

# MIGHTY MAGAZINE MARROWS

Life. God. Truth. For Coptic Youth

Ⲑⲣ

*Virtuous*  
MOTHERS



“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.*

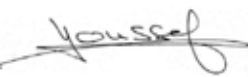
## My Beloved,

The Lord taught us in the holy commandments to honor our fathers and mothers. There is a contingent reward attached to this commandment: “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (Ex 20:12). In this Spring Edition of the Mighty Arrows Magazine, we honor many women who are virtuous mothers. Some are well-known and some are contemporary. Many generations have benefitted from their kindnesses and wisdom. Despite their toils and pains, these virtuous mothers are role models and mentors for women today.

I invite each young man and woman to reflect on the impact these women of virtue have had on the world. Where would the world be without their guidance and support? Virtuous women have raised generations of patriarchs, presidents, and saints. They have guided and supported extraordinary leaders throughout history. Each writer presents a unique perspective in honor of a particular virtuous mother, or many.

This edition is dedicated in honor of our virtuous mothers. We owe them a great deal of gratitude. We pray with grateful hearts through the intercession of our Lady, the most honored and blessed Theotokos, the Mother of Light, St. Mary, and the prayers of all virtuous mothers who have pleased the Lord from the beginning, and those who continue to labor and strive to please the Lord.

Glory be to God, forever, Amen.

God bless you,  


Bishop Youssef  
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By Joseph Ghebrial

## Luke 10:38-42: Whom Did You Really Invite?

God used the story of two well-known biblical women to demonstrate to us the type of relationship He wants with each of us. These are two very virtuous, but different, women who loved and cherished Christ immensely. You might remember that in one story, Jesus was visiting the home of the two sisters, Martha and Mary, when Martha came to Him to complain about her sister Mary. Mary sat at the Lord's feet to listen to what He said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made to feed Christ and His disciples. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" (Cf. v. 40).

When I read this passage, I get the image of a house bustling with people engaged in numerous conversations around the house with Martha frantically running about trying to figure out how everyone will be fed and coordinating the symphony of cooking for all the guests. Somewhere in a secluded corner, Jesus is calmly teaching a handful of people who are intently listening to His every word, and there is Mary sitting at His feet, very content and settled. Martha nervously rushes over to interrupt the intimate gathering. Everyone casually looks up at her as the Lord easily sets the record straight. Feeling compassion for Martha, He reassuringly says, "Martha, Martha ... you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Cf. v. 41-42). After all, if Jesus could feed the 4,000 (Mt 15:32-39) and the 5,000 (Mt 14:14-21), then certainly He could handle supper for a house full of guests. Sometimes we just forget how big our God is and we run around unwilling to let go of the remote controls, trying to make everything just right, when all we need to do is to just trust in

the Lord with all our hearts and minds. According to St. Luke, Martha was the head of the household; she welcomed Jesus into her home. We often regard Martha today as a "homemaker" type of woman, concerned with household details. Some also view her as hospitable, a highly esteemed quality for people in Jesus' day. Mary, on the other hand, is often seen as a more scholarly or spiritual woman, with a deep personality. That she sat at Jesus' feet means that she was His student or disciple. Another point to highlight is that, like most sisters, these two women had conflicts that came about because of their different personalities and roles, and also simply because of the fact that they were siblings. Martha was very consumed by something seemingly important to her, like providing a meal for Jesus and His disciples. But how important was this compared with other priorities? Martha's words and

actions depict her as practical and efficient, which isn't wrong unless it interferes with the more important things in life. If it does, it can become a problem. **Are you a Martha or are you a Mary in your life with God?** **Martha:** worried and preoccupied, protesting and anxious, yet responsible and mature. **Mary:** quiet, faithful, peaceful, introverted, prayerful, and at Jesus' feet. Any virtuous mother is one that conducts herself and her family in Christ-like fashion, does the work of God, and raises her home with the fear and grace of the Lord. Her home is the Church and her children are her offerings. That said, every Coptic woman, mother or not, is a virtuous lady of Christ. Her focus, her priority, and her entire being is that of Christ and, like ducklings, her household follow suit. She leads by example, she becomes the standard, and she is righteous! Her tool map is the Bible and her guide is Christ.

# Pillars of our Time: Ordinary People Serving in Extraordinary Ways MAKING AN IMPACT

## Beauty and the Beast The true story of the "Mother of the Poor." An Article by Myriam Fahim



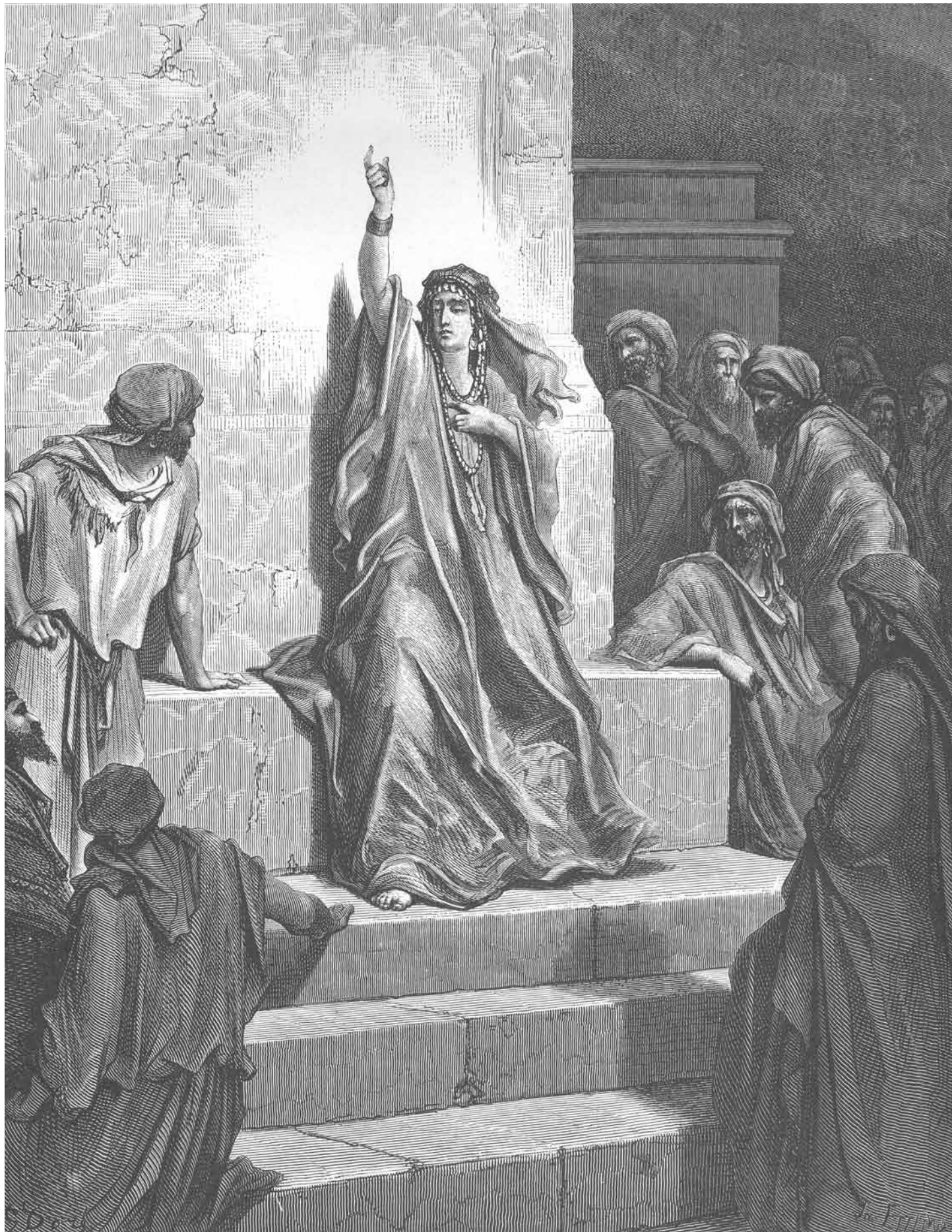
You may find the title of this article intriguing. I use it to introduce a beautiful-hearted lady that loved an awful man beyond reason. She is referred to as the "Mother of the Poor," or in Egyptian circles, "Om El Ghalaba." This woman lived in an abusive relationship, and didn't leave in spite of her husband's violence. She instead implored God, in prayer, to forgive this man and save his soul. Ultimately, her husband left her for another woman. Many years later, he became sick and the other woman threw him out. He returned in shame to his wife, the Mother of the Poor. She accepted him gladly and nursed him back to health. Despite it all, the man was still a bad husband and father. It was only at the end of his life that the man repented of what he did.<sup>1</sup> STOP. If you think the lesson I am trying to communicate is that a battered woman should stay and endure the pain her husband inflicts on her in the hope that he will change someday, you are mistaken. I very strongly believe a woman who is victim of physical abuse should remove herself and her children to a safe place immediately. Not only is a battered woman damaged physically and psychologically, but her children are as well,<sup>2</sup> and they carry that damage with them and pass it on to their children. Remember that there are

