

MIGHTY MARROWS MAGAZINE

Life. God. Truth. For Coptic Youth

WHO'S IN CONTROL?

Freedom

Liberty

Justice

Human Rights

Human Dignity

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

Psalm 127:4

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PRESIDENT	The Almighty God
VICE PRESIDENT	H.G. Bishop Youssef
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	Marilyn Ekladios
ASSOCIATE EDITOR	Monastic Servant
LAYOUT/DESIGN MANAGING EDITOR	J.B.
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS	Justine Ekladios Carine Iskander Freda Masoud Sarah Mathoslah
SPECIAL FEATURED ARTICLE	H.G. Bishop Youssef
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS	Meina Armanious Caroline Boulis Maria Fawzy James Helmy Mareya Naguib
PHOTOGRAPHY SUPPORT	Katherine Nawar Michael Nawar
TECH SUPPORT	Mina Abdalla
SUBSCRIPTIONS	http://suscopts.org/ mightyarrows/
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My Beloved Youth

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

A new page in history is rapidly being written every day. From the wearied cries of persecuted Christians to the protests of peoples throughout the Middle East, one united voice resonates louder than all: FREEDOM. Most countries go through elaborate festivities to commemorate their Independence Day as the key moment of victory from oppression, violence, and corruption on their native land and in their places of worship. It is what happens after freedom is granted that ought to concern us. How do we define freedom, justice, human rights, liberty, and dignity? How will the oppressors and the oppressed use these new and unfamiliar tools as they traverse together through these uncharted waters?

This July 4th, the United States will celebrate 235 years of independence from Great Britain. Subsequently, both countries have enjoyed many years of peace and have become the strongest of allies. A beautiful national anthem is still sung today at all formal gatherings in the United States with the utmost reverence as each citizen respectfully recites the pounding words of triumph in remembrance of the bloodshed for the name of freedom. Unfortunately, this honor is sometimes turned into a burden, worse than political oppression, when one uses this sought after freedom, which was paid for with the blood of young lives, to irresponsibly become intoxicated in conformity to some misguided celebratory customs. Let us strive to make all our celebrations wholesome and pure.

Freedom is a precious gift from God. From the moment humanity was created, God generously gave us a free will to make wise, intelligent, informed, and beneficial decisions. Freedom does not entail the harm of any other individual. Freedom must be understood within the framework of responsibility and restrictions. Joseph, the chaste young man who was hated and sold by his own brothers, understood this concept even before the Ten Commandments were given by God. He had the opportunity and even an excuse to sin and commit adultery with his master's wife, but he refused the bondage of sin over the bondage of iron chains, gallantly rebuking Potifar's wife saying, *"There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (Gen. 39:9).

Sin is the worst of all bondage. No matter how religious one may think he/she is, attachment to sin is the heaviest and most humiliating of all domination. Smoking, drinking, internet abuse, gambling, use of foul language, cheating, stealing, violence, and all manner of corruption are all under the umbrella of the worst kind of bondage. Sadly, this is self-imposed imprisonment. Freedom does not give anyone free reign to exercise vice under its valiant cloak. Freedom entails responsibility and accountability. This edition of the Mighty Arrows Magazine will explore the dynamics of freedom in various contexts.

God bless you,

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

Glory be to the Holy Trinity, forever, Amen.



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“My sweet Lady, your life was all righteous yet you still suffered greatly; although you were pure and as near perfect as humanly possible, you still endured so much hardships. How much more should someone endure whose life is contaminated with sin! As a child you lost both parents and were sent to live in the temple, and just as you grew to love living in the Lord’s house they exited you from there. You were given an old man to care for, and a baby you had not planned on having to also care for. When He grew He never stayed at home to give you

joy with His presence, and He refused to marry. You all were always on the move, and the climax of your pain was seeing Him suffer throughout Great Friday. If you, who are exalted above the angels, whose whole life was purity, suffered and endured so much... how dare someone like me ask if it is fare to suffer any amount of pain or persecution. My Lady, please don’t leave me, support me with your endurance and love, and most importantly remember me before the Throne of Grace. Please don’t leave me, my Mother. Why did you suffer so much if you were so righteous? If we suffer to even the score so that when we come to His judgment the devil owns nothing on us, why then did you suffer? Then again, you were not evening any score (and you did not ask ‘why me’), you were by far excelling to be exalted above the Cherubim and the Seraphim... that is why. My sweet Lady, please always remain with me, and bring me.. unite me with your Son, as close as He will allow. Always remember me in His presence and support me to arrive. Amen.”

Author Anonymous.

QUOTES FROM THE MOUTH OF PEOPLE WHO ARE LIVING IN THIS WORLD AND CURRENTLY PARTICIPATING IN THESE PEACE PROTESTS. THEY WENT TO VISIT A MONASTERY THE MORNING AFTER THE MAY 7TH INCIDENTS (NOT HAVING SLEPT ALL NIGHT, OF COURSE):

“It isn’t a matter of a church being burned, or a group of people being martyred, I’ve been living in this persecution for the past thirty years, and I wonder when and if it will end? I want to provide for my family, and see to their safety. I also seek the safety of my country, and her religious freedom. When will we live in peace. This is the reason many people migrate; but, if everyone migrates, there won’t be anyone left behind to defend our faith and our homeland.”

“As someone coming from overseas, I can very easily see a difference between life in the States and life in Egypt. Yes, in the States we have religious freedom, ease of mind and comfort about our future and our wellbeing, and we live in a clean advanced society. But, sometimes, this ‘freedom of mind and religion’ helps us become lax in our spiritual life; in the States we easily have the temporal ma-



terials. On the other hand, in Egypt, because there is no religious freedom for Christians, they cling to their religion with teeth and nails, and the missing ease of mind propels them to be even more religious. Being persecuted and overlooked (for promotions or positions) because of their religion makes them cry out to God even more, ever more fervently, cling to the saints, cling to the church and its services.

The Psalmody in Egypt might be packed, while I’ve often attended Psalmodies in the States where perhaps only two or three people were present. With the ease of mind perhaps comes slackness, and with the persecution comes fervor. The spiritual level of Christians in Egypt, generally speaking, far outweighs that of Christians in the States. With each hurdle the Lord gives grace, and the more hurdles the Copts have to run, the more grace God gives. I’m not saying persecution is good; I’m just saying that everything has its advantage, and God has His purposes in all that He does, and permits.”

Tidbits of Wisdom

- Talk to God with the heart; talk to people with the mind.

- Make a decision so that you own it; keep your eyes focused on the goal.

- Asceticism is not a goal but a tool, else it becomes a passion; vigil is watchfulness of the mind, not the body; fasting is from desire, not food; silence (stillness) is of the thoughts, not words; poverty is of passions, not possessions; solitude is sobriety of the mind, not avoiding people; obedience is forsaking my will to do His, not everyone’s; don’t be careless, not self-pity, this is the measure of wisdom in asceticism.

- Why should the clay pot boast that it can hold water!

- Be simple and thank God for everything.

- Keep your discipline but let others do what they need – let go!

- Detach in love, not in hate; separate in body, not in love; rather, be enmeshed in Him.

- Desire prayer from the heart and it will be unceasing.

