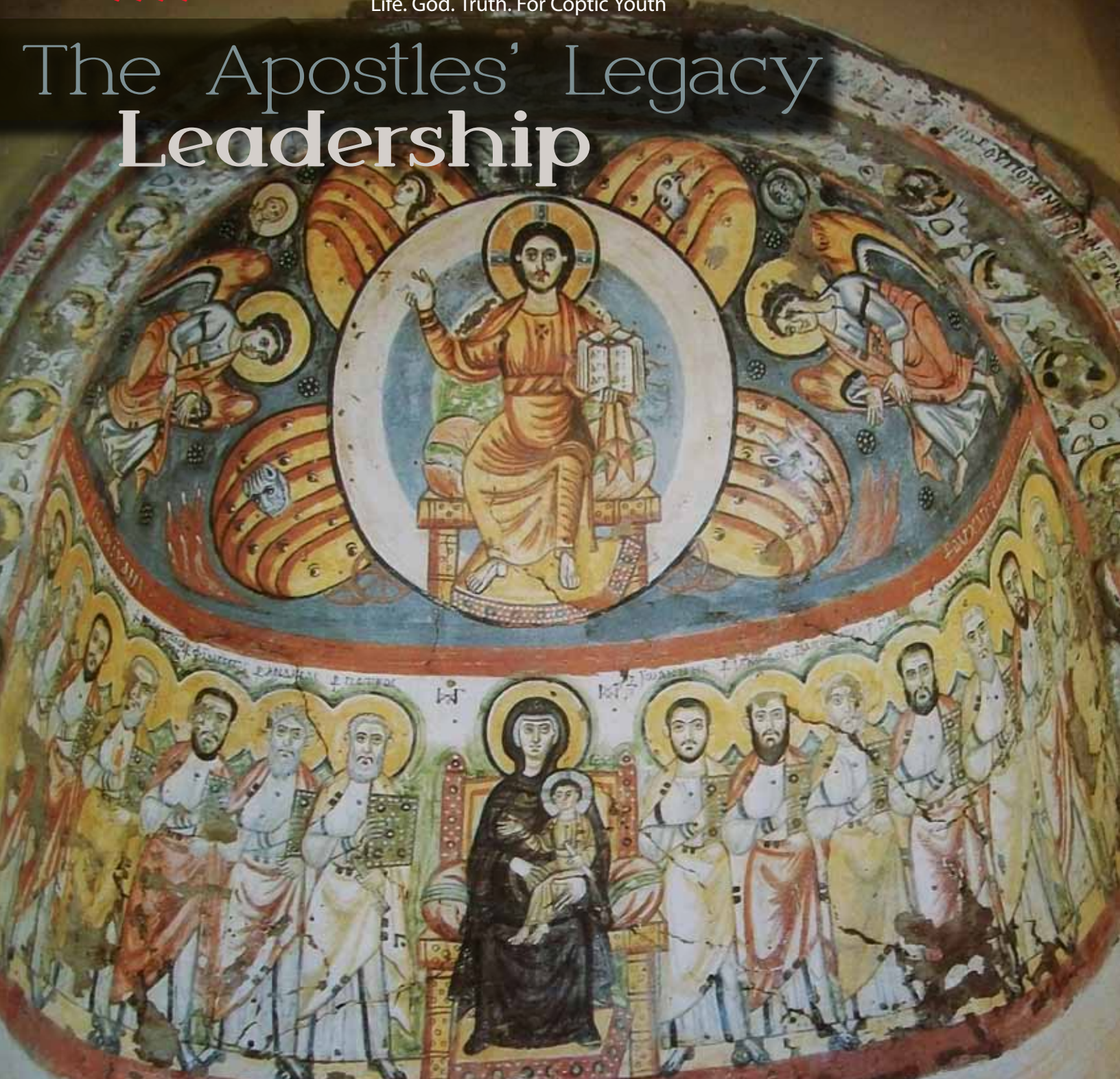


MIGHTY MAGAZINE MARRROWS

Life. God. Truth. For Coptic Youth

The Apostles' Legacy Leadership



A mural painting of a niche in Bawit room#6, dating back to the 6th century A.D., from the Monastery of Apollo in Bawit, Egypt

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

Psalm 127:4

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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,

Leadership is one of the many gifts God grants to His children. Many people possess talents, but gifts are from the Holy Spirit. God’s children develop their leadership abilities through discipleship, just as the apostles did. They submit to God and their spiritual fathers for guidance, being empowered through the obedience to a higher and wiser authority. Thus, on an ongoing basis, purpose and direction are revealed to them, and God bestows His blessings upon them to carry out their missions on earth, by His grace.

This edition of the Mighty Arrows Magazine shares Christian perspectives on leadership. I encourage our leaders to strive to develop leadership by first wisely choosing whom to follow. Learn from your spiritual fathers and imitate the saints and righteous men and women who, through Christ, have made a positive impact on society.

Leaders are not only heroes from a different era. Some leaders are part of our lives today. Some leaders are righteous and some are villains. Some are forthright and some have dissuaded people from the truth. Some leaders are corrupt and form a band of corrupt followers, while others are sincere seekers of peace. We must choose to follow leaders who are committed to exercise their authority for the good of the people.

We have recently witnessed many styles of leadership during the recent events in Egypt. As a country, Egypt has always been a leader amongst countries throughout the world. Religion, science, engineering, medicine, architecture, education, commerce, and many other concepts came from this great nation. Despite the great achievements that came from Egypt, many disruptive events occurred that hindered Egypt’s prominence as a catalyst. In recent events, once again, Christians have been bearing the brunt of brutality. Our thoughts and prayers are with all the people in Egypt that all may enjoy peace and goodwill throughout the land.

I pray that you will become leaders in your space in the world—your place of work, studies, and social venues. Do not allow others to dictate unacceptable behavior to you, no matter how popular and seemingly harmless it may be. Be firm in your Christian principles so that the wind of turbulent times does not toss you around in frivolous activities. Do not misuse or abuse your gifts, but apply them faithfully and wholeheartedly, and the Lord will bless your labors with much fruit.

Glory be to God, forever, Amen.

God bless you,

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



Why Did Enoch Walk With God, And How? Walk the Walk. *By Boulis Ibrahim.*



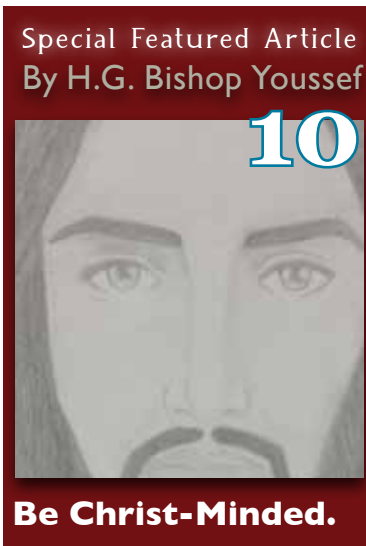
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Be Christ-Minded.



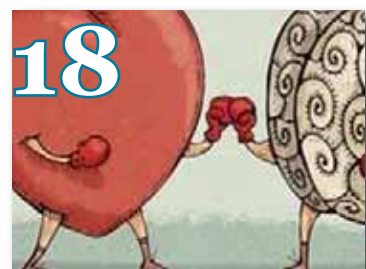
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Why Did Enoch Walk With God, And How?

By Boulis Ibrahim

The Book of Adam: Genesis 5

Chapter 5 of Genesis registers the genealogy from Adam to Noah—an account of certain names from the first man to the great flood (the deluge). The purpose of this chronology is not to deduce time, such as the date of creation, but rather to highlight certain individuals who played central roles in God’s plan. This chapter iterates the words “and he died” eight times, which prompts one to wonder why this repetition occurs. This is a highlight of the chapter for two reasons. First, the repetition of the words “and he died” is a divine revelation of truth and testimony against the first deception and wicked lie of Satan, who tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit: “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:4-5). Genesis 5, therefore, reminds us eight times of the lie Satan had used to deceive humans, claiming that they would not die, in his desire to drag them down to a fallen state, “for he is a liar and the father of it” (Jn 8:44). The second reason for repeating these words is to point out a specific character in the history of humanity. One of the ten men named in this chapter has not (yet) died and the divine revelation wants to point that man out to us. This man was Enoch, and the account mentions this most curious phrase about him: “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Gen 5:24).

