

# MIGHTY MAGAZINE MARROWS

Life. God. Truth. For Coptic Youth

HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENODA III  
40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary [1973-2013]

*The Harvest*

*Thanksgiving*

# "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth"

Psalms 127:4



In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, amen.

## My Beloved Youth

The Fall months are called the time of harvest. It is the time to reap what has been sown and sow new seed for the year ahead. It is a time of plenty and a time of thanksgiving. Thus, the American culture embraces this blessed season commemorating their arrival to their new land of freedom where they were hosted by the Native Americans. Each culture generously shared of their harvest with one another. Thus, this agape meal is celebrated annually in the American society and called, "thanksgiving." Let us also share it in every meal and in every good deed.

On several occasions, our Lord Jesus Christ used the symbols of the harvest, the laborers, the seed, the sower, and the ground to illustrate an important message. In essence, the harvest is our lives, for life consists of sowing and reaping, many laborers, the heart of man, and the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Scriptures teaches us that one will reap what one sows. It is incumbent upon all the believers to generously sow love, kindness, mercy, truth, and grace.

*"Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:6-10).*

The Coptic Orthodox Church begins every prayer with "thanksgiving" whether it is a joyous or a sorrowful occasion. We are truly indebted to God for all His kindnesses and mercy. Only a thankful heart can present the true genuine gift of harvest to our God. Let us ask Him together to bless the seed and bless the laborers and bless the fruit and bless the harvest for many generations until His faithful return.

The contributing writers of this Fall Edition of the Mighty Arrows Magazine invite you to journey along the many roads of the harvest. Let us traverse together through these words of inspiration.

God bless you,

Bishop Youssef

BISHOP OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

*Glory be to the Holy Trinity, forever, Amen.*

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## EDITORIAL: All Eyes on Egypt

On Sunday October 9th, 2011, a hideous act occurred against a few hundred peacefully-protesting Christians marching in the streets with nothing but crosses and candles, as they were simply pleading for justice on account of church burnings and violence against Christians. Once again, blood shook the earth beneath the land of Egypt, as witnesses saw how neither age nor gender was granted an ounce of mercy. Rather, tanks led by brute force ran wild over innocent and unsuspecting citizens. The Holy Synod assembled the following day to call for three consecutive days of prayer and fasting of every Coptic Orthodox Christian throughout the world. Funeral services were led by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III for the twenty-four victims whose lives were not spared by this additional and incomprehensible act of terror. We appeal to every upright citizen to recognize the inhumane tactics used against the dignity of fellow human beings in this region, and to unite together against future cruelty and bloodshed throughout the world.

May God—the Great Creator of the universe—intervene swiftly and save His people and all who seek peace.

## FROM THE FIFTH M

**He identifies three elements: body, soul, and spirit**

**On Depression:** Physical depression comes due to visible objects. Depression due to anger over sin is from a good conscience paired with self-knowledge. Depression, unaffected by the body, appearing in wisdom, comes when a person senses the future grandeur and sees of what make he is created, staring into the nature of the glorified soul, sorrowing over the imprisonment of the soul in this weak body.

**On Mourning:** If mourning is over earthly objects, then it is physical. If it is over sins and offenses, then the conscience has returned to hope. If it is for humbling the hidden person, then it is the virtue of knowledge.

**On Poverty:** Physical poverty is detachment from possessions and weakening the strength of the senses, because poverty of possessions is outside the soul. Poverty of healthy members is for its own nature. Poverty of the soul from the world is detachment from unwanted thoughts, which in turn, is the richness of self-knowledge. Poverty of nature in this life is ignorance, lack of wisdom, and lack of discernment.

**On Detachment:** Physical detachment is leaving possessions. Poverty of soul is shirking off pain. Spiritual detachment is halting all assumptions. Here we detach from possessions, and we are also able to detach from pain, but detachment from assumptions is not except in the life after resurrection.

**On Mercy:** Physical mercy is for a person to give charity, strengthen the weak, feed the hungry, dress the naked, and comfort the troubled. Mercy of the soul is for a person to have mercy on one who harms him, forgive enemies, do good to those who wrong him, and be favorable to those who reject him. As for spiritual mercy, it is for a person to have mercy on oppressors, teach the ignorant, bring the lost to full understanding, restore



# EMERSON ON THE PAINS OF THE SOUL - ST. JOHN OF LYCOS

the stray to God, prepare those who are estranged from God for the Mysteries, return the lost, and call to hope to those who have no hope. This is spiritual mercy which is fulfilled in the secret person. This is proof of God's mercies for the human race.

**On Peace:** Physical peace is to please a person and reconcile the angered. Peace of the soul is for a person to be internally, whole-heartedly complete and to reconcile with the simplicity of peace without deceit or wrath.

**On Security:** Physical security is stopping wars, calming the nations, obeying authorities, not murdering to rule. Security of the soul is an untroubled heart with divided thoughts of the conscience, a will undivided against itself, a calm mind not disturbing the heart, serenity of the soul, and not being moved irrationally. Spiritual security is a mind undivided against the truth, a soul undivided with assumptions, seeking the life to come. This is the security of the life that will be after resurrection.

**On Purity:** Physical purity is cleansing the filth, cleaning the members, washing the clothes, a pleasant scent. Purity of soul is weaning the soul from bodily corruption, purifying it from the filth of lustful thoughts, purifying the thoughts and illuminating them, and correct movement. Spiritual purity is soaring above the world and not remembering its affairs, caring about God and always looking to Him. This purity is for the life after resurrection.

**On Fasting:** Physical fasting is hunger for nourishment, refraining from food, and asceticism from fats. Fasting of the soul is hungering and thirsting for righteousness, fasting from ill will and its cares, and from the remembrance of sin. For the ill not to return to our memory is for the life after resurrection.

**On Service:** Serving the body is fulfilling its lusts, seeking riches, and the love of money. Serving the soul is seeking

its life, love of the world, finding wisdom, forsaking physical things, and caring for the soul. Serving the body before God is vows and offerings according to the laws of the children of Israel, because their service was bodily. Service of the soul for God is singing solemnly, and right thoughts with a clear conscience. Spiritual service to God is rapture in Him, praising His awesome wisdom in the depth of the mind. This is beyond this life and is reserved for us in the life after resurrection.

**On sacrifices and offerings:** Physical offering is what a person offers to God of external objects. Offering of the soul is for the person to offer his body as a sacrifice to God. Spiritual offering is the sacrament of communion with God, for a person to offer pure thoughts paired with rapture in God at all times.

**On the Altar:** The physical altar resembles the table of the people on which were offered the bodies of dead animals. The altar of the hidden soul is a conscience concerned with pleasing God with good works remembering the sacrifice of Christ. The spiritual altar is the uplifted mind above the remembrances of this world dignified by the knowledge of rapture in God.

**On Watchfulness:** Physical watchfulness is something the soul holds and uses, as Abraham drove away the birds lest they come down on the divided sacrifices (Gen 15:11). Watchfulness of the soul is a sensitive conscience, moving to evict filthy thoughts from the heart. Spiritual watchfulness is a mind erupting with the motions of rapture in God.

**On the Church:** The physical church in our world is the congregation of believers and the gathering of people together. The true church is a sincere conscience agreeing to one faith. The spiritual church is above our world, the apostle calling it the heavenly church. It is the higher congregations who do not go to

places; their meeting is called a church and their true church is knowledge of the truth with which they delight in the divine mysteries.

**On the priesthood:** The physical service of the priesthood is in places where a person serves physical matters according to the laws of the priesthood of the children of Israel. The priesthood fulfilled by the soul is the pure thoughts and rich requests the conscience offers to God.

**On Love:** Love between physical persons revolves around attaining the body and bodily objects. Love of souls for each other is teaching instruction and training on wisdom. Love between spiritual persons is loving God, praising Him, and knowing their hope. If anyone loves God for the sake of visible objects, his love is physical. If one loves God without a reason, then his love is spiritual. This love is preserved for us in the life after resurrection.