- Humility (compunction) is complete immersion (love) in God with thanksgiving (praise) so that I forget myself; it is not self abasement. “The

soul that is not humble has not surrendered herself to God.” Humility is forsaking my will, to do His.

- Reality is relative.

- Race after God, yet wait for His will.

- Love entails pain.

- Why am I here? Because God, in His awesome kindness, wanted me to unite with Him (to experience love).

- Don’t worry; trust God; thank Him.

- My value is very high (His blood); my profitability is very low (sin) = compunction.

- Don’t worry about right handed or left handed attacks, just simply and truly love God.

- Loving God means He knows me, as opposed to me knowing Him.

- All things from You are good.

- To the pure all things are pure.

- Woe to you when all men speak well of you.

- When you hear “but,” “no,” or “why,” smell the adversary.

- True tears have no passion.

- Relinquish your inner comfort – yourself.

- Disengage!

- Pride is apostasy (separation from God).

- In complaining, judging, or criticizing, who am I complaining, judging, or criticizing but You; in complaining, judging, or criticizing, to Whom do I complain, judge, or criticize but You.

- Set Christ as your goal and your example.

- The critical thing is to know that God has not left me in times of tribulation. Then I’ll be comforted and thankful.

- If someone offends say, “Forgive me,” and continue (under your breath) “It’s my fault the devil wars against you.”

- One who is still trying is not yet so; one who is does not try.

- The proud person compares the self with others.

- Urgency is from the adversary; God is always patient.

- If you react emotionally, you’ve already lost the war.

- Voluntary poverty is before God: with You I have nothing, everything is from You, thank You for everything.

Author Anonymous.

WHY DO THINGS NOT TURN OUT THE WAY I WANT?

Have you ever spent hours, days, months, and maybe even years praying for something and not get it? Have you ever prayed for an issue that you felt was according to God's will and you felt that your prayer went unanswered? Have you ever prayed for peace for the persecuted Christians in Egypt, or in the rest of the world, and wondered why God seemed to do nothing? A student once wrote me an email: "I had really been praying a lot yesterday, and asking God why things aren't turning out the way I want them to. He really spoke to me today." That was the day the Lord led me to speak to my students about some verses in the Bible and a sentence from the book, *Orthodox Prayer Life* by Father Matta El Maskeen (Matthew the Poor).

Father Matta writes, "It is known of God that He kills to bring to life, He breaks to bind up, He wounds to heal, He strikes to kiss, and He puts out of the land to bring back to His bosom." The fact that God "kills to bring alive" was the part that stood out to me. In 1 Samuel 2:6, the Holy Spirit says, "*The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.*" Two contradicting actions go together, just like there is no resurrection without a cross, no prize without struggles, and no roses without thorns. Jesus says, "*Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain*" (Jn 12:24). So while you may be praying for life, you find death; for peace, you find wars; for salvation of people, you find departure from the Living God. Things are not turning out the way you want them. And the question resonates: why? You struggle with God, asking Him, "Is not my prayer according to

Your will? You promised that I would receive whatever things I ask for in prayer if I believe (Cf. Mt 21:22)!"

Moses was in this same position. God had asked him to go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt. Moses resisted for quite some time (Ex 3, 4), but he finally obeyed. He and Aaron delivered God's message to Pharaoh. Did Pharaoh fulfill Moses' request to let the people go? No, of course not. Instead, he made it harder for the children of Israel to do their work; they



were no longer given straw for brick-making, yet, they had to fulfill their regular daily quota of bricks. They were beaten and made "*abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants*" (Ex 5:21). Things did not turn out the way Moses thought they would; he struggled with God: "*Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all*" (Ex 5:22-23). I can imagine Moses thinking: what is this? I

was minding my own business, tending the flock of my father-in-law, when out of nowhere, God assigns me a job that I know I am not capable of doing. I try to withdraw, but He would not let go. When I finally agree and go to meet Pharaoh, I bring more misery to the children of Israel; and I am supposed to deliver them from the bondage? That just does not make sense. What is wrong? Why are things not turning out the way they are supposed to? Sounds quite familiar, right?

God then speaks clearly to Moses about all this: "*And God spoke unto Moses, and said unto him: I am the Lord. I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty*" (Ex 6:2-3). Pay attention to what God is saying: this is how Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had known God, as "*God Almighty*." God continues His conversation with Moses saying: "*but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them*" (Ex 6:2-3). Imagine God talking to Moses, "You do not understand, Moses. For your fathers I was 'God Almighty,' but they did not

know everything about Me. They did not know that I am Jehovah. You see, I am infinite; the knowledge of Me cannot be acquired by some of you, nor throughout merely hundreds of human years. This is the time when I want to reveal a part of Me to My people, and I have to do it this way. I have to allow for the misery before the delivery. I have to allow for the killing before the bringing to life. I have to break before I bind up, because only through such will My people know My name."

There was another reason, however, why God allowed those things to happen to the children of Israel. He said to Moses, "*Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land*" (Ex 6:1). The revelation of God's character was not intended for His people alone, but also for the enemy, for God works all things for the good of His people and the glory of His name. Pharaoh had answered Moses earlier: "*Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord*," (Ex 5:2) so the Lord intended for Pharaoh to know who He is. God intended to teach Pharaoh a lesson; and He did.

So when things seem to be going in the wrong direction, and when prayers seem to go unanswered, rest assured in the wisdom of the Almighty, for the "*Father [is] working until now, and [the Son has] been working*" (Jn 5:17). It is not all about us only; it is not all about what we want. It is about God's plans for this world. It is about the people around us, the people we can affect. Did He not say "*you are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world*" (Mt 5:13-14)?

Author Caroline Boulis

It was May 07, 2011, around noon. I was sitting in a café shop enjoying my coffee, trying to collect my thoughts to write this article. I got it done, and I thought I did a good job. I was not aware that during the same moments my brothers and sisters in Egypt sacrificed their lives for the church. I am not even sure that this article is worth anything next to the living examples given by our martyrs. May the Lord repose their souls in the Paradise of Joy!

Disturbing troublesome events are sources of fear, grief, and anxiety to the human nature. It becomes much worse when people anticipate the future outcomes of these events. Unconsciously, human thoughts are guided by survival instincts in the same way that all living creatures react to danger. One difference is that we are much more intelligent than other animals. Therefore, we utilize our intellect as much as possible to secure ourselves. History has shown many examples of nations that grew in power just to establish this ultimate security, at least in a temporal sense. The same history tells us that these nations collapsed. Humans, however, will never give up. They are driven by a mysterious desire for immortal life, even causing them to sometimes adopt the "ends justify the means" mentality, to the extent that some human beings employ

evil tactics such as mass murder and terrorism, so long as it allows for the advancement of their kingdom. For them, it is a pleasant moment to watch the suffering of others. They lose sight of the gift of life, and subsequently behave like animals. However, another group of humans exists who know, by faith, the Source of Life and their ultimate end, and as the Source of Life complements their humanity, they grow in perfection. At the end of the day, we choose what we wish to emulate – an animal without regard to the well-being of others, or a human, who through love and compassion consider others as they do themselves.