Enoch

Enoch lived on Earth for 365 years, still short relative to his contemporaries. It is

most likely, however, that he did not walk with God for all of those years. It seems that he started only after the birth of a particular son of his, Methuselah, who was born when Enoch was 65 years old. The account says: “After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters” (Gen 5:22). It was, therefore, the birth of this particular baby that had, what one might call, an awakening effect on Enoch. Perhaps it was the fact that when Methuselah dies a calamity will befall sinful humanity! We know there were sinful people during his time from the account of Wisdom 4:10-11 (Book of The Wisdom of Solomon, NRSV Catholic Version): “There were some who pleased God and were loved by Him and while living among sinners were taken up. They were caught up so that evil might not change their understanding or guile deceive their souls.” Living amongst sinners can be depressing and spiritually depleting, but God “did not leave Himself without witness” (Act 14:17). Enoch adopted a positive attitude coupled with a resolve of steel, and faced the heart of the problem and the source of the venom: sin, then he sought its only possible antidote: God. He turned around and faced the direction of God, and started walking.

The Mechanics of Walking

When an army marches, it always starts with the left foot, followed by the right. The army of God, who are the believers, do precisely the same. They too take a left step first followed by a right one. A ‘walk’ is a repetition of these two steps: left, right, left, and so on.

Throughout the Holy Bible, there are two acts that God always advises humanity to do: repent of the wrongs done, and believe in God’s promises for repentance. Repenting your wrongs is the left step, and faith is the right step. Repentance and belief are two steps that must both be taken in succession in order to walk with God. St. Mark writes, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15). Enoch repented, but did he have a ‘gospel’ to believe in? St. Jude writes, “Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him’” (Jud 1:14-15). From this account, we know that it was revealed to Enoch that a day of reckoning and conviction—a day of judgement on sin—will come, when a calamity will befall sinners. That was his ‘gospel,’ and is ours too. Thus, Enoch learned that repentance from past sins, or at least from the negative stance of resignation to sin, combined with faith in God and His promises, are the left and right steps that must be taken to move forward towards the only solution to sin. It is the rise from the fallen state of man, and one’s vindication at the judgement day, by being counted amongst His saints.

Eternal Compassion

A final point to mention is that Methuselah, at whose birth Enoch started walking

with God, and at whose death the Deluge occurred, was the longest living man in all the history of humanity.² Genesis 5 documents his lifetime to have lasted 969 years. God allowed Methuselah to live longer than anyone else, and this highlights God’s compassion and length of patience for the return of man back from sin (the left step) in order to take a right step of faith, before the ‘Deluge’ comes. God waits as long as man lives, even to the limits of longevity. God awaits me for as long as I live, longing and yearning at every moment of my life, wishing for me to walk with Him! At this eternal love and compassion of God to whom all heads must bow and all knees must worship, I pause and ask myself, and even for no one else’s sake but my own, when will I ever start? Lord, let it be now, for I know not if there is a tomorrow (when my Methuselah dies). Besides, what an unimaginably immense honour and joy it would be for me to walk with the Creator of all things! Please, my Christ, hold my hand and let us walk. Let us walk together all the way to the Bosom of The Father. Amen.

¹ Enoch named his son Methuselah, which means ‘his death with bring’ (Hitchcock, 1869 and Smith and Cornwall, 1998). Together with the revelation made to Enoch in Jud 1:14-15, it seems that Enoch named his son according to a revelation of some calamity that will befall humanity when Methuselah dies.

² The Deluge occurred 969 years after Methuselah was born, which is the same year in which Methuselah died (Noah was 600 years old then. Gen 9:28-29).

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Elijah and Enoch (ancestor of Noah) - an icon 17th cent., Historic Museum in Sanok, Poland

Being Led By The Spirit Before Leading Others

“For as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

Translated from the Journal of the Late Fr. Metaos El-Souriany.*

May his prayers and blessings be with us.

This is the sure sign and firm assurance to success on a person's path. Let each one of us ask yourself, before judging others or being judged by others, "Am I a person led by the spirit of God? Do I let the spirit of God work in me and through me, observing silently and meditating His wondrous work in this weak vessel (me), as Virgin Mary 'kept all these things in her heart' until the amazing birth took place? Or do I rely on my own work and personal experiences, my intelligence, my knowledge, my plans, my rights, and my interpretation to all events?"

Here, the conniving Devil would enter my council to philosophize all my work and

words with Scriptural verses from the Holy Bible. Satan would increase my dizziness and distance me from Christ and His work of grace. In the end, the bitter truth finally becomes clear to me—everything I built, my whole effort, and my various services collapse as if built on sand. All this because it stemmed from my deified ego which did not submit to the work of grace to be led by the Spirit of God, asking good guidance from the godly servants of God in humility and contrition.

This is vividly transparent in the field of worship and the monastic life. Even until now, and throughout monasticism's long history, we have not seen,

heard, or read about any good struggling monastics who gained grace, gift, or spiritual advancement due to human effort or strength. This does not mean we should neglect the various diverse efforts in the monastic way (this has its important work), but it remains useless if it is not supported by grace, as fire working on wood, or as the necessity of leaves to preserve the tree's fruits.

How wonderful, how beautiful, how delightful for a monastic to await the work of grace in the soul, no matter how long it veils or conceals itself. I suppose, regarding the true worshipping monastic, who is dead to the world and its desires, that this

work (steadfastness, patience, endurance in the struggle, bearing with all life events that occur or by coincidence) is classified under a monastic's life of submission. Life of submission—one cedes this life as a living sacrifice of love to Christ our God, surrendering into His hands this soul which He created, for grace to work. Thus, this soul will truly be led by the Holy Spirit, making it actually worthy to be called a son to God. How great is this adoption, this great dignity for this poor wretched monastic to be Christ's own, eligible to inherit the kingdom, "For as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom 8:14).

Pillars of our Time: Ordinary People Serving in Extraordinary Ways

MAKING AN IMPACT

Bishop Gregorios

An Article by Myriam Fahim



The late Bishop Gregorios (Gregory) was born Waheeb Attalah Gerges in Aswan, Egypt on October 13, 1919. He graduated High School with high honors, so his family pressured him to enter medical school, but he insisted on entering the Clerical College. In 1939, he graduated from the Clerical College with a Bachelors of Science in Theology, again with high honors. In July of 1944, he graduated from Cairo University Faculty of Arts in Philosophy, with distinguished honors, and in 1951, from the same University, a diploma in Egyptology, again with distinguished honors. He went on to study Coptology at Manchester University in England. He obtained a Doctorate degree in this subject matter in 1955, yet again with high distinction.

During these former years, in 1944, he was hired to teach Theology and Philosophy in the Clerical College in Cairo, was promoted to be vicar of the College in 1952, and by 1955, he was the department chair of Theology at the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies. He was among the professors who taught HH Pope Shenouda III

in the Clerical College. In 1959, he was ordained an archdeacon, and by 1962, he became a monk at the Moharak Monastery. Also in 1962, he was the secretary of Religious Matters for HH Pope Cyril VI, along with many other responsibilities and dignities.

On May 10, 1967, HH Pope Cyril VI ordained him General Bishop of the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies and Scientific Research. Bishop Gregorios authored 158 books plus the many articles he authored in encyclopedias, books, magazines, and newspapers in Arabic, English, and Coptic. He was the first person to write about the Church's position on delicate topics such as in vitro fertilization. Furthermore, he delivered various lectures in Churches, Mosques, and elsewhere. He was fluent in Coptic, Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, English, French, German, and Latin. All this, and he maintained the simplicity of the saints and the purity of children. He was distinguished for his deep prayers, and his love for St. Mary and all the saints and martyrs. At his departure in 2001, HH Pope Shenouda III saw that two main

features highlight his life: consecration and scholarship.

