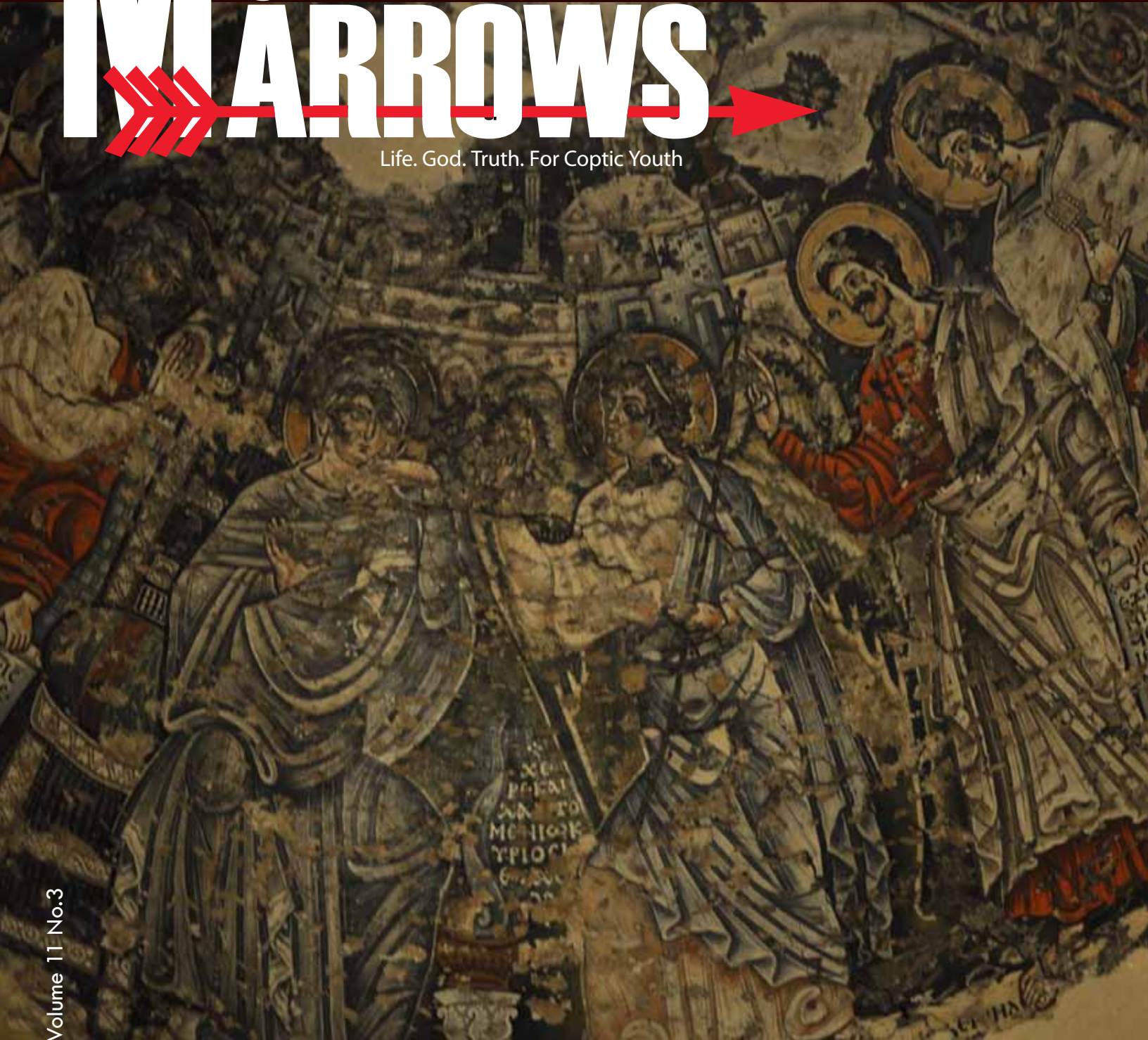


MIGHTY MAGAZINE MARROWS

Life. God. Truth. For Coptic Youth



Summer 2012 Volume 11 No.3

Timeless Treasures
OF
THE **CHURCH FATHERS**

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

Psalm 127:4

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MIGHTY

MAGAZINE

ARROWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE COPTIC
ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE
SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

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

My Beloved

Our Church Fathers are more valued and knowledgeable than all philosophers, scientists, teachers, and miners combined. They are cherished above all the finest gold, silver, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and jade, and all the precious ointments, minerals, metals, and gems that exist in the world or can ever be excavated. These fathers have cultivated timeless treasures spanning over two thousand years. In their writings, homilies, treatises, sermons, and conferences, their legacies adorned the Christian faith by adding precision to theological interpretations. They defended the true faith against heretics and selfish ambitions. Their knowledge has filled and satisfied all who seek wisdom and understanding.

Fatherhood is an underlying theme in Orthodoxy. It is a unique spiritual relationship within the context of discipleship. The father delivers his faith, practice, and tradition to his children. He prunes their mannerisms by discipline, refines their thoughts through narratives and chronicles, and models a standard of befitting decorum of Christianity by example. His patience is often tested by his children’s obstinate hearts and static impressions, but he does not yield to their temporary childishness because he understands their struggles and strives to bring them to a better place—a higher vista. He designs and personalizes a unique agenda for each one of them, not only for repentance, but also for growth and spiritual maturity.

In the giant footsteps of our Church Fathers before him, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III of Thrice Blessed Memory, remained dedicated throughout his papacy to reinforcing our devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ with the good knowledge of our Orthodox Christian faith. Though at this time in the history of our glorious Church, we have lost our beloved father, the Holy Synod demonstrates the need for unity, obedience, and fatherhood. Thus, we proceed and submit to the interim acting patriarch, His Eminence Metropolitan Pachomious, and continue to strive in peace and love toward a democratic and divine election for the next Patriarch of the See of Alexandria.

This summer edition of the Mighty Arrows Magazine highlights a glimpse of the timeless treasures of the Church Fathers. It is my prayer that each reader takes to heart the immense worth of knowing the Church Fathers. Come closer to them and enrich your lives with their wisdom and spiritual fortitude. Commitment to seeking the knowledge of the Lord is impossible without encountering the Church Fathers. These are our fathers who have preached and lived the Gospel and of whom it can be said, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Lk 6:38). Let us, therefore, follow in their footsteps and seek the knowledge of the Lord.

God bless you,

Youssef

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

Glory to the Holy Trinity, forever, Amen.



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As Christians, we are called to be warriors. We practice the faith, shed our blood protecting it, and lead others to Christ by living it. We exist in a world that is against us and we battle sins daily trying to escape alive. By the end of the day, we are burned out of exhaustion or simply give up, thinking, “Will we make it?” We wake up the next day with the same routine and expectations; we pick our battles, try to fight them, and struggle to just make it through the night. And so, our lives become miserable. There is no longer a smile illuminating our faces, our worries become a heavy weight on our shoulders, our hearts harden hastening to anger, and our hands shy away from helping others. We get caught up in the sores of our battles, and forget that as warriors, we need to keep focus on the prize, Eternal Life.

Many pass by this spiritual dryness where our souls are starving. We wonder what went wrong along the road. Our friends shy away from us because our attitude has changed, our supervisors are not content because our job is no longer thorough, our family thinks we no longer care for them because we start to isolate ourselves, but most importantly we see ourselves as failures for not winning the race, and wonder what is wrong with us?

You see, just like our bodies need food and rest to recuperate after days and months of hard work, so also do our souls. Our souls need to be nurtured, cared for, and cleansed so we can receive God again, and He can dwell in us gladly. Therefore, in the midst of all the mountains of worries, take a few minutes and meditate on how awesome God works in our lives: “He covered us,

helped us, accepted us unto him, spared us, supported us and brought us to this hour” (Thanksgiving Prayer). Even in the midst of trouble, His love and kindness are everlasting, guarding us day and night just like King David the psalmist said, sharing his experience, “The Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me.” (Ps 42:8). Our beloved departed pastor, Fr. Mina Iskander from Nashville, used to say, “It is important for the soul to take the time and meet with her beloved, regardless how many tasks are ahead of us. Those times of solitude with our Savior will reflect on our inner spirit, giving us peace and joy.”

