

# MIGHTY MARROWS

Life. God. Truth. For Coptic Youth



ORTHODOXY  
AMIDST

AN  
EVER-  
CHANGING  
WORLD

Spring 2012 Volume 11 No.2



“Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth”

Psalm 127:4

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

## My Beloved Youth

In this Special Edition of the Mighty Arrows Magazine, I want you to know you have been in my thoughts and prayers as we endured a difficult and bittersweet moment in the historic life of our beloved church. The soul of our honored father, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, reposed during the Holy Great Fast on March 17, 2012. On April 15, 2012, the Church celebrated the holy and glorious Resurrection Feast. On April 25th, the Church commemorated the 40th day Memorial of His Holiness. At present, the Holy Synod is preparing for a democratic and divine election process for our next patriarch and we ask each faithful member of the Coptic Orthodox Church to share in our prayers for the good of the Church.

During the latter twentieth century until today, no one person has had an impact on Orthodoxy amidst and ever-changing world more than His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. His remarkable papacy from 1971-2012, was an amazing and blessed period spanning forty years, where he introduced and confirmed Coptic Orthodoxy throughout the world. As a result, there stand today Coptic Orthodox Churches, monasteries, schools, and dioceses, in many countries and states throughout North America, South America, Europe, Australia, Asia, and of course Africa. We credit this astounding legacy to our beloved and honored father, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.

While some try to claim that Orthodoxy is complicated and antiquated, how then can they explain its power to flourish with overwhelming numbers, yet with limited financial resources, an immigrant population, and natives of foreign countries, in less than one half of a century amidst an ever-changing world? From the inception of the era of immigration of the Coptic people, at least two generations have been tested by time and fire. Beyond the ministry to the immigrant Copts throughout the world, the Coptic Orthodox Church has been embraced by natives of Japan, Thailand, China, Fiji, India, Kenya, South Africa, the Middle East, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Mexico, Columbia, the Dominican Republic, and the Caribbean Islands. The formula is clear: God, Bible, Sacraments, faith, truth, worship, service, tradition, discipleship, and love.

Beloved youth, adults, and converts, my children, it is my deepest desire to see and hear of your spiritual growth and maturity in the faith. Our church has been tested through many challenges and persevered. I am very proud of this blessed generation that has stood shoulder to shoulder with all Copts all over the world. We must realize that it is not age, ethnicity, or status that bonds us together, but it is our unified love, dedication, and commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ and His beloved Church that has fortified a determined nation to proclaim God's will amidst an ever-changing world.

As we bid farewell to our honored father, the 117th Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, we ask our great God to select the 118th Pope and Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, a leader for His great human nation and a peaceful era to come.

Glory to the Holy Trinity, forever, Amen.

God bless you,

Bishop Youssef  
BISHOP OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

We honor the memory and legacy of our blessed father, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. He has been an inspirational figure for many generations. With wisdom, patience, and love, he taught us about our Church and kept the Coptic Orthodox Churches throughout the world united in the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through his literature, sermons, and most of all his humble example, we are forever grateful. On behalf of His Grace Bishop Youssef and the entire Mighty Arrows Staff, present and former contributors, we offer our prayers and gratitude to God for enriching our lives with His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.



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# The Ladder



This is the story of a small little town up in the mountains. In this town, the main profession was building wooden ladders. It was the inhabitants' only way to climb up to a dripping spring where water dripped slowly from a huge overhanging sandstone cliff. This is where they got their supply of water. Every person in this town had to learn how to build sturdy wooden ladders in order to survive. Over the years, the people of this town refined their craft, becoming well-known for making the finest wooden ladders.

One of the secrets of their success was the type of wood they used to build those ladders. It was hard and strong, but light enough to be carried by one man. An investor heard about this town and wanted to buy their wood, but the town elders turned down his offer. They thought that if they gave their secret away, they might jeopardize their only way of getting spring water. They did have enough wood to meet their own needs and sold the extra when available, but if they were to start selling their raw wood, that would no longer be the case. The investor did not give up,

however. He offered the youth in the town plenty of money in exchange for their wood. He also offered them an alternate wood supply of lower quality to meet their building needs. The young people accepted his offer, and they started mixing some of their own wood with the lower quality one so that the town elders would not notice what they did.

One day, one of the youth went to get his daily water supply, but on the way back down his ladder could not handle his weight and broke. The young man fell, and his fall was great! He died and all the townspeople grieved for him. Everyone was wondering how one of their trusted ladders could have broken. Those who knew the dirty secret kept it for themselves because they did not want to lose their money coming to them from the investor. They even started placing doubts in the hearts of the rest that their own wood is the same as any other type of wood out there, so why shouldn't they sell it? As time went by, more and more started selling wood and it was getting harder and harder to discern which ladders were made out of the good wood and

which were made out of the bad. Many more people fell off their ladders and died. The truth was somehow lost...

As we seek optimism, we tend to look for any sensible evidence to support our positive attitude. It is a purely mental process in which our minds are trained to rationalize a positive outcome to an unpredictable event. Some people inherit this talent and others determine to learn it. It is always good to be positive and optimistic about life. When faced with hardship, it is very likely that an optimist will find a clever way out. Truly, optimism is a real gift in life but it still has its limitations. It is limited by the capacity of the mind to find the right ladder of logic that one can climb from a negative to a positive state of mind. In the process of doing so, many assumptions have to be made; an optimist will tend to make an assumption that serves his purpose of climbing the ladder. However, checking the validity of such assumptions needs extra effort that only some people are willing to put in, while others will climb the ladder accepting the risk that it might eventually break beneath them. Again, it is an amazing mental process. The more we practice it, the better we get at it. Believe it or not, few are those who master this talent!

On the other hand, Christianity offers hope as a free gift for everyone regardless of these mental talents. We just don't know how to accept this gift because we are dealing with it in a logical manner, like we do with optimism. It is not the same! Hope does not rely on a ladder of logic, but rather a ladder of faith. It is a type of ladder that the brain cannot construct. The brain cannot even control it because it is built in a different arena. Its ground level is the heart. It can take us as high as we want simply because it does not rely

on relativistic assumptions. Instead, it is a manifestation of the strength of our faith. *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Heb 11:1). Unlike man-made assumptions, faith is not founded by rationalism, but rather planted as a mystical seed in our hearts. The seed turns into a tree. From its wooden branches, we build the ladder of hope. Even though we help build this ladder, it is in essence a mystical seed. It is perfect quality wood that can be extended to reach the length of Jacob's ladder. It is not just capable of lifting our mindset, but also our whole being.

The question that poses itself is: Can optimism and hope co-exist within the same person? Yes, they can. It is a matter of taking tree branches and building a ladder out of them. It is a process in which both the heart and the mind are engaged. It is such a joyful process because we experience the positive connection between the heart and the mind. In fact, it might be one of the few experiences in which the heart and the mind are not fighting each other. In other words, optimism is sanctified by faith and reborn as hope. One problem that most optimists face is the lack of need for hope. They already know how to build the ladder, yet it is just as important to know how to pick the right lumber. A well built ladder is not going to hold us if it is made out of rotten wood. It is even more complicated when we mix up branches of different types. It is a trick that Satan plays on us. He watches us building a ladder of faith without intervening. Then he starts offering us easy-to-assemble, good looking, but cheap wood. We use it and the ladder holds us for a little while, then it inevitably collapses. Not only does he want us to fall down but also lose faith in the good quality wood. Then we complain that faith did not do us any good!

An Article by Mlena Armanious

# INCARNATIONAL ORTHODOXY

The echoes of the Pharisees can be heard still. They are pleading with you to keep your mouth shut. That was the one threat and demand made to the followers of Jesus in the book of Acts. Live for your crucified carpenter all you want, just never speak of Him; let it be some sort of secret hobby or social club, just don't make it public. But, those pesky disciples couldn't seem to put a lid on it. They *"filled Jerusalem with their doctrine"* (Acts 5:28) and *"turned the world upside down"* (Acts 17:6). Why didn't they just listen and stay quiet? I guess they just couldn't help but proclaim what they saw and heard. Is not the Orthodox faith the same as the church laid down by these very apostles during the time of Acts? Certainly. Has the power and glory of Jesus Christ lost its value over the centuries? Certainly not, but if that is true, and if the Person of Jesus Christ is the same today as during that time, then why are so many of us quiet? Is there a voice in you that's making the same demand of the Pharisees to keep your mouth shut? Is there something that's cutting off the tongue of your Orthodox Christianity and chopping it down at the knees?

The same type of people tried to control the Lord Jesus. They didn't stop at His tongue though; they targeted His feet too. "How can you speak and eat with THEM?! How can you go THERE?!" But despite their judgmental doubting questions, He kept going into the heart of darkness and drawing out the sick who were in need of a physician, because *that* is what the incarnation is. He came for the rejected, the hurting, and the lost. This doctrine, of reaching out to those, who in the eyes of the Pharisees are unworthy, is at the heart of Orthodoxy. It is

one on which all our behavior hinges. Our choice to live *incarnationally*, with the mindset that our religion is one that is a continuation of what our Lord Jesus Christ taught and practiced Himself, changes everything. This isn't just about re-reading the sayings of the early church fathers and keeping them to ourselves, but it is about letting that truth mold and direct our decisions and behavior towards other people within and without of the faith.