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* Fr. Aghnathous El-Souriany (2008). The Spiritual Visionary: Rev. Fr. Metaos El-Souriany, His Life And Sayings. El-Natroun: Virgin Mary Sourian Monastery.

You Give Them

To Eat

By Mariam Maher

“The place is prepared, the table set, the unleavened bread placed on the table, and the cups filled. The Son of God sits down and so do His disciples. Knowing He does not have much time left in this human body, He says to His own, ‘I shall be with you a little while longer’ (Jn 13:33).”



Peter: “Lord, where are you going?” (Jn 13:36)

Jesus: “My mission here is about to be accomplished; it is now your turn. I send you to all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teach them” (Mt 28:19).

Philip: “But Lord we can do nothing without You. We have been following You these past years, how can we now carry this mission alone?”

Jesus: “I have given you the words that the Father has given Me (Jn 17:8). I have given you wisdom and might, and yet you do not know how, Philip?” (Dan 2:23).

James, the son of Zebedee: “Master, John and I have been following you very closely. We have

witnessed miracles You performed only in our presence and Peter’s. We have witnessed Your transfiguration. We would be the best leaders for this upcoming phase of God’s plan” (Mk 10:37).

Jesus: “You, too, still do not understand, James. My Kingdom is not of this world; it is nothing like it, and does not work the same way. Have I not told you? You have heard that the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them (Lk 22:25), but verily I say unto you it shall not be so in My Father’s house. You know that a leader in this world has several people working below him, but I say unto you, whoever desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all (Mk 9:35). He shall not be over anyone but

rather below everyone. You have heard that men compete and achieve in order to be chosen by their lords to lead (Winslow, 1979). But, I say unto you that My Father chooses whom He wants to lead and assigns him the responsibility (Mk 10:40), according to the spiritual gifts given by the Spirit, as He wills for the edifying of My body (Eph 4:11-13, Heb 2:4). It is the Holy Spirit and My body that shall recognize and give authority to the leader (Act 1:23-26) who, in turn, shall be evaluated according to his fruits” (Jn 15:2-8, Gal 5:22-23).

John, starting to understand: “Lord, teach us how to lead, according to Your own heart.”

Jesus: “You first need the vision, that all men will be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4), for I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly (Jn 10:10). Second, attend to the needs of My people, be they spiritual, physical, mental, or social. Cast out demons, forgive

sins, preach, heal the sick, raise the dead (Mt 10:7-8, Jn 20:23), satisfy the hunger of the wise (Mk 12:28-34, Jn 3:1-21), be peacemakers (Lk 23:12) and a source of joy (Jn 2:1-10). Third, look out for opportunities (Jn 4:4-30) and think globally not locally (Ps 2:8, Warren, p. 300). Fourth, keep your eyes, heart, and mind open to My flock. Listen to what they say, recognizing the interests, talents, gifts, personalities, and life experiences each individual possesses, for I have a purpose and a plan for each one of My sheep. It is your duty to identify and put them to use for the glory of My name (Warren, p. 235). Finally, you ought to teach men what I taught you; make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19-20).

Thomas, feeling overwhelmed and doubtful, asks, “How can we do all these things alone?”

Andrew responds: “The Master is right, Thomas! I have seen my previous teacher, the Baptist, doing it. He had

a message, a vision to bring men to God. He taught, preached, and rebuked, all the time preparing the way. He had disciples; John and I were among them. He did it all empowered by the Holy Spirit through love.”

Jesus turns to Andrew lovingly: “You have well said, Andrew. Do it with humility, as John did. Do it realizing that you are servants, never better than your Master (Warren, pp. 265-270). Pray all the time (Lk 18:1-8). Be vigilant (1 Pt 5:8). Be faithful, full of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 1:13-14). Speak uprightly; speak the truth (Is 33:10-16). Beware of loving the best seats in My Father’s house (Mt 23:4-9). Beware of partiality (Jas 2:1-9) and of shutting your ears to the cry of the poor lest you should cry yourself and not be heard” (Pro 21:13).

John, leaning on Christ’s bosom: “We ought to love one another, for You are love, and it is how we abide in You and how Your love is perfected in us” (1 Jn 4:7-16).

Jesus puts his arm around John and rests His head on John’s head: “Yes John, you now understand it all.”

“Abide with us Lord,” melancholy **Peter** says, kneeling at Jesus’ feet, “for Your presence strengthens us.”

“Tend My sheep, Peter” (Jn 21:16),

The Savior responds. He holds Peter’s head in His hands and emphasizes, “Feed My lambs (Jn 21:15). And do not fear for I, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.” (Mt 28:20).

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BE CHRIST-MINDED

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST is historically recognized as one of the greatest leaders of all time. As believers, we know He is God. For the unbelievers, His impact on the world cannot be veiled or denied. **Let us look deeper and see His remarkable characteristics** so that in as much as it is possible, we can imitate Him. His disciples and apostles followed Him, and likewise learned true leadership from Him. Their legacy of leadership is evinced, not only in today's Christian leaders, but also in many noble leaders of different faiths who also use Christ's genuine leadership approach. "But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For 'who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him' (Is 40:13)? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:15-16).

Humility

"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Mt 23:11-12). Of all virtues, humility is probably the most difficult to acquire. Christ patterned the path of humility in His life—starting with His birth in a stable and finishing with His crucifixion on the cross at Golgotha. The Christian leader is ready to turn life's hardships into triumph—rejection is opportunity for resilience. Who is more familiar with rejection than St. Mary, the Mother of God? From a young age, she accepted her role as the "handmaid of the Lord." Her humility won her God's endless grace.

Compassion

True compassion requires one to empty him/herself. To empty oneself is to rid one of his/her presumptions, comforts, accomplishments, and pride. These attributes become stumbling blocks if we rest our laurels upon them. All we acquire are but mere stepping-stones in sharing our love toward God and unto others. We cannot serve others with compassion unless we let go of ourselves and let God fill our hearts and thoughts with His love. We must first empty ourselves, so that we can be filled with Him; we cannot give what we do not possess. If we are filled with His love, not our own desires, or our own interpretation of love, then we can pour His love that is in us onto others. His love and compassion flow from an eternal fountain. Thus, it fills our voids and satisfies our souls.

Prudence

Knowledge is power. Leaders need to pursue knowledge throughout their lives. However, worldly knowledge will lead to arrogance and strip one of humility—the true virtue for which we must strive throughout our lives to acquire. For the Christian leader, wisdom and intelligence are the pursuit of the knowledge of God. This is possible through prayer, the Holy Bible, theological and patristic studies, service, and discipleship through the guidance of one's spiritual father. Prudence can also be found in peacemakers such as in Abigail, a woman who found favor in the eyes of King David, and diverted war and bloodshed.

Courage

Leaders are called upon to be catalysts and agents of change. They say what others cannot, and fear not the repercussions. The cause is far more important than the cost. "Christianity is not a matter of persuasive words. It is a matter of true greatness as long as it is hated by the world" (St. Ignatius: Letter to the Romans). Leaders take a

stand on the issues. Saying nothing is saying something. What exactly is being interpreted is unknown. Thus, the Christian leader makes known his/her position on the issues so that the message is clear. Leaders do not fear for their own reputation. The goal is the betterment of the situation, and not one's own person.

Empowerment

By stepping out of their own comfort zones for the sake of others, leaders empower them by their support. By empowering others, leaders beget, cultivate, and produce other leaders. Barnabas, also known as "the son of encouragement" was that voice of encouragement and empowerment to the young John Mark and prepared him for his immense ministry. They are builders, imitators of Christ, the Carpenter—the True People Builder. People who empower labor to provide resources, enable others to achieve, seize opportunities, and give a voice to the oppressed. "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 40:31).