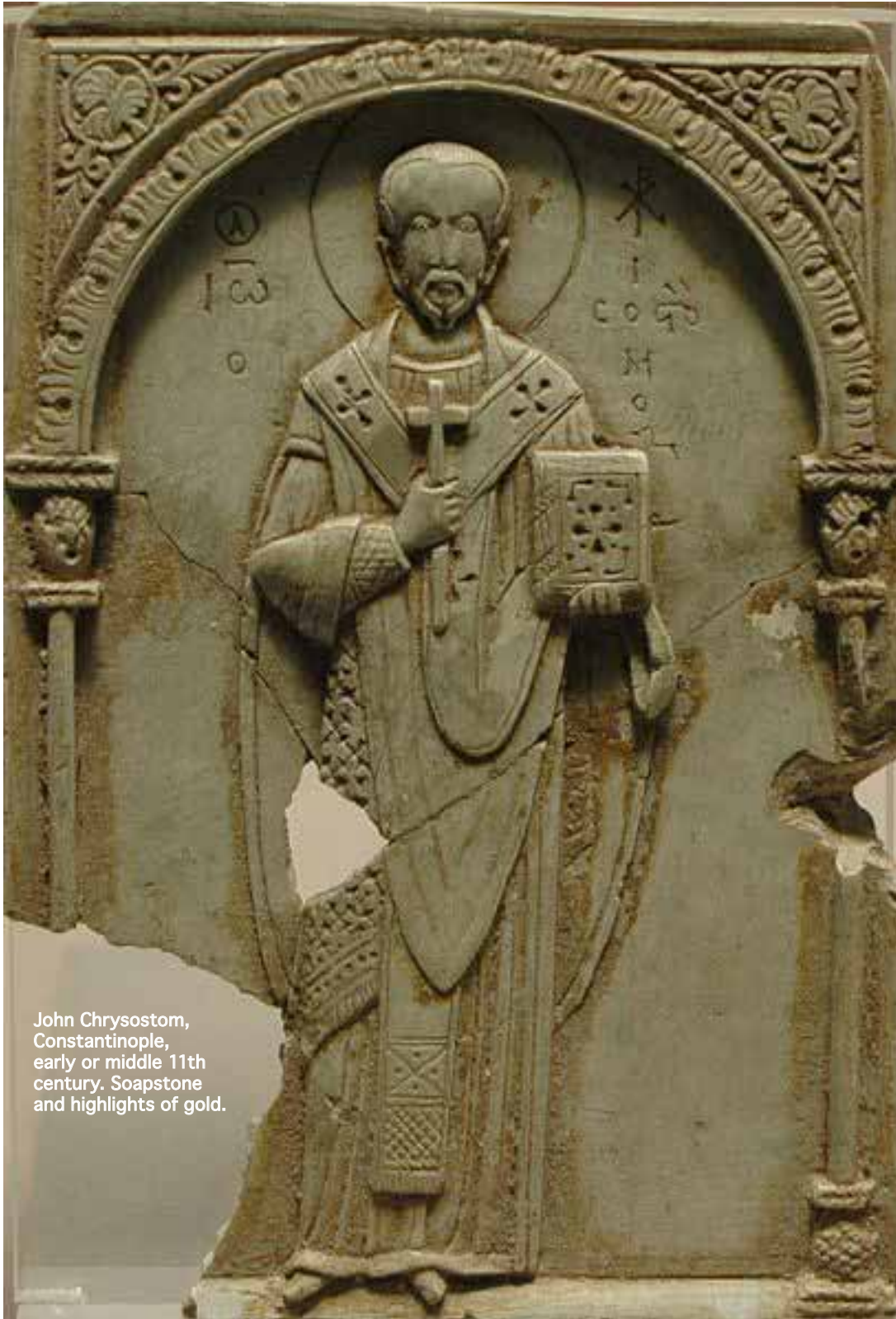
**On Comfort and Joy:** Comfort and joy of the body is riches, health, wellbeing, and beauty. Comfort of the soul is speaking what is right, reading the books, and attaining wisdom. Spiritual comfort is meditation on the resurrection, knowledge of the new world, and hope in God. This joy is not found in this life, but is preserved for us in the life after resurrection.

**On Prostration:** Physical prostration (or worship) is bowing the knees to the ground, bending the back, and lying on the ground. This prostration is offered equally to God and humans, but we must not fall prostrate before humans in the same form that we prostrate before God. The Gospel teaches that our prostration should be more than just physical, as He said, "Those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth," (John 4:24). Spiritual prostration in our current training is a sad mind coming from a heart screaming in agony.

- Walking upright is seeking wisdom.
- Thinking upright is a conscience unswerving to evil.
- Harmful shackles are the senses that do not follow wisdom.
- What comforts the conscience is not to be bound with desires.
- The fall of the soul is descent from knowledge.
- The rise of the soul is standing by its free authority.
- Good rumination is alertness of the conscience.
- The sleep of the soul is refraining from good concerns.
- Drawing closer to God is obeying His commandments.
- Fellowship with God is clinging to His love.
- Patience in hardships is relief from pains.
- Patience in learning is the treasure of trade.
- Health of the mind is purity of conscience.
- True celibacy is a soul unwed to bodily love.
- Purity of heart is not leaning towards the world.
- Physical humility is an orderly glance with a calm answer.
- Humility of the soul is for a person to consider himself lower than everyone.
- Spiritual prayer is seeking the unseen.
- Physical silence is not speaking.
- Silence of the soul is a conscience that has no mental conflict.
- Spiritual silence is for the soul not to be contaminated with assumptions.
- True authority is enslaving evil desires.
- Physical glory is boasting over possessions.
- Glory of the soul is boasting over knowledge.
- Physical laughter is mocking.
- Good labor is war against the pains.
- True energy is overcoming evil thoughts.
- Victory of the soul is the true kingdom.
- The weapon on the conscience is putting on wisdom.
- Beneficial trade is teaching what is good.
- Firm riches are hidden in the treasury of the soul.
- Praised courage is for a person to defeat his evil will.
- As the body is wounded from strikes, likewise the soul is weakened by doubts.
- If lustful gluttony pairs up with physical thoughts, one is never satisfied by the evils of others.
- Gluttony of the natural soul is to be never satisfied from training wisdom.



# St. John Chrysostom



John Chrysostom, Constantinople, early or middle 11th century. Soapstone and highlights of gold.

Those who have passed through the American university system of the 21st century have been taught to observe a prevalent concern for and sensitivity to the place of women in historical and social study.

A new consciousness of everything touching women's lives has risen—women's studies, women's health, women's rights, etc.—and a call for the revision or reassessment of womanhood has reached the ears of every modern person.

This discussion has nothing to do with feminism, a movement which began with the legitimate demand for equal rights, but which has come in these last days to invent and carry out the most ludicrous ideas that can only

lead to the spiritual destruction of womankind. A conscientious reassessment of woman's role in history is, nevertheless, a valid pursuit, and one which we must allow just like the role of any other formerly neglected group.

We run into trouble, however, and into misunderstanding, prejudice, and unfairness, when the reassessment is extended to the sphere of the Church Fathers. Those scholars and writers, who form the leadership of the revisionist movement, tend to be seized by a disposition not too friendly toward anything traditional or religious. They may be the quickest to point out a bias against them, but when formulating their opinions of our revered fathers and saints of the Christian Church, they do not blush to smear them with the most unwarranted accusations. Christian revisionist authors, though generally much fairer in their opinions, are often tainted by the same attitude of resentment, and occasionally will not hesitate to label a book of the New Testament as spurious, rather than to admit that the same Apostle who announced that "In Christ... there is neither male nor female" (Gal 3:28), could also, without contradiction, command women to preserve a state of silent reverence in church (1 Cor 14:34).

St. John Chrysostom, for example, the great orator, commentator, and confessor of the Universal Church, led an extraordinary life. His spiritual grandeur and dauntless courage were enough to excite the admiration of even the unbelieving historian Edward Gibbon. Today, modern revisionists have come down upon the poor saint with a decidedly harsh judgment: that he was a crusty misogynist (woman hater). Of course, being that his works so profusely breathe the fragrance of the Holy Spirit, there is not one line in all his ser-

# and Women . . .

mons that can be found to faintly support this conclusion – or insult as we should call it. What we do find instead is a collection of very bold denunciations of the faults and excesses of the women in his day, all directed toward those practices that conflict with biblical teaching, as seen here:

*What? Do you approach God to pray with embroidered hair and gold jewelry? Are you coming to a dance? This is not the dress of a suppliant. How can you pray fervently when dressed like this? Is it not mere acting to pour forth tears from a soul overgrown with extravagance and ambition? Away with such hypocrisy! ... It is for this that Paul talks of dress and modesty. And if he requires the removal of indications of wealth [1 Tim 2:9], such as gold, pearls, and expensive array; how much more the other ornamental details, such as painting, coloring the eyes, a luxurious strut, the sensuous voice, the enticing look, the exquisite care in putting on the cloak and bodice and shoes? ... Bear with me, I beseech you, for it is not my aim by this plain rebuke to wound or pain you, but to remove from my flock all that is inappropriate to them. (NPNP vol 13 Hom VIII)*

This sharp reprimand against the ornamental extremes of Chrysostom's flock is characteristic of his pastoral style, and one can understand why it would ignite the anger of female historians today because of its direct criticism of the feminine hobby of cosmetics. Conversely, the boldness of the chastisement should raise the saint in our esteem because he was preaching in the great Cathedral of Constantinople, where some of the

wealthiest and most powerful women attended church, who were highly displeased with his comments. St. Chrysostom knew that he continually endangered his life with his blunt preaching against the rich and powerful, including the Empress Eudoxia herself, who eventually wielded her power to bring about the archbishop's downfall and death.

Now, a sample of one of Chrysostom's positive messages to females:

*Young women not yet twenty years old, who have spent their whole lives in a delicate and feminine way of life, with sweet ointments, perfumes, reclining on soft couches, and over-indulgence... these very ones, seized with Christ's flame, have thrown off the indolence in their nature, and like noble wrestlers, have stripped themselves of soft clothing and rushed into the midst of the contest. I myself have heard that these tender damsels will wrap the coarsest rags about their bodies, go with those tender soles unsandaled, lie upon a bed of leaves, and keep vigil the greater part of the night.... They take it upon themselves to wait upon women who are sick, carrying their beds, and washing their feet. Nay, many of them even cook.... In the spiritual contest they get the advantage of us and are first to seize the prize, and soar higher, like so many eagles. (NPNP vol 13 Hom XIII)*

These are not the words of someone unable to appreciate women, but are instead an honest admission of the spiritual potential women share with men and of their ability to reach the same heights of spiritual and ascetic labor. Some might not

like certain comments he was accustomed to make, e.g. "The female sex is naturally somewhat talkative," but to charge him with contempt of women, when he so clearly and habitually declared their inherent strengths in the course of his sermons, is a clear injustice.