It's no wonder that the same attack on Orthodoxy exists today. If Jesus Himself was attacked by these Pharisee demands, if the same war raged against the apostles preaching the message of Christ, and if the same struggle continued against our church fathers who preserved these teachings for us, then we should know that we must also gear up for comparable combat. We will continually be questioned, doubted, and misunderstood, but like our Lord, the apostles, and the fathers, we too must also fight to maintain the truth of the Gospel which our Orthodox faith has preserved since the beginning. A loss on this front would wound the very world we occupy, which is waiting for the sons of God to be revealed (Rom 8). It would leave our world groping for Him in the dark, though He's not far at all. Orthodoxy in our day will either take flesh or take a back seat. Our choices are clear: be incarnational (evangelizing and exemplifying the message of the Gospel) or be irrelevant. To put it simply, we must "BE THERE!" in those places that the Pharisees of our day may deem unworthy or unclean, because the world is des-

perate for the good news of the Gospel.

The season of Lent is when we see the incarnation extend beyond just the manger. We see the Logos move and open His mouth to amaze us with truth and righteousness. Why Nineveh, Lord? It's a sinful city. Why Samaria? For the woman at that well? Why the

cursed Tree? He will gently respond to that with: "For this purpose I have come." The Lord could have taken flesh in space or in paradise, somehow I suppose, but that would have been of no value to our broken humanity. He needed to condescend to our lowest pit, in this Earth filled with sin and fear, to redeem us. He brought Divine light, knowing that the darkness will not overcome it. He humbled Himself for our sakes that He might raise us up with Him. Are we willing to do the same? Are we willing to get out of our comfort zones and go to the places and people that need the faith that our Church proclaims? Are we willing to share the message of His love? Are we willing to break the silence Orthodoxy has had for far too long and share with this broken world the riches and beauty of the faith firmly founded in our deeply rooted Church?

In the ever changing world around us, the truth of Orthodox Christianity has the unique opportunity to let classic truth, revealed by the Trinity Himself, take real form in the lives of people around us. Our call is



to internalize this truth in order to give it "flesh" so people can see it, hear it, and handle it with their own hands (1 Jn 1). Jesus resembled us in everything except for sin alone. Everything. Those are the daring doctrinal footsteps we must follow if Orthodox Christianity is going to breathe life and redemption into our world. We need to expend the energy to ask the Lord to reveal to us how to unveil the classic truths to a modern culture. Only He can do this. It isn't in the copying of songs or styles, but in letting Christ Jesus Himself truly relate to a fellow human on the most profound level imaginable.

We must refuse to remain silent and secluded. We must choose to bring the divine presence of the Lord Jesus into our campus, our courtroom, and our culture, knowing full well that what hangs in the balance is nothing short of the very life of the world.

An Article by Mena Mirhom





# True Orthodoxy of the Monastic Life: St. Pachomius, Father of the Cenobitic Life

carry out acts of mercy, especially to guests who came to their city. The Christians were moved with compassion towards the troops, who were very weary and exhausted. They treated them as part of their family and gave them health care, money, and food for their journey.

The love and care that the Christians offered St. Pachomius and his men left a lasting impression on his heart. He pondered as to who they were and who they followed that taught them such kindness and mercy. When he heard that they believed in Jesus Christ, he developed a great love towards Christ and desired to serve the Lord. After he was discharged, he had no desire to return home, but rather to turn to the church in order to be baptized. After baptism, he seriously began considering how to faithfully fulfill the laws of Christ and become the true Christian Christ expected of him.

Subsequently, St. Pachomius headed for the desert, where he believed he would learn the true faith from the desert fathers. He heard of an elder named Palamon, who served God with great perfection. St. Pachomius sought him out, asking to be his disciple and learn from his ways. St. Palamon did not refuse him, but advised him to pray and search deep within his soul and learn if this life was for him. St. Palamon told him, “Consider, my son, that my diet is only bread and salt: I drink no wine, use no oil, watch one half of the night, spending that time in singing psalms or in meditating on the holy scriptures, and sometimes pass the whole night without sleeping.” St. Pachomius was amazed at this account, yet he was not discouraged; he accepted the challenge and dedicated his life to the monastic way. St. Palamon received him into his cell, and conferred him with the monastic habit. Together, St. Palamon and St. Pachomius prayed, sang

the Psalter, and exercised themselves in manual labors (which they accompanied with interior prayer).

With his arms stretched out in the form of a cross (a posture widely used in the church today) St. Pachomius prayed primarily for perfect purity of his heart. St. Palamon mentored and strengthened St. Pachomius through the monastic life, teaching him to labor and struggle as well as to be watchful all night in prayer and vigil. St. Pachomius loved the quiet solitude of the desert and endeavored to go into the deep end of the desert near the banks of the Nile.

One day, as he was praying there alone, he heard a voice commanding him to build a monastery in the place he was standing. The angel told him that God will send him people who will also desire this life, and gave him rules commanded by God for the monastic life, to be followed by monks. He rushed to his elder St. Palamon and told him of his vision. St. Palamon went to aid St. Pachomius but did not dwell with him for very long.

Quickly, one monk soon became thousands and they began to follow St. Pachomius’ ways and teachings. He began to give his monks specific rules on fasting as well as work proportional to their strength; even though they were in one community. St. Pachomius also had them all dress in one uniform which included a cowl that covered their head and a long tunic. Novices were not ordained as monks from the moment they arrived, but were tested and watched for a period of time before they took their vows. To protect them against pride, Abba Pachomius did not allow any of his monks to become priests, and so a priest came from the outside world to serve the liturgy for them. All of his monks were occupied in various kinds of manual labor; no moment was

allowed for idleness. Another rule established in his monasteries was the practice of silence; silence was so strictly observed at Tabenna that any monk in need of any necessities would ask for it by signs. St. Pachomius was seen as a great man by many, and by his love to others he was able to convert many to the Orthodox faith. His virtues reached St. Athanasius, who tried several times to ordain him a priest. Abba Pachomius was missed greatly by his own sister Mariam who arrived to the monastery with the desire to see him, but he would not allow her to enter the grounds and so he put in effect another rule which allowed no woman to enter into the monastery. From outside the gate, she told him of her desire to live his life, and so he built her a Convent on the other side of the Nile, which soon was filled with many nuns for which she became responsible.

To this day, the Coptic Orthodox church observes Abba Pachomius’ rules and guidelines for the monastic life. Even as one is living in the midst of an ever-changing world, the true Orthodoxy of monasticism continues and is growing through the grace of God. As stated by the great Abba Pachomius himself, “Monasticism is prolonged fasting, continuous prayers, purity of the body, purity of the heart, silence of the tongue; conservation of the sight, pursuit of hardships, and attaining asceticism.” The Orthodoxy of monasticism is not simply rules that the monks and nuns learn, but, a life chosen to be lived for Christ in truth and faith.

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An Article by Mareya Naguib

# My beloved Coptic Orthodox Church

When I was asked to contribute to the latest edition of *Mighty Arrows*, I felt God’s will. For quite a while now I have been thinking about our Orthodox beliefs and the constant conflict between them and what we observe on the television, internet, or in the papers. Some of the claims made against us include that we worship the saints or that the icons we place in our churches are idols. They also make the claim that we deify our clergy and that we place tradition above the Bible. I look around and find enemies, sometimes even from within our own church. There are those who were once members of the church but, for one reason or another, no longer take part. They make it their life’s goal to teach that the Orthodox Church is heretical (which sways those who are not aware of our cause) and to issue biased judgments against our church.

I have encountered and debated with such individuals several times. I do not claim that I know all the answers to every question they pose or every idea they present. Not knowing only strengthens my resolve to research and find out more in the Bible and in our doctrine. Given the way I was trained to think, I find most of their arguments illogical as they present only segments of the picture and cast an unnecessarily negative light on the Orthodox beliefs.

A prevalent example of someone who has left our church and campaigned against it is Henein Abdel Messih. In my first encounter with him, I believed he was trying to have a dialogue for the purpose of understanding. As I spoke with him more often and researched his background, I learned that he has been fighting the church for years. Several bishops have also issued books in response to his allegations. Moreover, some individuals and websites have written responses to his claims such as <http://st-takla.org/FAQ-Questions->



VS-Answers/04-Questions-Related-to-Spiritual-Issues\_\_Ro7eyat-3amma/062-Kneeling-VS-Prostration.html.

Henein Abdel Messih, and others like him use illogical arguments to make their point. He has no intention of reading books that answer and explain what he does not understand. When you endeavor to argue with him logically, with supporting Biblical verses, he flees the scene or claims that he does not have the time to read all the responses he gets!