both State and Diocese resources to help victims of domestic violence. So what is one of the lessons that can be learned from her story? I believe that the Mother of the Poor embodies very well our Lord's teachings: *"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven"* (Mt 5:44). *"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven'"* (Mt 18: 21-22). The Mother of the Poor had a loving and forgiving heart, which inspired her whole village in Egypt. What about us? Can we love someone who wants our ill, who treats us unfairly, who is out to get us? Can we forgive someone who did something terrible to us? More than that, can we serve that person sincerely with a loving heart? Sometimes, the only Gospel that strangers, our bosses, colleagues, classmates, friends, or family members will ever read is the Gospel of our

actions. I hope that Gospel may be the one of love, just like the Mother of the Poor. I don't want to end this article here for fear of not doing justice to the Mother of the Poor. I want to tell you something more about her. She was a preacher everywhere she went. She brought the Good News to those around her. She went out of her way to locate the poor and help them, even though her own poverty was blatant. She did their wash, cooked for them, and comforted them when they were sick. Any money that she had was passed on in some way or another to others. The strength of women has always been our hearts. This woman's heart was so big that it encompassed not only her evil husband, but all of the miserable people of this world. With her heart and limited means, she found a way to change her surroundings for the better by giving love and hope to others. And that, dear friends, is the true power of a good woman!

Sources:  
<sup>1</sup> This recounting of the story is based on the movie "Om El Ghalaba."  
<sup>2</sup> STILES, Melissa, Witnessing Domestic Violence: The Effect on Children, AFP Journal, vol. 66, no. 11, December 1, 2002.





# Portrait of a Wise Woman - II

By Mariam Maher

In the previous edition of *Mighty Arrows*, we looked at three examples of unwise women: Potiphar's wife, Jezebel, and Lot's daughters. Now, in contrast, we shall look at examples of virtuous women, collectively described in Proverbs 31:10-31. This passage refers to so many virtues; it would be amazing to find them in one person.

H.H. Pope Shenouda III taught about "bearing virtues." Acquiring one virtue automatically leads one on the path to other virtues. St. Peter tells us that a person of strong faith will also bear integrity and virtues (2 Pt 1:5-7). This person fears and holds onto the Lord, is watchful for salvation, remains undisturbed in the midst of tribulations, and strives to look like The Master. Deborah the prophetess and Rahab are two prime examples of virtuous biblical women.

Deborah the prophetess: "She opens her mouth with wisdom" (Pro 31:26). After Joshua and the elders who outlived Joshua died, the children of Israel left the worship of the true God, and instead worshiped the idols of the neighboring nations. The Lord chastised them by allowing the defeat of the Israelites so they would return from their wicked ways. They cried, and He listened. He raised up judges who led

them in the ways of fearing and worshipping the Lord. The first judge was Othniel, followed by Ehud, Shamgar and, the first female judge, Deborah.

The fact that Deborah was a judge of Israel speaks greatly about her character and vast wisdom. She used to dwell under a palm tree, named after her, and judge the people who came to her for judgment (Judg 4:5). Deborah had all the qualities necessary to be an advisor, counselor, advocate, attorney general, and a discernor of the truth. She was comparable to the Chief Justice, or a wise decision-maker, like a President. She was also the Commander-in-Chief with Barak as the commander of the army!

Deborah had much more than those gifts, for God Himself was with her (Judg 2:18). She was also a prophetess. When she told Barak that God had commanded him to face Sisera, the enemy, Barak had little confidence and refused unless Deborah accompanied his army. Because of his lack of faith, she foretold that the honor would not be for him but to a woman, and it was so. In her song of victory in Judges 5, she praised the honored woman who killed the enemy, Jael the wife of Heber (Judg 5:24). Deborah also humbly called herself in the song, "a

mother in Israel" (Judg 5:7). In Proverbs 31 words "[Deborah girded] herself with strength and strengthened her arms... strength and honor [were] her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come" (Pro 17, 25).

As Christians, we must always remember that the world will pass away, and all that is in the world. We must remember to be above this world. "Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised" (Pro 31:30). Jericho's Rahab the harlot's story of fearing the Lord is worthy of praise. Joshua had sent two spies to survey the city and its surroundings. When they arrived in Jericho, they stayed in Rahab's house. When Jericho's king sent pursuers to fetch the spies, Rahab hid them, and diverted the pursuers' course. She told the spies three basic truths, and made a request of them. The three basic truths revealed the virtues of this woman. "I know that the Lord has given you the land," she said (Josh 2:9). That is knowledge that led to salvation. "[I know] that the terror of you has fallen on us...for we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you...and as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted" (Josh 2:9-11). That is fear of the Lord and paying attention to the surrounding events.

"...for the Lord your God...is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (Josh 2:11). That is faith which pleases God. "Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord...that you also will show kindness to my father's house" (Josh 2:12). That is wisdom, hope, practical love, and care for her household.

The story of how the Israelites destroyed Jericho can be found in the book of Joshua chapter 6. It is an amazing story of how victory can be attained solely by obeying God's words. The Israelites captured and destroyed the city, leaving nothing except Rahab and her family, all due to her virtues in fearing God. She lived among the Israelites from that day on, becoming a mother in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Mt 1:5)—Jesus Christ who was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary, of whom "glorious things are spoken" (Ps 87:3), is the crown of all virtuous women, but other virtuous women, like Deborah and Rahab, can be found throughout the Bible. However, the Holy Theotokos is the beginning and the end of Proverbs 31: "Who can find a virtuous [woman]? For her worth is far above rubies... many daughters have done well, but you excel them all" (Pro 31:10, 31:29).



# Interview with a Famous Mother

By James Helmy

“Our son became so famous for his biblical lectures, that large crowds would flock to his house to hear him speak. He often had no time for his own studies, except after midnight ... He was only 19!”



**Interviewer:** It is not often that we get to speak with the mother of a famous scholar and theologian of the ancient Church of Alexandria; such mothers are rare indeed, and even rarer when available for a short interview!

**Mother:** The privilege is all mine.

**Interviewer:** I find it strange, to begin with, that the name of such a historical person as yourself is not even known.

**Mother:** I prefer it that way. My name is not important. Christ's name is the only one deserving of praise.

**Interviewer:** Fair enough. “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world” is a famous English adage we like to repeat. What do you make of it?

**Mother:** I suppose it is true. Every great general, inventor, or saint was originally shaped by their mother's care during their earliest years. Children generally carry the imprint of their parents' personalities.

**Interviewer:** Particularly the mother's.

**Mother:** Well, yes...who cannot see that the tender touch, kindness, and humility of the Mother of God was imprinted on her Son's character? I think it is an honor to her far greater than the total sum of all the honors

that could ever be heaped upon her by the Church's praises.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your husband.

**Mother:** Oh, a marvelous man! His name was Leonides, and he was the best example and teacher that our seven children could ever have had—that is, while he was alive.

**Interviewer:** He died early?

**Mother:** He was the victim—or hero, in my eyes—of a violent persecution that was unleashed by that brutal man, the emperor Severus. May God have mercy on him!

**Interviewer:** How terrible! It must have broken your heart to have your husband innocently murdered.

**Mother:** Yes. It is both a pride and grief to be the widow of a martyr. But what doubled my grief was that my eldest child tried to go out and join his father in martyrdom! Can you believe it! Me, a sad widow, left with my six younger children to go poor!

**Interviewer:** What stopped him?

**Mother:** I did! I begged him in tears to stay, but he was adamant in his goal. So I had to hide all his clothes so he wouldn't leave the house! He was such a zealous and

unpredictable young man—my beloved Origen!

**Interviewer:** So that is the name of your eldest? What was your relationship to him?

**Mother:** We loved our little Origen. We put him into the very best schools, 'til he became a student in the School of Alexandria. He was later the dean, you know. But while he was still a child, I used to spend long hours with him, reading and memorizing Scripture, and teaching him Hebrew.