Finally, there was Olympias, a deaconess in the church of Constantinople, and by far Chrysostom's dearest female friend and comforter, whose noble life deserves an article of its own. The daughter of wealthy parents and heiress of a considerable fortune, she submitted all her worldly prosperity to the service of the church, and as deaconess became an essential aid in Chrysostom's ministry. It was particularly her labor of love to personally serve the saintly archbishop, to provide detailed attention to his bodily wants, especially seeing that he was fed wholesome food and to ensure that he did not overstrain his feeble health with a too rigid asceticism. When Chrysostom was eventually sent into exile by his enemies, he spent his time in writing letters to various friends, fellow bishops, and monks; but in none of his letters does he describe his forlorn condition or pour forth his fears and hopes so openly as in his letters to Olympias. The style in which she is addressed is at once respectful, affectionate, and paternal: "To my lady, the most reverend and religious deaconess Olympias, Bishop John sends you greeting in the Lord."

So, anyone who would think to accuse Chrysostom of disliking women, we would simply respond to read his works for themselves. For every sermon that censures women for unseemly attire, there are ten that censure men for their own faults; and if he was a woman hater, then he was a man hater as well, and the only logical conclusion is

to brand the saint for hating the entire human race. This is simply the unhealthy condition of the modern day: our society is afflicted with a narcissism that perceives almost every honest criticism as a type of "hate," for people can no longer bear healthy correction. The reality is St. John Chrysostom was very close to his flock; in fact, he was one of the most tender, most loving, and most caring of bishops on record. Just as no quarter of society was exempt from his sharp rebuke, so no quarter of his church was exempt from his ardent affection. Men and women loved him alike; and we will continue to love him, and feel his love for our souls, for as long as his golden words are cherished and read.

An Article by James Helmy



**F**ANCY HOME! NICE CAR! I WISH I HAD THE SAME. WHY IS THIS MY SHARE IN LIFE? I HAVE LITTLE MONEY; I CAN'T AFFORD IT. DO I NOT DESERVE TO LIVE LIKE THEM AND BE ABLE TO BUY SUCH NICE THINGS? WHY DOES GOD NOT GIVE TO ME LIKE HE GIVES TO THEM? **THIS IS NOT FAIR.**

It is Monday. I have to go to work, something that I do not look forward to. It seems like my supervisor does not spare an opportunity to give me a hard time. He is always unsatisfied with what I do; he keeps finding faults in everything. He forgets that he is not perfect either. Not only is he always negative, but he never encourages me if I excel in an assignment. I wish I had a job I would be looking forward to.

Lord, why did you allow this to happen to me? Why, out of all the people, am I the one who gets into such an accident? Falling from the top of the mountain, at a height of a 16-story building, being in a coma for 2 weeks, having tens of surgeries done to my body to barely be able to walk? I lost my sense of smell, I still have broken bones in my body, and I lost my feeling of half of my body. I am useless the way I am now. In fact, I am a burden to my family since they have to take care of me. Why was I kept alive? My plans for the future were shattered because of this tragedy, and I have no vision of what I can be doing in life. I am lost and I am of no use.

What beautiful nature! Green mountains with beautiful flowers in the spring. Roads are clean and everyone follows the rules. People are respectful and you have rights that you are able to claim. Large numbers of products fill up your grocery stores, which are clean, and just shopping in them is a pleasure. I wish I could live where you are living. You are in heaven!

The above are complaints from real people. They do not sound foreign as most of us have

# THANKFULNESS

said such or similar things at one point in time. There are things in our lives we are not happy about and wish that we had them differently or hope that we could change them. We evaluate situations and possessions from our side, but we forget to look at ourselves the way others look at us. The first person, for example, pays attention to what he does not have; he does not focus on what God has bestowed on him, but instead on the owners of the nice home and elegant car. God has given him the gift of wooing people; he has no problem

about her job and her boss, forgetting that there are many people out there who wish they had a job, any job. They are in dire need of money to be able to live their lives and they are willing to do absolutely anything to get a full time job, like what our lady has.

Getting struck by sickness or tragic accidents starts storms in our mind. Thoughts take us here and there and we are tossed around by the waves of questions. That is what is happening to the third person. He does not

eater...something to eat, and out of the strong...something sweet" (Judg 14:14).

The last person looks at the positive aspects of living in the U.S.A., but she does not see the "other side," having no or a dry social life, possibly having limited access to church services and Orthodox spiritual life, etc., privileges that she has but she does not pay attention to.

No one has it all. God distributes His gifts upon us as He sees fit and according to what



whatsoever making friends and socializing with others. He is pleasant, friendly, and fun to be around, and so you usually find him among a crowd, feeling very comfortable and enjoying himself. That is a gift that is not in the possession of everyone; in fact, the owners of the home and the car are lacking in that area. But this person does not see that; he does not see that he has something others do not have, and rather chooses to think of what he lacks.

The second person complains

know why he was kept alive, and wonders about the purpose of his continued existence. Some sick people complain about their situation, wishing "it did not happen to (them)." They forget that it is through times and tribulations like these that one gets closer to God. If used correctly, times of sickness can be times of great blessings and teachings from the Lord; a time where He opens the eyes, mind, and heart to a deeper relationship with our Father the Creator and the Omnipotent who can bring forth "out of the

will benefit our lives individually. He knows that I am better off with a gift towards people than a mansion and a top-notch car. He knows that, during a sickness, I will be transformed to look more like Him, or the situation will give glory to His name. The bottom line is this: be thankful for whatever you have, "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 5:2). And remember, the grass is not greener over there; for some, yours is greener.





# WHAT HARVEST

Jesus exposes us, as He often does, with a simple statement about the harvest... “The laborers are few” (Lk 10:2). You can talk about how many activities happen in your church, how many servants there are, or how big and beautiful your iconostasis is, but you still can’t get around that one simple sentence the Lord uttered. They are few. The laborers were few 2000 years ago and are few now. Are the Coptic Christians few? With over 300 churches and hundreds of thousands of congregants in the U.S.

we certainly are not few in number, but perhaps that wasn’t the sort of few He was referring to. When do we raise our voice and band together, besides when protesting injustice in Egypt? Apart from that, the world doesn’t even know we exist! Maybe we need to better understand the teaching of Jesus that “the harvest truly is great” (Lk 10:2). To our parents, whose hands were tied by the extremists, opponents of peace in Egypt, this verse meant nothing outside the four walls of the church. The harvest was Sunday School, Hymns Camps, and Kids Camps. End of harvest. To our Fathers, the leaders of the early church, the harvest didn’t stop there. A Christian was meant to influence his surroundings by much more than his or her radiant smile. He was meant to creatively shift the culture around Him. Each one of us has been called to a school or a profession where we can bring the Kingdom of God through seeking the peace of that very location (Jer 29:7). The norm was, and must become once again, that when a church exists in a neighborhood, the poor and sick are cared for, the prisoners are visited, and the gospel of peace is proclaimed! We must reclaim our true identity as healers and restorers of our cities!

Please be honest with yourself. Do you agree with Jesus’ claim about the field that is ready for harvest? Is the harvest in your city plentiful? Is the pressing need for Jesus abundant? Precious souls are converting to fake religions and cults every day in your city! What are you doing to change that? To you, does this harvest exist at all? At best, most of us may like “the harvest” on Facebook, but we need to commit to labor diligently in it.

Sometimes, you and I just want dying souls around us to find Jesus on Google + or satellite TV. No wonder we aren’t laboring in a harvest. We so badly wish that the one in front

of us isn’t a harvest at all. Let’s face it people, Jesus is talking to you and me! He’s not just talking to another denomination of Christians; God isn’t a fan of sitting back and watching people drown in eternally-poor choices. If He was, He would have never seen you as a valuable part of the harvest. He would have let you Google Him and “grope for Him” (Act 17:27), but He didn’t, did He? Like we pray in the Divine Liturgy,<sup>2</sup> He sent you so many to call your attention: prophets, servants, friends, family... but at last He came to you Himself. Then why are you unwilling to go yourself? Why are you sending and watching and clapping while others go (Num 32:6)? It’s only when you see that YOU are that harvest He labored for, that you will ever even consider laboring in the harvest that is your brother and sister.

Is your harvest always months away? In 50 years when we have perfect churches with no lost youth, THEN we will begin to care about people around us. Until then, our world is only made up of Egyptians, but there lies the irony. Our Church will never regain her identity until we decide to “lose our life” so we can gain it (Lk 17:33). We won’t come any closer to that perfection we’re chasing after or that stability we’re hoping for until we realize that it isn’t all about us. Our lost youth want to be used by God, not just lectured. We need to be challenged to make a difference. By ignoring the rest of the world and living in our own little Coptic bubble, we rob ourselves of becoming who we actually are!

Jesus once said, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see” (Lk 7:24)? What did you hope to see by reading this magazine, honestly? I pray that by now, you’ve stopped reading these words and that you ran to the harvest. Are you seeking something impressive, witty, or something new about God? My friend, I can promise you that

what we need most is not to learn more truth. Over our many years in the Coptic Church, we have been exposed to way more truth than we can begin to live out. Our real issue is how will we respond to truth that stares us in the face? The biblical response to an invitation by God was often what do I do now (Acts 9, Acts 3, Acts 16)! If you want to finally see the harvest, “lift up your eyes.” Physically, for you to look up, you use eye muscles that lift up your eyeball against resistance. Your eyes will naturally resist exposure to pain, suffering, and need in other people. They’d much rather see “eye candy.” Expose them to the reality of the world. Let them see a poor addict living on the street. Let them see a sick child or a prisoner. Train them to see a harvest where others see judgment. Train them to desire to meet spiritual needs of people around you! We were called to America for just that, not simply to get a degree and live the “American dream.” We must see the harvest in the Muslims, Hindus, and Jews that we know. We must see it in the promiscuous girl, the angry guy, and the addict. See their soul screaming for Jesus, not their flesh running away from Him... Because that is what He saw, in you.