As our struggle with sin weighs us down, remember that even the greatest saints were once sinners, but with prayers and fasting they overcame their

sins; don’t give up. Just like when your body is weak and you take vitamins to keep it strong and going, so does your soul need prayers and fasting to keep it uplifted and strong against Satan’s traps. Don’t lose courage, for St. John Climacus reminds us: “Do not be surprised if you fall every day and do not surrender. Stand your ground bravely. And you may be sure that your guardian angel will respect your endurance.” We may not have the luxury of time to pray the seven prayers, but surely, we can benefit from the desert fathers and use the Jesus prayer: “O my Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, I the sinner.” Calling Jesus’ name is a shield against all evil and a way to nurture our ailing soul with beautiful praise that keeps our heart and mind occupied with the King of Peace.

Have you ever wondered why only David succeeded in tam-

ing King Saul, although Saul as a king had many trained people at his beck and call, yet none were capable of calming his soul expect David? It is the power of the psalms, the word of God that brings inner peace and joy to the heart. This is just another way of nurturing the soul. David the psalmist testifies to God’s work in one of the most beautiful psalms saying: “He restores my soul; He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (Ps 23:3). Despite our shortcomings, God is gracious and merciful to restore our soul and guide us in the right path towards eternal life. Our beloved Pope Shenouda used to remind us saying, “Keep the psalms, and the psalms shall keep you.”

Many of us fear at times that our dry cracked souls, which are hidden behind a heart of stone and layers of sins, cannot be restored or nurtured any-

more. We start to lose hope in winning our battles, and thus, take the easy path and become conformed to the world. Even when the memories of our previous beautiful lives with Christ come flooding our way, we push them away because we’re afraid to disappoint Him again and fail. However, Ezekiel delivers to us the good news of God’s promise saying: “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments

and do them” (Ez 36:24-27). You see, God is willing to leave the ninety-nine good sheep and search after the lost one. He is willing to travel for hours with no food or water till he reaches us in the middle of the day, while everyone else is taking refuge from the sun. As the ruler of the army, God goes all out for His children, taking care of their injuries and providing them the rehab necessary to recover, but one must have the will to recover. So don’t be anxious or lose hope, but take comfort in Isaiah’s words: “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be

weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Is 40:28-31).

Finally my brethren, let us not lose sight of the most precious gem, that is the kingdom of heaven. Let’s keep our eyes focused on the prize of earning eternal life with God, His saints, and all those who persevered in this world. Let’s nurture our souls through meditations, prayers, fasting, reciting the psalms, and remembering to take refuge in our awesome God, so that we may finish this race in peace and obtain victory, being warriors in the army of Christ!

Glory be to God forever, Amen.

By Maria Mansour

Nurtured Soul



Russia, 1762 Oil Painting

Depicting:
St. Clement of Rome
and St. Peter of
Alexandria.

MENA MIRHOM

“The fathers are famous, but not known”; that was the opener of Fr. Athanasius to a study of Patristics. He made it clear to us then that it is easy to throw out the trigger phrase “church fathers,” but it is not as easy to have a real relationship with them.

For so many of us young people, there is a big barrier between us and these holy men of enlightened minds and hearts. The devil has managed to convince us of some of his lies. He’s convinced us that we need the cliff notes and can never handle the real thing. He claims that we are simply too “simple” to understand them or that we don’t need to, because “we just want to learn about Jesus.” Well, just who is Jesus? That, my friend, is a theological question, whether you’d like to admit it or not. We just aren’t ignorant of the devil’s tricks and can’t fall for them anymore.

The reality is, ignorance is a

choice, and it is a choice that we cannot afford to make. We need to learn what the Holy Spirit taught us through these men and women. The truth is that we can be destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos 4:6). Destroyed. Not just inconvenienced or kept shallow. There is a cost to us not knowing the Church fathers. We just cannot afford to be intimidated or claim “simplicity,” because, as Evagrius of Pontus, a desert father, taught us, “If you are a theologian, you will pray truly. If you pray truly, you are a theologian.”¹ That is why we owe it to ourselves to study, if we even want to approach God in the simple and fundamental act of prayer. So, there is no question of whether or not you, my beloved reader, are a theologian. Every one of us is, but many of us simply know bad theology, and wrong theology leads to wrong choices, because behavior is built on belief.

Theology is not cognition; it is vision and revelation. **The goal of theology is not to become a professor, but to become a saint.** Theology is seeing the world in light of the mount of Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus and allowing the Holy Spirit to make the work of Christ, the second and last Adam, became real in our lives. Theology is to be a real human, in the truest sense of the word that was revealed to us in the Person of Jesus. Theology is love. It is a way to live and move and have our very being (Acts 17:28). Jesus is the pinnacle of all that we call theology. He unlocks for us the mysteries of this Christo-centric universe—from who the Father is, to who the Church is, to who we are, to what the world around us is... it’s all in HIM! Just ask St. Irenaeus.

Wouldn’t it be great if we got to know the things about Jesus

that the prophets prophesied, Jesus proclaimed, the apostles preached, and the fathers preserved? Wouldn’t it be awesome to really know everything about Jesus that He revealed to us about Himself without having to reinvent everything that He explained?

Do not let anyone rob you of your God-given gift to know Him deeply, because that is eternal life (Jn 17:3). Take a listen to any sermon topic in which you may be interested at ancientfaith.com or read the church fathers from www.ccel.org/fathers and feast on the knowledge of the Trinity! Something as simple as a letter of St. Athanasius or a commentary from St. John Chrysostom will simply change the way you read the bible and relate to God, money-back guarantee.

¹ St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, ed. The Philokalia: The Complete Text. Translated by G.E.H Palmer, P Sherrard and K. Ware. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1979-95, Vol. 1, 62.

Fear The Fathers?

J O S E P H the C A R P E N T E R

An Article by
Mareya
Naguib

Whenever the life of consecration is mentioned, one might assume that it is referring to the life of monasticism or the priesthood. However, there are three different types of consecration into which each individual within the Coptic Orthodox faith can fit.

The first type of consecration is known as a “full” consecration to God. This occurs when one dedicates his or her life to be either a monk or nun through celibacy or priesthood, giving their whole life fully to God and no one else.

eat or drink or whatever [we] do, [to] do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31).

These three types of consecration are exemplified by St. Joseph the Carpenter, a great saint in our Church of whom we do not speak about regularly.

We often associate St. Mary with Christ by herself, and neglect that St. Joseph played a great influential role in raising Christ as well. Many may tend to forget about his important role as a fatherly figure for Christ, as



A True Life of Consecration

However, God did not call all humans to only these two vocations. Some can also go through a second type of consecration which is called a “partial” consecration. Partial consecration involves serving God’s people. This may include Sunday school service, or any other type of Church service that is dedicated to God’s Church or people. Partial consecration is expected from every Christian, as God reminds us: “Inasmuch as you did to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Mt 25:40).

The third type of consecration is the consecration of the heart. As members of the faith, we have all consecrated our hearts to God since the time of our baptism. That is why we are commanded: “Whether [we]

well as his life of consecration to the Holy Family.

St. Joseph was born in Bethlehem of Judea and was a descendent of King David. Later on in his life, we know that he decided to live in Nazareth and worked as a carpenter. As we know through the history of the Coptic Church, St. Mary consecrated herself to God and she lived in the temple up to the age of twelve. Since she had to leave the sanctuary by that age, the priests wanted to make sure that she would have a spouse from the tribe of Judah who would take care of her and be faithful to her. The priests gathered twelve righteous men and they took their staffs and placed them in the sanctuary for prayer. A dove was sent by God to fly into the sanctuary and stood on the staff of St.