**Interviewer:** You know Hebrew?

**Mother:** Yes, from my partially Jewish background.

**Interviewer:** You said you had seven children left to you. How did you take care of them alone?

**Mother:** There was a good, wealthy woman at the time who temporarily supported us. But once Origen began his lectures and receiving support from his students, he took on the family's financial burdens.

**Interviewer:** It must have been difficult to be left alone with seven children.

**Mother:** Extremely! You have no idea how many supplications a widow lifts to God for her children, how many anxieties she feels for them, how many sleepless nights she endures when they are sick, and how hard she must work in general to find food for them, day by day!

**Interviewer:** God has really looked after you.

**Mother:** He has. I know He has, because we would never have survived if it were not for the multiple miracles in our lives that fulfilled the needs that were so urgently pressing on us!

**Interviewer:** I want to hear a little more about your eldest, Origen.

**Mother:** He was the quickest learner I have ever seen! He would surprise, and sometimes shock us with his unusually perceptive questions about the Bible. His father and I were fond of approaching the little boy as he slept at night and kissing his chest, where we so clearly felt the presence of the Holy Spirit.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about his lectures.

**Mother:** Well, somehow, when he had grown older, our son became so famous for his biblical lectures, that large crowds would flock to his house to hear him speak. He often had no time for his own studies, except after midnight. It was at this point that Pope Demetrius appointed him as Dean of the College—he was only 19!

**Interviewer:** Is it true that some of Origen's own pupils were killed in a later persecution?

**Mother:** Yes, that same brute, Severus, launched a persecution against converted Christians. Origen had converted many pagans who enrolled in the School through his lectures, and Severus' violent policies turned it into a veritable School of Martyrs.

**Interviewer:** And Origen had to watch them die?

**Mother:** Oh my, yes! He visited them in prison, walked with them to the tribunal of their persecutors, and followed them to the very spot of martyrdom. And under the very eyes of the executioners, he gave his martyr friends the kiss of peace.

**Interviewer:** Why wasn't he himself seized?

**Mother:** Because he was born a Christian. Severus invented the ridiculous and insane idea that if you were born Christian, then the empire could tolerate your

existence. But if you were a converted Christian, you deserved instant death.

**Interviewer:** Senseless and shameful.

**Mother:** Indeed, but can you believe that my Origen despised this free exemption from martyrdom! From his youth, he looked for any means to die the martyr's death.

**Interviewer:** But I heard he almost reached his goal.

**Mother:** I would say he did. There came to the imperial throne, hard to believe, a man even more hideous than that Severus, and his name was Decius. I shudder at his name. His impiety decreed a fresh outbreak of persecution against the Christians, and that is when my poor son was seized. At the age of 65, he was thrown into prison, laden with heavy chains, and tortured on the rack by having his limbs almost pulled out of their joints.

**Interviewer:** And he was finally killed?

**Mother:** He was actually released when the cruel emperor fortunately died early; but his broken body lasted only a couple of more years.

**Interviewer:** I have to hear your opinion on two issues that many people have blamed Origen for: his self-castration, and his heterodox theology.

**Mother:** Of course, being his mother, my natural instinct is to defend him on every point, but I will admit that my Origen could at times be a bit impetuous. When he was teaching in Alexandria, many women came to hear his sermons, and even to receive personal advice. But, he wanted to place his purity above all suspicion.

**Interviewer:** And so he became one of those of

who, as the Lord said, “made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.”

**Mother:** I admit it was a rash decision performed in the rush of youthful zeal. But he later admitted that, when the Lord told us to cut off an arm or leg that caused us to stumble, He meant it as a metaphor for a kind of spiritual amputation of sin.

**Interviewer:** And what about his unconventional theological views—like saying that the devil could be saved?

**Mother:** I am not a theologian, and I cannot pretend to enter into the details of theological discussion, but I know that he did not mean it so flatly. Origen loved to speak hypothetically. He once mentioned to me that all such comments were pure speculation, and he never intended to offer strange-sounding ideas to the Church to build new doctrines.

**Interviewer:** But did he really believe the devil would be saved?

**Mother:** Of course not. He was having some odd discussions about the difference between Satan's pure original nature and his later corrupted will and...well, and a whole bunch of jumbled ideas that my poor tired mind can't get a hold of!

**Interviewer:** Well, all misunderstandings or mistakes aside, most modern scholars do agree that Origen was once the first biblical scholar, the first Bible expositor, the first Bible translator, and the first Christian philosopher. These are not small achievements, and we must give credit to the illustrious mother who nurtured such a man in the Scriptures and the Christian virtues since he was a boy.

**Mother:** Pray for my soul.



# VIRTUOUS MOTHERS OF TODAY

## A Continuum in the Art of Unconditional Love

**PICTURE THIS**—a matriarch, a judge, a queen, a convert, a widow, a leader, a Hebrew woman without a title, a prophetess, an old barren wife of a priest, a young virgin, and today's virtuous mothers. These are Sarah, Deborah, Esther, Ruth, Naomi, Judith, Jochebed, Anna, Elizabeth, St. Mary, and you. For some, the role of mother was biologically determined; for others, spiritual motherhood superseded the biological factor in many ways. Generations were indoctrinated by these strong matriarchal

and beheld the infant Christ at His Presentation to the Temple. Elizabeth, who, like her husband was said to be blameless before the Lord, was the last barren woman mentioned in the Holy Bible, giving birth to John the Forerunner, the son of promise. Who can compare with St. Mary, the queen of angels and saints, who is a mother to all of us? Although she was the only one who knew Jesus Christ like no other, she accepted the sword that pierced through her heart, and yet kept all things hidden in her heart until the resurrection of the Lord.

figures who had profound impact on many generations. The lives of these remarkable women and mothers were not easy.

Sarah, was the first barren woman mentioned in the Holy Bible to give birth to a promised son, Isaac. Deborah led a nation to victory. Esther was faced with a life and death situation and prevailed. Ruth chose the true faith in God while under no obligation to do so and was later honored to be the grandmother of the prophet David and a prominent figure in the lineage of our Lord Jesus Christ. Naomi, the broken-hearted widow who also lost her sons, did not think of herself, but of her daughters-in-law and their welfare before her own. Judith was a clever woman who helped her people. Jochebed chose to give up her son Moses so that he can live, even if that meant he would live far away from her. Anna, an elderly prophetess, who was widowed at a young age, spent the rest of her life in prayer and prophecy

Some of the virtuous mothers mentioned had wealth while others did not. What they possessed materially does not compare to their inner beauty, wisdom, resilience, character, determination, courage, and a deep-rooted relationship with God. They all faced challenges, but did not succumb to the pressures. Their perseverance is credited to the most prized relationship above all. It is from this finely-tuned place in the heart that the art of unconditional love is produced and from which it fortifies faithful women raising kings, prophets, patriarchs, and saints. They built their relationships with God on the rock of true faith. For the storms are but hardships that come down and beat upon that house, but cannot shake it, for there is someone stronger than adversities behind those walls. These are the virtuous mothers who have made their homes, "houses of prayer, houses of blessing, houses of purity," as prayed in the Divine Liturgy.

Virtuous mothers take their children by the hand to the

house of God and teach them to love Him, their Creator. She, herself, is a school—a theological school. Hannah, the mother of Samuel the prophet rejoiced to give birth to her beloved son for whom she longed to see from year to year, since she presented him to God and the service of the temple from his early childhood. Her unconditional love for her son far exceeded her joy of being with him day in and day out and watching him grow. St. Timothy, the bishop and disciple of St. Paul the apostle, was schooled in theology by his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois such that even his mentor, St. Paul, recognized their profound influence and upbringing on him. St. Rebecca was more comforted by the martyrdom of her children upon her lap rather than the possibility of them conceding to the threats of heathens and rejecting their Christian faith had she been martyred first. We must remember that sound Christian theology is not merely memorizing dates and doctrines, but moreover, it involves living the Christian faith with all conviction and teaching it by example.

Women today are faced with unusual challenges and circumstances brimming over with adversities. Despite all obstacles, virtuous women have not allowed their hardships to interfere with their love for God and their obedience to His commandments. Many women today have had to make many sacrifices for the betterment of the lives of their children and families. Most women today work full-time to help with the economic burdens on the family, especially when they are immigrants. Single family

incomes are rarely adequate to meet the demands of childcare, health insurance, upkeep of technology, car expenses, college tuition, and a myriad of other responsibilities. Whether they are stay at home mothers or working mothers, often we find the woman as the predominant glue to the Church. Unless the husband is also a steward, usually it is the mother who furnishes the spiritual realm of the home and constructs the perpetual bond to the Church and God.