The details of the “how” are rarely the problem for us, but if they are, those are covered too. Though the point isn’t for us to just get into a ministry, there are plenty of ministries in the Southern Diocese, like S.A.L.T., that help us become \*laborers\* and not FANS of the harvest. May God make us leaders and laborers in His beautiful harvest.

<sup>1</sup> Basil, S. (2009). On Social Justice. (C. P. Schroeder, Trans.) Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press.

<sup>2</sup> In the Prayer of Reconciliation from The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil.

# THANKSGIVING PURIFIES THE HEART

## SPECIAL FEATURED ARTICLE -

By H.G. Bishop Youssef



*“Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever” (Psalm 106:1).*

“Thanks be to God” is often the attitude expressed among Christians for good health, for safe travel, or perhaps for a special blessing. Christians typically give thanks to God for all the good that encompasses their lives, yet, just saying the words “thanks be to God” superficially is definitely not an expression of it.

St. Paul once prayed to the Lord to take away his affliction, *“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me”* (II Corinthians 12:8). But the Lord did not do as St. Paul prayed. The Lord responded, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness”* (II Corinthians 12:9). Did the Lord believe that St. Paul’s illness was beneficial for him? The message is that one’s spiritual health is the priority, certainly not one’s physical health.

An important self examination question might be, is good health being used for good or for

evil in my life on a consistent basis? Should I ask for good health or sickness? Which is better for me and my spiritual life? What is better for each of us is to accept all troubles with thanksgiving and that restoration without troubles is by the will of God the Father as He all knowingly sees what is best for our spiritual life.

### Expression of Thanksgiving

“Do not forget Christ’s church. So go there in the morning before all your work. And meet there again in the evening to return thanks to God.” (Apostolic Constitutions compiled c. 390, E)

How does one express thanksgiving? Attending the Vespers, the Midnight Praises, and the Divine Liturgy joyfully and with anticipation is an expression. Some deviations may be your job prevents you from attending, this is your only day off, or you need to study. Another deviation may be when late to a worship service you think that you made it; and you guess it is better than nothing. These are mere excuses with not an ounce of expression of thanksgiving within them.

*“O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn. I will praise You, O LORD, among the peoples, and I will sing praises to You among the nations. For Your mercy is great above the heavens, and Your truth reaches to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and Your glory above all the earth;” (Psalm 108:1-5).*

An expression of thanksgiving would be attending the vespers early, come inside the church and begin with a silent intimate prayer between you and our Lord, and taking the time for meditation by reading the Holy Bible in preparation of the worship to come. Giving thanks to the Lord for this day He has created for you.

Prayer is a strengthening act of thanksgiving for the weakest and the strongest. Our blessed Lord appeared to St. Ananias according to Christian tradition, the Bishop of Damascus and one of the seventy disciples. The Lord commanded St. Ananias to go to Saul (St. Paul) saying, *“Arise and go to the street*

*called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.’ Then Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.’ But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.’” (Acts 9:11-16).*

Not only was prayer strengthening for Saul of Tarsus but suffering would come to be strengthening as well. Saul of Tarsus would become a martyr and saint, St. Paul, who would endure all acts for and against him with grateful thanksgiving.

### Acts of Thanksgiving

“Wisdom is praised in hymns, in the places of egress. For the death of martyrs is also praised



in song.” (Tertullian c. 213 W)

The devoted and wise prophet Daniel was given a gift by our Lord, to both tell and interpret King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. It taught to lay aside human pride, man was not infallible and the only indestructible kingdom was the Kingdom of Heaven. Daniel acted upon his gift to give glory to God.

*“Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said: ‘Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; he removes kings and raises up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; he knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him. ‘I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the king’s demand.’” (Daniel 2:19-23).*

Daniel was a Christian finding himself surrounded by pagans. He thanked God against all laws for being born a Christian. He defied all social and legal issues surrounding his worship on the One True God. Do we thank God for being born a Christian among other Christians? Do you often think about those who desire to be of the Christian faith but have not achieved it?

### Characterized by Humbleness

Humbleness entails being willingly obedient to the will of the Lord. When Israel transgressed against God in the wilderness after they traveled out of Egypt, the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and

against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us” (Numbers 21:7).

Moses did pray for the people. The Lord due to Moses humble prayers instructed Moses with a remedy...

*“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived” (Numbers 21:8-9).*

So great was this lesson of repentance and humility the bronze serpent was again referred to in the Holy Gospel of St. John 3:14. The devoted apostle and author stated that the bronze serpent was a symbolic of the Lord Jesus Christ Who was lifted up for our salvation.

*“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 2:6-7).*

We must be humbled seeking Christ, acknowledging His great humility. St. Paul said “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the pure grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through human sufferings” (Hebrews 2:9-10).

### Ultimately Purifies the Heart

*“Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there*

*are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace; violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; they have more than heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth. Therefore his people return here, and waters of a full cup are drained by them. And they say, ‘How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?’ Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches. Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I had said, ‘I will speak thus,’ behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me—until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction” (Psalm 73:1-18).*

Through expression of thanksgiving, believing that all blessings you receive are gifts from God, you will lead a life of joy. You will learn to rejoice in all things and in any situation. Humbleness and suffering forged purity of heart within great prophets, and saints.

*“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (I Thessalonians 5:16-18).*

Joseph the Upright’s brothers sold him into slavery. As a slave, Potiphar’s wife attempted to seduce Joseph and when she failed had Joseph imprisoned for his purity of heart and mind. During the famine Joseph was a blessing to the land of Egypt and the sur-

rounding countries affected by the famine. He prudently managed the affairs/grain crops of Egypt. He turned a horrible life into one of good. He never tired of thanking God for whatever befell him. He would live to see his brothers again and say to them,

*“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Genesis 50:20).*

Joseph chose to forgo personal desires and life circumstance to live a life full of thanksgiving to the Lord.

In the New Testament, when St. Paul the apostle was in jail he would sing in great joy to the astonishment of other prisoners and jailers. His love of the Lord His God and his purity of heart were clearly evident to all that looked upon him.

It was as St. Clement of Alexandria c. 195 proclaimed: “Let love songs be banished far away. But let our songs be hymns to God.”

A life of thanksgiving ultimately leads one to taste peace and joy while in this earthly life. May we all pursue the life of thanksgiving in which God’s will becomes that of our own. Our heart is strengthened and purified.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING not only during this American season but in our daily spiritual endeavors,

“Let us give thanks to the beneficent and merciful God, the Father of our Lord God and Savior, Jesus Christ, for He has covered us, helped us, guarded us, accepted us unto Him, spared us, supported us, and brought us to this hour” (Agpeya: Prayer of Thanksgiving).



"The hour was late – very late. Silence and stillness settled like an ominous cloud over the sleeping city, weary after a long day's excitement. A small band of twelve men in sandaled feet slipped through dark streets and alleys, casting eerie shadows along rugged limestone walls. Quickly, they made their way across the Kidron Valley, then began their slow climb up the gentle slope of the Mount of Olives. By now the eleven knew where the Master was leading them – it was one of His favorite places to find solitude, to collect His thoughts, to meditate on things eternal, to talk with His Father. By the time they reached the orchard of old olive trees with their twisted trunks and thick roots knotted around rocky soil, they knew where they were: Gethsemane. What they had no way of knowing was the grip of agony that would soon seize their Master's soul, wrenching, as it were, great drops of blood from the pores of His forehead. For the rest of their lives, those men would never forget that night." –Chuck Swindoll

The passage we are discussing together (Mark 14:32-42) is one with which we are all familiar. The garden of Gethsemane is where the betrayal took place, the start of the crucifixion walk. We usually tend to focus on what happens after Judas shows up, but not the right before. The name of the garden says it all: Gethsemane means the oil press, the "falling apart," losing the

strength of the olives to produce oil. It was a private property, gated and walled, located outside the walls of Jerusalem that was probably owned by a wealthy patron, who followed Jesus and gave Him access. It was Jesus' favorite place; He came here often, both alone and with the twelve. They'd just had a long evening supper and were tired, but Jesus wanted to go to the garden; they followed.

Jesus specifically asked three of the eleven to come forward with Him. He longed for companionship during the next difficult moments. The desire of the Master is intimacy. The flesh, however, is weak, and they kept falling asleep. He repeatedly asked them to stay awake, to stay with Him, but they could not.

He asked once again for His three to stay awake. Peter, who had promised, "If they all leave, I will not," could not rise and stay with Jesus now. There is a side lesson here: "Sensitivity in the time of grief is silence." (Unknown). This reminds me of a story of a man who was grieving the loss of a loved one. A visitor came and spoke to him. He explained to him why God allowed this to happen, why he should move on, what he needs to do, and the scripture this or that. The visitor spoke and spoke for hours. The grieving man was silent but did not look at all changed by all that the visitor said. Finally, the visitor left and another came. This one said nothing; he just sat next to the man in silence. Slowly the grieving man began to hold his hand and lean on him. Tears came down both their faces and yet not a word was said. After a while, the visitor left and the man marveled: one visitor he could not wait until he left and the other he was very sad to see go. Which do you think helped the most? When we console, let us do so with actions, by our pres-

ence in other's lives, by listening rather than talking. Be there, awake, that's what Jesus wanted of His three.

