearest possessions like his right eye or hand or leg, in order to save the rest of the body. (Matt. 18: 7,8)

4) The Lord Jesus ordered Peter the apostle to pay the tribute though he was not committed to, saying: "Lest we offend them." (Matt. 17:27) He wanted to teach us the principle of personal sacrifice whenever necessary to avoid offenses.

5) In the parable of the field weeds, Jesus considered offenders equal to sinners. (Matt. 13:41)

6) St. Paul the apostle also confirmed that in his famous statement, "It is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that

makes your brother stumble." (Rom. 14:21) "Therefore, if food is a cause of my brothers falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall" (1Cor. 8:13). St. Paul specifically advised ministers saying, "We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed." (2 Cor. 6:3)

## Examples of serious offenses to avoid

1- "You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son." (Ps. 50:20)

2- To dispute and fight with your relatives, friends and colleagues openly. And refuse to reconcile with them, and escape facing or saluting them, while continually having communion without feeling ashamed or fearing God, breaking a clear commandment and trying falsely to justify yourself. (Matt. 5:23, 24 & 18:15-17)

3- The divisions in church are offenses and they are completely forbidden because they are fatal, therefore St. Paul warned: "I urge you; brethren note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them." (Rom. 16:17,18)

4- The divorce cases and family quarrels and repeatedly disputes, are terrible offenses to others, to the children, and to those who are away from the church.

5- Women's and girls' offensive dresses and exaggerated make up are not acceptable in the conservative Christian Coptic society. (1 Tim. 2:9, 10)

6- Anger, wrath, malice, filthy language, lies, insults, ugly dirty jokes, swearing, hatred, favoritism, judging others, fraud and cruelty, are bad offenses (Col. 3:8, 9).

7- Oppressing, stealing and despising others are offensive sins.

8- Using absolute authority without love and wisdom is a fatal offense. (1Cor. 8:9)

9- Being addicted to smoking, using drugs and drinking is a slavery and fatal offense.

10- Neglecting the church, or coming to church late during the liturgy, and neglecting fasting and experiencing the sacraments of confession, communion, giving good fruits and witness to the truth, are negative offenses.





# CHRIST...

## and His gracious invitation

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11: 28)

As the blackness of the night sky seems to be studded with fiery gems, so the Bible seems set in rubies and diamonds, which scintillate and relieve the somber setting of human failure. And as here and there in the constellations some stars outshine others in brilliance, so certain texts appear to possess added more beauty. They are rare gems of incalculable worth, and could not be purchased with a king's ransom. Not the least among these great verses is Matthew 11: 28, “Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There the entire purpose of Christ's coming is expressed in a few lines; how the aches of a sick world may be removed, and the innate needs of all races fully met.

### **The simplicity of the Invitation**

The Lord Jesus said, “Come unto me...” In contrast to many of the tiresome requirements of ancient orders and modern sects, the word of Jesus is both refreshing and illuminating. Come is the first word in every man's vocabulary. Expressed by the outstretched arms of a mother, it conveys meaning when sounds are confusing and irritating. Comparative religions declare that man must do or go; that eternal rest depends upon the efficiency with which he performs the allotted task. Christ said, come, and His invitation was constantly reiterated. To Peter He said, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become a fisher of men.” When the disciples were weary with acts of service, He said, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place, and rest awhile.” (Mark 6:31). None of these invitations ever led to disappointment. The disciples could draw near to their Lord without moving an inch. So can we - if we know how.

### **The Scope of the Invitation**

The Lord Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,” and in that one striking utterance His words circumnavigated a globe. Problems are never sent into exile; their roots go deep in the soil of every country. The cares of this world are common both to palace and hovel; to nobleman and peasant; to university professor and untutored heathen; to the African who sits alone in a hut in the forest, and to the skilled engine driver who sends his screaming train toward the distant horizon. Thus did John write, “For God so loved the world...” All who labor and are heavy laden - with

care, with fear, with toil - may respond to the invitation of Christ, and be certain to receive a welcome.

### **The Surety of the Invitation**

The Lord Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Life is filled with disappointments, and even the most reliable projects have a habit of failing. It is a most humiliating thing to place one's confidence in the promise of a person or movement only to discover at a most crucial moment that one's trust has been misplaced. A covenant is an undertaking in which two parties enter into sacred agreement to abide by the terms of the contract. The Lord Jesus said, “Come to Me . . . and I will give you rest.” That promise has been subject to the tests of time and circumstance, yet during the long interval which has elapsed since He first uttered the words; no voice has ever charged Him with inability to honor His promise. The promises of God are always true, always reliable, always a very sound investment.

### **The Sublimity of the Invitation**

The Lord Jesus said, “Come to Me. . . and I will give you rest.” If this text be a rare jewel of the sky, this word is one of the most delightful facets. It reflects glowing fires of beauty. Turn the jewel in the hand and the word rest will send forth beams of sheer loveliness to delight the heart and thrill the soul. Rest cannot be bought with earth's currency, for it is of God. It is not advice freely given; it is not sympathy sincerely expressed; it is not financial assistance benevolently offered. Rest is healing for a wounded heart, comfort for a troubled mind, fellowship for a lonely spirit, unspeakable relief for a haunted soul.

*Rest is dawn after midnight, calm after storm, laughter after tears, glad reunion after heart-breaking separation. Rest is heaven's gift to a weary world.* No government can supply it; no engineer can manufacture it; no church can claim a monopoly on its distribution. It belongs exclusively to Christ, and He alone can give it to others. He said, “Come to Me. . . and I will give you rest.” No night sky is completely clouded if one star is visible, and likewise no life is completely dark if the unrivalled brilliance of this celestial jewel can be seen shining from God's book.