Unconditional love is principled and goal-oriented. It produces spirituality and defies materialism. It cultivates a heart for the service and casts out self-indulgence. It generates love and crushes strife. It demands accountability and eliminates carelessness. It breeds contentment and frowns upon disgruntlement. It empowers the hopeful and does not allow the faint-hearted to wallow in pity. It expresses gratitude from the heart and discards unappreciated behavior. It is hospitable and does not turn away from the down-trodden. Its outcome is a responsible adult and not a spoiled rebel. The unconditional love of a virtuous mother patiently awaits even the most obstinate of her children to return, to repent, to rebuild. Ever hopeful and trusting in the Lord that He will not turn her away, she pleads on behalf of her wayward son or daughter. Love in itself is a heavenly and universal language.

*"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and*

*all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*

*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*

*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.*

*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor 13:1-13)*

Unfortunately, some marriages had to be dissolved. Some men abandoned their responsibilities to their wives and families and shamefully deserted them. Oftentimes, their wives were left behind alone to suffer in silence and bear the burden of the entire family, raise their children, educate them, prepare them for marriage, and provide for their every need. Some may additionally have to care for

their own aging parents as well or a child with a disability. From where do they find the strength? Their commitment to Christ remains unswerving. Their dedication to the Church is solid. Our own Christian communities are not always supportive, and sometimes discreetly search for the culprit—like the renowned Pharisees with roaming questions about the man born blind, "Who sinned, this man or his parents," or in this case, "Who sinned, this woman or that man?" In these circumstances, I am only using this analogy rhetorically to illustrate the process of how our community sometimes insensitively deals with single mothers and judges them. Yet, these women find the strength to carry on, work, study, serve, and raise their children well. Their unconditional love for God outweighs the murky mire of destitution.

We are all indebted to many virtuous women, including our own honorable mothers, for their unconditional love and endurance in carving out a spiritual path for us and carrying us through it with their many supplications. I pray that women today learn pearls of wisdom from each of these samples of virtuous mothers who are deservedly praised. Take wisdom from Sarah, discernment from Deborah, courage from Esther, loyalty from Ruth, fairness from Naomi, leadership from Judith, trust from Jochebed, piety from Anna, righteousness from Elizabeth, purity from St. Mary, and prayer from all mothers. Hope in God through all circumstances—be ever confident, you are a daughter of Christ.

Glory be to God, forever, Amen.

Featured Article by

H.G. Bishop Youssef

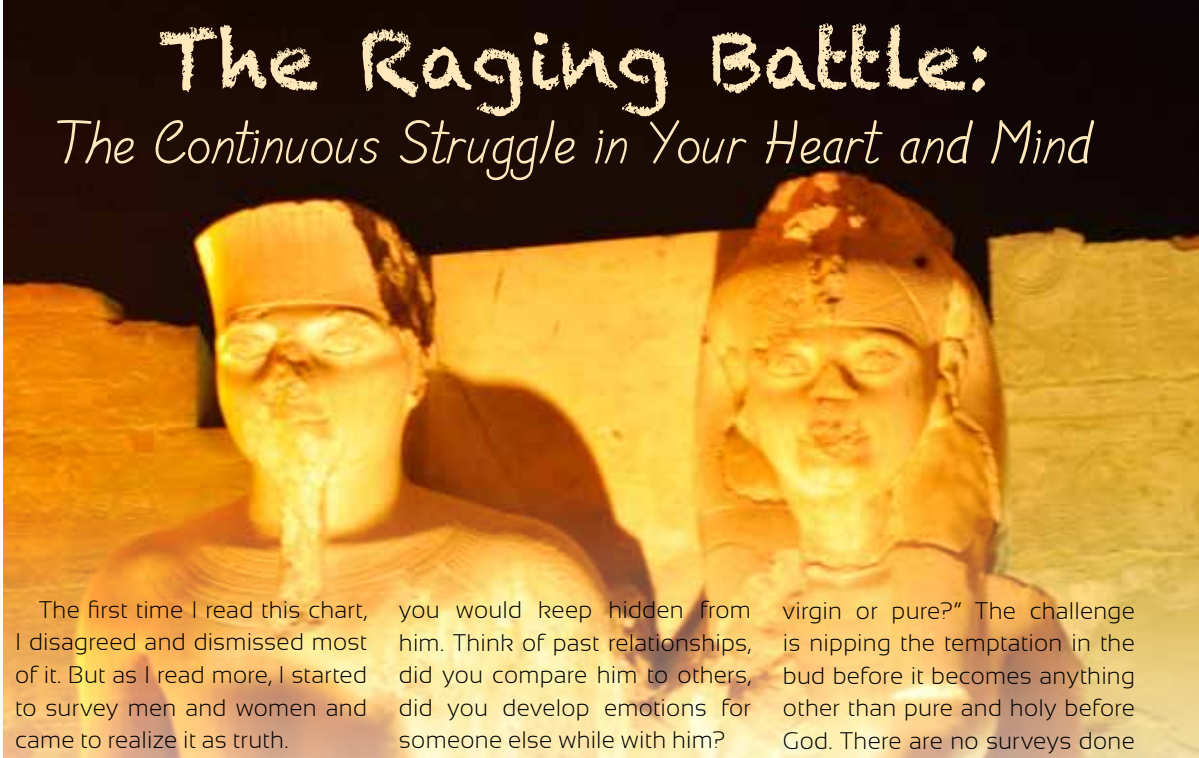


“I tell you that any woman who envisions a man longingly has already committed adultery with him in her heart,” (Cf. Mt 5:28)

ABOUT ONE YEAR AGO, a dear friend from my small Bible study group handed me a book and said, “You need to read this!” At the time, we were studying the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. We reached chapter 5, and I made the statement that men and women are tempted differently. Verses 27 to 28 are specific to men, not women. I said: “Men are visual.” I cannot even give proper credit to this statement because I do not know its source, but I had been told that statement for years. What I was subconsciously implying, and even believing, was that men struggle with sexual temptation more than women do. In this series, I am writing to women, but do not assume there is no insight here for men. I urge you to read on. Understanding how a woman operates, and how she is tempted, is a necessary step to helping her. The same is required of women when St. Paul urges us to dress modestly lest we tempt men.

I have since read and studied that Gospel account, underlining, highlighting, journaling, and praying about it. Here is the bottom line: **Though men and women struggle in different ways, when it comes to sexual integrity, the struggle is of no less intensity, of no weaker magnitude, nor any easier to overcome.** Below is a quick comparison between men and women:

MEN	WOMEN
crave physical intimacy	crave emotional intimacy
give love to get sex	give sex to get love
body CAN disconnect from mind, heart, and soul	body, mind, heart, and soul are intricately connected
stimulated by what they see	stimulated by what they hear
recurrent physical needs cycle	recurrent emotional needs cycle
vulnerable to unfaithfulness in the absence of physical touch	vulnerable to unfaithfulness in the absence of emotional connection



The first time I read this chart, I disagreed and dismissed most of it. But as I read more, I started to survey men and women and came to realize it as truth.

Now, none of this implies a battle between the sexes. Did the verse in Matthew 5 strike you differently as written in a woman’s context? Do not allow yourself to be deceived. Just because we are not acting out physically with a premarital or an extramarital partner does not mean that our actions are not compromising our sexual integrity. *“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!... Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled... Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy for I am holy.’... Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality.”* (Cf. 1 Cor 10:12; 1 Pt 1: 13-16; Eph 5:3). If you still doubt the “God” standard for purity, I urge you to take the quiz attached. It was eye opening for me. If you are single, think of your future husband and what

you would keep hidden from him. Think of past relationships, did you compare him to others, did you develop emotions for someone else while with him?

From our chart, we see that a woman’s soul, body, mind, and heart are intricately woven. Shannon Ethridge, the author of Every Woman’s Battle, has a great illustration for this balance: “Just as a table that has four legs that support it [and everything else placed on it], four distinct components compromise our sexuality [as women].” If one of the legs gives in, the balance is lost and it literally becomes a slide. All four needs are concurrent and require a balance in order to be stable. Some have made the mistake of thinking women are sexual only during the physical act. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is part of who we are; we were created mind, heart, spirit, and body.