Jesus was not expecting His disciples to comfort or console Him in any way. He knew what He wanted from them: intimacy. "Keep watch," He said, "Lest you fall into temptation." The silence of Peter reminds one of complacency. Many say, "I believe Lord," (Jn 11:27) yet when troubles come, He is the first One we doubt.

The Son began to pray to the Father and grew distressed, troubled, anguished. "Abba" – daddy – please "take this cup away from Me." He was grieving what already took place, what is to come, and what He knew would be the difficulty of the decision He was about to make. The struggle here shows us, perhaps better than in any other moment of Jesus' life on earth, His humanity.

Jesus was terrified, astonished, and disoriented as He prayed. A famous artist rendered this scene romantically. Jesus, however, was not calmly praying on the rock, looking up at the Father in a joyous state of communication. No, He was in agony, in tears, and blood dripped from His forehead, having full knowledge of what's to come, its image vividly visible to Him, and His request to the Father that the cup may be taken from Him.

The struggle is now. The battle of the mind is at this moment. Once Jesus gives it all to God's will, the battle is won. Note that from that moment on, you see no doubt in Jesus' eyes, no telling or asking the Father to take it all away. It is finished. The decision was made. Jesus chose to obey God's will, and it will all come to pass as He wills it. This is Gethsemane.

As for your own Gethsemane, these are the inner struggles that pertain to only you. I believe they fall into four categories:

- **Relational Struggles** – choosing life's mate, dealing with difficult individuals, and healthy vs. unhealthy friends. Examine your relationships. Do they align with God's will or do you know deep down how far from His will these take you?

- **Vocational Struggles** – your work, your occupation, your calling. Does God belong at your workplace? How does your work affect your life with God?

- **Personal Struggles** – within us, deep, private secrets and addictions, allowing non-honoring acts and bad habits, your "I know I shouldn't, but..."

- **Spiritual Struggles** – a genuine relationship with Jesus. Is He the primary source in your life? Are you fighting against His will for you? He came to be enthroned, to be king over your life. Do you see that as a good or bad thing?

I cannot make decisions for you. When are you going to say, "It is Your will, Lord"? When is your turning point going to happen? When will His words leave the Book and become pavement for us as a path to walk? When are you going to hand it all over with hands lifted in the air, realizing your limitations and say, "Take it all, God, take it from me. Let it be according to Your will." Pray that He helps you: "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief" (Mk 9:24). Trust in Him.

Make that decision, and it will all come to pass. That pivotal moment occurs the second you give into His will, having faith that He, the king, will bring all good things to those who love, trust, care, and belong to Him.

An Article by Christine Massoud



The room, a sea of black, is tossed by the crashing waves of wailing sounds from those nearest to the lost one. A funeral is no place for the faint-hearted. Its only guests are the somber and sympathetic family and friends. It is unlike any other church service in many ways, yet in at least one facet it remains the same – the officiating priest begins with an offer of thanks.

Why would a prayer of thanksgiving be appropriate in a solemn funeral? The answer lies in the wisdom of the Church.

Flip to the first page of any Orthodox prayer and you will find that regardless of the theme or premise for which it is being offered, it is necessarily and consistently preceded by an offer of thanks. It is not the sort of thanks that is confined to the restrictions of that particular prayer but reaches to an all-encompassing realm – a realm that covers every condition, concerning every condition, and in every condition.

Have we truly considered what it means to be thankful concerning every condition? Why does the Church encourage its recitation even at a funeral? It is because the church knows one thing, and it is enough – that the promises God makes are true.

We can find one such promise in 1 John 4:8. A promise that declares a characteristic of God that can potentially melt away our every fear. The promise is that God is Love. This is not the temporary, conditional, emotional, fleeting “love” that we humans often imagine. It is Love, with a capital letter, the perfect emulation of 1 Corinthians 13.

This characteristic of God is essential for our understanding because with it we can make sense of everything else, even thanking Him at a funeral. St. Paul describes this Love as one that “does not seek its own, is not provoked,” and “thinks no evil” (1 Cor 13:5). Thus, a Love like that is simply seeking our ulti-

mate benefit. Take note also that St. John does not say that Love is a trait God exhibits. It simply IS Him. Therefore, nothing can ever separate Him from Loving, because He cannot separate from Himself. He cannot change who He IS by nature. In light of these truths, we can know for certain that everything that comes our way, whether it be something joyous to something as solemn as the loss of a loved one, is done out of His love for us.

Although the examples of His love are etched all throughout

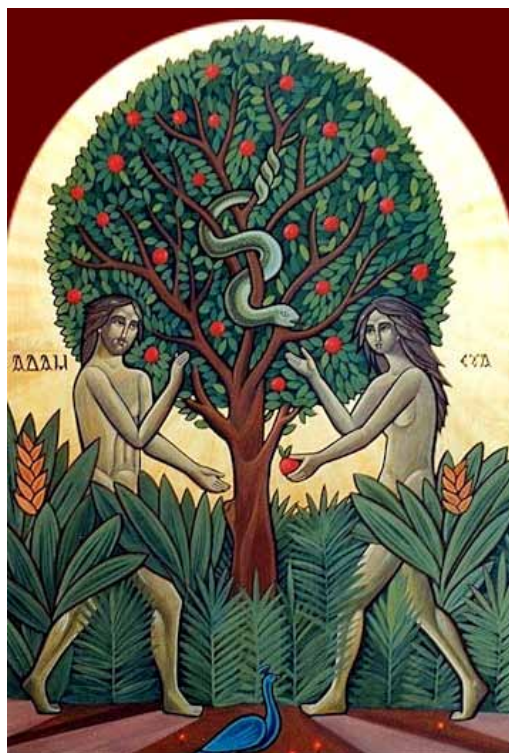
them from Paradise. Upon first read, one might perceive God as being an angry reactive God. On the contrary, however, God passionately loves man at this moment. Within the Garden was another tree by a different name – the Tree of Life. The moment Adam and Eve took a bite of the forbidden fruit, they put on a corrupted nature. Had man been allowed to remain in Paradise, and had He eaten of the Tree of Life after this original sin, man would have been subjected to eternal corruption. Thus, in an effort to

painful it was, He endured it because He knew it was the only way to save them.

Not much has changed now. Within the fiery trials we face, within every hurt and every fear, God is ever present. Though it may be painful for us now, we must believe, with all faith, that God truly IS Love. He can do nothing to us apart from loving us. In fact, every hardship we face is in His plan to make us the best people we can be – a humbled people receptive to Him. Thus we can understand what St. Peter means in his first epistle when he writes, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 1:6-7).

Indeed the Church is very wise to ask us to thank God concerning every condition and in every condition, for He is in every condition. He never leaves us. Never forgets us. Never abandons us. Everything He does is for our ultimate good. “So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture, will give You thanks forever; we will show forth Your praise to all generations” (Ps 79:13).

## I N E V E R Y



## C O N D I T I O N

the pages of His Word, taking a look at the beginning of the creation and God’s dealing with man can reveal to us the depth of His love in a manner we may not expect. In the Garden of Eden, God commanded man to not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. However, man in his fallen nature lusted after the fruit and ate. God’s response might be alarming to some. As a result of Adam and Eve eating of the forbidden fruit, God removed

them from Paradise. Upon first read, one might perceive God as being an angry reactive God. On the contrary, however, God passionately loves man at this moment. Within the Garden was another tree by a different name – the Tree of Life. The moment Adam and Eve took a bite of the forbidden fruit, they put on a corrupted nature. Had man been allowed to remain in Paradise, and had He eaten of the Tree of Life after this original sin, man would have been subjected to eternal corruption. Thus, in an effort to

An Article by Sarah Mathoslah

# WORRY AS AN OBSTACLE TO JOY

“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3-4).

What do all children have in common? Children are completely and utterly incapable of taking care of themselves. What is the single most humbling experience one can have after establishing oneself as a self-sufficient human being? Asking for help. What do children do all the time without a single afterthought? They seek help and rely upon those around them, and after asking, they blindly trust and obey.

Stop and think about the things worrying you right now. You probably don't even have to stop and think. The worries are there, at the forefront of your mind, interfering with your ability to concentrate, to rely on your faith, and to develop a meaningful relationship with Christ.

From the most trivial minutiae to serious matters, we are con-

stantly bombarded with things that make us worry. And why is that? Simply because we have forgotten to humble ourselves as little children and to treat God as our ever-loving father, capable of and willing to fulfill our daily needs. We often don't take Christ at His word, or we doubt Him, forgetting the promises He has made us. We get caught up in the material world, envying those who have worldly things that we don't, and seeking worldly things rather than Godly things. Furthermore, we rely too much on our own ability to “make things happen” rather than relinquishing control to God and allowing him to give us what matters. Where there is doubt, there is turmoil, and where there is turmoil, there is worry. We become like a “wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind” (Jam 1:6). There is no confidence in God when we doubt and worry.

“Envy and anger will shorten your days, and worry will bring premature old age” (Sir 30:24).