As Christians, we are called to Life in its fullness. Our norms are different from those of the animals, but sometimes, it is hard to deal with the cruelty of animalistic behavior. We try to avoid them as much as we can, but still as a roaring lion, they seek their prey. Consequently, we are then faced with another level of choice in life: the life of faith or the life of fear. It makes sense to fear the unknown evil, but why should we fear if God, who knows everything, is with us? We forget that "*where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rom. 5:20-21). When lacking

faith, we sometimes strategize to protect ourselves from the unknown evil, but by doing so we end up adding more to our load instead of making it lighter.

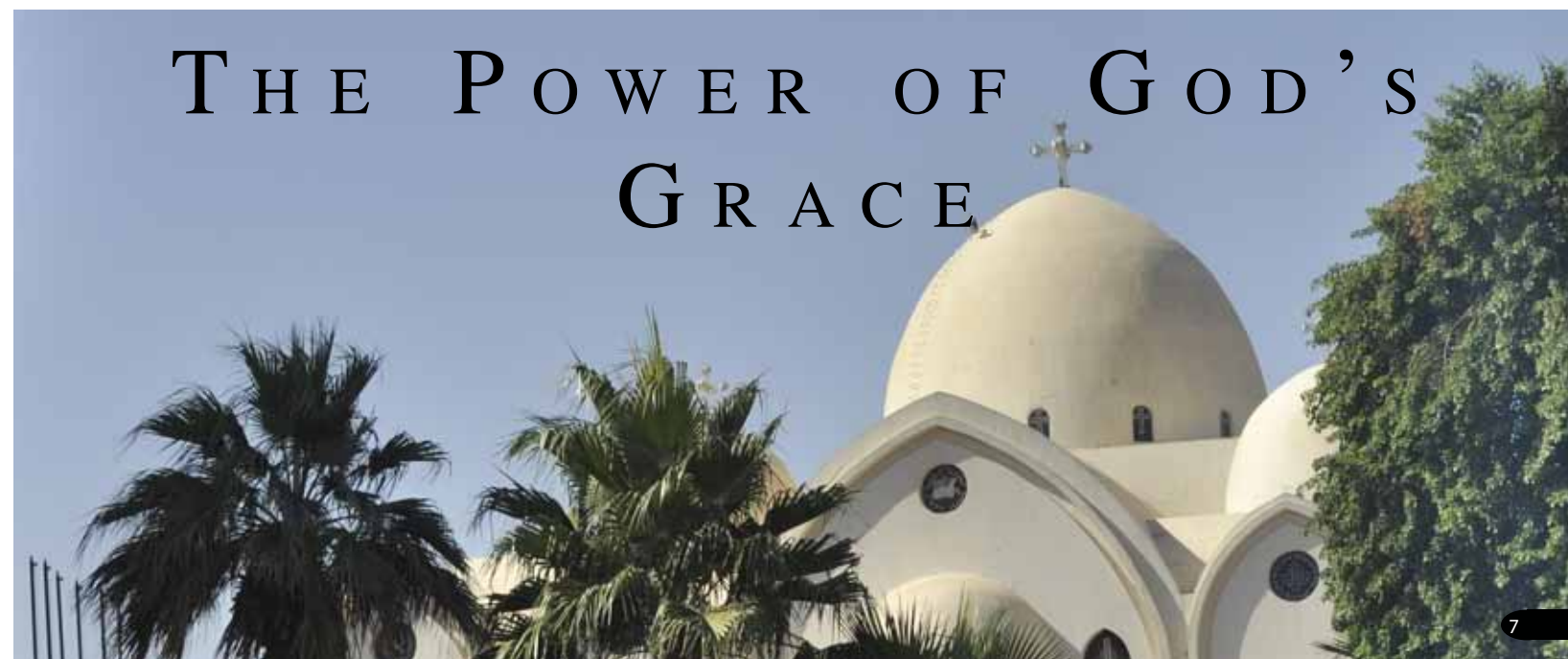
Most of the time, Satan is targeting those who are watching the persecution of their brothers and sisters and not the persecuted themselves. How is that? Well, the grace of God abounds more to those who are in need of it. We always forget that God knows us more than we know ourselves. He knows how far we can go and how powerful we can be through His grace, but He provides it when needed. That is why we pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread*" (Mt 6:11). We do not pray saying, "Give us our brothers' and sisters' daily bread!" We should believe that in whatever measure of trouble we face, God will provide more grace than our needs, on an individual basis. Satan knows this very well, and he cannot fight against the Grace of God. His easy target is the person who is watching, because the real battlefield lies within our minds. It is the battle between faith and fear. It is our daily choice to ask the Lord for faith to be able to cast out fear. "*Faith is the substance (essence) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Heb. 11:1). If faith is present in our lives, then the Essence of things hoped for is present as well. What is the Essence of the things hoped for other than God

Himself? Yes, we cannot physically sense the presence of God with our mortal body, yet, we can experience His Perfect Love, and "*perfect love casts out fear*" (1 Jn 4:18). No wonder St. Paul said, "*Now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love*" (1 Cor 13:13). We cannot enjoy our freedom without experiencing faith, hope, and love.

Basic physics tells us that in order to explore the three dimensional space we need 3 axes: x, y, and z. In order for us as Christians to enjoy our freedom to explore life in its fullness as a gift from God, we need to establish another set of axes: f, h, and l, i.e. faith, hope, and love. Then, we can enjoy the true freedom in this spiritual space even when we are confined in our physical space. One of the blessings of walking with God is discovering our full capacity in the Lord Jesus Christ. "*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift*" (Eph 4:7). This measure is far beyond our own expectations. Our spiritual capacity as humans, created in the image of God, surpasses our mortal, carnal capacity.