The problem with most of our plans to remain sexually pure or faithful to one is that they only include physical boundaries. But most women are emotionally vulnerable long before their bodies are involved. We have to keep our emotions in check, guard our hearts, and yes, our eyes as well. There is no such thing as “technical virgins.” Yes, you read correctly, experiencing most sexual pleasures with the exception of intercourse with or without a man is adultery. The challenge here is not “how much can I do and still be a

virgin or pure?” The challenge is nipping the temptation in the bud before it becomes anything other than pure and holy before God. There are no surveys done on Coptic youth, but if a college Sunday school teacher could dare to confess, it is shocking how sexual immorality has invaded our youth—everything from porn (30% of porn watchers are women) to impure acts, to abortions because of cultural pressures. So yes, the battle is raging and Satan is working. Job made a covenant with God saying: *“I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a woman”* (Cf. Job 31:1). Ladies, we need to make a covenant with the eyes of our hearts not to look at men (real, virtual, or imaginary) to fulfill our emotional needs and desires in ways that compromise our sexual integrity, be it to our husbands or future husbands.

On a final note, please know that perfection is unattainable on this side of heaven. This series is for all of us, no one is raising a stone. The One who can, He is holding out His hand of forgiveness and grace instead. If you are battling a temptation, please seek counseling. This series and the books mentioned are great encouragements but continuous accountability is key. In the next installment, I hope to share with you seven myths believed or used as excuses for ourselves and others.

By Christine Massoud

The Virgin St. Mary, St. Elizabeth the mother of St. John the Baptist, Hannah the mother of Samuel the Prophet, Rachel, Rebecca, Sarah... The list is continuous for virtuous mothers mentioned in the Bible. Would you be able to answer if asked which Biblical Mother ingrained her virtues into her child during the first three years of his life, and would later become a very notable biblical figure? The answer is Hannah, mother of Samuel the Prophet. Hannah lived in a situation where she was one of two wives to a man named Elkanah. His other wife, Peninnah used to mock and torment Hannah because Hannah was barren and, at that time, being barren meant being accursed from the Lord, because she was deprived the opportunity to give birth to the awaited Messiah. Regardless of her affliction, Hannah did not turn her back on God, but continually prayed and laid her request for a child before Him. As a reward, she eventually received her heart’s desire. When she was granted her request, she did not focus on the gift and forget the Giver. Rather, she praised God, not just for granting her a son, but solely for His honor and glory.

Initially, when Hannah was barren, she did not reject the Lord, but actually turned to Him to solve her problem. When she was *“in bitterness of soul”* she went to the temple and wept before God, presenting her petition and vowing that, if she would bear a male child, he would be consecrated to the Lord (1 Sam 1:10-11). Unlike many people, Hannah did not attempt to comfort herself by worldly means; she did not consider her tribulation as cruelty or punishment from God. Her faith and love for God remained unshaken. We can learn from Hannah’s example to never blame God for any hardships that befall us. Instead, we should turn to Him as the provider of all good

things. We should ask Him for a solution, having faith that He will not forsake us. Moreover, we should view hardship as a chance to prove and strengthen our faith and love of God, who *“will not allow [us] to be tempted beyond what [we] are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that [we] may be able to bear it”* (1 Cor 10:13).

Hannah’s means of escape out of her tribulation was to seek God, believing that He would take care of her. As soon as Hannah finished praying to God and heard Eli the priest’s promise that her request would be granted, she *“went her way and ate, and her face was no*

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III taught us, “God exists; it is all for good; it will end.”

In Hannah’s case, the “end” signified by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, was begetting the prophet Samuel. Here, we see *“the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful”* (Jam 5:11). Amidst her joy over the Lord’s gift, Hannah’s heart remained focused on God. She offered a prayer of thanks, not merely thanking God for answering her prayers, but also praising His might and glory. *“Her heart [rejoiced] in the Lord”* (1 Sam 2:1), not just in the Lord’s gift. Hannah’s prayer is so remarkable that St. Mary

the Lord has granted us, not simply the material gifts He bestows on us. Nowhere in her prayer did Hannah even mention her personal gift, thus, revealing that she sought the Lord because she loved Him, not just because she wanted a son from Him. Likewise, in our lives, we should not offer prayers to God or service to the Church because we want an earthly reward from the Lord, but because we love God and rejoice in the salvation which He has granted us and which surpasses any other gift.

As a result of Hannah’s virtues, God had mercy on her and relieved her misery by granting her a son. Hannah’s

## Physically Barren yet Spiritually Fruitful

By Theopeste Kereles



*longer sad”* (1 Sam 1:18). This indicates that her brief prayer to God and Eli’s assurance were enough to comfort her. When she put her request before God, she had faith that God heard her, and that He would take action. In St. Peter’s words, she *“cast all her cares upon Him, believing that He cares for her”* (Cf. 1 Pt 5:7). That is exactly what we should do in times of distress. We should flee to God and throw the burden down at His feet, believing that He will solve our problems and deliver us. We should have faith that, as

used it as a pattern when she offered her prayer in response to the Archangel Gabriel’s annunciation. Hannah’s model prayer teaches us to firstly offer thanks to God when we receive a gift from Him. In the New Testament, when the Lord Jesus Christ healed ten lepers, he praised the Samaritan leper who *“when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks”* (Lk 17:15). In addition, Hannah’s prayer teaches us to concentrate on the salvation

story did not end with her, because she did not keep her virtues to herself. She passed them on to her son, Samuel, and he grew to be listed by St. Paul as a hero of faith (Heb 11:32). Hence, one could say that this virtuous mother’s story has not ended at all, because every time we mention the great prophet Samuel, we are in effect honoring the effort Hannah put forth in raising him. Truly, Hannah *“[trained] up [her] child in the way he should go, and when he [grew] old, he [did] not depart from it”* (Pro 22:6).



## WHAT DO YOU SILENTLY KEEP IN YOUR HEART?

Your heart is a treasure chest, storing all the mysteries of the world. Only someone deep could keep the mysteries of Incarnation. You knew with all certainty that nothing is of yourself; all is a gift from God, for His own sake. We exalt you, yet you saw yourself merely as an instrument in His hand to fulfill His will. You saw yourself as nothing. The amazing thing is that no matter how much God gave you, you remained to see yourself as nothing. The angel declared you as the mother of God, and what do you do? You run off to the hill country of Judea to serve an aging pregnant woman. Because of her old age and her shame, she hid her pregnancy, and no one was there to help her in her time of need. You ran off to be her servant. And you put your own pregnancy second to the needs of others.

The mystery of your greatness is that you lived for others, never for yourself. Your *self* did not stand between you and others. You had no *self* to compete with others; your whole life was in service to others—you held your peace. Silence is superior. The life of discipleship is learning by observing the life of the teacher, not only the words. St. Pambo said, “If he is not edified by my silence, my speech certainly will not edify him.”<sup>1</sup> A disciple complained to the elders that he had come to be edified by his teacher, but the teacher gave him no directives. When they came to ask the elder about this, he said, “Who am I to give him orders, let him do what he sees me do,” so the disciple learned from his silence and humility.<sup>2</sup>

Oh my sweet Lady, you were a servant to all. You served in the sanctuary, you served Joseph, and you served Elizabeth. You saw yourself as lower than all and readily plunged into giving your all for whoever needed. You didn’t think, “I’m the mother of God, I should be careful during the first trimester”; no, instead you

relied on Him who gave you conception to also care for the pregnancy. You were humble beyond measure, which explains how you, a 13 year old girl, found with child, didn’t panic. You left all matters in His hand and completely trusted Him to care for you. You didn’t holler and scream: “But I don’t have anyone to care for me!” Neither did you go spread the news, but stayed strong and silent, keeping everything to yourself and accepting the pregnancy with full dignity. You didn’t complain about the pains of the pregnancy, the hardship of travel, or the flight to Egypt. You truly gave humility its honor and dignity. You held your peace and submitted completely to Him. Oh my Lady, Oh my mother, Oh my purity, my humility, my calmness and stillness, my gentleness, Oh my dignity and silence, Oh my life of trust and full submission, Oh my mother—you were the mother of the Creator of the universe and you didn’t even open your mouth. You had to be perfectly humble and pure for your womb to carry the Son of God. Your whole life was in God, and for God.