In a number of different ways, Christ tells us not to worry about anything. Christ plainly states, “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Mt 6:31-33). By putting God first and seeking the true riches, everything else will be provided for us in the measure that we need—no more, no less.

Christ further asks us to take a proactive role in our salvation by relying on God and actually asking Him for the things we need. By taking the affirmative step of asking, as a child, we are humbling ourselves and seeking help from our almighty Father. Christ foretells the outcome of asking—God will provide. We are told in Mt 7:7-11 to seek, and we will find. We are told to knock, and it will be opened to us. We are told to ask and have faith that God will provide as our loving Father and caregiver, and we are told that God will provide good things to those who ask of Him.

Additionally, St. Paul reiterates that we should make our requests to God, and we will receive peace in our hearts, stating, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:6-7).

When we lose sight of putting God first, and seeking the Kingdom of God, worry and stress and the cares of the world take over. Look at Mary and Martha. When Christ visited their home, Martha was overwhelmed with the worldly cares of her guests and she was worried and preoccupied with serving them without the help of her sister, Mary. Martha further approached Christ asking him to reprimand Mary, and tell Mary to help her with the chores, even though Mary was perfectly content sitting at the Lord's feet seeking and obtaining the heavenly things. Christ stated, “Mar-

tha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Lk 10:41). Not only was Martha worrying about trivial things, she failed to benefit from the blessing of having Christ in her home. By placing Jesus first, Mary did not lose sight of what was important while Christ was in her home, but she was also rewarded with the support of Jesus in her endeavor of drawing close to Him and obtaining the Kingdom.

Finally, if we are thankful and rejoice in all things, as St. Paul directs in 1 Thess 5:16-18, then God's will is being done in Christ Jesus for us. Once we are blessed with the ability to be thankful in all things, there is no longer a need for anxiety or worry, because we are secure in the knowledge that everything that happens is God's will for us. We receive the peace of God that guards our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus as promised in Phil 4:6-7.

May our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ increase our faith, and bless us with the ability to humble ourselves as little children, to approach him with thanksgiving, and to call upon His name asking for what we need.

An Article by Paul Botros





# HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III

**40<sup>th</sup>** Anniversary as Pope, Patriarch, and  
Archbishop of the See of St. Mark

On November 14, 2011, all of the Coptic Orthodox Christians all over the world will join together in hymns, praises, and thanksgiving to our Lord Jesus Christ in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Enthronement of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III to the Papacy and the See of St. Mark. His Holiness has been and is continually admired as a man of peace, wisdom, gentleness, and vision: truly, a great man of these times. He has not only governed the state of the Coptic Orthodox Christians in Egypt, as well as the many lands of immigration, but also, he has established numerous churches worldwide for native Copts and for new converts, delegating priests and bishops in the process to shepherd them and provide services for them. Ever so graciously, he humbly reaches out his hand to every child and every individual. Never does he turn his eyes away from any individual in need. He is an exemplary living gospel and a beacon of light and hope for our times.

**Congratulations!**



On behalf of His Grace Bishop Youssef and the Mighty Arrows Magazine Staff, we present our heartfelt gratitude to God for the faithful years of service of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, and we ask the Lord to preserve his life for many years and peaceful times.

Poem:

*The World is Mine!*

Submitted by Maria Mansour  
on behalf of an Anonymous Author

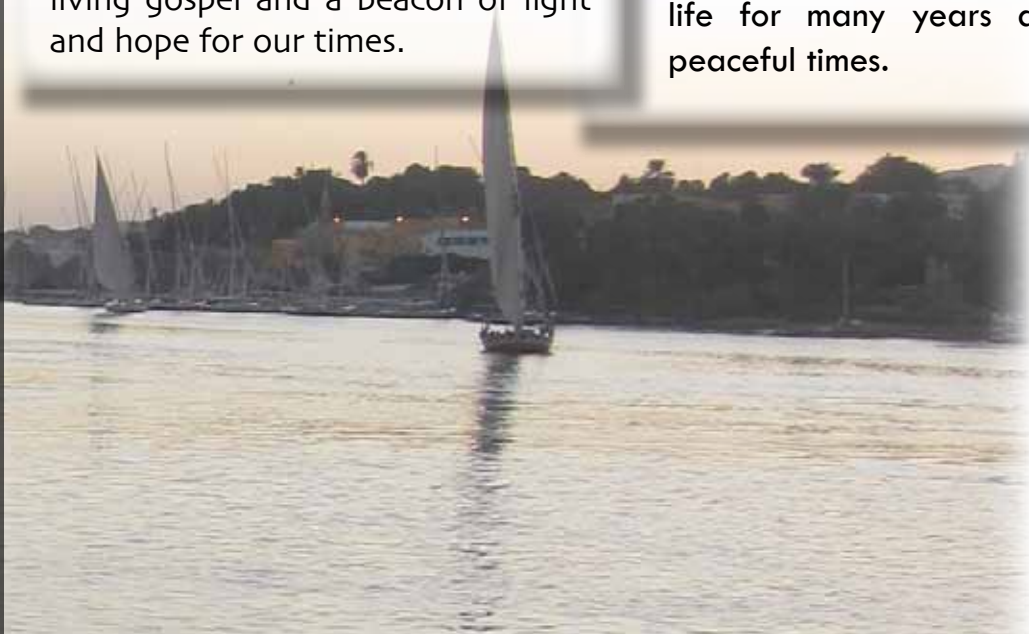
Today, upon a bus, I saw a very  
beautiful woman  
And wished I were as beautiful.  
When suddenly she rose to leave,  
I saw her hobble down the aisle.  
She had one leg and wore a crutch.  
But as she passed, she passed a smile.  
Oh, God, forgive me when I whine.  
I have two legs; the world is mine.

I stopped to buy some candy.  
The lad who sold it had such charm.  
I talked with him, he seemed so glad.  
If I were late, it'd do no harm.  
And as I left, he said to me,  
"I thank you, you've been so kind.  
It's nice to talk with folks like you.  
You see," he said, "I'm blind."

Oh, God, forgive me when I whine.  
I have two eyes; the world is mine.  
Later while walking down the street,  
I saw a child I knew.  
He stood and watched the others play,  
But he did not know what to do.  
I stopped a moment and then I said,  
"Why don't you join them dear?"  
He looked ahead without a word.  
I forgot, he couldn't hear.

Oh, God, forgive me when I whine.  
I have two ears; the world is mine.

*With feet to take me where I'd go.  
With eyes to see the sunset's glow.  
With ears to hear what I'd know.  
Oh, God, forgive me when I whine.  
I've been blessed indeed,  
the world is mine.*



# HARVEST

is defined as the “gathering of ripe crops.” The keyword here is ripe: grain or fruit ready for the picking. Are we ready for the picking? Are we preparing for the harvest, and how are we prepared for the harvest? There are two ways to interpret the topic of harvest: the literal way and the spiritual way. For a literal meaning, just refer to the above definition because it means to pick ready crop. But spiritually interpreted, it means preparing oneself for heavenly living or living with Christ, whether on earth or in heaven. I like to think that death is merely symbolic for where our home is located. On earth, we grow while living in our parents’ home, but upon death we move to our Father’s mansion. It’s a better home and I get my own room!

Until then, we are to live with-in Christ on earth, preparing for the great harvest by fasting, praying, living like a shepherd, and

gleaning crops like Ruth so that God may find favor in us at the time of Judgment. Fasting plus prayer is one of the foundations of our orthodox faith, which routinely equals a feast or harvest. During these fasting periods we are preparing our bodies, spirits, minds, and ways of living for the big feast with Christ, which is why all the Church’s feasts (i.e. “harvests”) begin the eve before at Christ’s house with Christ in us upon communion. Needless to say that raising up a child, studying for an exam, getting married, or pursuing a career can all be construed as harvests for which we are preparing something or someone by means of Christ’s love, prayer, patience, and faith to the fulfillment of God’s desire.

Therefore, harvest also means

opportunity for growth, time of gathering AND giving, time for remembering the poor (Lev 19:9,10), and time for welcoming grace and forgiveness. Genesis 8:22 says it best, as it is a time of continuation of life and seasons. For the most part, harvest time is a great joyful time (Is 9:3).

But with every gift, God expects to see its harvest in labor multiplied. It is because of our sinful fashion and reluctant, deaf, blind, resistant ways that we see examples of: 1. God’s wrath (Rev 14:14-20), 2. World’s end (Mt 13:30,39), and 3. God’s final Judgment (Jer 51:33). God’s wrath graphically describes Christ’s second coming as His “harvest of the earth is ripe” (Rev 14:15). Here two harvests are depicted: grain and grapes.

The two receive the same judgment, however the grain may suggest the righteous while the grape, the unrighteous. This brings us to the next point of the world’s end where the field of harvest in this Parable of Wheat and Tares is really referring to the entire world. Season long, God’s grace decides to hold back judging the righteous wheat that grow rooted amongst the impostor tares. But come harvest time again, God clearly lets down the axe, weeding out the unrighteous tares that are no longer allowed to cohabitate amongst the righteous wheat. And finally in Jeremiah 51:33, God shows His clear plan for those who bare no fruit during harvest as the city of Babylon comes to a frightful and absolute end.

God’s love is faithful and He will not forget the ones He loves. Therefore, the makings of a greatly blessed harvest are love, purity, patience, faith, persistence, and, of course, rain!