Besides people like Abdel Messih, others from outside the church have attacked our beliefs as well. On one Saturday afternoon as I arrived home from work, I found at my doorstep a tract entitled: “My Dear Roman Catholic Friend...27 Questions to Ask Your Priest.” Even though the article in question was not directly targeting the Orthodox Church, I was very disturbed by the questions the writers posed. It encouraged the reader to ask their priest questions such as: “Where in the Bible does it teach that we should pray to the Virgin Mary... that priests can forgive sins... that there is such a sacrament as a mass?” as well as many more that provide the wrong implications.

I immediately sat down and wrote a letter to the organization distributing the article. The points I made on my letter were:

1. The questions posed do not speak the truth about



beliefs like ours and are thus deceptive.

2. Different Christian denominations have the same basic beliefs, which is the material of our creed.

3. The knowledge of the infinite God cannot be captured by a single church.

4. Distributing such tracts is destructive to the efforts of uniting the body of Christ.

5. A dialogue aimed at understanding the other would be much more fruitful and Christ-like.

Not long after, I received a response that the article was determined to be inappropriate for distribution and was pulled from the list of published works used to evangelize.

We, the Coptic Orthodox people, have a responsibility to stand up for what we believe. Do not let anyone just throw their ideas at you without fully analyzing or critiquing them, no matter how much sense they may make to you. Many facts could be easily twisted in order to be

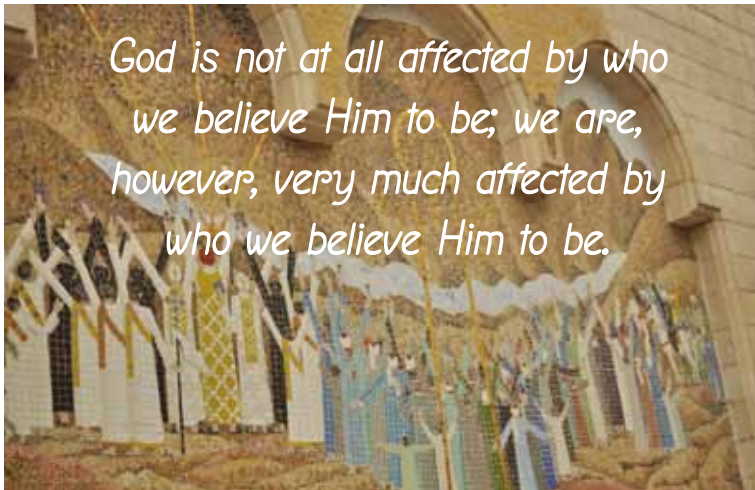
presented in a way that makes perfect sense. It is also possible for you to be fooled if you do not have full understanding of the topic at hand. The least we can do when we are faced with such conflict is to ask—ask your father of confession, your priest, servants in your church, close relatives, or through consulting sources like published works.

We also have a responsibility to learn what supports our Orthodox beliefs. I sincerely wish that our clergy could speak out more about these issues. I believe that teaching us how to defend our faith can be taken more seriously. This can be done in a series of Bible study sessions, or weekly sermons. I think it is time to have such studies done on the scale of the whole church, not just to youth servants or Sunday School teachers. Instead of shutting our doors in the face of those who object to our beliefs, we ought to be able to say, knowing that we are fully equipped and are ready to give an answer to every man that asks us about our Orthodox Church, “Welcome, let us talk.”

An Article by Mariam Maher



# To believe God, Not to Believe IN God



We start this second installment with one of the most important questions of our lives: Who is your God? You will find that every belief-related-question is based on the simple understanding of who God is. If you think He is the man upstairs, just watching, you might act differently from one who thinks God is a friend, differently from one who thinks God is this old man, big white beard, full of wisdom but not hip enough to understand our slang, etc. Sometimes, our belief of who God is is based on other's thoughts or opinions. Let me tell you this, I heard a wise person say: **"Every attempt to define God cannot help but minimize Him."** Read this one more time because it's extremely important to realize that He is beyond our earthly definitions. Every attempt to define God cannot help but minimize HIM. Somehow, we, as humans, cannot grasp the idea that we have no earthly idea who God is in his fullness. It's hard for us to admit that we will not reach all of God. He has revealed some things, and withheld others. But some see that hidden mystery and dismiss God altogether and some sound very convincing as to their logic for how scientifically He cannot be all that we make Him out to be. I will be the first to admit, I do not know Him as He is. But here's what I know: I know He is good. I'll start there. He's not out to get

me: there is goodness in Him because I have known Him to be good and merciful to me.

When we take away the mystery and the majesty of who God is, we turn Him into something He is not; not even what He revealed in the scriptures about Himself, but far far less, I'm afraid. If in our pursuit of knowledge, God seems to have gotten smaller, we have been deceived. We will never grasp the enormity of God; He will continue to get bigger and bigger. One point I would like to make here is: **God is not at all affected by who we believe Him to be; we are, however, very much affected by who we believe Him to be.** That's why it is very important to examine who you say God is. In the last article, we ended on being very intentional about making faith very personal. We were going to "work" through our belief. I used work because, like every relationship, it requires work, effort, want, and desire to get closer. Faith is not an emotion; rather, "faith is always an exercise of the will, not the emotions" (B. Moore). **Keep in mind that faith that remains unchallenged ordinarily remains unchanged.** So challenge yourself and your belief. You will realize, just as I did, that you have developed perceptions of God that made Him no god at all. He was impractical, impersonal, unreachable, unwilling, weak, and powerless.

Psalms 135:15-18 says, *"The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak. Eyes but they do not see. They have ears, but they do not hear. Nor is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them."* Notice this part: *"Those who make them are like them."* We will reflect and are living out who we believe our God to be: God of the Bible or the god we made Him out to be. When we realize that we have perceived a weak and an unwilling god, we will never turn to him in our times of trouble. We will never ever have faith that exceeds the strength of the god we perceive and contrived. This god does not have the power to deliver us. But the God of the Word does; He is big enough to deliver us, He is mighty to save.

Hebrews 11: 6 says it very clearly. We are all familiar with the first part. *"For without faith it is impossible to please Him."* Forgive me, but before speaking of pleasing God, let's focus on the next part. Now watch this: *"For he who comes to God must believe that He IS, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."* Those who come to Him diligently must believe that He is all that He says He is. The same God who told Moses, "I AM (I exist). I will go before you, I will protect you, I will save you from your enemies, I will provide for you, I am your God and you will have no other God but me." *"Know that the Lord is God,"* as Psalm 100:3 says. Notice how he said **KNOW** that the Lord is God, not just hope or think that He is, but know it. He wants us to know, He can't wait to show us. His desire is for you to **KNOW** that He lives, that He redeems, that He forgives, that He loves you and me. I'll be honest here, even writing these words brings tears to my eyes. I am shaking off a perceived god and slowly seeing an awesome

and powerful God. I was one who tried to fit Him in a box, to logically explain every event that occurred in my life and how He was responsible for it. Sometimes, I thought I almost said to Him, "No no, don't get involved, God, I got this..." How foolish! And that will happen to you too. **The more you get to know HIM, the more aware you are of your sinfulness.** Guilt started to build up as I thought of all that I have done, the sins of my mind, my actions, and my thoughts. These thoughts were quickly followed by shame. I'm not alone, we all have done this, and I don't hold up that stone to judge. As I was thinking that, an amazing thing happened: God spoke and said "But you also realize that, because of this, how much more of a miracle you are now." That's the God who reveals Himself to us. That's it. That thought of how miraculous and powerful He is, that came from HIM to me. And you know what it did? It took away the feeling of guilt and shame and replaced it with worship and praise. How great is He who takes away the sins of this human, my sins, my wrong doings, my evil thoughts, all of it and takes is as far from the east as it is from the west.

So dig deeper, have a moment, have a conversation with the Almighty, a private encounter if you will and I guarantee you won't be disappointed. He will reward those who seek Him diligently. Take Him up at His words. Who does God say that He is? He will reveal Himself in two ways: His words and His works. Start with Ps. 100: 1-3 and Ps. 145: 1-6 and let the real God stand up taller and higher than any we have ever conceived and all that we perceived Him to be.

I heard this poem written by B. Moore and thought I would share it. It is so appropriate:

He is Elohim, Creator, the om-

nipotent who rules.

He is the sovereign King of Glory and earth is His footstool.

He is Alpha and Omega, The Beginning and the End.

He sends forth lightening that later checks back in with Him.

He speaks worlds into existence and spins them out in space.

He gives orders to the morning and shows the dawn its place.

He prophesies the future, then orders it fulfilled.

He bears fruit from a landscape that man has never tilled.

He feeds the beasts of the field from the palm of His hand.

He watches while they bear their young, then teaches them to stand.

He gives the seas their boundaries and hides His creatures deep.