Joseph. The priests immediately knew that it was God’s choice for St. Joseph to be St. Mary’s spouse. The first way St. Joseph began his life of consecration was through full consecration which meant living a life of celibacy with St. Mary.

Not only did St. Joseph dedicate his life to celibacy, but also to a life of service. As St. Mary’s spouse, he took care of her and served her during her pregnancy with Christ. He protected her in every way and continued to care for her even after Christ was born. St. Joseph’s life greatly exemplifies the

life of service and many can learn from him by putting others before themselves in order to better serve God’s people.

Finally, we can see that St. Joseph also dedicated his life through the third type of consecration, the consecration of the heart. Even though he was busy with the Holy Family, his heart was always focused on God and glorifying Christ. St. Joseph was a godly man and that is why God chose him to be the perfect spouse for St. Mary.

One can conclude that St. Joseph’s life was a true life of consecration by all measures.

Consecration is the dedication of the heart to God fully. It is not split between God and man. Consecrating the whole heart to God, one will do everything for the sake of glorifying God. The life of consecration does not fall into a specific time frame. Even the youth can begin a life of service, and so can the elderly.

Through tradition, we learn that, “St. Joseph died before Jesus entered public ministry. Our Lord was about sixteen years of age when His foster father, St. Joseph departed” (Bishop Youssef, St. Joseph the Carpenter). St. Joseph served the Holy Family when he was well into his elderly years, up until his departure at the age of one hundred and eleven years. His departure was on the twenty-sixth day of the month of Epep (August 2nd). May he pray for us and teach us the true life of consecration for the sake of Christ.

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An Article by Christine Massoud

Part Three

To believe God Not to Believe IN God

In the previous article, we talked about finding out Who God is and diligently seeking Him. If you do not remember or have not read the previous article, please check it out online at www.suscopts.org/mightyarrows. Let's quickly draw on the following Scriptures: "Come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people." (Ps 100:2-3) And "Great is the Lord... His greatness is unsearchable... The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is good to

all, and His tender mercies are over all His works... The Lord upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down... The Lord is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works. The Lord is near to all who call upon Him... He will fulfill the desires of those who fear Him. He will also hear their cry and save them. The Lord preserves all who love Him." What a God! So call upon Him, and you too will say with David, "I will declare your greatness and utter the memory of Your great goodness [to me] and shall sing of Your righteousness [and mercy you have shown me]" (Ps 145).

Something great and wonderful happens when we start to see His hands in our lives; when we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that only He must have done this. That something is praise, praise to Him Who saves, Who provides, and Who protects... And that praise will have you in awe of Him for a while, until you see Him again. And the more you look for Him, the more you will see Him involved. I can feel your doubt. Trust me, I was doubtful too; and still am; That is why we all need the reminder of the works and provision He gives daily. So, may this be for us

both: "Believing God can do what He says He can do."

I did a study a while back with my church called the Gospel-Centered Life. It was a great study of what it is with which we struggle the most: living our lives by the Book. The study is based on two truths and with each lesson, we dug a little deeper into what it meant to know and live these Biblical truths.

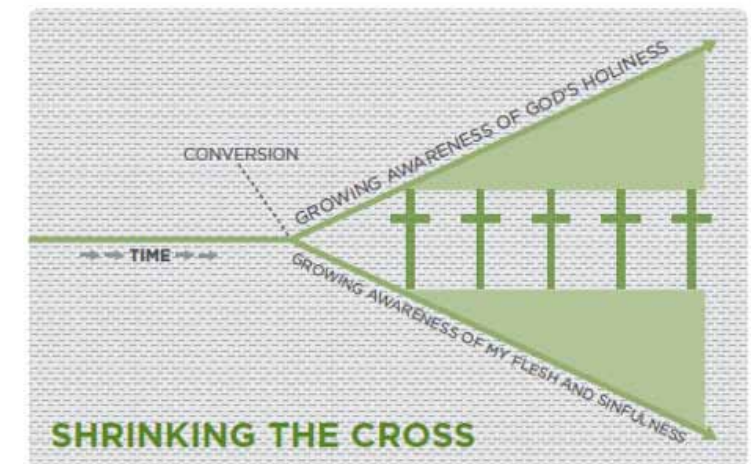
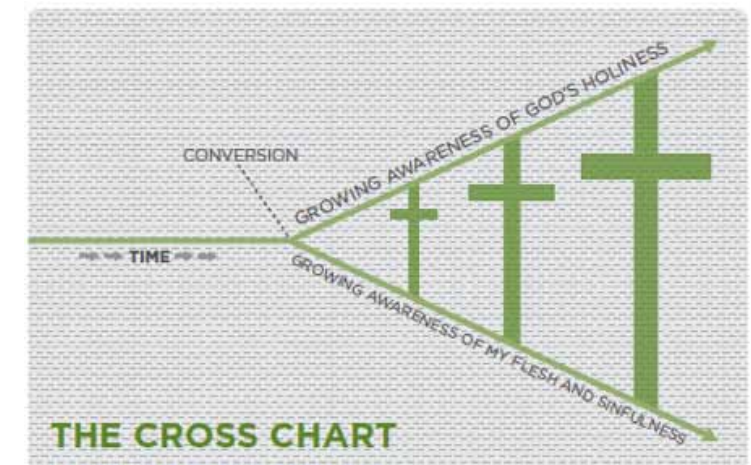
The first truth is that our Christian walk with God is never static. There is not a grand moment of conversion or belief and that's the end of

the story. There is a moment of realization but if that moment does not affect and is not reflected throughout the rest of our lives, then it was very much fleeting. Having been raised a Christian, baptized, drenched (for a lack of a better expression) in the Bible, Sunday School, Liturgies, fasts, etc., does not mean you are a Christian believer. You are responsible for your belief. This does not mean stop going to Church or listening to others; it just means we have to know the difference between what God says in His words and what man is saying to us. Listen, when we stand before God and He says, "Why did you not believe Me?" We are not going to be able to point to them and say, "He's why! She's why!" Your parents' faith and others' prayers are not going to help you either at that moment. His question is clear, "Why did you not believe? I told YOU to believe Me." Doing without believing is simply that, doing. Action items and check boxes will never amount to love and a relationship with God. We have all heard the same within a relationship or a friendship setting. If the gift giving is a supplement for the time less spent, it does not mean the same thing, does it? Well, the same with God. Our lives have to reflect this belief in Him.

The second truth is, there is a path to walk, and through that path, two outcomes can occur. First is our growing awareness of God's holiness and mercy, along with our growing awareness of our sinfulness and our weak bodies. This is the better of the two outcomes. When we begin to see Him as He is; we cannot help but be humbled. The second is the opposite: no growth; no new awareness of God; and thus, no new awareness of how human we are.

So, back to our belief conversation--the more you see HIM, the less you will see yourself. If you do nothing, then you are basically shrinking the cross — the price paid for you. God goes from a big G to a small g. These two thoughts coincide with two modern belief systems: the miraculous and the lack of. The first believes that miracles in our day have ceased. At the other extreme, we have the thought that it is all about miracles — it is all about the performance of God. These are two extremes within our Christian thinking today. I hope to show you that neither one of these two extremes are what God has called us to believe. "Why are we debating this?" you may ask. Remember the last article: **"Faith that remains unchallenged remains very much unchanged"**? The difference between Graph 1 and 2 is simply this: our reaction to God, and our belief in who He is and what He can do. There it is again--what He can do in your life, in mine, in the Church, in our cities, etc.