Author Miena Armanious

THE POWER OF GOD'S GRACE



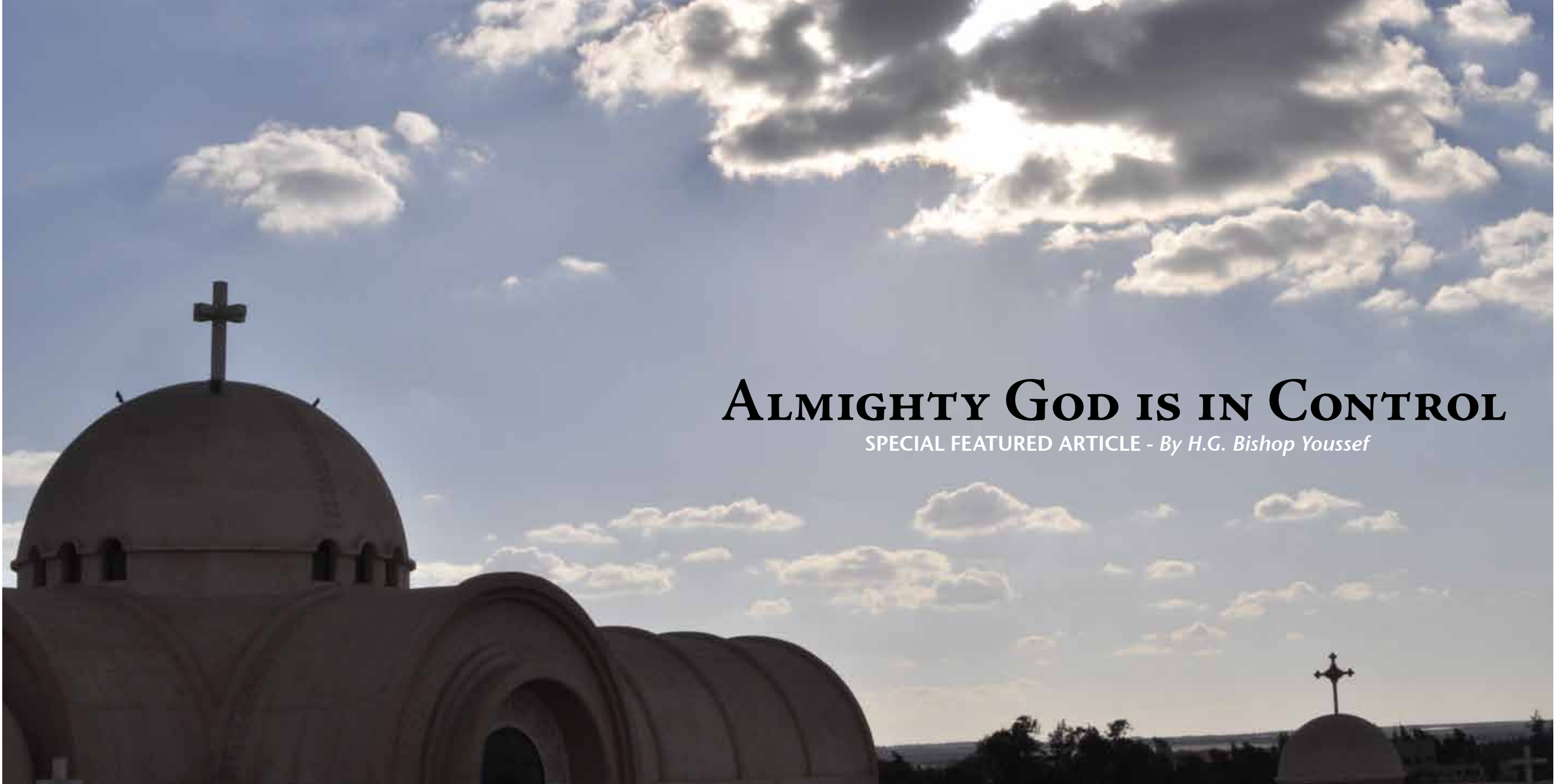
THE CONSECRATION OF ST. MARK'S CHURCH IN NASHVILLE,
TN, BY H.G. BISHOP YOUSSEF AND H.G. BISHOP RAPHAEL
MAY 2011



Amidst turmoil and pandemonium, people wonder, “Who’s in control?” The answer is that Almighty God is in control. He will avenge and provide justice. In His justice, He ensures mercy, and in His mercy, He confirms justice. No one will flee from His might and majesty. Believer and non-believer, both stand to be accountable for their civil or uncivil conduct toward one another and toward the human race. When Christ taught the Beatitudes, He did not specify to whom one ought to be meek, merciful, a peacemaker, etc., but He left the recipient anonymous since it is expected that these good Christian behaviors ought to be extended to everyone. Humanity at large is the true recipient (Mt. 5; Lk. 6).

Although most of the prophets addressed the errors of God’s beloved chosen nation, Israel, as well as God’s indignation toward them, because of their transgressions and faltering away from their faith, the prophet Obadiah fiercely warns the Edomites, a foreign nation of non-believers who were callus and aggressive, of the day of justice that awaits them because of their arrogance and violence against the children of God: *“For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head”* (Obad. 1:15). Likewise, the prophet Joel prophesied against Egypt and Edom (modern-day Jordan) regarding their day of justice: *“Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land”* (Joel 3:19). Here, we recognize that since Christ came from the tribe of Judah, His people are the Christians who bear his glorious name. Therefore, although harm may have come to many Christians in these lands and in others, their innocent blood is not forgotten before God.

Jonah the prophet was per-



ALMIGHTY GOD IS IN CONTROL

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

plexed, but not surprised, by God’s mercy toward the sinful people of Nineveh. Despite their faithlessness, God never required them to worship Him, but only to repent of their wickedness. To worship God is a privilege. It is a solemn truth and an incomprehensible grace of God: *“For many are called, but few chosen”* (Mt. 20:16). To live with morality and in fairness is mandated of every tribe, nation, faction, and people. God’s infinite love for all creation was to be demonstrated to the prophet and the sinner alike. Human rights should be extended to all, not only the faithful; for God will have mercy on whom-ever He will have mercy as He

said to the archprophet Moses: *“I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”* (Ex. 39:19). God’s love was demonstrated with little effort on Jonah’s part; he merely walked through a small portion of the city of Nineveh and announced to the people that they would be destroyed: *“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown”* (Jon. 3:4).

The Ninevites must have heard about the prophet’s ordeal and the splendor of his God while at sea,

and therefore, did not hesitate to immediately repent. In their state of liberty, they condemned their former wicked behaviors and humbled themselves before the Lord. God removed His wrath from upon them and taught Jonah many lessons, mirroring His loving kindness and mercy. He pitied this pathetic people who knew how to humble themselves before Him and admonished the great reluctant prophet: *“But the Lord said, ‘You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and*

twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left – and much livestock?’” (Jon. 3:10-11).

Micah the prophet speaks on behalf of the stricken people: *“Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me”* (Mic. 7:8-9). Christ defined where goodness and evil stems from, and how it is manifested and known to society: *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth*

good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Lk. 6:45).

When Christ taught about judging the nations, He stressed feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, quenching the thirsty, taking in the stranger, visiting the sick, and going to the imprisoned as if it was to Him. He emphasized that the object of our love ought to be in Him (Mt. 25:31-46). Thus, we so greatly benefit when we see Him in others regardless of who they are or what their belief system is. For through these learning channels

of life experiences, Christ places the highest integrity in His people to treat others with the most essential courtesy of human dignity.

We must be cognizant of our spiritual, moral, and civil responsibilities as we strive for equality, human rights, human dignity, justice, and freedom. The more that we possess, the more we ought to give unto others in sincere gestures of kindness and genuine mercy so that God will have pity on us, hear our prayers, and ensure us of His justice. Let us ask ourselves, “How can I use my precious freedom to build and improve my relation-

ship with God, and with others?” Let us use the measure of freedom we possess responsibly, compassionately, and wisely to build and not to destroy. Let us use the profound and gracious gift of freedom to stand for justice, to ensure equality, to protect human rights, and to value every life with dignity. Faithful and righteous Christians ought never to fear tribulations nor worry about avenging themselves, for God will take charge and avenge them, Himself. Almighty God is in control.

BEING FREE

is hardly a small matter. Repression and restoration of liberty have been two of the greatest forces that molded the shape of our world's history. Many of the most well-known national holidays are celebrations of the victory of liberty over oppression. The American Independence Day, the Egyptian Independence Day, the fall of the Iron Curtain, World Wars I and II, and even Hanukkah are all familiar reminders of humanity's struggle for freedom. Bondage, subjugation, and oppression of the weak by the strong have been perpetually galling vices that have marred the course of our history. The present world is no less guilty of these outrages than was the ancient world.