He teaches eagles how to fly and nest upon the steep.

He makes the clouds His chariot and rides on wings of wind.

He champions the victim and brings proud men to end.

He is Immanuel, God with us, come to earth through Christ.

He is the Kinsman Redeemer, who paid the slave man's price.

He is the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and worthy is the Lamb.

He holds the keys of Life Eternal, where the dead and Christ now stand.

He's enthroned between the cherubim, and great is His reward.

The devil His defeated foe, the weapon His swift sword.

The story has a moral so I'll hasten lest you tire,

Whoever you perceive He is, you might aim a little higher.

Lord, help us discover your greatness. We don't begin to know how great you are but we want to daily see you in the reality of who you are. Lord, take the scales off our eyes and reveal yourself to us. Father, we praise you. Amen.

An Article by Christine Massoud

## Part Two

# The Prophetic Voice of the Church



temple's ritual. Then a "man of God" (1 Kin 13:1)—a prophet—boldly cried out against the ruler and his false worship. Jeroboam stretched out his hand and yelled, "Seize him!" but in that instant his hand withered. It was risky business to openly censure a powerful ruler, but it was also risky business to speak against a prophet.

Another case is St. John the Baptist, who was God's "voice" in the wilderness (Mk 1:3), but who lost his life for his sharp rebuke of the king. The ultimate example is the Great and Final Prophet, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was rejected and executed for teaching man the ways of salvation, but Whose word was also proven by His resurrection from the dead.

The Church has now taken up the role of the prophet in the world, as Christ told us, *"You are the light of the world"* (Mt 5:14). The office of prophecy has passed from being the lot of a select few, to the privilege and duty of every baptized Christian. The world is dark, deaf, and lost, but we are God's mouthpiece, we are God's lamp, we are God's ambassadors. The world cannot see God except through His people. If there is wrong in the world, it must be righted by the Christians. If there is corruption, Christ's body must be the cleanser and preservative: *"You are the salt of the earth"* (Mt 5:13).

But it is not just any church that can faithfully sound its prophetic voice to the world. A man in one prominent church can come out and openly announce his list of sins, referred to as *choices* he has made, and still be a valid candidate for bishop. One of the greatest perils to the world is when the world's vices

sink into the Church. Now, the possibility of officially condoning society's sins is being hotly debated by the major churches.

To be prophetic, a Church must be orthodox, it must be apostolic, and it must be holy. This cannot be left, however, to simply be the responsibility of holy synods and popes. It is the individual charge of each one of us. Yes, we have testimony to bear; the purity and clarity of that testimony reflects directly upon the person of our Savior. If my role as Christian is blemished, who will seek my Christ? The integrity of our character, the consistency of our righteousness, affects not only our salvation but the salvation of the world. This is the burden of a prophet. My spiritual life is personal, yes, but it is also critically communal. If I die spiritually, a part of the community dies with me; if I rise spiritually, the community is lifted up with me. This is a mode of reciprocity that God has mysteriously built into the fabric of humanity, and it cannot be ignored. I may not be appointed by God to directly preach the gospel, but my conversation and conduct will convict and alter the world, and I have thus done my part in expressing the prophetic voice of the Church.

An Article by James Helmy





**SPECIAL FEATURED ARTICLE**  
*By H.G. Bishop Youssef*

## A Pillar of Our Time—An Ordinary Man Who Served in Extraordinary Ways

# H.H. Pope Shenouda III

ON MARCH 17TH, 2012, A LIGHT IN THE WORLD DIMMED—HIS FRUITFUL VOYAGE THROUGHOUT THIS WAY ENDED AND OUR BELOVED FATHER, HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III, CONTINUED ON HIS FINAL JOURNEY TO BE WITH THE LORD. Ordinary people serving in extraordinary ways have laid the foundations of all that could be good in humanity. In the footsteps of his beloved Lord, the cornerstone and the

Master Potter who lived as an ordinary carpenter, so too, Pope Shenouda III was once a simple solitary monk, who emerged to brighten and lead God's people into the 21st century as the 117th Pope of the Church of Alexandria and the Patriarch of the See of St. Mark. Our contemporary heroes have become the pillars of our time. In the warm shadows of these colossal beacons, we trust to be guided by their

radiance. These are our fathers who have lit the narrow path through rugged terrain and over turbulent waters that lead to the eternal fountain of life—Jesus Christ. Thus, when the Lord joyfully calls them to enter the Paradise of Joy, history then reveals their exceptional legacies and voluminous chronicles of selfless and tireless labors. The light continues to flicker in the lives of those who have been

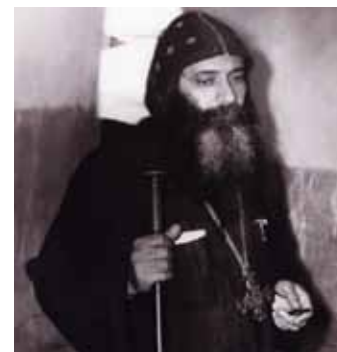
touched by their wisdom and generosity, so that we never lose sight of pursuing better goals, achieving higher principles, and kindling a spirit that yearns to do what is good and noble. We will never be orphaned nor abandoned, but earnestly, we await their successors who will carry the torch and illuminate the next chapters of life.

**Blessed are the Pure in Heart for They Shall See God**



Nazeer Gayed

From humble beginnings, he grew to be the patriarch of one of the oldest churches in the world. The early years of Nazeer Gayed began with the repose of his mother. Like the prophet David, Nazeer Gayed was also the youngest of eight children. From a religious perspective, it should not surprise any that being the least would hinder one from rising to being the greatest. Thus, this young boy attained rapid spiritual maturity and began a dedicated life of service by the age of sixteen, in what has now allegorically proved to be a “school of stewardship” at St. Anthony’s Church in Shoubra, Egypt, the beloved church of many contemporary spiritual leaders, clergy, and saints. A well learned and spiritually-driven man, Nazeer Gayed earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and History and entered the work field as a teacher, a prophetic title, one commonly attributed to our Lord Jesus Christ. He also obtained a Bachelor of Theology from the Coptic Theological Seminary in Cairo, of which he would later become Dean as the first Bishop of Christian Education. A true Coptic and Egyptian patriot at heart, Nazeer Gayed also performed his national obligations as an enlisted member of the Egyptian Military.



From 1954-1962, the monastic order embraced this bright candle who would become known as Fr. Antonius El Suryani (named after St. Anthony the Great and the Syrian Monastery—the name of the monastery of which a monk enters). The last six years of his time of perpetual devotion at the Syrian Monastery, Fr. Antonius lived a life of solitude in a cave near the monastery, like his predecessor, His Holiness Pope Cyril VI, who later appointed him to be his personal secretary. In 1962, His Holiness Pope Cyril VI ordained Fr. Antonius the Hermit, the first Bishop of Christian Education by the name of Bishop Shenouda.



*“So if your concern is to reach the light of spiritual knowledge and to do so not through the sin of empty boastfulness but rather by a purifying grace, then be enflamed first of all by the longing for this blessedness, concerning which is said, ‘Happy are the clean of heart for they shall see God’ (Mt 5:8). Do this in order that you may achieve*

*what the angel spoke of to Daniel: ‘The learned will shine like the splendor of the skies and those who have taught virtue to many will be like the stars for all eternity (Dn 12:3). There is this about it in another prophet: ‘While there is time light up within you the lamp of knowledge’” (Hos 10:12).*

*St. John Cassian  
Conference Fourteen<sup>1</sup>*

**The Papal Era of the 117th Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, 1971-2012**



Following the rituals of selecting a new patriarch after the departure of our beloved saintly father, Pope Cyril VI, the By-laws of 1957 were applied, and the Church delegates finalized the three names, of which one was Bishop Shenouda, Bishop

of Christian Education. As a result of fervent prayers, and a democratic and divine Church election, our Lord Jesus Christ chose His Holiness Pope Shenouda III as the 117th Pope of the Church of Alexandria and the Patriarch of the See of St. Mark. His Holiness was thereafter enthroned on November 14, 1971.

He educated and cultured nations, enriched the Coptic Theological Seminary in Egypt, and encouraged the establishment of Coptic schools, monasteries, and seminaries abroad. Many new converts have been flocking to seek wisdom and hope for an eternal life with the Lord and have found fulfillment in Orthodoxy. Throughout the world and in the wilderness of the deserts, Orthodoxy flourished, and monasticism was revived in this era. With copious official obligations, summits, seminars, and engagements amongst an array of dignitaries, he remained connected to his teaching roots and humble life. Wednesdays were earmarked for his weekly lectures and answering the people’s questions. The doors of St. Mark’s Cathedral in Abasseya, Egypt, never discriminated against any of its audiences, for everyone was welcome. His wit, delightful humor, discernment, astuteness, vision, tears, and fatherly understanding would resonate throughout the cathedral walls. On Thursdays, he honored the poor and disabled by opening the cathedral’s dining hall. Christians and Muslims alike had the opportunity to enjoy a hearty meal. Not only did he expect the clergy and stewards to follow these instructions of personally caring for the poor and disabled, but he saw to it himself that these brothers and sisters of Christ would have the provisions that they need.