We could also easily say that one is God-centered and the other is self-centered who prioritizes what God can do over. Who God is? The danger of the second is that it **undercuts our HOPE in God and what He can do**. Here is a set of verses that speak just that. Let us begin with Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things HOPED for, the evidence of things not seen." "Who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and HOPE are in God" (1Pt 1:21). And Romans 4:18 "[Abraham] who, contrary to HOPE, in hope BELIEVED, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, 'So shall your descen-



dants be." **Faith cannot be separated from HOPE.** God has worked miracles for people who have believed God for things they have never seen. Can you imagine if the children of Israel stood on the edge of the Red Sea and said, "We are not going to cross because we have never seen this before!" You know, they would be dead and would complain to God: "You have brought us out here and now we're dead." And He would answer them: "No, I parted the sea for you! But, since you have not seen this done before, you just stood there and stared at it!" Do not let your lack of belief stop you at that Red Sea and die. Do not ever forget what St. Mark said: "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mk 9:23). **When we say it's not possible, you have undercut your hope and your belief and your God.**

In Judges 6:12-13, is the story of Gideon, the least of the tribe

and the least within his tribe as he describes himself: "And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!' Gideon said to Him, 'O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about.'" We ask the same question, Lord, Your Word is full of miracles but why are we not seeing them? David in Psalm 74:9 said, "We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet; nor is there any among us who knows how long." The prophet Habakkuk said, "O Lord, I have heard your speech and was afraid; O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known" (Hab 3:2). Do you feel his desperation? Are you feeling the same way? Do you have the need to see Him and His miracles? We have needs, right? We are not short on need, we are short on belief!

The Bounty of Our Coptic Heritage

Not a “he said she said” story

An Article by Joseph Ghebrial

This topic should be the passion of every Coptic Orthodox individual. We are all the legacy of the ‘early church Fathers’! Every individual Copt around the world has been blessed to be a part of this legacy. It is not enough to be wearing the crown of its greatness by merely being ‘born into the religion’. We all need to understand that our identity, and not our religion, has been handed down to us from Christ Himself. In essence, being Coptic Orthodox Christians is who we are and not our religion. I often feel that new-comers or converts into our church have earned or have a greater, more pure respect, understanding, and appreciation of its magnifi-

cent and awesome nature than those born into being Orthodox Christians. Unfortunately, this article is not about church converts but instead about the strength, beauty, and truth within the Church that attracts people from all walks of life to follow in its promising path. This indeed was Christ’s intention two thousand years ago and carried out by His disciples.

Egypt! Egypt is Coptic history and part of Egypt’s history is Coptic history. There it begins: the introduction of Christianity in the first century AD and covers the history of the Copts to the present day. Egypt is identified in the Bible as the place of refuge that the

Holy Family sought in its flight from Judea: “When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod the Great, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, ‘Out of Egypt I called My Son’” (Mt 2:14-15). Wow, nothing is by chance; everything God created and touched has a point, has a meaning, and has a purpose. Therefore, even a country has a purpose. It’s no wonder the Coptic Church history and traditions are just so very entrenched with beautiful history and symbolism.

The Coptic Church, which is now more than nineteen centuries old, has been kept sacred

and united through Christ’s direct teachings and instructions to His apostles (messengers). The message they were sent away to convey was very direct: there is one way, and only one way (Jn 14:6), by which people from all nations may restore their relationship with God: if they choose to stop living life their own way and turn to Jesus in repentance and faith. Before they were set out to teach, the ‘twelve’ had been only disciples (ones who learn). Therefore, this event was for them a form of graduation, when they went from being students to teachers. Jesus calls His inner circle of twelve disciples “The Twelve,” which might allude to the Twelve tribes of Israel as noted in Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:28-30. The apostles were sent away by Jesus to the Jews in pairs as in Matthew 10:1-7 (also read Mark 6:7-13 and Luke 9:1-6):

And when he had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these... These

twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying, “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

These verses literally state that their initial instructions were to heal the sick, drive out demons, and, in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, to raise the dead, but our Orthodox teachings read this more metaphorically as instructions to heal the spiritually sick, and thus, to drive away wicked behavior. They were also instructed to “take nothing for the journey except a staff — no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts— but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics” (Mk 6:8-9). Their carrying of just a staff (Matthew and Luke say not even a staff) is given as the reason for the use by Christian Bishops, and currently Popes, as a staff of office, because we believe in apostolic succession.

The Apostolic Age then, re-

fers to the period in our Church history during the lifetime of the apostles. In the second century, association with the apostles was esteemed as evidence of authority, and such churches are known as Apostolic Sees. When the Church of Alexandria was founded by St. Mark during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero, a great multitude of native Egyptians (as opposed to Greeks or Jews) embraced the Christian faith. These were great times for Christians, and Christianity spread throughout Egypt within half a century of St. Mark’s arrival in Alexandria.

Like St. Mark, Early Church Fathers are influential theologians, they have served as important Christian teachers and great bishops. These earliest Church Fathers are within two generations of the original Twelve Apostles of Christ, and are therefore, called the Apostolic Fathers since they were taught directly by the twelve. Important Apostolic Fathers include St. Clement of Rome, St. Ignatius of Antioch, and

St. Polycarp of Smyrna. They lived and wrote in the second half of the first century and the first half of the second century. In addition, the Didache and Shepherd of Hermas are usually placed among the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, although their authors are unknown. In essence, they provide a link between the Apostles, who had personal contact with Jesus, and the later generations of Church Fathers (Bishops). From earliest times, the first Bishop to be called Pope was the first Patriarch of Alexandria after St. Mark, Pope Anianus.

Now fast forward 382 years (in 381 AD), to Pope Timothy I of Alexandria, who presided over the second ecumenical council known as the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, which completed our Nicene Creed with this confirmation of the divinity of the Holy Spirit:

“We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified who spoke by the Prophets and in One, Holy, Universal, and Apostolic Church. We confess

one Baptism for the remission of sins and we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the coming age, Amen.”

In keeping with the traditional rights and vigor of our Coptic Church Fathers, we need to continue teaching. Then, it is only fair and very necessary to require that we, as a one bodied culture, get more Coptic schools, Coptic libraries, nationally acknowledged Coptic History Month and Coptic Appreciation Week, more Coptic language classes, and Coptic lessons in every Sunday School class. Basically, we need to appreciate and be proud of what we have been given, first by

Christ himself, and then given forward by the Apostles, Church Fathers, and Popes. It is very necessary for the Coptic congregations to appreciate the physical and spiritual being of the Church and its priests. It is also important to bring up our children and youth with the fear and respect needed to practice proper behavior in and out of the Church. We need to realize that the answers to our problems are not to throw them onto the shoulders of our Churches and its priests. Every member of the church is a unit of its structure, and being just that, a unit, we would be expected to aid one another, yet not parasitically devour it from its core. We have different outsiders from different religions and cultures looking in, and it would be a shame to represent Christ in a bad light. We are held up to a higher standard because we are the direct link to Christ.

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The Didache

SPECIAL
FEATURED
ARTICLE

By
His Grace
Bishop Youssef



HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF THE LORD'S INSTRUCTIONS TAUGHT TO THE NATIONS THROUGH THE TWELVE APOSTLES:

THE DIDACHE MAY BE THE OLDEST OF KNOWN DOCUMENTS OF CHRISTIAN ANTIQUITY. IT HAS BEEN SAID TO BE UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST ANCIENT CHURCH "MANUAL" IN MANKIND'S POSSESSION. IN THE EARLY CHURCH, HISTORICALLY RECORDED, PARTICULARLY IN THE NATION OF EGYPT, THE DIDACHE WAS HELD WORTHY OF GREAT RESPECT, AND

IS DOCUMENTED, AS OFTEN CITED BY ST. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA AS WELL AS ST. ATHANASIUS THE APOSTOLIC.

The Didache entails educational teaching and Church order, specifically Christian in characterization. This means there is no evidence of Jewish indoctrination, nor does it address Judaism as the first prob-

lem encountered within the early Christian Church's conception. The Didache's language is simplistic which places it to have been written at a time period very close to the Apostolic Era. This is postulated to be the initial period of change from the writings of the New Testament to those writings of the Church. Many theologians date the

book written in its entirety sometime around the latter third of the first century, making its accuracy of teaching valid.