# From a Monastic Journal



Oh my sweet Mother, how they falsely accused you and looked at you as a defiled corrupt girl: “Is this Mary who lived in the temple, and is she pregnant without marriage!” And the looks and foul treatment you got, and the suspicions: “Look at that, she went to the hill country absent from her betrothed for three months, and got pregnant there. How the mighty have fallen! Is this one who loved God so—she wanted to give Him her life—how weak she turned out to be in her love for Him. They are not even married yet! Or was it someone in the hill country?” Oh my sweet Mother, how that must have been the hardest trial for you, but you said, “*Let it be to me according to your word*” (Lk 1:38). Now look at what they call you, how exalted, honored, and loved you are, and how wondrous His works and economy are... if only I put my whole life and trust into His hands... no matter how difficult the road might seem... to be wholly faithful to and trusting

in Him. My magnificent Father, please lead me to walk in Your path with You—if and whenever I falter, please correct me, and wherever I follow in Your steps, please confirm me in You.

I accomplished nothing before You gave me life and I accomplished nothing without the brain You gave me, so of what would I boast? Look at Your mother, look at St. Mary, despite all the glory and honor You gave her, she never forgot her rightful place as dust and ashes, dirt and mud. If she who was exalted above the cherubim always knew that none of this glory and honor was in and of herself, but from God and for His glory (truly epitomizing the angels), then what will dust and ashes do? She was silent and still; she was humble and thankful (not grumbling over the hardships in her life); she was solemn and serious; she was wholly faithful and loyal; she was loving and obedient: “*Look, Your mother and Your brothers*

*are standing outside, seeking to speak with You*” (Mt 12:47) and very respectful: “*Whatever He says to you, do it*” (Jn 2:5)... oh my Lord, what could You possibly find in me... why on earth would You love such a debased creature? Of all that was created by You, none have abused Your Name as I, none have challenged Your glory and authority, and sadly, I’ve still not fully repented. Lord, please give me true repentance. Lord, You never tire of running after me, no matter how much I reject or run away from You—

You take the rejection and keep coming—You don’t say: “What do I care,” or, “I’m not going to force someone to love Me”; Your *self* is not the issue, but my salvation. You know You are the drug I need and that I am addicted to You; You know I love You and need You—even if I kick and scream like a little child, but You know I love You, and You know just exactly how much I love You, because You are the one who put this love within my heart.

In Cana, St. Mary was *that* confident in His compassion; she knew exactly to Whom she was talking, and she was so sure He could not deny her request, not because of any favor of her own (humility), but because of His unsurpassed and unbelievable heart. She certainly had faith, but the faith was not in her own favor, but in His love. Oh my Lord, now this is true faith—selfless. Oh my Lord, why is it I mentally understand all these things but halt at applying them? How? Or better yet, when do You want them to be engrained in me... I’m ready whenever You are. This is humility, this is the clinch, this is the target on which to focus—His grace, His love, His mercy, His compassion, His gifts... not my

virtues, my values, my qualities, etc. Thank Him for being, doing, giving, and creating; the lens has to always focus on Him!

Oh my sweet Lord, Oh Your love is so incredible; the Bible doesn’t mention that You appeared to St. Mary when You rose, but without a doubt, You did.... Not because of her unbelief, but because of Your tender heart that loved her so for enduring all these hardships and pains in silence without complaining and with complete faith. She endured the bitterness, and now You wanted to begin magnifying her. Your tender heart, as her Son, was even more ignited by Your love for her, as God toward His creation who loved Him so—You were overpowered, overwhelmed by her love and her loyalty. Oh my Lord, how the Almighty is moved by love and compassion, moved by the tears and love of His creatures (Son 6:5).

My sweet Lord, I continue to be amazed at Your vast love; You didn’t have to appear to St. Mary (her faith was solid), but out of Your love and pride in her, You wanted to give her... this is You—You always give, even in receiving, You give. You do not separate from emotions and say, “No, she is solid in the faith,” but realizing how much joy it would give her to see You, You appeared to her—for no other reason, but out of pure love. Love for Your mother and love for Your faithful servant—the crown of Your creation, the pride of the human race, the most near perfect human. My Lord, how was she so near perfect and so humble! Satan fell when he was the seal of perfection... Oh my sweet mother, won’t you teach me to be humble like you?

My sweet Lord, how is it that You, the Creator of all, waited for St. Mary’s word, her consent, to dwell in her? How Your humility is unbelievable! Why? Why would the owner beg the slave for a loaf of bread? By human logic, this is impossible! No one would accept it!

Just as in the Liturgy at the words of the priest, the bread and wine are changed, at her words “*Let it be*” (Lk 1:38), You came! Why? Why my Lord are You so humble! When God said, “*Let there be*” (Gen 1:3), it was created; when St. Mary said, “*Let it be*,” Christ incarnated in her. How awesome You are Lord that You allow humans to share even in Your authority! She did not create, but He was even more humble in that He created, but waited for her permission!

<sup>1</sup> Ward, Benedicta, trans. The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks. London: Penguin Books, 2003, 159 (42).  
<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ward, Benedicta, trans. The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection. Revised Edition. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984, 99-100 (2).



# A Treasury of Mothers: Shelter, Stronghold, Sacrifices

A MOTHER WITH HER CHILD is one of the most endearing and intimate relationships in humanity. When there is a scraped knee, a crushed spirit, or a broken heart, a mother’s love can heal. When fearing failure, an uncertain future, or experiencing diminished faith, a mother’s love gives hope. During times of hurt feelings, or a lonely soul, a mother’s love protects.

We see the power of this precious love in our mothers – the women who have nurtured, protected, covered, and guided us throughout our lives. Every mother, in her own way, possesses the same nourishing traits.

Outside our personal individual experiences, mothers have played an integral role throughout history, particularly our spiritual Orthodox history. Behind many of our well-known saints, for example, St. Samuel the prophet or St. Augustine, stands - or rather kneels - a virtuous, prayerful mother. The tears of these women elicited a powerful and radical response from God to change their circumstances. Hannah, Samuel’s mother, prayed so passionately for a son that Eli the priest took her to be drunk. Can you imagine a prayer so intense? Afterwards, Hannah selflessly offered this same son back up to God, dedicating him to forever serve his Maker. In a few simple sentences, we see Hannah being prayerful, sacrificial, and loyal. She is honest, dependable, trusting, and inspiring.

St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, wept for her son to not live a life apart from Christ. When we hear of St. Augustine, we instantly recall his Confessions, remembering a man passionate for Christ, whose words lead us all into a deeper love for God and a greater understanding of His love for us. For many years,

before his life changing “confession,” St. Augustine was lost and far from Christ. During that time, St. Monica wept, appealing for her son, asking Him to save him from the life apart from Him. God answered her prayer, and with the help of her supplication, St. Augustine



became the saint we know him to be.

Another treasure of the same vein is found in 2 Maccabees 7. This chapter tells the tale of seven young brothers and their mother. The king was attempting to persuade them to eat pork, a practice against God’s commandments at that time. After each brother refused, the king sent him to be tortured. All the brothers received the crown of martyrdom by the end. Verses 20-29 highlight the bravery and influence of the mother during all of this:

*The mother was especially admirable and worthy of good memory. Though she saw her seven sons perish in*

*the span of a single day, she bore it courageously because of her hope in the Lord. She encouraged each of them in the language of their fathers. Filled with a noble spirit, she stirred her womanly reasoning with manly courage, saying to them, “I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you breath and life, nor I who arranged in order the elements within each of you. Therefore the Creator of the world, who formed man in the beginning and devised the origin of all things, will give both breath and life back to you again in His mercy, since you now disregard yourselves for the sake of His laws”* (2 Macc 7:20-23).

When it was the turn for the last son to be brought before the executioner, she encouraged him by saying:

*My son, have mercy on me. I carried you for nine months in my womb, and nursed you for three years. I reared you and brought you up to this point in your life, and have taken care of you. I beseech you, my child, to look at heaven and earth and see everything in them, and know that God made them out of nothing; so also He made the race of man in this way. Do not fear this executioner! But be worthy of your brothers and accept death, that in God’s mercy I may receive you back again with your brothers* (2 Macc 7:27-29).

What amazing faith! And more inspiring still is that this woman is not alone. In the story of St. Sophia, she encouraged her three young daughters to stand firm in their faith, despite torture. These virtuous mothers encouraged their children to martyrdom, even to the point of their own death. Through them, we see how faithful women lead their children to a deep and surrendered unity with God.