An Article by Joseph Ghebrial

## Pillars of our Time: Ordinary People Serving in Extraordinary Ways Iris Habib El Masry

1910  
-1994



Iris Habib El Masry is remarkable in many ways. A renowned historian, she has written books about the history of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Story of the Copts is her best-known work.

Born in Egypt, she obtained her Bachelor of Arts in London. She expressed an interest in church history and conducted extensive research to write her books. Iris’s attention to detail and her ability to consider both sides of a story earned her considerable respect in her field. Even today, scholars (or anyone interested in church history) refer to her books to understand

obscure or controversial historical points.

Interestingly, in 1954, she was appointed by the Pope to attend the World Council of Churches in Illinois, USA. She also served as a role model and counsellor for young Coptic women.

Although Iris departed to be with our Lord in 1994, she left us a very precious gift: many of her books are available online in English and allow our generation to obtain hands-on knowledge about our ancestors and our church.

Author Myriam Fahim



# St. Panteleimon

Many of us have probably heard this verse being read in our church: “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Mt 9:37). What is God implying by the word “harvest”? As God’s children, we are his harvest, and he wants us all to live with him in heaven. However, not all of God’s children are aware of His love and mercy, and so they are lost in the world. God told us that we are the light of this world and that we need to shine. It is our responsibility to bring back those who have gone astray. Priests and bishops have so much to work with that it is simply not acceptable to put the full responsibility on them. As Coptic Orthodox youth all over North America and the world, we are responsible for each other. We are one church, which means one Body. If a part of my body is wounded, it must be taken care of, because it could lead to the suffering of the rest of the body. Therefore, we must put the effort to reach out to those that are lost. Not only by advising them, but also purely by simple actions that could possibly lead them back to Christ – which is exactly what St. Panteleimon did.

St. Panteleimon did not grow up in a perfect Christian family. His father worshiped idols while his mother was a Christian. Both of his parents worked hard to make him become a great physician. He met a priest named Armolas, who taught him the true Orthodox faith and baptized him. St. Panteleimon reached a high spiritual level, and God performed great miracles through him. Since he was well known as a great doctor by the people in his town, he gained the trust of many who desired to gain healing through him. One day, a blind man came to him and asked for medicine to heal his eyes. Boldly, St. Panteleimon put his hands on the man’s eyes, and made the sign of the cross over them. Immediately, his eyes were

opened, and he gained his vision.

The emperor was not Christian, and when he heard of St. Panteleimon’s miraculous works, he was very frustrated. The emperor immediately called for the blind man so he can find out what had happened. The blind man was full of God’s spirit and declared that he was a Christian and that St. Panteleimon had restored his vision. The emperor was very angered by what he heard, and commanded for the blind man’s head to be cut off. You see, even though St. Panteleimon did not lecture the blind man about Christ, he had compassion and love towards the blind man and simply by praying to God, the blind man not only received his vision, but also believed in Christ. Through this, the blind man willfully did not deny his faith, but chose martyrdom. On that day, heaven certainly received another soul.

The emperor immediately arrested St. Panteleimon and used all his strength to make him deny Christ. St. Panteleimon refused, telling the emperor that he would never deny the Lord, and that to die was gain since he will live eternally in heaven. The emperor threatened that he will be beaten and scourged. However, St. Panteleimon held his head high with faith that Christ will be with him in all the tribulations that come his way. The emperor then inflicted upon him severe pains. The Lord Jesus Christ “appeared to him in the form of Armolas, the priest who baptized him and taught him the facts of faith, to strengthen him, and walked with him as if he was sharing with him every punishment which befell him.”<sup>1</sup> Finally, the emperor was exasperated and ordered him beheaded. When the saint was thrown in jail for the night, St. Panteleimon spent the night in prayer. While he was praying, a voice from heaven announced



to him that a great crown awaits him for his struggles. When the soldiers saw this, they were greatly amazed. They also headed to the emperor declaring that now they believe in Christ. The emperor was frustrated; he beheaded the soldiers along with St. Panteleimon on Babah 15.

Our God is a very zealous God; He wants all his children to be with him in heaven. Through St. Panteleimon’s confessions and his strength in the faith, he was able to bring many to Christ. He fulfilled God’s commandments by working in the field and gathering up the harvest. We also should learn from this great saint that through love, prayer, and perseverance, we as well are able to bring back those who are lost. The harvest will continue to be plenty, but those

who have ears let them hear God’s words and do His will. May St. Panteleimon’s prayers be with us all. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> “Coptic Synexarium.” *Saint Abanoub and The Holy Apostles, Coptic Orthodox Church, Sydney, Blacktown*. Web. 28 Aug. 2011. <[http://www.abanoub.org.au/synexarium/2\\_15.html](http://www.abanoub.org.au/synexarium/2_15.html)>.

*Picture:* Icon is from the early 13th century, from St. Katherin’e Monastery in Sinai.

**Top row:** The priest Hermolaos adopting Panteleimon; Panteleimon learning medicine from Hermolaos; Panteleimon praying for a child bitten by a snake; Panteleimon resurrecting the child. **Left side:** Panteleimon killing the snake; Panteleimon healing the blind man; Panteleimon raising the paralytic; Panteleimon in a vat of boiling lead. **Right side:** Panteleimon baptized; Panteleimon destroying the idols; Panteleimon scraped and burned; Panteleimon put among the wild beasts. **Bottom row:** Panteleimon thrown into the sea; Panteleimon and the wheel studded with nails, which turns on his torturers; Panteleimon beheaded; the burial of Panteleimon.

An Article by Mareya Naguib

# Why Couldn't Philip?



There is a very little known story in the book of Acts that stands for an extremely profound and fundamental Orthodox Christian teaching: Apostolic Succession and the authority of the bishopric. The story can be found in Acts Chapter 8. It undermines the spiritual authority of any non-Apostolic Church. Recently I was on the plane with an evangelical Christian who was returning from a prodigious evangelical conference being held in Atlanta. As I approached my seat I noticed him sitting in the seat next to the one assigned to me. I glanced in his direction and he replied with a welcoming smile. I had a feeling he would want to talk with me, which is something I rarely enjoy to do on a flight. Soon enough, he opened up a discussion about Christianity. That's when I took over the conversation, shared the story from Acts 8, and asked him a question that no Protestant or non-Apostolic "Christian" has ever given me a meaningful answer to: why couldn't Philip?

Let's read Acts Chapter 8 together and see what I mean. But first, let me explain which Philip we are speaking of. If anyone has ever heard of the seven deacons chosen by the Apostles, the only one you are likely familiar with is St. Stephen. We read about him beginning in Acts Chapter 6.

*"Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.' And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them"* (Acts 6:2-6).

If you notice carefully, *"the twelve"* disciples, one of whom we know is named Philip (see Matt. 10:3) choose seven deacons, one of whom also bears the same name: Philip. It is Philip the deacon who takes the central role in Acts Chapter 8. How do we know this? If you follow Acts Chapter 6 and read until Acts Chapter 8, you will notice that St. Luke maintains focus on these newly ordained deacons. First, he writes about St. Stephen *"full of faith and power"* who preaches to the Jews about Christ (Acts 6-7). In response, the Jews *"were cut to the heart," "gnashed at him with their teeth,"* and eventually *"stoned him"* until he dies (Acts 7). In Acts 8, St. Luke concludes the story of St. Stephen, explaining that *"devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him,"* after which people were *"scattered"* and *"went everywhere preaching the word."* Immediately afterward, St. Luke introduces us to the works of another of the seven deacons—St. Philip.

St. Philip, the deacon, *"went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city"* (Acts 8:5-8).

The story takes a break to tell you about one important

Samaritan named Simon, who was once engaged in witchcraft and received much attention for the powers he received from the devil. *"But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the great power of God.' And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time"* (Acts 8:9-11).

Fortunately, he was convinced by St. Philip's words and became a Christian, giving up his past life and all the attention and semblance of power that came from it. *"But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done"* (Acts 8:11-12).

For most Protestants, the story should end here. People believe, are baptized, end of story. But no, the story does not end here, because what St. Philip did was not enough.

Let us continue, and notice very carefully what happens next. *"Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them"* (Acts 8:14). Why did the Church send St. Peter and St.

John, two disciples of Christ, to Samaria? Traveling to Samaria was not an easy task, after all; it would normally take an estimated two days—48 hours—to journey there.

Reading further gives us the answer: *"they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 8:14-17).

St. Peter and St. John were sent by the Church to travel two days to place their hands on people? Obviously, the Bible explains, they preformed this action so that the people who were baptized by water at the hands of Philip would now also receive the Holy Spirit.

Here is where I ask the pivotal question: Why Couldn't Philip? Why couldn't he do this instead? We know that he was favored in God's eyes, having done *"miracles," "for unclean spirits ... came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed."* How come he could not give them the Holy Spirit?

Pause for a moment and notice something: St. Philip the deacon is said to have baptized people. If you do not see what may be questionable about this, then let me explain: normally, in the Coptic Church at least, you cannot find a deacon who is allowed to baptize



people. St. Philip was not just any “*deacon*.” Today, in the Coptic Church, you will find various ranks of deaconship, from least to greatest as follows: singer/hymnist (Epsaltos), reader (Aghnostos), sub-deacon (Epideacon), full-fledged deacon (Deacon), and a leader of deacons (Archdeacon). A full-fledged deacon (and archdeacon) is regarded as the beginning rank of priesthood. St. Philip was a full-fledged deacon who, as was common in the Early Church, had authority to baptize, but with water only.