**From the sayings of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III: “The spiritual person first gives from the heart with all his love before he gives from his pocket. His compassion is a heartfelt expression in sharing in the needs of others and in the needs of the Church. Others, however, give alms without sentiments, but give for the purpose of**



adhering to the literal commandments, and forget what the Bible says, 'For God loves a cheerful giver' (2 Cor 9:7). Giving starts from the heart and not just the hand. The spiritual giver is one who rejoices when he gives because he shares in the aid to others and also because he receives the blessing of serving the Church."



**Blessed are the Peacemakers for They Shall be Called Children of God**

The spiritual leader of a ten percent minority of an indigenous people in Egypt, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III epitomized knowledge and courage as the Prophet Daniel and the Apostolic Father St. Athanasius of our time. His papacy spanning over four decades encountered two Egyptian presidents. The Copts in Egypt were often directly and indirectly mistreated, and he carried their burdens, intervening on their behalf whenever he could. Even in exile and under house arrest in the 1980's, he continued to protect the Church while at St. Pishoy Monastery in the Natrun Valley. Despite years of harassment, he instructed his children, the Copts all over the world, to keep the peace. He was an exemplary model who reached out to all religions and denominations in Egypt and abroad. Since the late 1960's, many Coptic Christians began immigrating in mass numbers

to America, Canada, Australia, and Europe. He knew they needed spiritual care, and thus, he provided a wave of clergy to establish Coptic Orthodox Churches, to teach, to serve, and to ensure that future generations would have a place of worship and fellowship, and thus, the Church would also have a future for many generations to come. Negative influences of a decaying moral culture began to infiltrate the nucleus of the family of new generations in Egypt and abroad. Not only was this becoming prevalent in the Coptic communities, but it was actually also pervasive throughout many other cultures and religions. Yet, despite the rapidly changing world, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III maintained the spiritual integrity of the Church by reinforcing its concrete foundation and the sound values of the Christian family.

*"The spirit of humility and modesty, therefore, of so many and thus well-attested men has by their obedience been helpful not only to us, but also to the generations before us, as well as to those who have received His words in fear and truth. And so, since we are allowed to profit by so many glorious examples, let us hasten on to the goal of peace handed down to us from the beginning, and let us fix our gaze upon the Father and Creator of the whole world and hold fast to His magnificent and superabundant gifts and blessings of peace."*

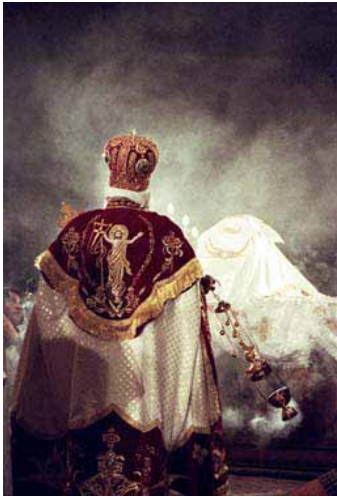
*St. Clement of Rome  
Epistle to the Corinthians*<sup>ii</sup>

**The Legacy of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III**

Under the auspices of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the inauguration of Coptic Orthodox Churches all over the world today attest to his unsurpassed evangelist efforts—

the Apostle Paul of our time. Not only were churches established to serve the immigrating Coptic people, but churches and dioceses were also formed all over the earth's landscape to introduce Coptic Orthodox Christianity to foreign nations throughout Africa, the Middle East, North America, South America, Europe, Australia, and Asia. He was a man of exceeding wisdom and his vision was immeasurable. His message was always clear and poignant, whether in his spoken or written words, for they were incessant, profound, meaningful, explicit, and simple, so everyone could understand and dare to apply them—the Golden Mouth, St. John Chrysostom of our time. His love for the poor and disabled was never in question. He never differentiated of what class or religion was the recipient of his grace for he saw all those in need as he saw Christ, Himself.

**The Final Chapter**



In the final chapter of the life of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, even his ailing health could not prevent him from preaching the word of God and caring for His children as he was entrusted to do. The faithful steward and the trustworthy shepherd never took his eyes off the flock but labored day and night, keeping a vigilant watch. Thus, it

is evident that there can be no finality of the impact and service of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. Neither in sickness, nor in oppression, nor in turmoil, nor in suffering, did he rest, but he continued to meet with visitors, imparting wisdom and hope, even a few hours before he reposed in the Lord. Therefore, neither in his departure will death prevail against his astounding service, which will forever be engraved in our hearts. His final chapter on earth is only an impetus upon which the Church will draw her energy and press forward to enhance, enrich, and enliven the spiritual future of the believers, raise social consciousness, and uphold the growth and advancement of God's holy and apostolic Church.

**Conclusion**

*"Let us now praise men of renown, and our fathers in their generation."*

*The Lord hath wrought great glory through his magnificence from the beginning.*

*Such as have borne rule in their dominions, men of great power, and endowed with their wisdom, shewing forth in the prophets the dignity of prophets,*

*And ruling over the present people, and by the strength of wisdom instructing the people in most holy words.*

*Such as by their skill sought out musical tunes, and published canticles of the scriptures.*

*Rich men in virtue, studying beautifulness: living at peace in their houses.*

*All these have gained glory in their generations, and were praised in their days.*

*They that were born of them have left a name behind them, that their praises might be related:*

*And there are some, of whom there is no memorial: who are perished, as if they had never been: and are become as if they had never been born, and their children with them.*

*But these were men of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed:*

*Good things continue with their seed,*

*Their posterity are a holy inheritance, and their seed hath stood in the covenants.*

*And their children for their sakes remain for ever: their seed and their glory shall not be forsaken.*

*Their bodies are buried in peace, and their name liveth unto generation and generation.*

*Let the people shew forth their wisdom, and the church declare their praise."*

*Wisdom of Sirach 44:1-15*<sup>iii</sup>

May the Lord prepare the next chapter of Orthodoxy amidst an ever changing world on the fruitful labors of our beloved father, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III—St. Mark the Evangelist of our time.

Glory be to the Holy Trinity, Forever, Amen.

<sup>i</sup> John Cassian. Conferences. Conference Fourteen on Spiritual Knowledge. Paulist Press, NY; Mahwah, NJ. 1985. P. 162

<sup>ii</sup> Epistle to the Corinthians. Ancient Christian Writers: Epistle to the Corinthians p21. The Epistles of St. Clement of Rome and St. Ignatius of Antioch. Paulist Press. Mahwah, NJ 1946.

<sup>iii</sup> Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition

**Exposition Read at the Funerals of Patriarchs**



*During the funeral service for His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the following exposition was read.*

I am your father, and your teacher. All of you my children, listen to my commandments.

Because I ask you my beloved children; preserve and look after the faith of the Holy Trinity.

I ask you my beloved children: love one another with a true love.

I ask you my beloved children: do good with all humanity.

I ask you my beloved children: do not let the world deceive you.

I ask you my beloved children: do not fall short in the service of the Lord.

I pray for you my beloved children, that you exert yourselves in prayer.

I pray for you my beloved children, preserve your tongues from causing any division.

I pray for you my beloved children, that you preserve the Holy Baptism that was granted to you.

I pray for you my beloved children, preserve your body pure for the Lord.

I pray for you my beloved children, do not ever let your lamp go out.

I pray for you my beloved children, preserve the commandments that God gave to you.

I pray for you my beloved children, that the fear of God be within you.

God is witness, my beloved children, that I did not keep away from you any of God's words...that I never ever rested my children, while one of you held something against me.

If you preserve and keep what I have said to you, you will crush the head of the serpent.

If you preserve and keep what I have said to you, you will eat of the goodness of the earth.

If you preserve and keep what I have said to you, the shining Cherubim will guard you.

If you preserve and keep what I have said to you, you will never lack of the Heavenly gifts.

I ask of you my beloved children, to ask of Christ for my soul, that it may have comfort before Him, and not count my shortcomings, unknowingly and unwillingly.

**To the clergy, bishops and priests:**

I ask for your love and I plead to your reverence, to absolve me each and everyone of you. And now, I am far from you and left you, and I cannot see your faces. And now I ask of you all, that you exhaust yourselves in prayers for me, and remember me in the Holy Liturgies, that my Master may accept me to Him, and forgive me.

And I ask Christ, the Great Chief Shepherd, that he may elect for you a righteous shepherd according to His Will and heart, that he may shepherd you and your matters and watch over the salvation of your souls.



# Condolences From Around The World



**Patriarch Bartholomew**

At the Ecumenical  
Patriarchate,  
March 19, 2012  
Archbishop of  
Constantinople-  
New Rome  
And Ecumenical  
Patriarch

To the faithful people of the Coptic Church in Egypt and throughout the world, our beloved in the Lord: grace and peace from on high.