Influence

There are occasions when leaders are controversial. Despite that, people still seem to be drawn to them. Charisma is often an attribute many leaders possess. However, it could be a dangerous characteristic, as proven by history. Justice and equality came about through the influential and charismatic leader Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On the other hand, heresies were instigated by Arias, who was a charismatic clergyman in the early years of the Church. Some world leaders have been productive and others have been destructive. History witnessed and recorded the differences. Christian leaders submit to a higher spiritual guidance so that they use their likeability and charisma to serve others

and society.

Selflessness

"It is not about me." Never did St. John the Baptist express contentment for his own recognition. He persistently described himself in relation to Christ: the friend of the bridegroom, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, not worthy to stoop down and loosen his sandal strap, He must increase and I must decrease, etc. The Christian leader must know that his/her role is to lead others to Christ in a Christ-like manner and be content to move out of the way. There is only one Savior! "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil 2:3-4).

Confidence

With a submissive and pure heart, the Christian leader studies all the angles of the situation at hand. This is prudence that produces confidence. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13). Twelve ordinary men changed the world through their extraordinary leader, Jesus Christ. It was never through violence or threats. Often persecuted, but never the oppressing force, the Coptic Orthodox Church has become a fortress of faith and confidence. The mere existence of our church and her continuous flourishing throughout the world despite the persistent persecutions defies all understanding and is a marvel and a wonder in the world.

Collaborative

It is important to share the vision and not see oneself as above the others, but amongst the others. Our Lord Jesus Christ modeled a powerful collaborative style by allowing His disciples to share in His ministry, teach and perform the same miracles as He did, suffer persecution and martyrdom,

and, even, be glorified with Him. Christian leaders do not serve alone, but rather, as team members they allow exchanges of thoughts, allow potential to become a reality, allow talents to thrive, and they build-up one another.

Service

Who is it that my eyes really see? If I am not seeing Christ, then I am not diligently seeking Him and His kingdom. Where and how then can I see Him? It is in His people—the orphan, the widow, the helpless, the downtrodden, the ones in need, and even the ones who yet do not know Him, and in many, many others. The Christian leader is a servant at heart. He/she imitates Christ. This is our Christ—our God, who not only washed the feet of His honored disciples, but even there amongst them, He did not refrain from washing the feet of His betrayer, another who weakened and denied Him, and the rest who fearfully fled after His arrest. He did not refrain from loving them or serving them. Though we often praise Mary for sitting at the feet of Christ, we must also appreciate and praise Martha for her dedicated service.

There are many styles of leadership. Each of the disciples, apostles, martyrs, saints, and prominent biblical figures has modeled various styles of leadership. We have wonderful role models and heroes, whom we can imitate on our journey with Christ to the everlasting life, as we confidently pray in the Divine Liturgy with joyful hearts, "Lead us throughout the way into Your kingdom." Yes, Lord, lead us deeper and deeper into Your kingdom.

Glory be to God, forever. Amen.

Featured Article by

H.G. Bishop Youssef

Successful Disciples Make Successful Leaders

By Theopeste Kerelos



St. Peter

Why do we call the twelve loyal men who followed our Lord Jesus Christ, “disciples”, and not leaders? Were they not the initial leaders of Christianity? They led the Early Church, yet we continue to label them disciples. This is because their discipleship was the key factor to their advancement into becoming quality leaders. In fact, all our great Church Fathers were disciples first. Being a disciple is not like a college degree that a person has to earn to become a leader; it is a natural process. Discipleship produces effective leaders, as seen throughout the history of the Church, and of the world for that matter. Clearly, discipleship is the first step to leadership, generally speaking, but especially in the Church.

As mentioned earlier, our Church leaders started as disciples. Let us study how some of those notable leaders developed. We discussed earlier that the twelve disciples were followers of our Lord Jesus Christ before they led the

Early Church. There is St. Paul, who was “brought up...at the feet of Gamaliel” (Act 22:3) before becoming a leader for the Jews. When God called Saul, He sent him to Ananias in Damascus to be filled with the Holy Spirit through the laying of his hands, then, St. Paul “spent some days with the disciples at Damascus” (Act 9:19) before beginning his service. St. Silas the Apostle was another significant figure in the Early Church. The Holy Bible does not mention much about St. Silas, other than that he was a follower of St. Paul: “But Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God” (Acts 15:40). What many people do not know though is that, according to the early Church documents, St. Silas became the bishop of Corinth, a sign that his discipleship to St. Paul brought forth fruit. There have been, and still are, countless Church leaders who prospered due to their experience as disciples, but time and space would fail me to name them all. The progression from discipleship to leadership can be studied further through the lives of the men mentioned.

So, why is discipleship such an important criterion for leadership? First, a continuous sequence of discipleship ensures that the faith and all the basics of Christianity are passed on correctly from generation to generation. The foundations of Christianity are ingrained in the heart of the disciples, and those disciples blossom into successful leaders who in turn convey the accurate

teachings to the next set of disciples, and so forth. In this manner, the core of the Church teachings is not uprooted. This process bypasses the dangers of people “desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm” (1 Tim 1:7). Second, a person who has accepted to be a disciple and taught by a person with more knowledge is guaranteed to be a wise leader. The book of Proverbs states that a wise person is one who accepts chastisement, while a fool cannot bear correction (Cf. Prov 12:1). Perhaps most importantly, it is necessary for one to be a disciple, to know how to lead disciples. In other words, leaders would not know how to lead others properly unless they themselves have been under the direction of another leader. Hence, where there is no discipleship, there is no leadership.

Because discipleship plays a significant role in the growth of a leader, it is imperative to apply this principle when fostering and appointing leaders. Just like the apostles and the Church Fathers, leaders should be people raised in the Church under the direction of knowledgeable religious mentors: priests, deacons, and servants. This will guarantee that there are no “false teachers...who will secretly bring in destructive heresies” (2 Pt 2:1).

Although the Church is responsible for choosing qualified leaders, the

congregation should distinguish between the leaders whom they choose to trust and follow. St. John the Evangelist writes, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn 4:1). In order for people to remain on track in their spiritual lives, they should follow the leaders whom the Church chooses according to the pattern of discipleship before leadership.

In essence, discipleship was not merely a practice to teach people in the early ages about Christianity, but rather, it is an ongoing process to hand down the treasures of the Church to the upcoming generations untarnished. If not for discipleship, Early Church leaders would have gradually strayed from the truth and the door would have been opened for blasphemies and heresies. May God save His Church and guide us to select faithful disciples who will become effective leaders.



St. Paul



St. Andrew



The oldest known images of the apostles Andrew and John, dating back to the 4th century A.D., were discovered in the catacombs of St. Tecla, one of 40 catacombs underneath Rome, Italy.

Above: Apostles around an image of Jesus on the ceiling of what is thought to be a Roman noblewoman’s tomb. Below: The catacomb of St. Tecla



12 St. John

Quoting Things You've Never Read

By John Habib

I REMEMBER LISTENING TO HIS GRACE BISHOP SERAPION OF LOS ANGELES DELIVER A SERMON AT A CONVENTION I attended several years ago. He told us (in effect), "People often read small excerpts of the Church Fathers, but do not get the full import of their teachings until they read the writings in their entirety." Recently I have been meditating on these words and come to a realization that so many of us Orthodox Christians can be so proud of our Church Fathers and even often quote them, without really knowing what they were saying. How many of us actually read the writings of our Early Church Fathers in their entirety? Why don't we? It is available to us, and the excuse of not being able to afford it is invalid, as our Church often offers this gift to us for free, and many of them are available online. It may seem like a daunting task, if you were to try to read all the volumes in one sitting, but if you really look at their writings, they are often in short segments, sometimes barely just letters or responses to various matters. The translations we have today can sometimes be hard to comprehend, yet in my opinion, well worth the richness. I would now like

to examine an epistle from Clement of Rome, and what he believed about the new faith he accepted as his own:

Obedience to Clergy

Obedience to the clergy is a necessary duty of a Christian. "For you ... walked in the commandments of God, being obedient to those who had the rule over you, and giving all fitting honor to the presbyters among you" (Ch. 1). He says so much more in his epistle, but it would be too much to include here. Check out Chapter 47 ("It is disgraceful, beloved, yes, highly disgraceful, and unworthy of your Christian profession, that such a thing should be heard of as that the most steadfast and ancient Church of the Corinthians should, on account of one or two persons, engage in sedition against its presbyters.") Chapter 57 ("Submit yourselves to the presbyters, and receive correction so as to repent."), and especially Chapters 40-42 and 44 which are all about how we should preserve the order appointed by God in the Church, in particular regarding the priesthood.