The Didache further refers to the stability of the Church, which had been realized as the Apostolic Era drew to a close. Likewise, it makes reference to many quotes from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

It has no known author, nor does the Didache directly point to apostolic authorship. Rather, the inner writer writes about the

doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ as taught to the nations by the apostles. Therefore, it can be correctly surmised that the Lord's teachings to the apostles were shared with the Gentiles through evangelistic efforts.

Its place of origin is stated by many scholars to be Alexandria, Egypt. What evidence concurs with this? Alexandria, Egypt was said to use the Apostolic Church order (the Egyptian Church order) which is found under the Christian Church ethics section of the Didache. Statements within the Didache were quoted by Egyptian authors such as St. Clement of Alexandria, as historically documented. Further evidence support is the Egyptian 4th century Bishop Serapion who used it in His Grace's Eucharistic Prayers.



What purpose does this document give to the Christians today? It gives evidence pointing to the apostolic beginnings of our Church, first and foremost. It did not reveal evangelism's teaching of the day, but rather revealed the treasures of the Christian life at the end of the first century and in the second century with the rituals of that time, instructions of organiza-

tion, and regulations for Liturgical functions. It gives rise to the human imagination of how Church law in the East and in the West originated.

Specifics are astounding, for example, baptism was undeniably practiced by immersion (it spoke of running water in the rivers and immersion). Baptism by pouring water from a vessel or from the hand was allowed only in cases of scarcity of water or to sick persons who could not leave their beds. Fasting was necessary on Wednesdays and Fridays. Receiving the Holy Eucharist regularly was essential.

The Didache is not considered a book of the New Testament. Pope Athanasius emphasized that it was not canonized. Its purpose to us may rest in the fact that the Lord's teachings to the apostles were simply recorded by an inner unknown/anonymous writer as a result of the apostles' evangelistic efforts following the Pentecost. It gives us, perhaps, a look into how the Lord Jesus Christ shaped His disciples for Church greatness.

The discovery of the Didache was only a whisper of the teachings and the extraordinary talents which lay within the apostles. The disciples were twelve ordinary men similar in human likeness to many of us

today. The disciples were twelve men who could not fathom the power of God, who struggled with their own sins, had difficulty with absolute commitment, yet, who found faith.

With this ever challenged faith, a handful of common fishermen, a despised tax collector, and a political zealot--together comprising twelve men--became a force that would forever impact the world. This is not fiction or myth. They were not earthly prophets or saints. They were not priests or religious scholars of the day. They were not even educators or orators.

They were unremarkably human, but with faith and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, they conquered the world in His Name. This is an undeniable, undisputable historically recorded fact!

May we all give homage to those who did what He wanted them to do and ask to be worthy to pray:

"Just as You were with Your disciples, O Savior, and gave them peace, graciously come also and be with us, and grant us Your peace, and save us, and deliver our souls" (2nd Watch, Midnight Prayers).

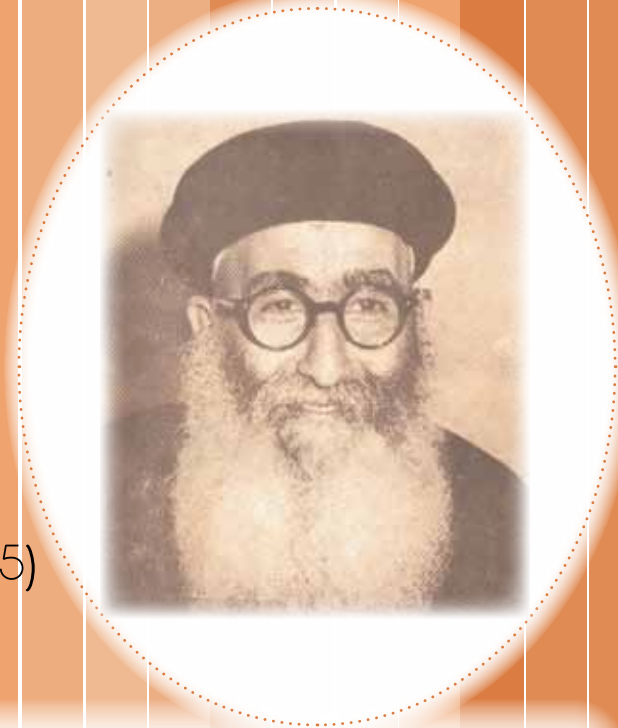
May we humbly ask that His blessings be upon us all,

Pillars of our Time: Ordinary People Serving in Extraordinary Ways

MAKING AN IMPACT

Fr. Mikhail Ibrahim,
A Man of Humility and Prayer (1899-1975)

An Article by Myriam Fahim



It was not until I read the story of Father Mikhail Ibrahim that I realized why I struggle to lead a life of prayer. Prayer is closely tied to humility. The proud person feels self-sufficient whereas the humble person **needs** God, and therefore, prays.

Allow me to share with you parts of Fr. Mikhail's story which have led me to this conclusion:

Fr. Mikhail was born in Quisna, Egypt to a God-fearing family. Before he became a priest, he was a government clerk. One day, an inspector unjustly filled a complaint of job negligence against him because he was going to church on Sundays before work. His superior (who had consented to later arrival on Sundays) began defending him stating that the law allowed this for Christians. To spare his superior trouble with the inspector, Fr. Mikhail simply asked for a transfer to another station.

Fr. Mikhail became a priest at age 52. He used to introduce himself as "Mikhail" or as "Mikhail the servant," not using his priestly title. Whenever he approached the gates of any church, he would kneel down, praise God, and make the

sign of the cross.

One day, while he was on a bus, a man harassed him because he was a priest and ordered him to leave the bus. Fr. Mikhail complied immediately. As soon as he got off, the bus broke down. The driver told the man to get out and apologized to the elderly Coptic priest. Other passengers got off the bus and asked Fr. Mikhail to get back on. He did. The driver started the ignition and the bus ran smoothly! When he was asked why he got off and on again, Fr. Mikhail replied that he simply did as he was told.

Asking people young and old to pray for the "Poor servant Mikhail," was something that he often did. He also "assigned" tasks to the saints, such as:

- "St. Mary, please take care of so and so..."
- "St. Mark, please take care of so and so"
- "St. George, please take care of this and that..."

Once he did this, he fully believed that the problems were taken

care of. He seldom gave advice, as he believed in the power of prayer. His approach to problems was "let us pray together and God will bring the answer."

He prayed before EVERYTHING! He prayed before eating and drinking, even water or tea; he prayed before discussing anything, before trying to settle family disputes, and he prayed the Divine Liturgy almost every day. If he was on a bus, he prayed for the passengers, the driver, and even the vehicle itself. In between these periods of prayer, he recited psalms!

When he went home to our Lord in 1975, H. H. Pope Shenouda gave the eulogy and asked this great man to keep praying for us all. He asked to have him buried at the Cathedral, so he could take Fr. Mikhail's blessings!

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

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By Miena Armanious

ONE MORNING I LEFT HOME WITHOUT MY GLASSES ON. Thankfully, my sight is not too bad, but my naked eyes cannot resolve fine details from a distance. As I was walking down a busy street, everything looked beautiful at first! Even the crowd in the street looked very young. It felt like walking in the middle of a 3D painting. In a superficial way, everything looked perfect and I had an epiphany. From now on, I will intentionally leave my glasses at home whenever possible.

It seemed like perfection was in front of me when I was forced to overlook the fine flaws. I had always thought that perfection is all about the small details. The value of a diamond is only determined when inspected under a microscope. A sophisticated machine runs perfectly if all the minute electronic components are well designed. This thinking led me to an important ques-

tion: Do the same standards apply to humans? What is it to be a perfect human? As Christians, we all agree that the answer to this question is to be like Christ. Again, a parallel question arises: what is it to be like Christ? I have to admit that I cannot answer the latter question, but I will try to address some points related to the subject as best I can.