The world's heart stopped briefly in mourning as we all learned the sad news that His Holiness Pope Shenouda III fell asleep in the Lord. Yet, we do not mourn without consolation or hope (1 Thess. 4.13). For, Pope Shenouda left behind a legacy for all people and all ages.

He was a genuine pope inasmuch as he was spiritual father and loving pastor to so many in difficult circumstances over the 40 years that he led the Coptic Church, developing his local congregation into a united communion while at the same time expanding his church in the Western world, especially North America and Australia. He was an educated leader and theological mentor, informing his flock while at the same time seeking reconciliation with sister Orthodox Churches.

He was a wise defender of religious rights for minorities and a staunch critic of fundamentalist factions, being honored and respected widely – by Christians and Muslims alike – for his discernment and compassion. We had communicated with him personally on two occasions during the last year

in order to express our solidarity and condolences for the tragedies that befell our pious Coptic brothers and sisters.

And he was a lover of a monasticism, which so definitively shaped the early and entire Christian Church, choosing to be buried now in his beloved Scetis of the Natrun Valley, where so many Desert Fathers lived and died before him: St. Macarius of Egypt, St. Arsenius the Great and St. Poemen the Shepherd.

We solemnly stand in prayer and in sympathy beside all of the beloved faithful flock of your Church and the entire world as we entrust to the Lord's tender embrace the soul of the late Pope Shenouda III. And we wholeheartedly entreat the Lord to keep his faithful flock strengthened in this transitional period of their Church's leadership.

As we send our sincerest condolences through our Patriarchal representative, we pray with the words of the Orthodox funeral service: "Blessed in the way that he walks today; for a place of rest and comfort has been prepared for him."

Your fervent supplicant before God ...



**Pope Benedict of Rome**  
March 18, 2012

VATICAN CITY: Pope Benedict XVI offered prayers Saturday for Egypt's Coptic Pope Shenouda III who died on Saturday at the age of 88, a Vatican spokesman said.

The Catholic pope expressed the desire that "the Lord welcomes this great pastor," Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi said in a statement.

On learning of the sad departure to God, our common Father, of His Holiness Shenouda III, Patriarch of Alexandria on the See of Saint Mark the Evangelist, I wish to express to the members of the Holy Synod, to the priests and all the faithful of all the Patriarchate, my most sincere brotherly compassion. I recall with gratitude his commitment to Christian Unity, his memorable visit to my predecessor Pope Paul VI, and their signing of the Joint Declaration of Faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God together in Rome, on May 10, 1973, as well as his Cairo meeting with Pope John Paul II during the Great Jubilee of the Incarnation, on February 24, 2000. I can say how the Catholic Church as a whole shares the grief that afflicts the Orthodox Copts, and how she stands in fervent prayer asking that He, who is the Resurrection and the Life, might welcome his faithful servant. May the God of all mercy receive Pope Shenouda in His joy, His peace and light.



**External Affairs  
Minister of India**

**To Egypt's Foreign  
Minister**

"Excellency,

I am deeply saddened to learn about the demise of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria and Head of the Coptic Orthodox church. Pope Shenouda III was both a great Egyptian patriot and believer in the virtues of religious tolerance and reconciliation. We in India share the sense of loss at the passing away of this great figure. On behalf of the Government and people of India, I offer my sincere condolences to the Egyptian people and members of the Coptic Orthodox faith.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration."

New Delhi  
March 19, 2012



**President Obama**

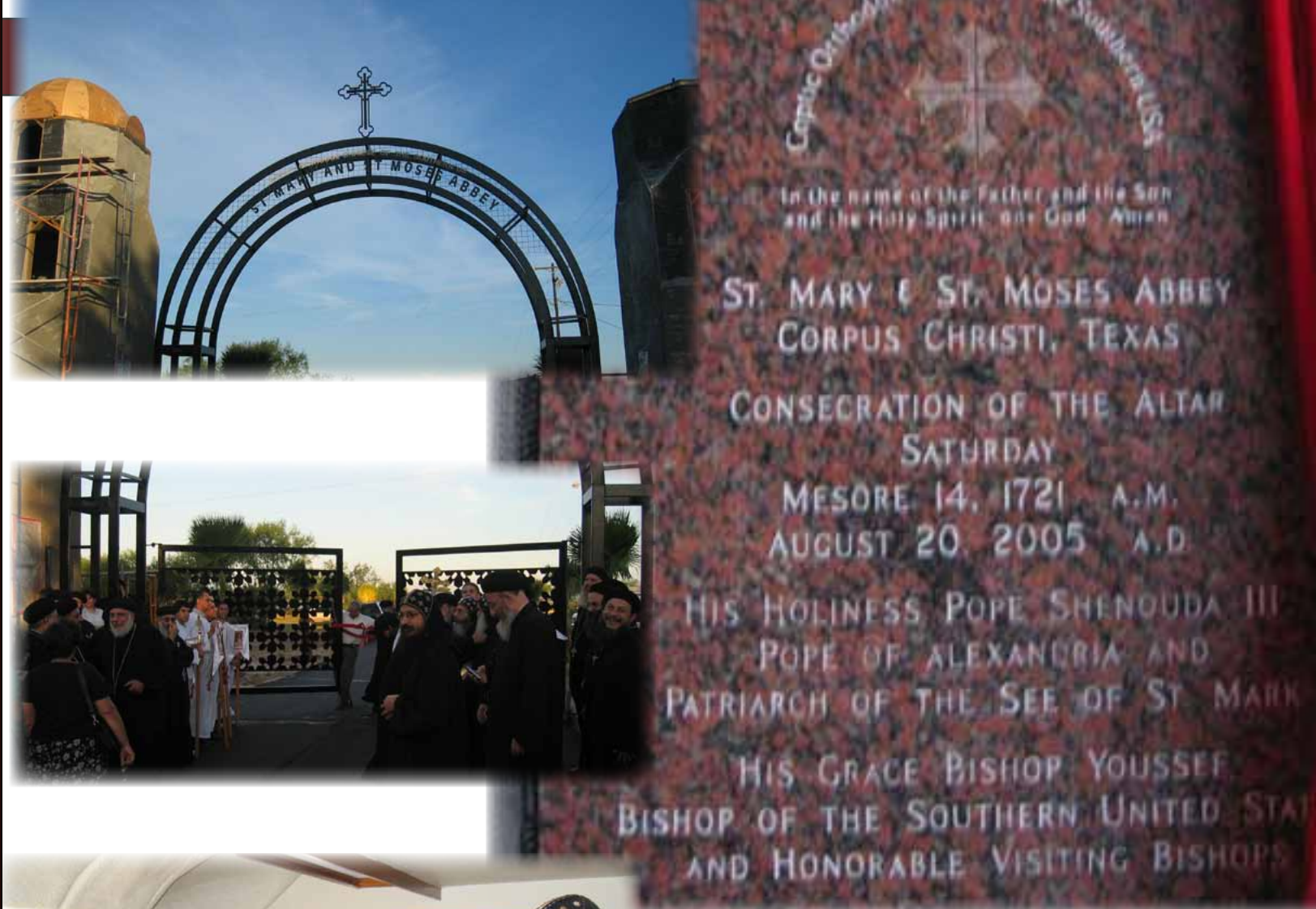
Michelle and I are saddened to learn of the passing of Coptic Christian Pope Shenouda III, a beloved leader of Egypt's Coptic Christians and an advocate for tolerance and religious dialogue. We stand alongside Coptic Christians and Egyptians as they honor his contributions in support of peace and cooperation.

We will remember Pope Shenouda III as a man of deep faith, a leader of a great faith, and an advocate for unity and reconciliation. His commitment to Egypt's national unity is also a testament to what can be accomplished when people of all religions and creeds work together. On behalf of the American people, we extend our thoughts and prayers to Coptic Christians, Egyptians, and all those who mourn Pope Shenouda III today.



**Hillary Clinton  
Secretary of State**  
March 17, 2012

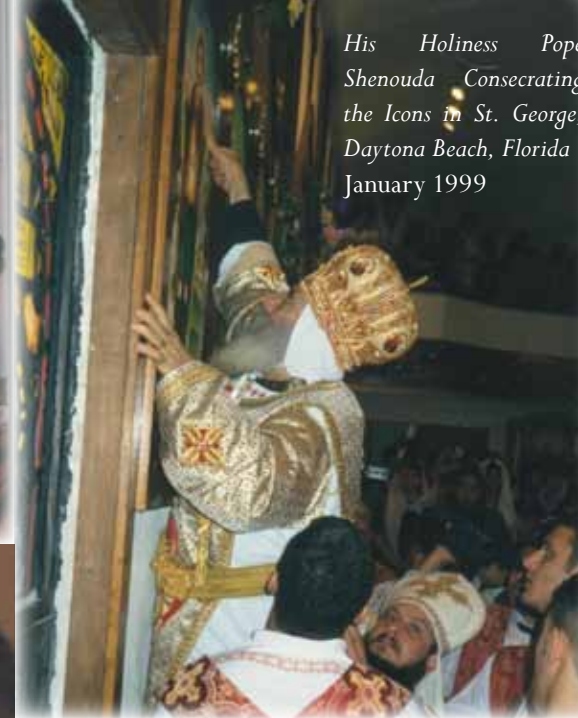
Today, Americans stand alongside Egyptians in offering our deepest condolences on the passing of Coptic Christian Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria, leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church for more than 40 years. Pope Shenouda III was a beloved leader of Egypt's Coptic Christians and an advocate for national unity and religious cooperation. As we reflect on his life and legacy, we reaffirm our support to the future peace and prosperity of Egypt. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Egyptian people and all those who mourn Pope Shenouda III.