Truly, through personal experiences as well as through Church history, the many stories of the outstanding role and influence of faithful mothers display the role of the virtuous mother. Yet, let us not forget one Mother, the most faithful and most virtuous Mother of them all –the Church herself. This is the Church that Christ betrothed to Himself as He shed His blood on the cross for her sake. This is the Church, the true mother, which is ever-present. She is the guide and leader of her children into a true union with Christ, her King. She provides for us the sacraments by which we can attain an intangible and mysterious unity with our Savior. She always accepts, always nurtures, always sanctifies, and always defends her children. On the Church, her children can rely. In the Church, her children can always find a home in the midst of their trouble, their pain, and their uncertainty. In her, her children can find a haven of rest, support, and calm. Much like our earthly mothers, much like our saintly mothers, our Mother the Church is a healer, an avenue of hope, and she is our protector.

Let us rejoice together in thanksgiving for our mothers of virtue. Let us look to them for the hope, encouragement, and nourishment they offer. Let us take from them the strength they inspire, and let us, thus, live lives worthy of their sacrifices.

By Sarah Mathoslah

Among the youth of Coptic Churches, **stories of male saints usually dominate over the stories of females.** When it comes to the monastic life, one hears more about the sayings of the virtuous desert fathers than of any monastic mothers. History tells us that around the fourth century, a soldier named Pachomius strategically organized a monastic way of life known as coenobitic monasticism. However, not many are aware that he built a convent for his sister Mary as she began her virtuous life on the monastic path. **IN THE COPTIC CHURCH, WE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE MONASTIC MOTHERS:** St. Mary of Egypt, St. Anna-Simone, and **ONE OF THE LEAST KNOWN BUT AMAZINGLY BLESSED VIRTUOUS MOTHERS, ST. THEODORA OF ALEXANDRIA.**

St. Theodora was a righteous, beautiful woman. She was married to a noble man who cared for her and loved her. A certain man saw her and became awestruck by her beauty. He lusted for her, hoping to be with her for a night, but to no avail; he was unable to persuade her of such. His desire for her remained unaffected, and he bribed a sinful woman to lead Theodora astray so he can be with her. Theodora fell into the woman’s bait, and into adultery through bribery. Thankfully, it did not take her long to realize that she had committed a grave sin and needed to repent and come back to God. Theodora was in great sorrow, and as she confessed her transgressions, she felt the calling to pursue the monastic life. She decided to secretly leave her home dressed as a man and lead the monastic life with men, fearing that her husband would be able to find her in a convent.

The abbot of the monastery which she chose for refuge always tested his novices by refusing them entry into the monastery on the first night, to see the sincerity of their conviction. Theodora was persistent and lived outside the gates to prove to the abbot the strength of

her desire for the monastic life. At every opportunity, she tried to remind the abbot that her name was “Theodore” from Alexandria, who thirsts for a life of repentance, seclusion, and prayer. The abbot did not refuse her request, and allowed her to begin her monastic journey. The true meaning of repentance can be seen through St. Theodora’s life. She led a life of prayer, vigil, and tears. Her life of self-denial and hardship was all for the sake of Christ.

One day, the abbot asked this Theodore to go out and make a few purchases for the monastery. Realizing that the journey was long, He instructed her to stay at a nearby inn for the night. At the inn, she had an encounter with a woman who tried to seduce her, not realizing that “Theodore” was actually a woman. When St. Theodora rejected her, the woman was furious and decided to commit fornication with another man. That incident resulted in the woman’s pregnancy, and when she was confronted by her father, the blame was placed on the monk “Theodore.”

Her father was enraged and went to St. Theodora’s monastery, complaining to the abbot that he wanted justice for the child for whom St. Theodora was now allegedly responsible. The abbot, in shock, decided to immediately confront her of such accusations. St. Theodora denied everything and promised that she was not involved in the conception of this child. Unfortunately, the abbot refused to accept her declaration, and when the child was born, St. Theodora was forced to leave the monastery to take care of the child. With great humility, she took the boy and started to raise him outside the monastery’s gate for seven years in banishment.

The monks had pity on St. Theodora, and requested from the abbot to bring “him”

back into the monastery. The abbot accepted their request, and so St. Theodora and the child, were reinstated back to the monastery. She was very loving and instructed the child to always fear and love the Lord, and to always set the Lord before his eyes when making any decisions in life. She remained faithful in taking care of ‘her’ son and imparted to him important



teachings until she reposed in the Lord.

After her departure, the abbot learned through a vision by God that she was a woman. To reveal her sainthood in front of his monastic sons, he exposed her identity to them. They were all ashamed and in great awe of the virtuous life she lived. In addition, the son she raised eventually became the abbot of that same monastery when he grew up. St. Theodora was a righteous mother who turned her life around from numerous transgressions to becoming a vessel shining God’s light. She led the monastic life with deep struggles and in self-denial. She was so humble that she accepted the responsibility and accountability for a sin she



did not commit. Though most would view this as punishment and injustice, she accepted the child with open arms. She was faithful in raising him and treated him as if he was her own true son.

The monastic life is not meant to be only for men. There are many women who have led this humble life and have become great examples for the world. Monasticism is a life of ongoing repentance. God does not need a righteous woman or man to be qualified for this ascetic life. God only wants a heart that is willing to be dedicated to Him and not

to the world; just like what St. Theodora has done. May we learn from her zeal and strong repentance so that we may live a life of holiness dedicated to our amazing Beloved and Redeemer.

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Cistercian Publications, 1984, 99-100 {2}.



## Coptic Pope Meets with the Pope of Rome

For first time in 40 years, the head of Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church traveled to the Vatican to meet his Catholic counterpart on May 9th and 10th of this year. This marks the first such visit by a Coptic Orthodox leader in 40 years. Pope Tawadros' predecessor, Pope Shenouda III, met with Pope John Paul VI in 1973 and the two launched a process of dialogue between their respective churches, which was marked by a signing of a Christological agreement between their respective Churches in the Vatican in 1973.

Accompanying Pope Tawadros, were His Eminence Metropolitan Pakhomios of Bohaira and Pentapolis, His Eminence Metropolitan Hedra of Aswan, His Grace Bishop Serapion of Los Angeles, HG Bishop Kyrillos of Milan, HG Bishop Raphael, General secretary of the Holy Synod, HG Bishop Barnaba of Turin, HG Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom, HG Bishop Epiphanius, Abbot of the monastery of St Macarius, and Papal sec-



Source: The Coptic Orthodox Church UK Media and Communications Office  
The two newly appointed Popes of the Roman and Alexandrian churches

retaries Father Angelos Ishak and Father Seraphim el Souriani. In his official address Pope Tawadros said:

"We appreciate all we have in common and need to work together to improve the relationships between our ancient Churches and

prepare our people for our greater unity." In Egypt, Catholics number 250,000 among majority-Copt over 15 million Egyptian Christians (by some estimates).

## H.G. Bishop Youssef remarks regarding the Violence which Erupted at the St. Mark Cathedral on April 7, 2013

The world has been monitoring the historic transition of what was promised to be a surge of democracy for all Egyptian people, Christians and Muslims. The recent assault on April 7, 2013, at the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, in a series of other assaults on Copts at various districts throughout Egypt, has fundamentally undermined the movement with disgrace. The onslaught of innocent Christians in a pervasive and remorseless series of attacks severely threatens the healing of a wounded nation which has been marred by pandemonium and incessant, systematic subjugation of the marginalized Coptic people.

This most recent attack, during a funeral procession of Christian martyrs on the Cathedral grounds, which houses the Papal Residence, is deplorable. Christians have the

right to live in Egypt with every human dignity as any Muslim. In this sad occasion—another defining radical occurrence—law enforcement abandoned their call of duty to protect the victims and allowed extremists to dictate violence, resulting in more bloodshed and adversity amongst the people.

If the goal is to destroy Egypt and all hope for peace and democracy, then the persistent, religious persecution of the Copts in Egypt will achieve that futile goal without a doubt. History attests that never have offenses stemmed from the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt or in any other land. Thus, this persecuted, indigenous people have benevolently contributed to the prosperity of Egypt. Even though their blood stains the hands of their foes, the Church will continue to shine and thrive forever.

All God-fearing and civil-minded people of all religions and ethnicities around the world have been gazing in horror at the collapse of empty promises, and demand the political and religious leadership of Egypt to swiftly denounce all forms of hatred, discrimination, and brutality targeting Christians.

Let us lift up our hearts to God in fervent prayer and supplication for peace throughout Egypt, our beloved Patriarch His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, and for all people suffering indignation.