St. Peter and St. John were not deacons. They were bishops. Only bishops have authority to invoke the Holy Spirit. When Christ ascended and presented Himself in Heaven as a “*propitiation for the sins of the people*” (Hebrews 2:17), only then could the Holy Spirit be delivered to the New Testament Church; that is why Christ said the following: “*It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you* [from the Father—John 15:26]” (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit was entrusted to the people Christ trusted most: the disciples and Apostles—the first bishops. Bishops (derived from a Greek word meaning overseer) are able to oversee the spiritual fidelity of the Church by performing two God-given functions: ordaining others (including other bishops), and administering the Mysteries (which involves asking the Holy Spirit to bestow spiritual graces upon people). St. Philip, being a deacon, could not invoke the Holy Spirit to complete baptism. That is why St. Philip could not do as St. Peter and St. John, the bishops, did.

If you read further in Acts 8, you will notice that Simon the former sorcerer noticed that St. Peter and St. John possessed a special rank and power that even St. Philip the miracle-working deacon lacked. Simon, recalling his former days of glory and power, sought the same. “*And when Simon saw that through the lay-*

*ing on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’”* (Acts 8:18-19). If you are a Protestant, then you believe in the universality of priesthood for all believers and, therefore, there is nothing that St. Peter and St. John should possess that Simon should not, because all of them are Christians. However, that is not the case, as is evident in St. Peter’s response to his request. He did not say, “Simon, what kind of silly question are you asking? You and I are the same, and you possess this power because you and I are both Christians.” Instead, he responded with a sharp reprimand: “*But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity’*” (Acts 8:20-22).

In this story you find a truth that is maintained in Apostolic, Orthodox Churches such as the Coptic Church. Not just anyone can become a bishop or priest, or any other purported leader of any church or parish. People cannot simply choose themselves to maintain administrative authority in the church, and are definitely incapable of proclaiming for themselves spiritual authority. “*No man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was*” (Acts 5:4). Spiritual authority of the priesthood is passed on by the overseers of the Church—the bishops. That is why St. Peter referred to this “*power*” as a “*gift*.” Gifts are things you receive from someone else. Christ gave this gift and authority to the first bishops, who then passed on the same gift to other bishops throughout the generations until even now. That is the design Christ set up to

maintain order and care over His Bride, the Church.

Tracing one’s ordination back to a succession of bishops all the way back to the Apostles of Christ Himself is referred to as Apostolic Succession. Anyone legitimately ordained by a successor of the Apostles is referred to as being canonical (e.g., canonical priest, canonical bishop, or canonical deacon). Apostolic Succession is so important that the Church Fathers, even as early as St. Cyprian (bishop of Carthage c. 250 A.D.) proclaim that this is the reason why “*there is no salvation outside of the Church*.” As explained previously, Christ reconciled us with God and because of His redeeming love we are now allowed to enter into Heaven. To ascribe to this reconciliation and have access to salvation, we must be baptized by water and Spirit (John 3), maintain a righteous life through repentance (John 20:22-23), and partake of His Holy Body and Blood (John 6). These Mysteries are all administered by the action of the Holy Spirit at the hands of a canonical bishop or priest.

An example of Apostolic Succession in the Bible involves St. Timothy, a bishop in the Church. St. Paul, along with at least two other bishops (as is the well known and ancient rite required for the ordination of a new bishop) ordained St. Timothy. “*Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership*” (1 Tim. 4:14); “*Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands*” (2 Tim. 1:6). St. Paul also taught St. Timothy that ordination is something that must continue: “*the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*” (2 Tim. 2:2).

The earliest writings by the Church Fathers and first Christians proclaim this fundamental Orthodox Christian necessity. St. Clement, bishop of Rome or-

dained by St. Peter himself, writes (c. 96 A.D.) the following: “*Through our Lord Jesus Christ, our apostles knew that there would be strife over the office of oversight [episcopacy—meaning office of the bishop]. Accordingly, since they had obtained a perfect knowledge of this, they appointed those men already mentioned. And they afterwards gave instructions that when those men would fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry: Therefore, we are of the opinion that those appointed by the apostles, or afterwards by other acclaimed men, with the consent of the whole church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry.*” Another bishop, Irenaeus, who is closely linked to St. John the disciple (having heard the disciple of St. John—St. Polycarp the bishop—preach), writes (c. 180 A.D.): “*In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is the most abundant proof that there is one and the same life-giving faith, which has been preserved in the church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth.*” One early Christian scholar named Tertullian (c. 197 A.D.) was very assertive on this issue, explaining how a person can determine a legitimate church from an illegitimate one: “*Let them [the heretics] produce the original records of their churches. Let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that the first bishop of theirs can show for his ordainer and predecessor one of the apostles or apostolic men—a man, moreover, who continued steadfast with the apostles.*”

As it turns out, this little story in Acts 8 is not so little after all.

An Article by John Habib





Pilgrimage to  
*ITALY* Trip 2011



BRAZIL  
&  
PARAGUAY

Mission  
Trip 2011





# 13TH ANNUAL EVANGELISM CONFERENCE



## Comments about the Brazil & Paraguay trip . . .

Monica Sidrak

This Mission trip was an amazing and awe-inspiring experience, new friendships and unforgettable memories were made, but most of all I experienced the true meaning of unconditional love.

Dr. Mervat Awad

My trip to Brazil was a life-changing experience. I went there with the expectations to make a difference to someone's life, but to my surprise, it was the people and children of Brazil that truly made a difference in my life. Nothing was more fulfilling than being with those kids and seeing the happiness through their eyes to have our company. Once again, the work of God uplifted my spirits and through him, I felt an even deeper connection with my friends- soon turned family- on the trip. A truly amazing trip!

Dr. Sarwat Ibrahim

Before Brazil mission, I had mixed feeling of anxiety, and uncertainty about my role in this mission, however after going through this mission, it has become an unforgettable experience.

I grew spiritually and I gained more out of it than I gave. I saw the true love in the eyes of kids of Paraguay..I learnt comfort from book of Nahum, embracing God from the book of Habakuk, it was a new and exciting experience in my life.

## ARCHANGEL RAPHAEL MINISTRY 1ST ANNUAL SPECIAL NEEDS CONVENTION



# QUESTION & ANSWER

## SPECIAL ATTENTION!

### GENERAL QUESTION

**Q:** From where has the prayer of Thanksgiving originated? How long has the church been using it?

**A:** To be posted in the next edition!!!

**Summer Edition Bible Question:** Name 3 things that Tobit kept doing all his life:

**Answer:** Justice, almsgiving, being mindful of God, and blessing Him.

### New Fall 2011 Edition

### BIBLE QUESTION

FROM THE HOLY BOOK OF JUDITH  
(answer to be posted in Fall Edition)

**Q:** Judith had greath faith in God. Give proof

**A:** To be posted in the next edition!!!



St. Clement Academy, Coptic Orthodox School in TN, was able to create an account with Publix in these states: TN, AL and GA. The cards are printed keychains for us with the school name on them. Shoppers will be allowed to scan this card with every purchase they make. The retailers will give the school a percentage of the gross sale every quarter. Mr. Saad will ship an ID card to anyone who signs up.

Contact: [stclementacademy@suscopts.org](mailto:stclementacademy@suscopts.org)

Mr. Bishoy Saad: [ebichoy@yahoo.com](mailto:ebichoy@yahoo.com)

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# Events & Activities

## DIOCESE PROGRAMS

### St. Verena Resource Ministry

(SVRM) Requesting assistance or registering to be a Volunteer Consultant

### Family Ministry Program

(FMP) Spring Registration deadline: Dec 10, 2011

### Theological Seminary Program

Program Registration deadline: March 15, 2012

## DIOCESE EVENTS

### Pre-Marital Retreats

TX: Nov 11-13, 2011; FL: Feb 3-5, 2012

**Marriage Retreat:** TX: Nov 11-12, 2011

**Family Convention:** FL: Nov 23-26, 2011

### WTL High School Conventions:

Boys: Dec 25-28, 2011; Girls: Dec 28-31, 2011

## NEW DIOCESE PROGRAM!

### The LEAD Program Leadership Education And Development

The Diocese is very excited to announce a new program for those interested in leadership development. God willing, The LEAD Program (Leadership Education And Development) will begin in the Fall of 2012. Please stay tuned for more details coming soon!

*\* Dates are subject to change. Please check [www.suscpts.org](http://www.suscpts.org)*

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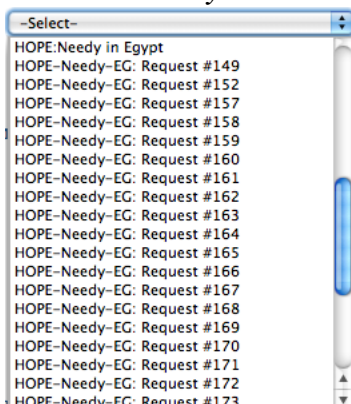
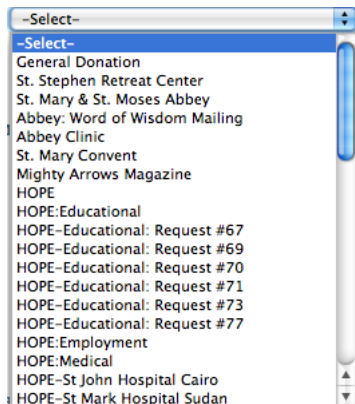
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Mighty Arrows Magazine Staff

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