St. John Church congratulates,

### **Joseph & Angela**

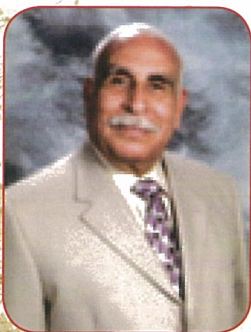
On their marriage, praying the Lord Jesus to grant them a blessed, happy and fruitful long life together and a Christian home built on the Rock of ages. Also the church extends her congratulations to Rev. Fr. Athanasius Ragheb and Tasony Hemmat and Rev. Fr. Shenouda Ghattas and Tasony Marian.



ST. John Church congratulates,

### **Peter & Regina Gergis**

On their marriage, wishing them long life together full of joy, love, peace, health and great deeds. Congratulations also to their two blessed families.



Congratulations to my brother,  
**Dr, Ragi A. Girgis**

From heart to heart. We thank our Lord Jesus Christ for receiving your Doctorate degree in "Family Counseling." With God everything is possible. God bless you- Love, Dr. David Kamal Attia George & Madeleine A. George.

-To my husband **Dr. Ragi Girgis**, I am very proud of your great accomplishment. You are a true inspiration.

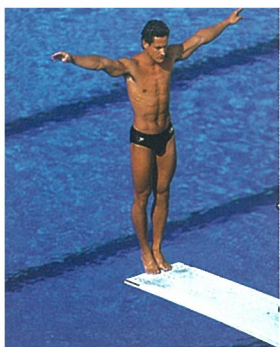
All the best- Your wife Nadia Girgis

-To my uncle **Dr. Ragi**: We are proud of you. May our Lord Jesus bless you always- Sam & Cathy Gerge.

**Congratulations for all the winners in  
Magragan El-Kiraza 2016  
from all churches, and especially from  
St. John Church.**







## Keep on Sowing!

(Author: George Whitten)

"Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:8-9 NIV)

### A friend sent us this amazing story.

A young man who had been raised as an atheist was training to be an Olympic diver. The only religious influence in his life came from his outspoken Christian friend. The young diver never really paid much attention to his friend's sermons, but he heard them often.

One night the diver went to the indoor pool at the college he attended. The lights were all off, but as the pool had big skylights and the moon was bright, there was plenty of light to practice by. The young man climbed up to the highest diving board.

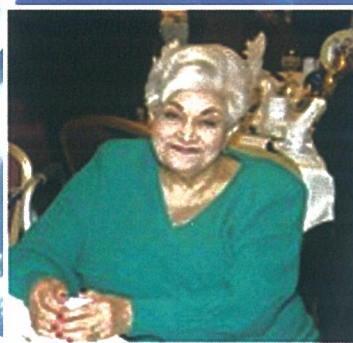
As he turned his back to the pool, on the edge of the board and extended his arms out, he saw his shadow on the wall. The shadow of his body was in the shape of a cross. Suddenly, he felt a strange feeling, like someone was speaking to him. Instead of diving, he knelt down and finally asked God to come into his life.

As the young man stood in deep reverence before the Lord, a maintenance man walked in and turned on the lights. The pool had been drained for repairs.

Sometimes we get frustrated. It seems like our words are falling on deaf ears and that our loved ones will never see the truth. But we never know how God is working in those for whom we've been praying. He often has a plan we know nothing about!

Let's not be discouraged when we don't see the fruit right away. God knows the day and the hour and He will be faithful to follow through. Keep praying. Keep sharing. Keep sowing the seed! There's so much work to be done!

## CONDOLENCES



**Dr. Etidal Basily  
(Dolly) Tadros**

**January 1, 1931 ~ June 27, 2016**

Etidal Basily Tadros, aged 85, passed to the Lord peacefully on June 27th, 2016, after a brief struggle with cancer. Etidal was born January 1, 1931, in Cairo Egypt, the daughter of Basily Sweha and Kokab Gayed. She was known by all her friends and relatives as Dolly. She was very generous and kind and had a bright smile. She was loved by many who looked up to her as their mother.

Etidal grew up in Cairo Egypt and studied medicine at Ein-Shams University, graduating at the top of her class in medical school, an amazing accomplishment for a woman in the Middle East in the 1950's. In addition she obtained a PhD in Forensic Medicine and went on to become a professor of Forensic Medicine at Ein-Shams University. She was a champion tennis player.

**She married Engineer Azmy Tadros in 1954.**

**In 1968 they immigrated to the United States to provide a greater opportunity for success for their children Lili and Wahid, settling in the San Francisco Bay Area.**

She became a licensed physician in California specializing in Obstetrics and Gynecology. She operated a private practice in Foster City, CA for 20 years.

**Etidal was a very active member of the Coptic Orthodox Church. In 1976 she was one of the founders of the St. Antonius Coptic Orthodox Church in Hayward, the first Coptic Church in the San Francisco Bay Area.**

**In 2003 she also founded St Mary and St John Coptic Orthodox Church in San Ramon, California, which later moved to Pleasanton, CA. She has been very active and supportive of the church, as well as all Coptic Orthodox Churches worldwide.**

**She and her husband Azmy Tadros hosted Pope Shenouda III many times at their home. She also was a lover and supporter of St. John Magazine.**

The family wishes to thank all of those who cared for her during her latest illness and for their sincere sympathy.