It is a fact that oppression in its cruelest forms has been dealt mostly to minority groups. Ethnic minorities like the Kurds or Tutsi come to mind. One of the most interminably antagonized minority groups across the globe is what we may

loosely term as "Christian" minorities of religiously restrictive countries. Pick up any issue of *Voice of the Martyrs* and you will read endless accounts of Christians in India being attacked by Hindu mobs with machetes; Christians in China being imprisoned and tortured for conducting "unregistered" worship; Christians in North Korea suffering arrest by Communist police; Christians in Sudan having their homes lit ablaze; Christians in Vietnam having their faces burnt; Christians in Pakistan being murdered for being former Muslims; Christians in Iran being imprisoned for evangelizing; Christians in sub-Saharan Africa being mercilessly and fatally attacked for believing; and, of course, Christians in our own Egypt being slandered, insulted, threatened, abused, discriminated against, and killed for their faith.

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution," and, *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hat-*

ed you" (2 Tim 3:12; Jn 15:18), explains the Holy Bible. Every act of violence against our faith is accounted for and forecast in the prophetic utterances of the Scriptures. But it is one thing to cite these prophecies as a distant observer of persecution, and it is another thing to call them to mind for comfort while living in the midst of a hostile and dangerous country. I, as a Christian, empathize with all those Christian groups suffering in other nations at the hands of their tormentors. But as a Copt, I feel an especially acute pain for the Christians of Egypt.

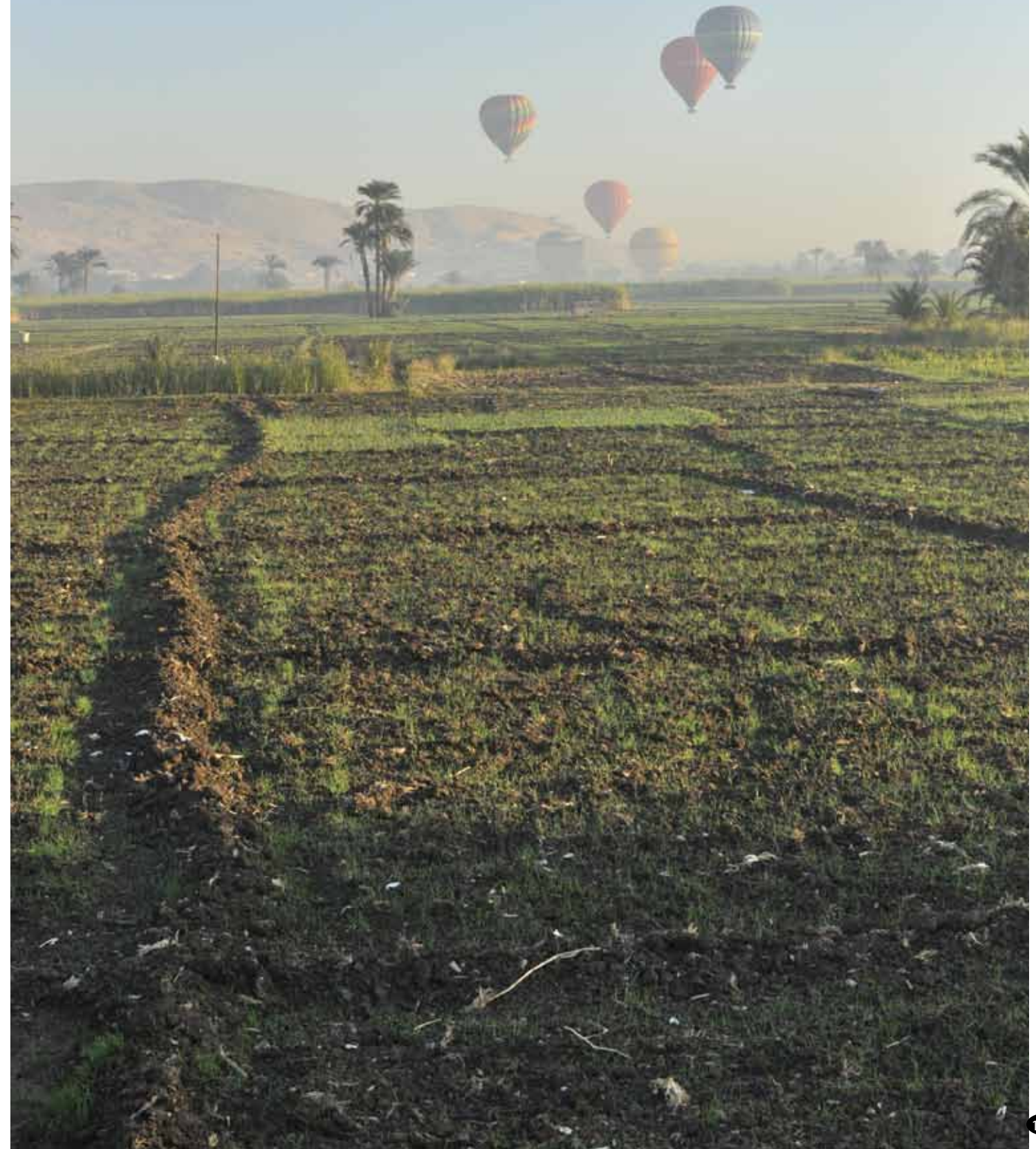
A person cannot be happy if he is not free. Freedom is instinctual, inbred, and essential. Freedom was clearly "installed" in our nature by God at Creation, because it has proved to be a need every bit as vital as food, sleep, and life itself. Nay, it is even more valuable than these. Prisoners unjustly confined are known to go on "hunger strikes" to show their preference for freedom more than food; citizens unjustly re-

pressed will stage a bloody revolt, preferring freedom to life. But, if freedom is so elementary to our nature, how can Christians in Egypt and other restricted countries appear so happy? Why haven't our liberties and comforts afforded us more joy than they have? How can a believer who has lost his job, his money, his rights, and his health declare so positively that he rejoices in the Lord? There must be another "order" of freedom which escapes our notice. Our Lord Jesus Christ explains, *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (Jn 8:31). The inward, spiritual freedom based on the truth really reigns supreme. So as we thank God for our religious and civil liberties, let us also ask Him to guard for us that gift which would be much more terrifying to lose: our spiritual liberty in Christ Jesus.

Author James Helmy

AN IRREVOCABLE GIFT, AN INALIENABLE RIGHT

FREEDOM BASED ON THE TRUTH REALLY REIGNS SUPREME.



The Memre of Mar Jacob of Serug

Open to me Your door O Son of God, Who is likened to Your Father, to see You and speak of You among the people. Give me understanding to learn of You and be in awe of You, not by examinations because You are unsearchable and unfathomable. When a person looks into a mirror, it carries his picture within, and he boasts of it, and if he steps away, it vanishes and nothing remains...

Look inside me, O One who sees all, and fill me with awe at Your might, and with wonders move me richly with Your words. Give me a word full of discernment, a mouth that praises Your pure glory without trepidation, a mind in awe at Your ways above searching, and a voice to awake people to praise You successfully.