It is very true that we have to care about the small details even in our spiritual life. Remember that the Lord warned us of "the little foxes that spoil the vines" (Sol 2:15). We also learn from the fathers of the Church the importance of the life of "precision." On the other hand, we raise our standards higher as we grow in awareness of the small details in life. Sometimes it is hard to be content or satisfied if we cannot meet these standards. Even worse, we expect others to meet our own criterion.

Sometimes we unconsciously become judgmental.

It seems we would be better if we get off this road to perfection, or maybe we need to take off our glasses! Is this even possible? Yes, Christianity offers a unique lens. It provides very high resolution when looking at our own lives and much less resolution when looking at the details in others' lives. It is called the lens of humbleness.

We are scared wearing this lens because it does not give us a clear frame of reference against others. In the real world, we can compare the quality of two pieces of diamond to determine their values. This is not possible in the spiritual world. We cannot compare our spiritual diamonds to others'. In order not to feel lost, the Church offers her tradition and the testimony of her saints as a guideline to perfection.

The Orthodox Church never encourages what is known as sharing personal testimonies, which is practiced among other churches, because it is an earthly way to attempt perfection; it lacks humbleness. It might be a joyful experience in the beginning but ends with bitterness. It is more like a competition where everyone cannot help but observe others. Whoever is on top does not have to place extra effort unless a potential competitor appears in the horizon. Christian perfection has nothing to do with this because it has no limits. Humbleness is what reminds us that we cannot reach the Unlimited by stepping over the limited achievements of others. It reminds us that the road of perfection is very modest. It reminds us that every step we take is by the Grace of God. It is enough for us to focus on the work of His Grace in our personal lives to find perfection.

The Mystery of Mysteries

An Article by James Helmy

The Western Church has traditionally referred to any leading theologian of the Christian faith by the title of doctor. The word is originally Latin and bears the meaning “teacher.” Saints Augustine, Athanasius, Cyril, and Gregory are all famous “doctors of the church,” for they were the original pioneers of Church doctrine. They did not create doctrine, but they expounded it—you could say, developed it out of Scripture. The voluminous array of teaching the Church Fathers have left us regarding the “Mystery of Mysteries,” the Holy Eucharist, is both complex and profound. We are indebted to them for the richness of their exposition, for they were the earliest instructors of the Church (after the apostles) on the blessedness and significance of the Holy Gift. Volumes have been composed in honor of this sacrament, but a few passages from the Fathers will be enough to achieve a summary of their thoughts.



ST. AUGUSTINE

The Eucharist was a favorite theme of this doctor of the Latin Church, and his teaching is tangible, profound, and edifying. In explaining the meaning of the Eucharist as “sacrifice,” he begins where every scholar of the New Testament would, the Old Testament.

“You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God

are a broken spirit, a broken and repentant heart, You shall not despise.” (Ps 51:16-17) Notice how in the very words in which God says that He does not desire sacrifice, he shows that God really does desire sacrifice. He does not desire the sacrifice of a slaughtered animal, but He desires the sacrifice of a repentant heart. So the sacrifice which he says God does not desire signifies the sacrifice He does desire.

The philosophic saint then goes one step further, and declares that the ultimate sacrifice man can offer to God is, in fact, himself...

Man, himself, consecrated in the name of God, and vowed to God, is himself a sacrifice insofar as he dies to the world that he may live to God...Our body is a sacrifice when we chasten it with temperance, that we may not present ourselves as instruments for sin, but as instruments for righteousness to God.

His remarks on the question of why we use bread and wine provide us with some of the finest specimens of his eloquence:

But why bread? I provide nothing of my own, but let us listen to the Apostle: “We, though many, are one bread, one body” (1 Cor 10:17). Understand and rejoice! Remember that bread is not made from one grain, but from many. When you were exorcised, you were (in a way) “milled.” When you were baptized, you were “moistened.” When you received the fire of the Holy Spirit, you were “baked.” Be what you see, and receive what you are....So also in the case of the wine. Recall, brethren, how wine is made. Many grapes

hang in the cluster, but the liquid of the grapes is mixed into a unity. So also did Christ portray us. He willed that we belong to Him. He consecrated the mystery of our peace and unity upon His table.



**ST. JOHN
CHRYSOSTOM**

This great teacher, ascetic, patriarch, and golden-mouthed preacher of the Greek Church is another source of luminous teaching on the Great Mystery. This excerpt explains how the Holy Blood waters the soul:

This blood makes the image of our King bloom in us. It produces an inconceivable beauty. It does not permit the nobility of the soul to fade, since it waters and nourishes it without ceasing. The blood which we form from food is not blood immediately, but passes through some other stage first. Not so with this blood, for it at once waters the soul and creates a certain power in it. This blood, when worthily received, drives away demons far from us and summons to us the angels and the Lord of the angels. This blood poured out has cleansed the whole world.

He urged his flock at Antioch (during his priesthood) to forgive others their trespasses before approaching the sacred altar:

Let no one have wicked thoughts, but let us cleanse our minds, since we are approaching a clean sacrifice, and let us make our souls holy. And this can be done in a single day. How? In what way? If you have anything against an enemy, get rid of your wrath. Heal the wound. Let go of your hostility, that you may receive healing from the table. For you are approaching the awesome and holy sacrifice. Show reverence for the goal of the sacrificial offering, who is Christ. For whom was He slain, and why? That He might make peace between heaven and earth; to make you a friend of the angels and of God; to make you—who were once an enemy—a friend. Will you continue in enmity with your neighbor? How will you be able to approach the Table of Peace? Hear, at least, what He says: “When you offer your gift upon the holy altar, and standing there before the altar, remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift upon the altar, and go and be reconciled with your brother, and then offer your gift” (Mt 5:23, 24)



**ST. CYRIL
OF ALEXANDRIA**

We finally come to St Cyril, who is most famous for unmasking the Nestorian heresy,

and leaving for us the foundational theological formula: *mia physis tou logou theou sesarkomene* (one incarnate nature of God the Word). His teaching on the holy Eucharist continually maintains as its point of reference—the nature and power of Christ. The way his teaching joins the ideas of sacrament and Lord reveals a finely-tuned theological mind. His favorite theme was the life-giving nature of the body of Christ:

How then can man upon earth, clothed as he is with death, return to deathlessness? I answer that this dead flesh must be a partaker of the life-giving power which comes from God. And the life-giving power of God is the only-begotten Word, and Him He sent to us as Savior and Deliverer. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). But He became flesh not by undergoing any change or alteration, or by ceasing to be the Word, but rather by having been born of a woman in the flesh, and taking the body He received from her, that by implanting Himself in us by an inseparable union, He might raise us above the power of death and corruption.

He goes on to soften the tough theology and assists our minds in grasping his thought with the following examples:

When you put a piece of bread in wine or oil, you find that it becomes charged with quality of that particular thing. When iron is brought into contact with fire, it becomes full of its activity, and though it is by nature iron, it exerts the power of fire. And so the life-giving Word of God, having united Himself to His own

In the Teachings of the Church Fathers



flesh, endowed it with the power of giving life. He, Himself, assures us of this: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If a man eats of this bread, he shall live forever” (Jn 6:47)...When, therefore, we eat the holy flesh of Christ, the Savior of us all, and drink His precious blood, we have life in us.

How or in what manner this

is done, we cannot tell, for it is incapable of explanation, and completely beyond the powers of the mind [to comprehend]. To Him alone is the manner of the union known.

These are just a few gems randomly gleaned from a wide and deep treasure chest of thinking that we call the teaching of the Church Fathers. For every quote included

in this article, there are at least a hundred more of equal value dispersed throughout patristic works; for every provoking thought, there are a thousand more to be discovered; for every stimulating line, there are ten thousand more to be read and upon which to meditate and incorporate into the believer's life.