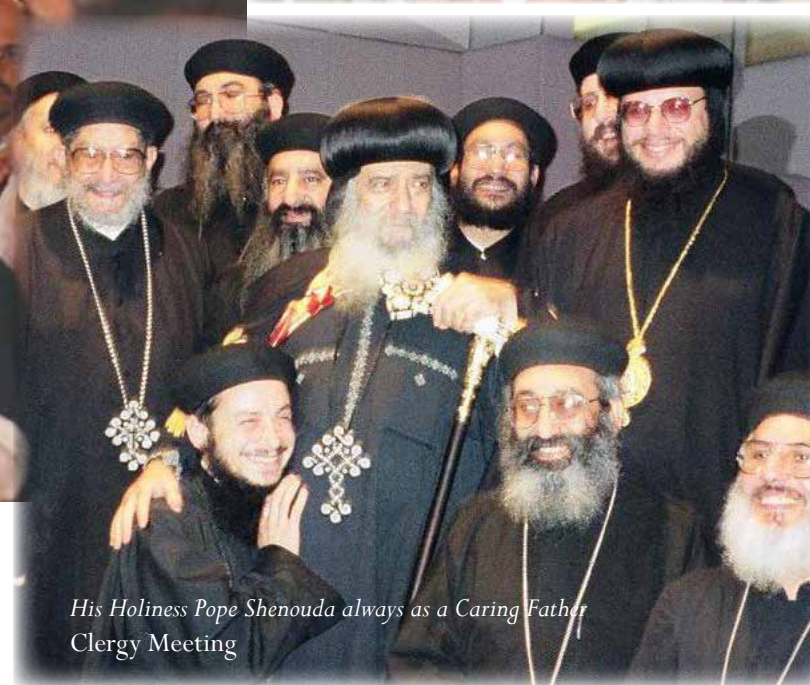
His Holiness Pope Shenouda III's Visit to St. George, Daytona Beach, Florida - January 1999



His Holiness Pope Shenouda III Consecrating the Icons in St. George, Daytona Beach, Florida January 1999



Fr. Isaac Bassily's Ordination in St. Mark's Cathedral by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III June 1990



His Holiness Pope Shenouda always as a Caring Father Clergy Meeting

**Priest:** Fr. Isaac Bassily  
**Church:** St. George, Daytona Beach, FL  
**Date:** August 1999

#### COMMENT:

"It's a challenge for me to write about H.H. Pope Shenouda III, for he is an extraordinarily well rounded character. Being close to His Holiness since 1989, I found a loving and caring father, teacher and role model. I also felt the flaming power of the Holy Spirit through him. In our humble city, Daytona Beach, Florida, we were blessed by his three visits to St. George Church. To me, H.H. Pope Shenouda III is like a pure diamond, you see the beauty no matter which side you look at it. We will never forget you Pope Shenouda."



His Holiness Pope Shenouda with Fr. Isaac Bassily's Family in St. Pishoy Monastery - 1998



**Priest(s):** Fr. Angelos Boghdadi & Fr. Moussa Saleh  
**Church:** St. George, Tampa, FL  
**Date:** August 1999  
**Occasion:** The official opening of St. George, Tampa~Busch Blvd. (at its new location)

#### COMMENT:

"It was a great joy for us to see H.H. Pope Shenouda III. It was a great blessing for us in Tampa to see our pope opening our church after relocating to Tampa from Plant City. During this visit, His Holiness also visited St. Mary and St. Mina Church in Clearwater, FL, which was still under construction.

His Holiness was in great spirits at that time. I remember one of the reporters asked him a question: "How important is the role women play in the Church?" With his usual great humor, he responded, "Women do not play in the Church."

His Holiness will remain in our hearts for the rest of our lives. I am sure he is praying for us now in heaven."

By Fr. Moussa Saleh  
St. George Coptic Orthodox Church  
Tampa, FL





**Priest:** Fr. Ghobrial Samaan  
**Church:** St. Abanoub Church, Eules, TX  
**Date:** February 2008  
**Occasion:** Consecration of the church

**COMMENT:**

"I feel our generation is lucky to have lived during the time of such a blessed leader of the church. I, myself, was very blessed to have his holiness consecrating our church in Eules, TX. It was such a blessing and I learned a lot about the humbleness and the love of this great man of God. My condolences to the whole church of God with all faith that Pope Shenouda's true spirit of service will only be felt more and more by millions around the whole world. may his intercessive prayers be with the whole church during these tough times."



**Priest:** Fr. Timotheus Soliman  
**Church:** St. John the Baptist Coptic Orthodox Church, Miramar, FL  
**Date:** February 1, 2007  
**Occasion:** Official opening of church site



**Priest:** Fr. Mikhail Aziz Abdou  
**Church:** St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Delray Beach, FL

**COMMENT:**

"As we all know, HH Pope Shenouda is a loving father, who cared about his children both in Egypt and in the land of immigration. God gave him great wisdom and intelligence. I was very blessed to be one of his disciples and I learned a lot from his teachings and love. We will greatly miss him, but we know that he will be praying for us before the throne of God."

(pictured above)  
 H.H. visiting south  
 Florida; VIP Hall at Ft.  
 Lauderdale Airport  
 February 2007

Consecration of St. Mary  
 and St. Moses Abbey  
 Corpus Christi, TX  
 August 2005

**Priest:** Fr. Tadros Hirmina  
**Church:** St. Peter Seal of Martyrs, West Palm Beach, FL  
**Date:** August 2010  
**Occasion:** Priests' convention in Boston MA



**COMMENT:**

"His holiness pope Shenouda is a man of the utmost integrity and his tireless work for over forty years has served millions of Copts all over the world... We ask the lord to repose his soul in the paradise of joy and to grant us a faithful shepherd to lead us with purity and righteousness.. We will never forget him who illuminated our minds and hearts."

More photos from this event can be seen in the article on the next two pages...





*“Spiritual life is not one virtue,  
but an overall life of virtue.”*

*“The spiritual person is not concerned  
for one virtue and ignores the others,  
otherwise there will be a lack in his  
personality.”*



# The Holistic Personality

Abridgment from a sermon given by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III on 4/3/81 which in truth highlights some of the many virtues of our very own beloved holistic Pope.

*By His Holiness Pope Shenouda III*

Most people isolate one virtue and ignore the others. Spiritual life is not one virtue, but an overall life of virtue. In this overall holism there are no contradictory characteristics.

Consider simplicity and wisdom. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, “*Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves*”;<sup>1</sup> be as simple as you want, but also be very wise. Have a simple soul, but have a wise mind. Have a simple personality, without any complications, and a deep mind, full of wisdom. One must keep equilibrium between the simplicity of the soul and the intelligence of the mind. Our Lord did not mean for you to have a simple mind when He said to become as little children, He meant purity of heart,<sup>2</sup> a simple pure heart with an exceptionally intelligent knowledgeable mind. This is the holistic personality. St. Antony, when asked, “Which is

the primary virtue,” answered, “Discernment,” because if you take any other virtue without discernment, you might falter on the way and harm yourself, and possibly others.