When You contented with the Devil in an awe inspiring battle, the mind observes Your struggle and is filled with astonishment; I don't know how to utter! Are You the Son of God? How then did that evil one not fear You? He warred against You because he did not know who You are! Are You the Son of Man and the only-begotten invisible and apparent? By Your incarnation, Satan was perturbed and was troubled at Your fasting. Satan erred in tempting You, not knowing that You are the Son of God. For this I was awe-struck at Your humility. You are the Mighty and like a man you struggled. When You fought, You hid Your power with weakness, and concealed Your might by Your humility, hiding Your divinity through the wisdom of Your humanity. Satan erred and set against You an amazing war, so the waves of Your words move me dumbfounded. The Son of God asked to pay the debts of all, and so He endured the temptation of Satan. Since, when Adam was tempted he fell, the Victor of all came down to be an example to all who endure in the battle;

He incarnated from a human and became Man and was tempted like a man. No one can say that He did battle with His divinity. Our Lord humbled Himself to the adversary and wanted to struggle with the rebel in weakness, so when Satan saw Him as a man, he assumed that He is not God but a human being, as He concealed His divinity from him. Had he recognized Him, he would have fled immediately and not warred against Him, but the Word came and became Man and struggled bodily, so He clung to fasting from the start of His struggle, because He saw that Adam was defeated by eating from the tree.

The Mighty came down and put on humility... He came down to the war as a man incarnating from the daughter of man (Virgin Mary), and began with fasting in order to scorn voraciousness and human gluttony in exchange for Adam and Eve's desires, who were condemned for eating the fruit. He preferred asceticism, beginning by fasting. The Son of God fasted forty days, like Moses and Elijah, who through prophecy tasted a foresight of the mysteries and resembled Him in His fast. He began with fasting, so the archon of the world trembled from Him, he was troubled, not knowing who our Lord was. Since He had no human sin, he feared that He might be the Son of God. Uncertain, he approached Him with the temptations, perhaps he could unveil His identity. Satan sat forty days watching if the Son of God would hunger or not.

Is He earthly or heavenly? What does He seek? Why did He fast? How could He fast when He has no bodily sin? Satan pondered if He was fasting instead of Adam, to raise the one who had fallen by the Devil, mocking him. Satan said within himself, "He has no evil thoughts, unlike humans, and will not be easily deceived with desires. The dead-



ly sin is not in Him, since whenever I knock to enter, He does not open to me. He is tranquil, full of humility, and clinging to righteousness."

The evil one was filled with mutiny and trepidation, while the Lord Christ basked in fasting and humility, so that evil one called together all his devilish powers and soldiers to strengthen the struggle: "Behold, there is one who wars against me, earthly and heavenly, God and man, spiritual and physical, and I don't know if He is above or below? He is struggling, calm, scorning me. Come my minions from all directions as He is not a simple opponent. If he defeats us, He will bind us all in a dark dungeon. Set aside all temptations and evils in the whole world and ease your traps, let us all bait this One, He is a difficult opponent. He is for Adam, whom I made to fall; this One wants to raise him, and make us all fall." All the devils

were terrified at the struggle of the Son of God, He horrified the whole North with His struggle; they were dismayed at His amazing humility, seeing His abounding tranquility and peace. In His incarnation they did not know Him, if He is heavenly or earthly.

Forty days Satan was in a concealed war with our Savior, but there was no room for his lies or his evil thoughts since the Holy One refused to accept this from him. In Him there is no sin to crave anything. The Son of God came down in order to lift up Adam; the Son of Life came down to give live life to Adam. He alone incarnated from Mary and took our likeness in everything except sin. The insubordinate went out to make war against the King face to face. He did not send the serpent to Him because He is not Eve; he tempted the hypostasis of the Son without an intermediary. For forty day, he was unable through his deceptive

authority to mislead Him, not through trepidation, not through terror, not through intimidation, not through thoughts or nightmares or daydreams, so the evil one was terrified.

At the end of the forty days, our Lord hungered, and so Satan had an opportunity to tempt Him. The Lord Christ hungered naturally, being an incarnate human. The tempter approached, as one who is concerned and an advisor, as the angel who aids the righteous, and began telling Him, "If You are the Son of God say to this rock to become bread" to feed on, seeing that one who hungers seeks bread. He did not reveal himself as an adversary, but as a friend or as angels when they are sent to the saints to fulfill their needs. Oh Satan, did you want to teach or to learn, so that when you identify Him you would learn the truth. Why do you care about bread for the hungry, having no good eyes since your beginning? When did you ever show mercy? If the Lord commanded, and it became bread, revealing Himself as Omnipotent, He would have lost the humility for which He came and He would have given the evil one occasion to rejoice for having tripped up the path of the Only-begotten. He was humble to revive Adam. He did not will to say, "Let there be bread," although He is able.

He was thinking, "If He hungers then He is human, and so I can defeat Him. Perhaps He will reveal Himself in glory," but He remained steadfast in humility and scorned the tempter by His humility. If He wished, it would have been easy for Him not to hunger, since Moses fasted forty days and it was not written that he hungered, because he saw God, meanwhile, the Son who is in the Father hungered when He fasted. He hungered to reveal that He took flesh and became like us, and with us for our sake. Hunger did not approach Moses' fast al-

though he was human, while the Son of God hungered when He fasted. Had He not hungered, He would not have been humbled as He did, as He emptied Himself and fasted like us. Had He said, "Let there be bread," He would not have been humbled as Isaiah described Him. Countering the tempter's arrogance when he told Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread," our Lord answered him with a humble spirit: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." The word of God is the life of humanity; life is not only through bread. The evil one was defeated by the arrow that went out from the Father's armory house concealed by the humility of the only-begotten. The tempter insolently hungered for a victory, so he drew our Lord to the pinnacle of the sacred temple, to take a second stab at Him.

One's mind wonders how Satan was able to draw the Son of God to the Holy temple. How did he draw him as if a strong man drawing along a weakling (God forbid that the Son of God is weak)? This is how. He challenged Him a first time and was defeated, so he sought for another chance, without cause since there was no material for this battle. The first temptation was due to the hunger, but the excuse vanished, so he sought another excuse to do battle with Him. He thought, "If someone would give me here a chasm or an abyss, I would pulverize Him and make Him cast Himself. If He is spiritual He will not be harmed, but if He is human then I will make a great mockery of Him. I will demolish Him through haughtiness and so He will fall. He knows the Book; He took His armor from the Torah, I will seek the Book to pulverize Him and He will immediately fall. If He rises now to the pinnacle, I will set a trap for Him in the chasm and

plunge Him therein."