I Have Learned from Him

By Mariam Maher

I HAVE LEARNED FROM HIM how to get to know God. “Have a small notebook and every time God’s hand becomes clear to you, write it down,” he said. I have learned that God is omnipotent, for He is the maker of all the angels, one of whom was enough to kill one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians in one night (2 Kin 19:35). I have learned that He is omnipresent because He sees everything, hears everything, and knows everything; He is omniscient for He is the creator of everything and everyone. Because of him, the notion of the infinite God and His infinite attributes has become clearer to me.

I HAVE LEARNED FROM HIM how to love God: “Contemplate on the qualities of God that you have personally experienced in your life. Have you seen God the merciful? Take a note of it. Have you seen God the just? Make a note of it.”

I HAVE LEARNED FROM HIM how God works. He asserted that God does not rush into things; God takes His time to plan, and time for His plan to take its course. God is patient, very patient. God works quietly, and calmly. God works to win everyone over.

I HAVE LEARNED FROM HIM to think of and love eter-

nity. In one of his sermons, he kept imagining what will happen when one arrives home. “It will be a grand introduction party.” You will be introduced to our father Adam, and our mother Eve, to the early fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You will meet the prophets: Elijah, Samuel, and Isaiah. Moses will be there and you can ask him all your questions on how God parted the sea and provided the manna. You will meet King David and you will hear him singing his psalms. It will take you a long time to be introduced to the rank of martyrs: St. George of Cappadocia the prince of martyrs, St. Demiana, St. Mina the wonder worker, St.

Marina the devil-conqueror, St. Abaskhairoun of Qalin, and all the rest. You will be introduced to the rank of the patriarchs: St. Athanasius the Apostolic, St. Cyril the pillar of faith, and many others. Can you imagine how many monks and nuns you will get to meet? The ones of whom you have heard, and the ones you haven’t. He made me think of heaven.

I HAVE LEARNED FROM HIM to love my Coptic Orthodox Church and to be strongly rooted in its beliefs. He talked about our sacraments and how biblically founded they are. He talked about the lives of the saints and how we should follow

their faith “considering the outcome of their conduct” (Heb 13:7). He talked about tradition and why it is important, about the legacy of the disciples, and how the Coptic Church kept delivering it through the many generations.

I HAVE LEARNED FROM HIM to meditate on the lives of the saints and Biblical characters. He spoke about women who stood fast in faith, were brave and strong, like Moses’ mother and how she, in the short period she raised him, was able to feed him the faith before he became Pharaoh’s daughter’s son (Ex 2:8-10). Deborah, the prophetess and judge, was another

character of whom he spoke highly. She led Barak and his men in a victory over Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s (king of Canaan) army (Jud 4). He also spoke several times about the God-given gifts to women and how they can be used in prudence and wisdom, like Abigail when she wanted to correct her husband’s mistake, did that with great wisdom and was able to keep David “from coming to bloodshed and from avenging (himself) with (his) own hand” (1 Sam 25:33).

I HAVE LEARNED FROM HIM many social skills. He taught about leadership, team work, accepting others, winning

people over, comforting the fainthearted, upholding the weak, and being patient. “A successful leader is one who realizes the gift of everyone around him and employs them correctly,” he said. He taught that team work is essential in serving the Church. He also talked about the different types of personalities and gave advice on how to deal with each.

He was a knowledgeable teacher, a wise leader, an orphan, yet a father to a multitude, a poet passionate about his creator, an evangelist who was able to spread his Church from one end of the world to the other end, an ambassador and a patriot.

He had a sensitive heart, a cute sense of humor, a child’s laughter, the reverence of great people, the grace of royalty, and Christ’s lowliness of heart. He was known all over the world, respected by many, and deeply loved by myriads. He was the faithful servant who shepherded God’s people in purity and righteousness. No human could accomplish all these things if it was not through divine help; the Holy Spirit was clearly residing in him.

Sitting at his feet to learn through the timeless legacy he left is priceless. This is His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.

يا ترى شفت ايه يا أبى؟
يا ترى قابلت مين لما وصلت؟
شفت أباءنا ابراهيم واسحق ويعقوب؟
الملائكة التى حملتك بتعرفك بموسى ويشوع؟
يا ترى قابلت داود، مرتل اسرائيل الحلو؟
اللى كان أشفر مع حلاوة فى العينين
يا ترى شفت بولس وسألته ازاي كان بيقول على نفسه انه مُفترى؟
يا ترى قابلت التلاميذ وسألتهم ليه ماكتبوش لنا على الأمور المختصة بالملكوت؟
اللى علمها لهم السيد المسيح لما كان بيظهر لهم بعد القيامة
يا ترى قابلت يوحنا الحبيب وسألته على تفسير سفر الرؤيا؟
يا ترى قابلت مين فى حفلة التعارف اللى كنت بتحكى لنا عليها انها هتحصل لما
نروح فوق؟
وفوق كل ده، يا ترى قابلت من أحببته فى خلوتك ينادى فؤادك بعمق الكلم؟
من أحببته فى توبتك ووقت البكاء ووقت الألم؟
من أحببته وقت الرخاء وأيضا وقت العدم؟
من أحببته قلبا يضمد جرحك وروحا يرفرف حولك يفيض عليك بأسمى النعم؟
طوباك أيها العبد الصالح، كنت أميننا فاسترح الآن وانعم بالقمم

Early Monasticism in the Christian Church

By Evraam Gorgy

Following the Edict of Milan in 313, which gave full religious liberty in the Roman Empire, specifically Christians, putting an end to the persecution era, practicing the faith was no longer done in secret or being under attack by the state. Soon after, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire (nearly the whole world). The building of churches expanded, and Church clergy were being treated with honor and dignity. The faith flourished and theological schools were being established; the greatest of all being the School of Alexandria. Soldiers had crosses, and sometime Scripture imprinted on their helmets and weapons.

One can argue that this is the first time Christians were ever able to live in full liberty since the day of Pentecost (the beginning of the Church). The Church was under persecution, first from the Jewish leaders, and then from the Roman rulers and governors, which reached its utmost in the Diocletian Persecution, also known as the Great Persecution. Up until that point, the Christian faith was associated with martyrdom: nearly all of Christ's disciples were martyred, Christ Himself died the most humiliating death, and Church expansion was mostly done underground; Christianity was an embattled religion.

In the years following 313, Christians experienced something extraordinary and remarkable about their faith: not only were they granted the full freedom of worship, but also, their long-persecuted faith and Christ became the world's King and

Master, and the state that spilled their blood assumed their religion. The martyrdom attitude of Christians did not end with the beginning of the Christian state. Its understanding, however, changed from the sacrifice of the body to the sacrifice of worldly pursuits. A new way of life was increasingly embraced by pious Christians.

St. Anthony the Great (251-356), who lived most of his life during the persecution era, was the first to establish this way of life most practically, even before the end of the Diocletian Persecution. He was not the first to abandon the riches of the world for the sake of Christ. Many saints and righteous preceded him, but he, no doubt, was the first to become a model and founder of the ideals of the life of devotion which is now known as monasticism.

Moved by the life-changing event of his wealthy father's sudden death, he reportedly contemplated: "You left the world despite your will, but I'm willingly leaving it." He literally put to practice Christ's teaching: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Mt 19:21). He sold his inheritance and sent his sister to a virgins' hostel.

The story of St. Anthony was documented by St. Athanasius the Apostolic (296-373) in his book, *Life of Anthony*. St. Anthony's story and teachings, as well as the story of other Coptic monks, influenced people from different walks of life and from all over the world: peasants, wealthy individuals, illiterates, educated, even scholars. A highly educated

man in Rome who was called 'the tutor of princes' because the kings of Rome entrusted him with teaching their children (princes), St. Arsenius (360-449) is a model of scholars who loved the life of monasticism. He left Rome and all its glory for the Egyptian desert. He once said, referring to the wisdom of one of the righteous and often illiterate Coptic monks, "I have indeed been taught Latin and Greek, but I do not know even the alphabet of this peasant."