Heaven is no Guarantee Just Because You Are A Christian

Unlike what many people believe today, the early Christians understood clearly that there was no guarantee to go to heaven simply because a person is a baptized Christian and

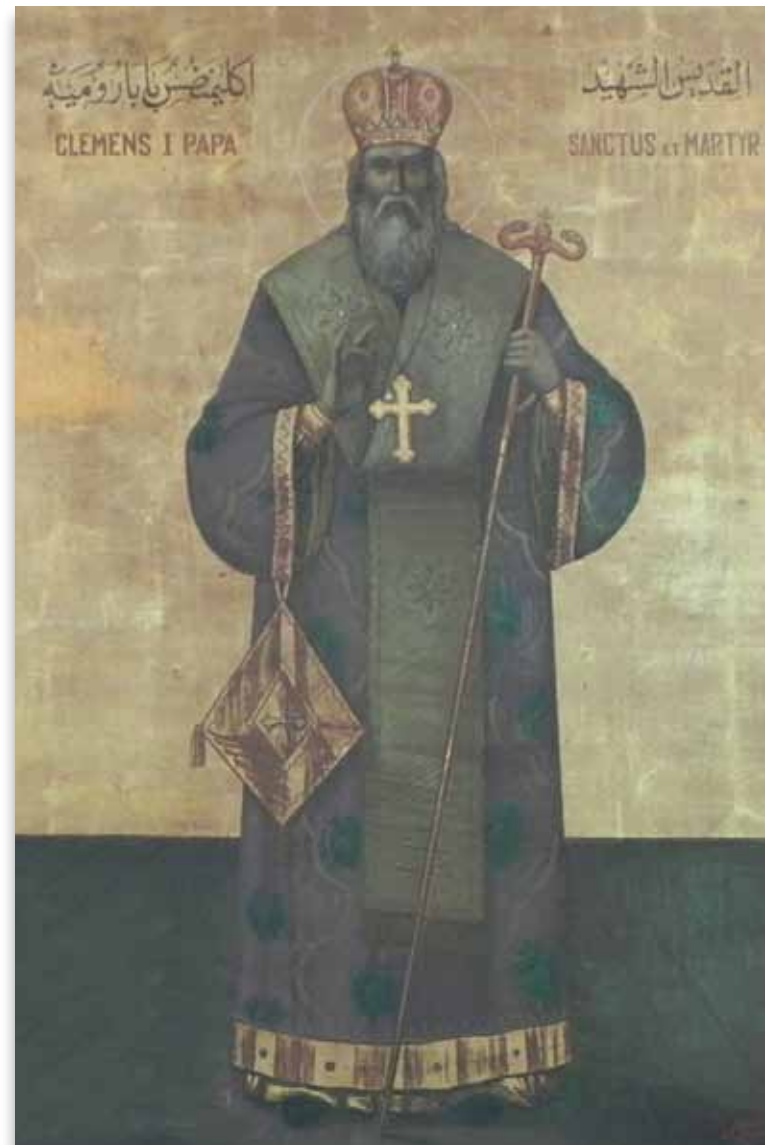
has accepted Jesus Christ in their lives. We should always keep Christ's suffering before our eyes and remember that only because He suffered and shed His blood, we have access to God and heaven, but in order to take advantage of His saving grace, we must live a life of repentance walking in a manner that is pleasing and acceptable to God. The early Christians understood clearly that, although they were "called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ch. 1), they still were in need of repentance. Clement commends the Corinthian Christians for being aware of this, in particular for their concerns of involuntary sin counted against them: "You did, with true earnestness of mind and a godly confidence, stretch forth your hands to God Almighty, beseeching Him to be merciful unto you, if you had been guilty of any involuntary transgression" (Ch. 2). He commends them for being "anxious" for the

salvation of the rest of their fellow Christians: "Day and night you were anxious for the whole brotherhood, that the number of God's elect might be saved with mercy and a good conscience" (Ch. 2). Clement later explains the Christian life as a "struggle" to maintain a life that is "acceptable in the sight of God," and repentance is at the center of such a life (Ch. 7):

These things, beloved, we write unto you, not merely to admonish you of your duty, but also to remind ourselves. For we are struggling on the same arena, and the same conflict is assigned to both of us. Wherefore let us give up vain and fruitless cares, and approach to the glorious and venerable rule of our holy calling. Let us attend what is good, pleasing, and acceptable in the sight of Him who formed us. Let us look steadfastly to the blood of Christ, and see how precious that blood is



The Martyrdom of Saint Clement. Painted ca. AD 1480, by Fungai.



to God [the Father], which, having been shed for our salvation, has set the grace of repentance before the whole world (Ch. 7).

The requirement for repentance is not in contradiction to the blood of Christ, meant for our salvation. Clement tells us, to "reverence the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us" by our actions (which he gives examples of following that quote; Ch. 21). He gives examples of how people, "repenting of their sins, propitiated [i.e., won the favor of] God by prayer, and obtained salvation" (Ch. 7). He quotes several pieces of scripture about repentance and concludes: "Desiring, therefore, that all His beloved should be

partakers of repentance, He has, by His almighty will, established "these declarations" (Ch. 8). Justification by faith is the foundation of salvation, but a person must live a life of good works, reflecting that faith in order to attain to salvation. See what Clement says about justification by faith:

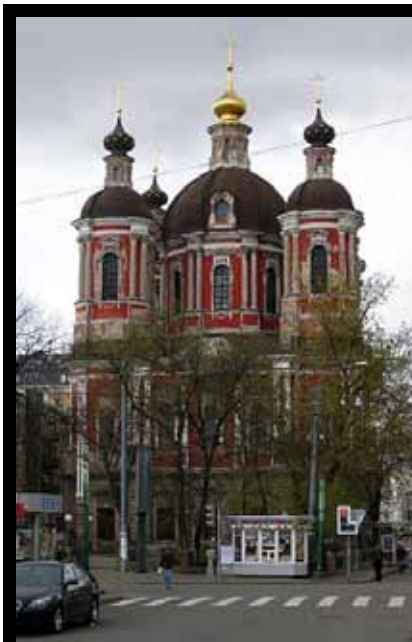
All these [good men, like the Israelite priests, kings, and rulers, who have received gifts from God], therefore, were highly honored, and made great, not for their own sake, or for their own works, or for the righteousness which they wrought, but through the operation of His will. And we too, being called by His will in Christ, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own

wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men (Ch. 32).

Clement immediately follows these statements by asking a question that resonates with the problem of today's forms of Christianity. "What shall we do, then, brethren? Shall we become slothful in well-doing, and cease the practice of love?" (Ch. 33). Unfortunately, Clement's concerns are a present reality among today's believers. Clement answers his question posed with an ominous answer: "God forbid that any such course should be followed by us!" (Ch. 33). Then he goes on to explain what should happen even though we are justified by faith: "But rather let us hasten with all energy and readiness of mind to perform every good work. For the Creator and Lord of all Himself rejoices in His works... Let us without delay accede to His will, and let us work the work of righteousness with our whole strength" (Ch. 33). Clement connects faith with works even more clearly, making evident that the resurrection of the dead is not for everyone, but only Christians who have faith and with that faith serve God devoutly: "The Maker of all things [is going] to raise up again those that have piously served Him in the assurance of a good faith" (Ch. 26). He also tells us, "Since all things are seen and heard [by God], let us fear Him, and forsake those wicked works which proceed from evil desires; so that, through His mercy, we may be protected from the judgments to come" (Ch. 28). Also, see Chapters 9, 21, 29, 30, 34 and 35 for more on this subject.