Our Lord allowed for Satan's will, so He drew Himself to the place that would give the tempter a chance. Immediately, the tempter approached saying, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down," seeing that the place was high and the depth great, craving to see His descent. He began to press him from the Psalm, since he heard Him answer him from the Bible in the first temptation, and that He likes to recite the Holy Bible and expound on it. The wicked one dared to address Him from the Psalm, urging Him as one who knows that David wrote that "He shall give His angels charge over you, and, in their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone," so, if You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down and You will not be harmed. Our Lord answered him that the prophet wrote: "You shall not tempt the LORD your God," I will neither tempt, nor fall, nor will I listen to you! He is without comparison in all creation; the prophets sang to Him and by the light of His glory they were revealed; they spoke of His mysteries in their books. Oh rebel, where have you read this, who wrote the Psalm for you, or when did you take time out from your evils to have time to read, understand, and expound the Psalm? You have no time for writing or reading, but only for every bait and trap! How, through this Psalm, are you urging the Son as a true teacher? Whom are you teaching, as you cheat and tempt? If the truth is told deceitfully it is not heard. Calm yourself from that interpretation because it is written: "You shall not tempt the LORD your God"; we learn the truth from the true Holy Bible. Satan was stung in this second temptation, but a second defeat was not enough, so he sought a third trial.

He drew the Son to a high mountain, and He allowed Him-

self to go with him wherever he pleased. The mighty Son humbled Himself to that rebellious enemy and allowed him to war against Him as he wishes, to reveal all the wiles within him, cast down all his darts, blot out all his deceitful ploys... to fulfill all His work... and overcome by His humility.

On the high mountain, he dusted the air with his lying deceit, filling the mountain with illusions and mirages of cities and villages, sat kings, raised up great powers, placed multitudes of nations, kingdoms and kingdoms, a magnificent apparition of glorious kings, gathering the riches of rulers in various kinds, filling it with thrones, commanders, and people worshipping their gods, multitudes and leaders offering sacrifices to the gods, gold without measure, silver without weight, expensive clothes, precious stones, all the kingdoms with their glory, riches, and people, so he displayed to the Son the riches of all the world's people and their glory.

Our Lord was humble and allowed to see all this, as the evil one willed to show Him. After this, Satan arose to tell Him that all these are mine, so if You fall down and worship me I will give You all. His insubordination was beyond limit, telling the Son of God to bow down and worship him... because He was humble... and he assumed that He would be defeated, as he placed all his might into the third great temptation.

Here, our Lord revealed His zeal, so He scolded him. He was zealous for the Father's possessions, which he had plundered, so He was firm to restore those whom he had imprisoned. He heard him say that the authority is his, so He was saddened over those imprisoned from His Father's house. "Oh rebel, do not boast of what is not yours. They are the Father's and became

subservient to you by their will. How dare you say now that they are yours? From now on they will not be yours. Step back Satan!” Here, the evil one fell quickly like lightning, and the angels moved in to glorify the Son of God; this is the fall that our Lord mentioned: “I saw Satan fall like lightning.”

When Our Lord called him by name, “Away with you, Satan!” immediately, the arrogant spirit of his lies fell. He did not know that He recognized him from the beginning, so he immediately shook and fell. During the first temptation he approached Him as someone who is concerned, during the second temptation as one who encourages Him to glory, and during the third as one who seeks to give him great riches. He encountered the Lord Christ as a luminous angel, not revealing himself as Satan, but the Son of God knew him since his beginning, but did not reveal this to him, but met him with

humility and simplicity. Had our Lord not told him, “Away with you, Satan,” he would not have realized that He knew him. When he realized that He knew him, he was terrified of Him and was dismayed at the extent of His humility in this struggle. He did not seek to reveal Himself; how much did He bear with the temptations without surrender. When Satan fell, the angels advanced to serve the Son of God, as it is written; after the warfare with the only-begotten Son, the angels came to serve Him, as St. Matthew mentions.

In His humility, when He warred with the offender, the higher hidden powers were watching, and the Father did not leave the powers to help the Son in that struggle, nor did the Son do battle with the power of His divinity, having stripped Himself and yielded in the form of a servant, striving in this battle with good humility, not allowing the angels to serve Him, also not re-

vealing His might. After He was tried, His powers stood to watch Him in amazement, zeal, awe, fear, and sternness. This was when our Lord completed His struggle with humility, so the angels approached to serve Him with great awe, not due to His victory but due to His complete humility; being the victor, He was tried by struggle. The powers moved to praise Him with all the praises, hymns, and rejoicing. Satan the tempter fled and the angels arose to serve Him as befits the Son of God.

We our brethren, let us approach with those sons of light, lifting up praises to the Son who willingly was tempted, taking His path in the world for us, so we must thank and confess Him more than the angels for He gave the victory to humanity. He became Man to teach us by what armor to meet that adversary, and with what power to quench the savage pains. He struggled against three antagonists to teach

us to conquer the three different mortal pains.

In the beginning of the battle, let us take on fasting and abstinence, restrain unholy desires and gluttony. In the second battle, let us subdue and abandon seeking vainglory for the self to cling to God by humility. In the third battle, let us flee the love of riches and authority because it tramples and destroys whoever loves righteousness. Flee now from the works of evil and from all arrogance, to gain righteousness. The Son of God humbled Himself to teach you. Blessed is He who always conquers, who through His temptation gave the victory to those who cling to Him.

His is due eternal glory for evermore. Amen.

St. Theopeste

To Live with Christ is Far Better.

For centuries, many people have demanded their rights for freedom of speech, worship, desire, and fear. It is certainly not wrong to speak up and ask for this freedom since it should be granted to any living human being. However, we tend to worry about worldly freedom and forget about our spiritual freedom. Ultimately, what will matter is where our souls go after we die. As humans, we are bound to sin, for which the penalty is death. Were it not for the shedding of Christ’s blood, we would still be in bondage. During the Holy Fifty Days, we should focus on the great gift that God has given us to be free from sin and to be able to live a spiritual life that can lead us to heaven for eternity. St. Theopeste is a great saint who became a widow at a young age and chose to give her youthful years, after her husband’s death, to God in order to gain her eternity in heaven.

St. Theopeste was married and had a son; however, her husband passed away when she was still young. Instead of looking for another husband, she decided to take the monastic path to become a nun. She embarked on this journey through fasting, continuous prayers, and prostrations. After a while, she went to Bishop Macarius of Nekios, and asked him to bless her and ordain her a nun. The bishop, however, advised her to try living this type of life for a year. He told her that if the monastic life continues to grow within her, he will not stand in the way and will ordain her. She heeded to his words, went back to her house, and shut herself in a small room. At that time, her son was twelve years old and was taking care of all her needs. St. Theopeste longed for the ascetic life wholeheartedly and took upon herself “strenuous worship with asceticism and devotion.”

The bishop forgot about St. Theopeste and the promise he

had made to her. One night a year later, in his sleep, he saw her in a luminous image telling him: “My father, how did you forget me until now, and I am passing away tonight?” In the dream, he then prayed and ordained her and proceeded to put on her the garb of monasticism. However, he noticed that he did not have with him an extra kolonsowa (cowl). He then took his own kolonsowa and placed it over her head. St. Theopeste had in her right hand a silver cross which she gave to him saying, “Accept this from your disciple.” It has been written that Bishop Macarius woke up instantly afterward and noticed that the silver cross that was given to him by St Theopeste was in his hands. He was amazed and glorified God.