Early monasticism is generally associated with the Egyptian desert. Most of the well-known Fathers lived in Scetis, located in Egypt's western desert. This discipline first started as a withdrawal from the world to a life of solitude, but developed to groups of monks, then to monastic communities. While initially monks were not ordained priests, the term "Abba" or "Father" was given to the elder monk or group leader. In a poetic description, the Desert Fathers turned the barren desert into a fruitful paradise of prayer and devotion.

People visited the desert to learn from the Fathers' wisdom and to seek their counsel, which is practiced to this day. A noticeable theme in the very famous literature *Apophthegmata Patrum* (Sayings of the Desert Fathers) is a layman or disciple asking an elder: "Abba, give me a word," (a word to live by), hence the name of the book. Remarkably, the teaching of the Fathers is applicable to different types of lives through all ages, especially in this day and age where the worldly pleasures have greatly multiplied and the need for true spiritual wisdom is vital to our salvation.

A higher class of the Desert Fathers is called the hermits. These individuals have attained higher levels of spirituality and mysticism. One hears of the astounding stories of the hermits' great miracles like raising the dead, and seeing visions of Paradise, angels, and sometimes Christ Himself. These saints usually live in the "inner" desert (lost areas in the desert) where literally no one could find them. While this might seem radical to us today, it is certainly and simply beyond the understanding of ordinary world dwellers.

The life of celibacy and devoting one's life to God existed in both the Old and New Testaments, long before St. Anthony established monasticism in the fourth century. To name a few examples: in the Old Testament, prophets like Elijah and Elisha lived a life of celibacy (see 1 and 2 Kings); in the New Testament, St. John the Baptist (the Forerunner) was a celibate (Mt 3:3,4), as was St. Paul (1 Cor 7:7). In fact, according to some hypotheses based on the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls found at Qumran near the modern day West Bank, St. John the Baptist lived in a community of celibates akin to the Essenes. Consequently, monasticism is part of the Christian faith according to Scripture and Church Tradition.

The monastic order has penetrated the skeleton of the church so much that the Church leaders, the bishops, and patriarch are chosen from the monastic order. The Orthodox Church learned over its 2000 years of history that faith, pastoral care, and evangelism are best kept and performed by monks. May their prayers and blessing be with us all.



QUESTION & ANSWER

New Summer 2012 Edition

GENERAL QUESTION

And its Answer

Q: Why do we call a priest “father” although the Lord said, “Call no man father”?

A: Our Lord did not mean this literally, otherwise we should not call our parents father and mother. Many churches have Sunday school ‘teachers’ and in some churches the minister has an advanced degree, so he is given the title “doctor,” as are physicians. The problem is that our Lord forbids the title “teacher” (which is the meaning of the Latin word for doctor), “Do not call anyone teacher, because your teacher is one, the Christ” (Mt 23:10). Therefore, if we follow the literal interpretation, any church with Sunday school teachers or doctors is guilty of breaking the literal interpretation of the Holy Gospel of St. Matthew 23:9-10.

The New Testament also gives Christian leaders the title “father.” The Holy Book of 1 Thessalonians refers to St. Paul “as a father exhorting his own children” (2:11). This is consistent with his frequent designation of the members of his communities or disciples as children (1 Cor 4:14,17; 2 Cor 6:13; Gal 4:19; Phil 2:22; 1 Tim 1:2,18; 2 Tim 1:2; 2:1; Titus 1:4; Phm 10). By this St. Paul places himself in the role of spiritual father. In fact, he insists on being called the spiritual father of the Holy Book of Corinthians when he says, “You have in Christ ten thousand teachers, but not many fathers, because in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through announcing the gospel. Therefore I exhort you to become imitators of me” (1 Cor 4:15). Preaching the Holy Gospel of Christ constitutes St. Paul’s fatherly begetting of children, making him their spiritual father.

Furthermore, he requests that they imitate him, not only in good behavior but in bringing others to spiritual rebirth through preaching the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

New Summer 2012 Edition

BIBLE QUESTION

And its Answer

FROM THE HOLY BOOK OF
BARUCH

Q: Describe Jerusalem after the return of the exile.

A: Exalted with honor as children of the Kingdom (Baruch 5:6).

PAPAL CANDIDACY

EDITORIAL

A Released Statement from the SUS Diocese Clergical Assembly States the Following:

“After we have studied the church canons concerning the election of the Patriarch, we declare that we hold steadfastly to the Church Tradition and the Apostolic Canons that it is not permissible for a diocesan bishop to be nominated to the patriarchate, except within the conditions which are stated by Canon 14 from the Apostolic Canons, and it is only the authority of the Holy Synod to apply this canon on the candidates from the diocesan bishops to the degree of papacy.” This statement is conferred by all 39 current SUS Diocesan priests and was signed by H.G. Bishop Youssef on July 1, 2012.

On Wednesday May 30, 2012, the Nomination Committee comprised of nine clergy and nine laypeople published the preliminary list of papal candidates to the global public. The selected nominees first had to willing agree in writing to accept their nomination. The process of selecting a new pope, the 118th Patriarch of the See of Alexandria, is under the auspices of the Holy Synod and is currently underway to reduce the list of prospective candidates to five or seven individuals. To foster an opportunity for the Coptic community in Egypt and abroad to express their viewpoint regarding the preliminary list of papal candidates and any other objective in the process, His Eminence Metropolitan Pachomious, the interim acting patriarch, authorized a survey to be administered at all the churches for a period starting from mid-June to mid-July. In the duration, each diocese has designated twelve eligible delegates to vote on behalf of their respective diocese. Countries and states independent of a diocese or a metropolis will be under the jurisdiction of the interim acting patriarch. Once the list is reduced, the evaluation process will be presented to the Nominations Challenges Committee comprised of three clergy and two laypeople to determine the final three candidates. These three distinguished individuals will be identified by receiving the most votes and surpassing any challenges regarding their capabilities. From that point forward, the final three names will be brought to the altar for the Divine Liturgy and a child who will be blind-folded will choose one of the three names to be 117th successor of St. Mark the Apostle.

1. H.E. Metropolitan Pishoy, Metropolitan of Damietta
2. H.G. Bishop Kyrillos, Bishop of Milan
3. H.G. Bishop Pavnotious, Bishop of Samalout
4. H.G. Bishop Boutros
5. H.G. Bishop Rafael
6. H.G. Bishop Tawadrous
7. H.G. Bishop Youannes
8. Rev. Fr. Anastasi St. Samuel
9. Rev. Fr. Daniel the Syrian
10. Rev. Fr. Maximos St. Antony
11. Rev. Fr. Pachomious the Syrian
12. Rev. Fr. Pigol St. Paul
13. Rev. Fr. Pishoy St. Paul
14. Rev. Fr. Rafael St. Mina
15. Rev. Fr. Sawires St. Paul
16. Rev. Fr. Seraphim the Syrian
17. Rev. Fr. Shenouda St. Pishoy

Events & Activities

DIOCESE PROGRAMS

St. Verena Resource Ministry

(SVRM) Requesting assistance or registering to be a Volunteer Consultant: www.suscopts.org/svrm/

Family Ministry Program: fmp.suscopts.org

Theological Seminary Program

Program Registration deadline: March 15, 2012

The LEAD Program

Registration deadline: August 31, 2012

See www.theleadprogram.org for more information.

HOPE Program

Help Other People Excel: Social Services Ministry

See hope.suscopts.org for more information

Archangel Raphael Ministry (A.R.M.):

Special Needs Ministry: www.copticangel.org

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DIOCESE EVENTS

Southern Coptic Kids Camp: FL: Jul 22-25, 2012

FL Middle School Camp: Jul 30 - Aug 2, 2012

2012 Evangelism Conference: Aug 3-5, 2012

CPAR Adults Professional Retreat:

Sept 13-16, 2012

Pre-Marital Retreats: TX: Nov 16-18, 2012

** Dates are subject to change. Please check www.suscopts.org*

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