Honoring Martyrs and Saints

Honoring martyrs and especially "righteous pillars" of the Church was the common practice among early Christians, as it remains today. Clement moves his focus away from "ancient examples" to "the most recent spiritual heroes" (Ch. 5). He specifically focuses on the "illustrious apostles," calling them "noble examples furnished in our own generation," being "the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the Church]" who were "persecuted and put to death" (Ch. 5). He names Peter and Paul as two prime examples (and later he specifically refers to Paul not just as an Apostle, but "the blessed Apostle Paul" [Ch. 47]). It was not just these holy men that Clement deems are examples for other Christians, but many other Christians in his own time: "To these men who spent their lives in the practice of holiness, there is to be added a great multitude of the elect, who ... endured many indignities and tortures, [and] furnished us with a most excellent example" (Ch. 5). He first provides the example of some women martyrs (Ch. 6). He later



St. Clement of Rome is the only Roman Pope to have a Russian Orthodox Church dedicated to his name. 15

urges the Corinthians to “be imitators also of those who in goatskins and sheepskins went about proclaiming the coming of Christ” (giving examples of Elijah, Elisha, and the prophets; Ch. 17), and then provides the example of David (Ch. 18). He goes on to tell us that the exemplars of holiness of recent and ancient times are people we should learn from to make us better people:

show, yourself perverse.” Let us cleave, therefore, to the innocent and righteous, since these are the elect of God (Ch. 45).

All in all, Clement summarizes this subject as follows: “Let us cleave, then, to those to whom grace has been given by God” (Ch. 30).

What Did Clement Know About Christ?

Clement also is aware of Old Testament prophecies as relating to Christ, just as Philip showed knowledge of at least one of those same prophecies, as we see in the book of Acts 8:26-36. Specifically he refers to Isaiah 53, Psalm 22:6-8, and the story of Rahab (where there was a scarlet thread that saved her from being killed, just as the blood of Christ saved us all) as all prophesying about Christ (see Ch. 12 and 16).

There is evidence in this epistle that some New Testament Gospels were in circulation among the early Christians very soon after they were written, since this epistle, being written in the late first century, quotes Christ’s words. We should be “especially mindful of the words of the Lord Jesus which He spoke, teaching us meekness and longsuffering: ‘Be merciful that you may obtain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven to you; as you do, so shall it be done unto you; as you judge, so shall you be judged; as you are kind, so shall kindness be shown to you; with what measure you mete [i.e., measure out] ... it shall be measured to you” (Ch. 13). These words can be found in varied ways in the following New Testament texts: Mt 6:12-15; 7:2; Lk 6:36-38. Clement also quotes Christ’s words elsewhere:

Remember the words of

our Lord Jesus Christ, how He said, “Woe to that man [by whom offenses come]! It were better for him that he had never been born, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my elect. Yes, it were better for him that a millstone should be hung about [his neck], and he should be sunk in the depths of the sea, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my little ones.”

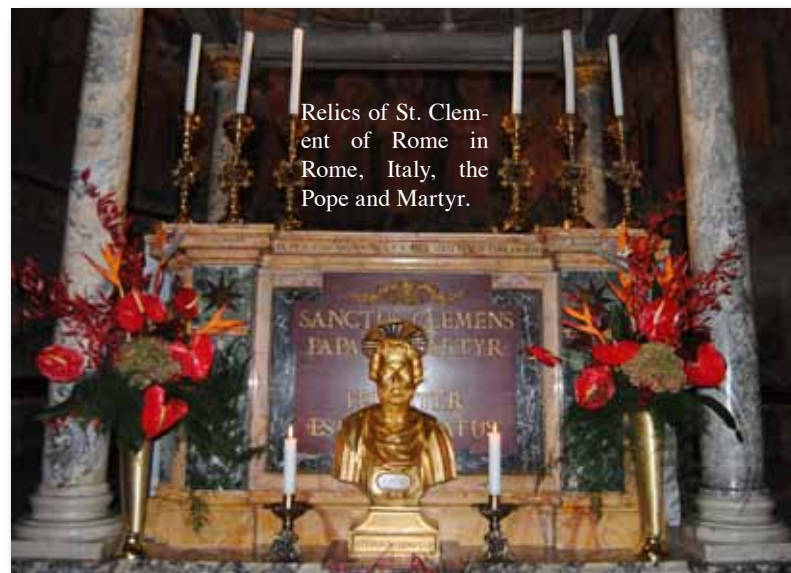
Clement called Christ the first-fruits of the dead, as St. Paul did in 1 Corinthians 15:20: “The Lord continually proves to us that there shall be a future resurrection, of which He has rendered the Lord Jesus Christ the first-fruits by raising Him from the dead” (Ch. 24). He was aware that Christ would come again, quoting from Habakuk 2:3 and Malachi 3:1 as evincing this belief (Ch. 23).

Clement talks also about Christ’s divine glory, and expressly uses language found in the epistle to the Hebrews which is echoed in the ancient Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed regarding Christ as “light of light, true God of true God”:

This is the way, beloved, in which we find our Saviour, even Jesus Christ, the High

Priest of all our offerings, the defender and helper of our infirmity. By Him we look up to the heights of heaven. By Him we behold, as in a glass, His immaculate and most excellent visage. By Him are the eyes of our hearts opened. By Him our foolish and darkened understanding blossoms up anew towards His marvelous light. By Him the Lord has willed that we should taste of immortal knowledge, “who, being the brightness of His majesty, is by so much greater than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” For it is thus written, “Who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.” But concerning His Son the Lord spoke thus: “You are my Son, today have I begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.” And again He [i.e., the Father] says to Him, “Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.” But who are His enemies? All the wicked, and those who set themselves to oppose the will of God.

All quotes and references are adopted from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, “The Anti-Nicene Fathers,” Volume I (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903); also see <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ii.html>



Relics of St. Clement of Rome in Rome, Italy, the Pope and Martyr.



By Mareya Naguib

Western culture has infused into the minds of humanity that in order to be important, one must be a leader. In our culture, if a person cannot be a leader, then he or she is looked down upon. However, the Orthodox Church teaches us moderation, and that every human being has a special talent. One who cannot be a leader, is not rendered useless or valueless; on the contrary, being a follower has many virtues, such as humility, obedience, and discipleship. Sometimes one needs to be a follower, to learn first, before setting off to be a leader. But, in our own personal lives, God teaches us that each one of us must be a light when it comes to our spirituality. No matter how young you are, “let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12). St. Ephraim the Syrian took this verse to heart and decided to change his ways to become a great spiritual example, until he became a great spiritual leader in the church today.

St. Ephraim was born in the fourth century in a city named Nisibis, Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia was part of Syria, which is why St. Ephraim is referred to as “the Syrian.” His parents were Christian and brought him up in the Lord. When he was still a child,

St. Ephraim the Syrian

A Life of Leadership, Wisdom, and Purity

his parents had a prophetic dream that his tongue produced abundant clusters of grapes. Many birds ate from it, and the grape clusters kept multiplying. It was later in his life that the prophecy was deciphered, as the clusters resembled the many sermons he preached throughout his life.

Even though St. Ephraim was raised in a Christian home, he was not very spiritual in his young age. He was a troublemaker, and gave in to lustful thoughts. One day, feeling mischievous, he decided to beat up a cow owned by a poor man. He was not caught, yet God wanted to teach him a lesson, so one day he was out late and decided to spend the night with some shepherds since it was too dark to walk home. That night, thieves came, stole some sheep, and placed the blame on Ephraim. Even though Ephraim was innocent, he was incriminated, and taken to prison. Ephraim saw the reward for crimes, and so he pleaded with God. He vowed that if He spared him, he would go right away to the desert and become a monk. An angel appeared to Ephraim and told him, “Yes you are innocent of stealing the sheep, but did you forget the poor man’s cows?” Ephraim understood why God brought him there.