The next morning, Abba Macarius took one of his disciples and headed for St. Theopeste’s house. Her son answered the door but began crying to Abba Macarius. When the bishop asked him why he was crying, he replied saying, “My mother called me in the middle of the night and bid me farewell and told me whatever the bishop tells you, do and do not break it. I will depart this night to go to the Lord Christ. She prayed over me and advised me, saying, ‘Keep all that I commanded you and do not disobey our father, the bishop.’ Here I am now in your hands.” Abba Macarius then headed toward St Theopeste’s room and knocked on her door. No one answered. When his disciple opened the door, he and the bishop saw St. Theopeste resting in peace and on her was the monastic garb that the bishop placed on her in his dream. He began to cry and praised God for His work and wonders. The Bishop asked the disciple to take the saint’s body, shroud it, and bring it to the church for the holy prayer of the departed.

In the city, there was a paralytic who suffered from evil spirits.



When he heard of St. Theopeste, he asked his friends to take him to church to see her body. When he drew near the saint’s body, the devil departed from his own body instantly. He and his friends believed in the Lord and were baptized. Since then, anyone who suffered from diseases came to church to touch St. Theopeste’s holy body and was healed instantly. When the governor heard of St. Theopeste and her wonders, he and his people believed and glorified God. He then took the body and buried it.

St. Theopeste was a person who longed “to depart and be with Christ, which is far better” (Phil

1:23) for the freedom of her soul. Her life reminds us to look to the heavenly glory and its gifts, and to forget about the earthly matters. She reminds us of how one should long for the freedom of the soul, to be in heaven for eternity. St. Theopeste’s life teaches us to give up our worldly pleasures in order to follow our spiritual paths by keeping our eyes focused on Christ and eternity with Him in heaven. May she pray on our behalf in front of our Lord Jesus Christ that He may forgive our iniquities and grant our souls freedom from bondage, so that we may live with Him forever.

An Article by Mareya Naguib

Pillars of our Time: Ordinary People Serving in Extraordinary Ways

As you may know, in 1969, Father Bishoy established the first church in the United States in Los Angeles, California. This article will not be able to contain all his remarkable services, but here is a bird’s eye view.

Father Bishoy’s passion for our Lord and for His service was apparent well before his ordination. He spent his time serving in Sunday School, tutoring students, and assisting them and others with whatever else they needed to the point where he wanted to spend all his time serving. He was then ordained as a priest over the church in Sporting, Alexandria by His Holiness Pope Cyril VI. He continued and persevered in his service to the Lord and was blessed immensely for it. After feast liturgies, he would always go and pass food

out to the needy and would usually sit and have the feast meal with one of the families. Anyone who knew him would describe him as humble and loving.

Father Bishoy helped establish many churches outside of Egypt, including ones in Europe and Australia, as well as the first church in the United States, St. Mark’s in Los Angeles, California. After he moved to the US, 10 years after his ordination, Father Bishoy continued his mission, establishing the church, translating many hymns, and serving in extraordinary ways. One of Father Bishoy’s many virtues was his full trust in God’s plan, even when it did not make sense to others; he lived a life of complete submission to the Lord. Years passed and Father Bishoy was diagnosed with can-


FR. BISHOY KAMEL

GIVEN NAME: Samy Kamel

BIRTHPLACE & YEAR: Menoufia, Egypt. 1931

EDUCATION: Bacherlor’s of Science, 1951
B.S. in Literature, 1954

PRISTHOOD ORDINATION: 1959



cer, the “disease of paradise” as he called it. Throughout his sickness and pain, he praised and glorified God for this cross, and continued to serve until his last breath.

He died on the twenty-first of March, 1979 and was buried at his church, St. George of Sporting, Alexandria.

May his prayers be with us. Amen.

Reference:
<http://st-takla.org/Priest-Fr-Bishoy-Kamel.html>

Author Maria Fawzy

QUESTION & ANSWER

GENERAL QUESTION

Q: What is a specific definition of Justice?
Is there any book I should read?

A: *Justice can be defined as the moral quality, which perfects the will and inclines it to render to each and to all what belongs to them. While charity leads us to help others in their need, out of our own possessions, justice teaches us to give to others what belongs to them. Justice is the virtue that controls and regulates man's dealing with others. As a social being by nature, man will tend to be in contact with and dependent on other fellow men. These relationships will necessitate the recognition of rights and obligations that must be protected and regulated, if man is to live in peace and harmony with others.*

Homer, Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Cicero, and the Corpus Juris Civilis of Roman law (Instit. I,I) gave the same definition for justice. Homer cites it in the Odyssey (14,84), Plato in the Republic, Aristotle in the Rhetoric (1,9), Cicero in De finibus (5,23), St. Augustine in City of God (19,21), and St. Thomas Aquinas in his Commentaries on Aristotle's Ethics (5,1; no. 893). The Latin expression of this definition is most simple and, therefore, most effective, justice is "suum cuique" or "to everyone their due." An "injustice" means that something that belongs to someone has it withheld or taken away from him.

Justice demands that man's actions in civil society, conform themselves to the right in civil, social, economic, and political affairs. Whether a man "likes" acting justly or not, is to a great extent, in-

consequential. With this in mind, we can then make the distinction between the act of justice and the virtue of justice. The "act" of justice is to render to someone what is due them within the context of civil society. The virtue of justice, however, is something distinct. The virtue of justice is a habit or inclination by which the will tends towards choosing that which is right, the proper good in any particular situation. A "virtue" or virtue in itself, is, etymologically speaking, an ability, a power, a form of "manliness." A virtue inclines a power of the soul towards its proper object; it is a "habit" which enables a man to perform a good action with alacrity and perpetually. Temperance inclines the appetites towards moderation and submission to the commands of reason, fortitude controls the passion of fear so that life can be preserved and the difficult good attained, and justice is a perfection of the will by which it attains the proper good of the whole person and, also, advances the social good.

One major problem concerning the matter of justice is that so many people seem only concerned about the rights they have in justice, and not the obligations it imposes on them. The true Christian, knowing his inherent tendency to self-seeking, will try to counter these tendencies by trying to be more concerned about his obligations to others. Christians believe that God is the source of justice in the whole world. A Christian knows that the more just he is, in dealing with others, the more will God's justice be tempered by His mercy in dealing with him.

You can read more about justice at these websites:

http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/catholic_christianity/9165

http://www.hollandsentinel.com/stories/063001/rel_0630010041.shtml

<http://www.quango.net/verdict/scandalgodsjusticepart3.htm>

http://www.lifeissues.net/writers/cho/cho_03justice.html

New Summer 2011 Edition

BIBLE QUESTION

FROM THE HOLY BOOK OF TOBIT
(answer to be posted in Winter Edition)

Q: Name 3 things that Tobit kept doing all his life:

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St. Verena Resource Ministry

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

Family Ministry Program

(FMP) Fall Registration deadline: July 25, 2011

Theological Seminary Program

Fall Registration deadline: August 1, 2011

DIOCESE EVENTS

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Kids Camp: Jul 24 - 27, 2011

Italy Trip: Jul 25 - Aug 6, 2011

Florida Middle School Camp: Aug 1-4, 2011

Archangel Raphael Ministry Special Needs Convention

Aug 8-11, 2011

Annual Evangelism Conference: Aug 12-13

Three Holy Youth Summer College Convention:
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