Take for example the virtues of gentleness and strength. If one is gentle-hearted, does that mean this person has no strength of personality? And does gentleness mean weakness? Christ did not say this. Christ was **extremely gentle and meek**, often forgave those who wronged Him, with all gentleness took St. John into His bosom, and did not repay evil with evil, yet, He had a very strong personality. He allowed Satan the three temptations with all gentleness, but when he went overboard, He rebuked and exposed him. Gentleness does not prevent strength and strength does not prevent gentleness. **The holistic person is gentle and strong.** Abraham the patriarch

was gentle and strong... God did not call people to have weak personalities, but to be strong. Christianity is **inner personal strength**, and not external strength. A strong Christian conquers himself first, before conquering others. **A Christian is strong in love, in understanding, in personality, in mind, in resoluteness, in actions**, not in aggression towards others. Aggression is not strength, it is weakness; the aggressive person cannot control himself or his temper; he is too weak to face love and purity. Christ was gentle-hearted and was strong in personality... Christ was strong in His logic, in His conviction, in His debate, in His influence on others (thousands flocked to Him)... He was strong in His love, such that He sacrificed Himself on the cross... The cross is a sign of Christ’s strength, **the strength of His love, which captures**

**others and sacrifices for the sake of others.** The one who crucifies another is weak, but the one who is crucified for another is strong. Even on the cross, He was strong in His forgiveness... **strength is internal strength, spiritual strength, heart strength, strength of a person who overcomes sin and overcomes Satan**, not one who overcomes another human. One who overcomes himself internally is not overcome by anything externally, he is **liberated internally**. Christianity calls for this internal victory, being **free from hatred, free from anger, free from betrayal, free from treachery, free from evil, free from aggression, loving everyone, free from fear**; this is the strong person. The person who is internally free is **pure as the sun, innocent as the angels, powerful as an army with banners.**<sup>3</sup>

We also find holism between lowliness and courage. Take for example, Moses the Prophet, he was very meek and yet when he knew that the congregation worshipped the golden calf, he acted with might... Consider David the prophet... The holistic life is one where the virtues harmonize; **Christ was among the rare holistic personalities.** There was no one like Him in His holism; every beautiful virtue is found in Him. The spiritual person is not concerned for one virtue and ignores the others, otherwise there will be a lack in his personality, the neglected part... Take Jeremiah the prophet, he was **lowly in his tears and was courageous in witnessing to the truth, and in his courage he did not sin.** People’s mistake is that they assume that courage is rashness and impetuosity. No! Courage is internal strength that witnesses to the truth without fear. No one said that John the Baptist was rash or impetuous, but he witnessed to the truth...

Virtues overlap in the holistic person. One’s love is **full of wisdom, discipline, and power**; the meekness is **full of courage** and the

courage is **full of meekness**; the gentleness is powerful, and the power is gentle. This is the holistic person. One who believes that spirituality caused problems does not yet understand spirituality. Nothing troubles a person but ignorance of the ways of God, of what needs to be done. All the virtues come together... Many people speak about love, but do not know love. True love is **pure love, wise love, firm love, a practical love.**

Consider **holism between the life of meditation and the life of service.** Some spent their lives in isolation for prayer and meditation. Others spent their lives for the sake of service and laboring to build the Kingdom. There is another holistic type that blended isolation and prayer with service and labor for the sake of others. How? These do not contradict. Christ had the life of isolation and meditation; during His incarnation, He spent thirty years in isolation of which we heard nothing, except a simple visit to the temple, and even during the period of His service He spent entire nights in prayer. We also have His meditations on the Mount of Olives, and in Gethsemane. Simultaneously,

the service is there, He circuits the country preaching the message of the kingdom and healing all sicknesses and disease in the people. The two go hand in hand. Likewise, John the Baptist... St. Paul... Elijah...

The issue is an issue of a holistic personality that contains all the virtues. If you ask about the great monastic fathers, I will answer you that St. Antony the great lived thirty years in solitude not seeing a human face; as for service, he established the monastic canon and trained all the monastic fathers and taught an entire generation, people coming to him from the ends of the earth, even philosophers, to teach them the life of asceticism and renunciation. He wrote twenty letters, and was a great teacher. This is why the church titles him St. Antony the Great, and elevates him over St. Paul the anchorite, although St. Paul was at a higher level of asceticism and spirituality. In St. Antony were gathered the two virtues: meditation and service. The holistic personality gathers virtues that might seem to some as contradictory, but they harmonize in this

holistic personality despite the apparent contradiction. There is no contradiction between meekness and courage, between love and firmness, between gentleness and strength, between meditation and service. All harmonize.

Let us pray that the Lord may give us this holism. His is the glory forever. Amen.

Translated by Monastic Servant

<sup>1</sup> Mt 10:16

<sup>2</sup> Mt 18:3

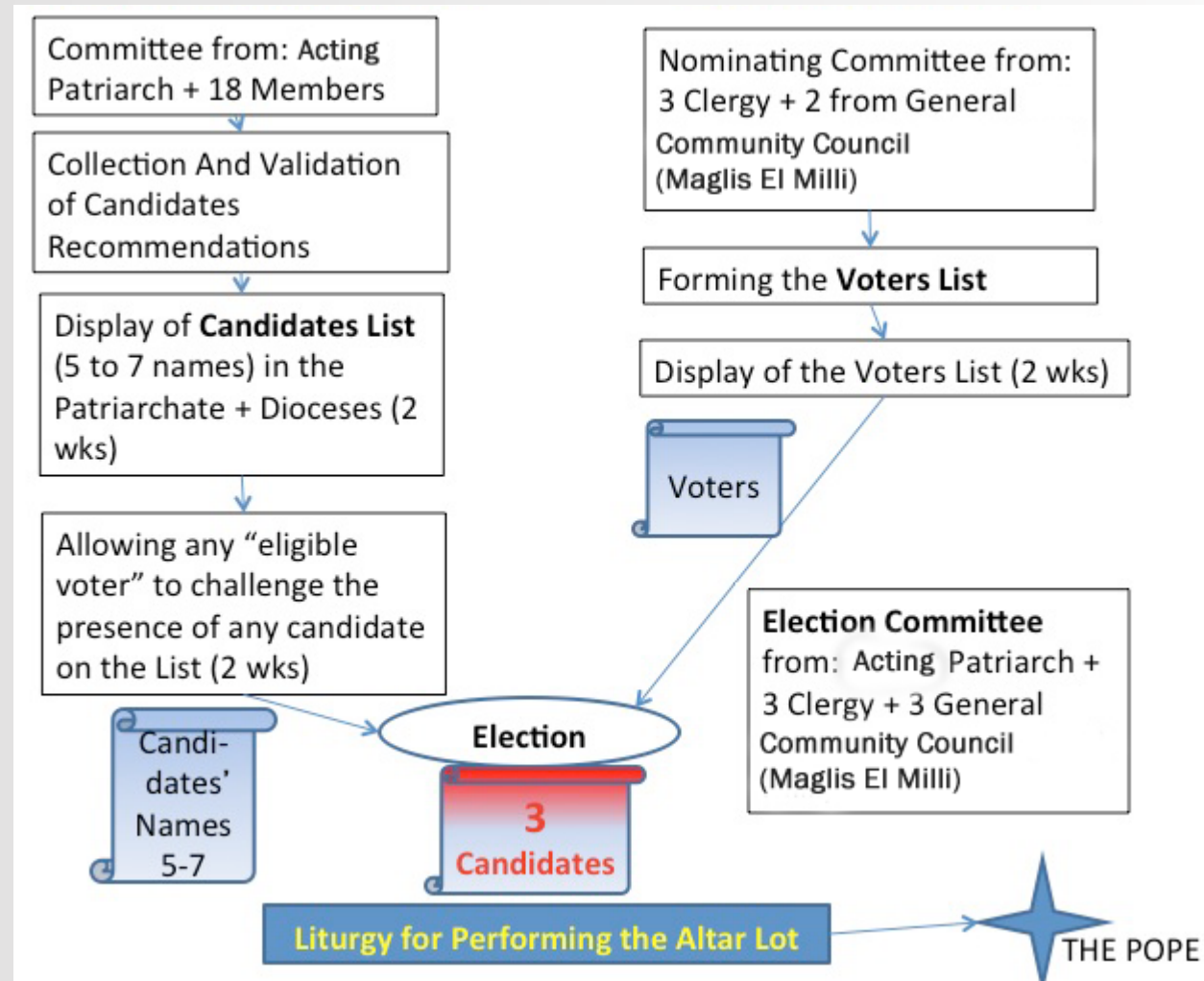
<sup>3</sup> Sol 6:4





*New Spring 2012 Edition*  
**GENERAL QUESTION**  
*And its Answer*

**Q:** What is the process for the Coptic Orthodox Church to select a new Pope?



**Winter Edition Bible Question:**  
 What did Judah's men do as they returned from plundering the camp?

**Answer:** 1 Maccabees 4:24: "After this they went home, and sung a song of thanksgiving, and praised the Lord in heaven: because it is good, because His mercy endures forever."

*New Spring 2012 Edition*  
**BIBLE QUESTION**

FROM THE HOLY BOOK OF  
 2 MACCABEES

**Q:** Prayer for the departed is biblical. Give proof.

**A:** 2 Maccabees. 12:39-42: <sup>39</sup> On the next day, as by that time it had become necessary, Judas and his men went to take up the bodies of the fallen and to bring them back to lie with their kinsmen in the sepulchres of their fathers. <sup>40</sup> Then under the tunic of every one of the dead they found sacred tokens of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. And it became clear to all that this was why these men had fallen. <sup>41</sup> So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous Judge, who reveals the things that are hidden; <sup>42</sup> and they turned to prayer, beseeching that the sin which had been committed might be wholly blotted out. And the noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen.

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

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\* Image provided from the official opening of the church site of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in Miramar, FL