St. Ephraim was True to his vow, and upon his release he went straight to the hermits living in the mountains where he became a disciple of St. James. St. James later became a great bishop of Nisibis. Ephraim began his monastic life in true asceticism, fasting, and prayer. He began to study the Holy Scriptures and memorizing the Psalms. The troubled youth began to transform into a humble, knowledgeable,

and spiritual youthful monk, weeping day and night for his transgressions. St. Ephraim kept growing in his spiritual life, until the prophecy foretold to his parents was fulfilled. He was blessed with great wisdom and gave many sermons that brought many to Christ. After spending some time in prayer asking God where he should go, St. Ephraim decided to head to the city of Edessa where monastic life was flourishing. Looking for a job to earn some money to eat, he was given the job of a bath keeper. The times he was not working, he would walk around the city preaching the name of God and bringing the unbelievers to the faith.

Satan was not happy with Ephraim’s spiritual growth, so he decided to trap him, taking advantage of his adolescent struggle with lust. While St. Ephraim was making dinner, a woman from the village watched him. She then called

out to him, but he did not turn around to look at her. Instead, he just asked her what she wanted. She asked if he needed help with his dinner. Wisely, St. Ephraim replied that he wanted stones and sand, so as to “build a wall and block you from my window’s site.” She then shamelessly told him that she wanted to lie with him. St. Ephraim, again using his great wisdom, told her to follow him, and led her to the city square. There, St. Ephraim told her, “Do as you wish.” Shocked, the sinful women accused him of lunacy, asking how such a deed could be openly displayed before spectators. St. Ephraim replied, “If you are ashamed of men, how much more should you be ashamed knowing that God knows all the secrets of men and is watching! For He will judge the whole world and will reward everyone according to his deeds.” By God’s Grace,

St. Ephraim’s words moved her heart and she repented deeply in tears, begging him to help her come back to God. St. Ephraim taught her the Christian faith, and then brought her to a convent where she dwelt as a repentant nun.

After living for some time in Edessa, St. James advised the Saint to go into the wilderness. He settled in a cave of the nearby “Mount of Edessa,” where he gave himself up to prayer, fasting, and the study of Holy Scriptures. He lived his life in solitude, but never pushed away those who came to him for spiritual growth. Despite his knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual leadership he remained humble all his life, and many loved him for his humility.

In his old age, and after a brief illness, St. Ephraim reposed in the Lord on Abib 15. St. Ephraim was a lampstand for many Christians. His teachings were

a blessing, and his wisdom brought many to Christ. He took initiative of his spiritual life and decided to lead his soul. He renounced Satan and vowed to live his life as a repentant monk. One can learn so much from this great saint. May we all work on leading our soul’s towards Christ, saying: “I have set the Lord always before me, because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved” (Psalm 16:7-9). Just as St. Ephraim led his life.

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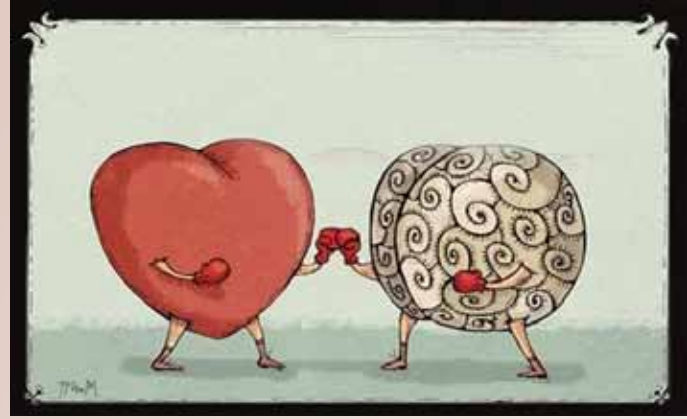
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The Raging Battle In Your Heart and Mind

By Christine Massoud

I hope you had a chance to read the first installment of this series where we discussed the major differences between females and males. I shared with you my past understanding, as well as a new one, which I call the “table-legs” balance of women’s sexuality, which argues that there are four intricately woven threads that affect our sexual integrity. In Ecclesiastes 4, the writer tells us that “two are better than one... and a threefold cord is not quickly broken...” Imagine a fourfold cord! Temptation is a knife, attempting to cut through these threads, strand by strand. Cutting even one strand compromises the cord. Our integrity is similar; when our mind is compromised, our actions, emotions, and hearts soon follow.

In this article, I would like to go through some myths as they relate to the female’s integrity, but first, I would like to emphasize that my writing is simply a sharing of the personal lessons I am learning. I have not perfected these in this life, and doubt I will, but will continue striving towards God, as Ecclesiastes 9:18 shares: “Wisdom is better than weapons of war.” I have begun seeking for wisdom in this area with a group of god-fearing women as we have been studying a work by Shannon Ethridge, “A Woman’s Battle.” In this text, Ethridge shares seven myths commonly and naively believed, and the connection between them and the battle to stay pure. I will only touch on three points she shares as I encourage you to read the book on your own



or with a group. God has used it tremendously in my life, and my connection with other women has been crucial to my accountability.

Myth One: “There’s nothing wrong with comparing myself to other people.”

The truth is, when we compare ourselves to others, we regard one as superior to the other. Comparing spells death for self-contentment. Either we come out on top, or we come up short. For example, “Thank God I’m not 300 lbs. like her,” or sadly, “I’m not a size 4 like her.” The first leads us to be prideful and the latter makes us feel disappointed with ourselves. Sadly, I feel for the self-inflicted disappointment that turns us into “self-affirmation seeking missiles.” It opens the door to hunger for approval, so that a woman craves a man’s attention, often allowing herself to be manipulated by the attention or words of another. We also could find ourselves constantly competing with other women and losing out on possible strong connections with them. If we compare ourselves as singles, what do you think we will do when we get married? We will be comparing our husbands too. Ethridge writes:

“If others are the measuring stick we use to place value on ourselves and those we love, then we’re doing exactly what Paul warned us about in 2 Corinthians 10:12 ‘...they, [who] measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.’”

We seek intimacy with our future husbands. We can find the meaning of that word by simply breaking the word into syllables - “INTO ME SEE.” Intimacy is seeing into each other and respecting, valuing, and loving what is really there regardless of how that measures up to anyone else. If we desire a man who will love us unconditionally, we have to stop comparing ourselves and learn to accept ourselves, while pressing towards God.

Myth Two: “I’m mature enough to watch, read, and browse any movie, show, book, magazine, blog, website, etc. without being affected negatively in any way.”

What we fail to recognize, or maybe choose to ignore, is that these negative images become stored in our minds. What is in your mind is on your heart, and it will affect your actions and decisions.

Jesus taught his disciples “A good [woman] out of the good treasure of [her] heart brings forth good; and an evil [woman] out of the evil treasure in [her] heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart [her] mouth speaks” (Lk 6:45). If you fill your mind with negative comments or situations, you desensitize yourself to similar scenarios in your own life. If you feel that you do not want others to know that you are watching a certain movie or show, or reading a certain type of book or magazine, or browsing explicit sites or blogs, chances are they are only going to intensify your battle for purity.

To use a personal example, last year I gave away my 50” flat screen TV. Sounds crazy, I know! I got into the habit of doing everything with the TV turned on: I ate on my TV tray, worked on my laptop, folded laundry, even talked on the phone (with it muted)... even fell so uncomfortably asleep in front of it. I was completely out of balance and felt its effects –exhaustion, lack of motivation, a few extra pounds (while my treadmill stayed in the bedroom, only decorating my room as a very expensive sculpture). I watched all kinds of modern day garbage. In an attempt to fix all of this, I first got rid of cable, and then slowly watched less until I finally gave my TV away, and with no regrets, I promise. Maybe you do not need to give away your TV, but you could maybe limit the time you spend in front of it, or maybe regulate what you watch. You could apply the same yardstick to what you read or with social media or virtual personalities, which are such a large part of today’s world –where people often misrepresent their true personalities. Please protect your heart by putting boundaries on what you see, hear, read, and watch, and do

not leave the door to your mind and heart open.