Source: frontpagemag.com



Source: Copticworld.org



Source: Copticworld.org



Source: Copticworld.org



Source: Copticworld.org



Source: Copticworld.org

## President Obama extends best wishes to Orthodox Christians for Orthodox Easter



to forward to all of our members:

This weekend, Michelle and I extend our best wishes to members of the Orthodox Christian community here in America and around the world as they observe Holy Friday and the Feast of the Resurrection. For millions of Orthodox Christians, this is a joyful time. But it's also a reminder of the sacrifice Christ made so that we might have eternal life. His

The White House Office of the Press Secretary sent CopticWorld a message from President Obama for the occasion of Easter

decision to choose love in the face of hate; hope in the face of despair is an example we should always strive to follow. But it's especially important to remember this year, as members of the Orthodox community have been confronted with persecution and violence, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. For centuries, the region and the world has been enriched by the contributions of Orthodox communities in countries like Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. As a nation, we reaffirm our commitment to protecting universal human rights including the freedom of religion. And in this season of hope and restoration, we celebrate the transformational power of sacrificial love.

Source: Copticworld.org



Source: Copticworld.org



Source: Copticworld.org



Source: Copticworld.org



# SUS Diocese & L.A. Diocese

2013

# Joint Priest Conference





# QUESTION & ANSWER

New SPRING 2013 Edition

## GENERAL QUESTION

And its Answer

**Q:** When celebrating the Passover, our Lord Jesus, Himself a Jew, used unleavened bread. Why does the Coptic Orthodox Church, for Holy Communion, use leavened bread instead?

**A:** The bread at the Last Supper was leavened bread. We know it to be so because in the Greek original manuscripts of the Gospels, it is referred to as 'artos', not as 'aksimon' (unleavened bread).

Here is the order of the events:

First the Lord ate the Passover with unleavened bread (this is the Last Supper).

Then after washing the disciples' feet, He instituted the Eucharist with leavened bread (this is the Mystical Supper).

How did the Lord use leavened bread although it was not allowed for the Jews to keep any leaven during the Passover? Actually there are many opinions regarding this point. The most acceptable opinion is the following:

The Passover is a lunar feast (calculated based on the moon). Usually there is no consensus about the first day of the lunar month (as it happens every year with the Muslims' feasts being lunar feasts). This was the case with Jewish feasts too. So on the year of the Lord's crucifixion, some people calculated the Passover Day to have been Thursday and others Friday. So, when the Lord ate the Passover on Thursday, He followed the group that celebrated the Passover on Thursday and when He used leavened bread for the Mystical Supper, he was not breaking the Law because of those celebrating the Passover on Friday. Also, on a denotation level, it was very meaningful; because Christ offered His Body and Blood in the Mystical Supper during the slaying of the Passover Lamb. On the next day, He offered Himself also on the Cross during the slaying of the Passover Lamb, thus He became our Pass-over Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Why did the Lord use leavened bread? Leaven is a symbol of sin (1 Corinthians 5:7,8) and our Lord is the Lamb of God Who carried the sin of the whole world (John 1:29). Leavened bread is living bread representing the rising of Christ..

New SPRING 2013 Edition

## BIBLE QUESTION

And its Answer

FROM THE SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO ST. TIMOTHY

**Q:** What was the role of St. Timothy's family in his faith? How can we affect the faith of our children in the light of this answer?

**A:** His mother and grandmother had genuine faith. We ought to teach our children and be good examples to them.



**The Papal Encyclical for the Glorious Feast of the Resurrection 2013.** Khristos Anesti; Alithos Anesti! Pi-Ekhrestos Af-tonf; Khen O Methmi Aftonf! Christ is Risen; Truly He is Risen!

I congratulate you on the occasion of the Glorious Feast of the Resurrection, which is the Feast of all Feasts, the Joy of all Joys and the Delight of our lives. The Feast of the Resurrection comes after a long period of fasting; 55 days to be exact. This fast culminates in the Holy Week of Pascha, which is a period filled with prayer, fasting, and supplication. Subsequently, Great Friday arrives, during which we declare 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me' (Galatians 2:20). Finally, Sunday, the Day of Light arrives... the Day of the Sun of Righteousness and the Resurrection of the Lord Christ from the dead.

I would like to talk to you about three stages or three scenes from the Resurrection.

### The First Scene: (Exiting the Tomb)

The scene of the Lord exiting the Tomb: Of course, each of the scenes is true historically, but it also has symbolic, spiritual, and contemplative meanings. Christ rose through the power of His Divinity, exited the tomb, and death had no dominion over Him. Christ offered His Resurrection to all; this Resurrection therefore, is the First fruit. Through this First Resurrection, He granted to every person who believes in the Cross, life, and to enjoy his share in the Salvation and Redemption of the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The expression 'Exiting the Tomb' symbolizes leaving the tomb of lust...the tomb of sin. For sin is like a tomb. We read in the message of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians, chapter 5 verse 14: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

'Arise from the dead' signifies rising from the tomb of lust, from the tomb of sin. The sins mankind has faced throughout time always appear pleasant. This appearance is deceptive; an outwardly appealing façade, while, simultaneously, it is brutal and destructive for man. Man can now say with the power of the Resurrection: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' (1 Corinthians 15:55) The First Scene therefore, is 'Exiting the Tomb', the tomb of lust.

### The Second Scene: (Rising towards Heaven)

From 'Exiting the Tomb' to 'Rising towards Heaven': This is why Christ appeared many times on the day of His Resurrection; in the morning as well as the evening, and also throughout the forty days until our celebration of the Glorious Feast of the Ascension. In the Second Scene, 'Rising towards Heaven' the humanity in our Lord's Resurrection, transcended earthly gravity, Earth was rendered ineffective; so too should we arise. Nothing hindered our Lord Christ in His Resurrection... neither shroud, nor darkness, nor fear, nor the boulder--nothing. So also we should not just discard sin, but we should yearn for the heavenly. St. Paul the Apostle said a very beautiful expression: "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23).

TO READ THE REST, GO TO: [http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/hhpt/2013resurrectionpapalmessage\\_en.pdf](http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/hhpt/2013resurrectionpapalmessage_en.pdf)

# Events & Activities

## DIOCESE PROGRAMS

### St. Verena Resource Ministry (SVRM)

Professionals Networking Together Make a Difference

[www.suscopts.org/svrm/](http://www.suscopts.org/svrm/)

### Family Ministry Program:

fmp.suscopts.org

Summer Registration: July 15, 2013

### Theological Seminary Program

<http://tsp.suscopts.org>

Program Registration: June 15, 2013

### The LEAD Program

[www.theleadprogram.org](http://www.theleadprogram.org)

### H.O.P.E Social Services

Help Other People Excel: Social Services Ministry

[hope.suscopts.org](http://hope.suscopts.org)

### Archangel Raphael Ministry (ARM)

Special Needs Ministry

[www.copticangel.org](http://www.copticangel.org)

✝ If you wish to sponsor a child, a family, t-shirts, or an activity for the Special Needs Convention 2013, kindly contact Fr. Joachim Boutros. Your contributions are greatly appreciated:  
[father\\_joachim@yahoo.com](mailto:father_joachim@yahoo.com)

## DIOCESE EVENTS

### 2013 SVRM & H.O.P.E. Conference & Banquet:

June 7-8, 2013.

### Pre-Marital Retreats:

TN: Jun 28-30, 2013; TX: Nov 15-17, 2013; FL: Jan 10-12, 2014

### SUS Diocese Kenya Mission Experience

**Summer 2013:** July 2-13, 2013

### SUS Diocese Summer Trip to Spain:

July 13-27, 2013

### 2013 Archangel Raphael Ministry (A.R.M.)

**Special Needs Convention:** July 25-28, 2013

### Mexico Mission Experience Trip:

August 3-13, 2013

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



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Servants in Christ,  
Mighty Arrows Magazine Staff  
[mightyarrowsmagazine@suscopts.org](mailto:mightyarrowsmagazine@suscopts.org)

## LINKS TO FLYERS

### ARMSummer2013Flyer:

<http://www.copticangel.org/PDF/ARMSummer2013Flyer.pdf>

### Spain Flyer:

<http://www.suscopts.org/spain-trip/Spain%20Flyer.pdf>

### SVRM & H.O.P.E. Flyer

<http://suscopts.org/svrm/sites/default/files/forms/SVRM%20HOPE%20Flyer%20.pdf>

### SUS DIOCESE KENYA MISSION EXPERIENCE SUMMER 2013

<http://www.suscopts.org/kenya-mission-trip/pdf/2013KENYAMISSIONEXPERIENCE.pdf>



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## 2013 GRADUATE CONVENTION PICTURES