Myth Three: “Masturbation does not hurt me, my relationship with my future husband, or my relationship with God.”

Here, I’ll start off by simply quoting Ethridge because I believe that her words and her experience in counseling women speaks better than anything I could write: “Many single women tell me I cannot expect them NOT to masturbate. They say things like, ‘I must have a physical sexual release, and if I can’t have sex, then I have to masturbate.’ ...The momentary stress-relief masturbating may provide may not be worth the long-term stress that the habit creates.” Oblivious to the “long-term stress,” I read on. First, masturbation serves only to fuel sexual fire, not quench it. No lust can ever be satisfied; once this act begins, it will develop into a habitual sin. Second, if we cannot control ourselves while alone, what chance do we have of self-control when someone pays a little extra attention to us? Third, the guilt and dirty inferior feeling only increases as the sin becomes habitual and uncontrollable. “The only way to KILL a bad habit is to STARVE IT TO DEATH.”

Starving these bad habits may be painful, but not as painful as letting them rule over us. Entire books are written about how self-gratification becomes self-destruction. However, the biggest argument against the sin of masturbation is God’s commands. Let us be honest with one another, when women masturbate, they do not think pure thoughts such as Philippians 4:8 has instructed us: “Whatever things are true, ... noble, ... just, ... pure, ... lovely, ... good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.” Women are

not asked to meditate on fantasies about a certain person or scenario nor on porn or erotic books. Colossians 3:5-6 tells us exactly what to do with such thoughts: “Put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming,” while 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 tells us of God’s will for us to be “[sanctified]: that [we] should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of [us] should know how to possess [her] own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like [those] who do not know God.” Pretty convicting!

I’ll close with my own plea. My God is my creator. He made all these body parts of pleasure. He knows the temptation and He wants me to be pure. So, I ask HIM for you and for myself that He proves Himself great in this area and helps us strive for “God-gratification instead of self-gratification.” He’s big enough, I can assure you.

“Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His Holy Place? / [She] who has clean hands and a pure heart, / who has not lifted up [her] soul to an idol / Nor sworn deceitfully” (Ps 24:3-4).

Lord, I pray for Your mighty hand to come quickly to our aid. Lord, we desire to be women of integrity, to hold fast to You, and not give into temptations: whether to compare ourselves with others, to expose our minds and hearts to what is displeasing to You, or to act on it. Lord, we want to have clean hands, pure hearts, and uplifted souls as we walk this earth, that we may enter Your holy place and hear You say, “Well done good and faithful daughter, come in.” Lord, these struggles are hard, and putting to death bad habits is extremely difficult, but nothing

is impossible for You. You, Lord, are able; You come and save us. You show yourself mighty as a protector of us, Your children. Lord, I pray for Your Holy Spirit to strength us in this battle for our souls, that all our thoughts would be pleasing to You and edifying to us. Amen.

References:

Ethridge, S., & Arterburn, S. (2003). Every Woman’s Battle: Discovering God’s Plan for Sexual and Emotional Fulfillment. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press. Chapter 3: Seven Myths That Intensify Our Struggle. pages 31-48.



Icon by Abeer, from St. Paul’s Coptic Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA

MY SWEET LORD, You knew Judas' love for money, and You gave him the moneybox. You essentially gave him enough rope to choke himself, yet simultaneously You offered him divine love, the sweetest alternative. You also gave him complete freedom to choose You over possessiveness (Jn 12:6; 13:27; Mt 26:50). Despite all this, he chose to reject Your love, reject and blaspheme the work of the Holy Spirit in him (Mk 3:29), and deny himself the freedom to choose, being rather bound by the chain of "the love of money" (1Tim 6:10). Judas did not just willfully refuse to procure himself from evil, but rather submitted to it, and committed yet another sin because it meant him denying God's ability to save him. He is saying, "I can't, I'm helpless

the times You did speak, it was either to condemn Yourself when they were failing in their accusations against You, or for the salvation of a soul – but never to defend Yourself. You admitted Your divinity to both Pilate (Mt 27:11) and the Jews (Lk 22:70) to push them toward the condemnation; You tried to pinch Judas' heart with "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss" (Lk 22:48), and condemn the Jews' conscience with "I was with you daily in the temple" (Lk 22:53) and "If I tell you, you will by no means believe" (Lk 22:67), to reveal their stubborn intent on evil. They behaved so stubbornly, and their conscience knew that what they were doing was wrong; they were unable to condemn You because You truly are just. You had to 'help' them carry out their plot

against this, it is stronger than both me and You, so I will submit to it." Is anything stronger than God? Than the Holy Spirit who dwells in me? How can I say I'm helpless when this is His body and an extension of Himself? Can anything render Him helpless? Shame on you for daring to suppose Your Savior is helpless! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Do you not know that when you submit to helplessness you are saying, "God is too weak for this?" "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4:14).

My Lord, how did You live with Judas' hatred? Because "the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (Jn 1:5)... yet the Light scatters the darkness... so if the darkness does not convert into light, it will be overcome and cease to be—like Judas—but if it recognizes the light, it will be like Demas, the right-hand thief.

Oh You Who are the Author of speech, Your silence was certainly not for lack of words. You did speak, but if we notice

(even further goading their conscience). Condemned while innocent and treated so spitefully—and You never opened Your mouth to defend Yourself. You knew You were innocent, You didn't need human justification. You who are due all Majesty, but how did You agree to be bound and beaten? It is unfathomable; had I not been born a Christian I would have had difficulty believing and understanding Your humility. Oh my Lord, please give me a humble heart like Yours; You didn't defend Yourself. Oh my Lord! Being the all Pure, He did not speak, but because, as representing the whole of sinful humanity, He felt He deserved even more pain and shame – this is silent humility: feeling you deserve even more.

Lord, You knew Judas was a traitor and a thief, yet You silently trusted him and entrusted him with the moneybox. Oh my Lord, if You leave Your life into the hands of the world and the accursed Jews – knowing and trusting in God that Your life was really and truly in His hands – how

Anonymous

or why could I fear if I trust that my life is really and truly in Your hand? Is not Your will and only Your will being done? Is not my life truly in the palm of Your hand? Oh my Lord, please keep me inside You. Silence has a new meaning: it is neither responding audibly (defending myself) nor inaudibly (a sense of entitlement, deserving better), because I know I deserve even worse due to my sinfulness, and were it not for God's grace, I would perish. Do I deserve any better than the Almighty God who was silent, whose hands were bound, and who suffered? Others bound His hands, but He bound His own tongue!

Not only did Judas betray Him, but Peter also denied Him, and—in the garden at the most

crucial moment, the moment of darkness—all His disciples ran from Him. Not one showed his loyalty to Him, not one stood by Him, not one was loyal to Him; after three years of discipleship where He poured His love on them and taught them and gave them Himself and they saw His wonders and miracles, at the precise moment when He had no one, and as a human needed emotional support, only the angels could not separate from Him. But the humans... St. John puts it best: "Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men (Jn 2:24). Oh my Love, if You were able to forgive them this, what can I do but to ask You to make me imitate You. Lord, You send the temptations and trials, and with them You send the ability to overcome and the beneficial strengthening experience.

Oh my Love, how You stood crying, dying over the Jews, while they ignorantly reviled You and challenged You to come down from the cross, oblivious to Your love, Your

wisdom, Your purpose, Your person, Your suffering for their sake. Oh my Love, how didn't You just silence them with one word? How did You not command a legion of angels to avenge You? How did You not command fire to come down and consume them? How did You continue to love them? How could You die for such ingrates? How did You not avenge Yourself and Your honor.

Oh my sweet Lord, what were You in the garden keeping watch for and agonizing over (Lk 22:44)? You have no sins, no confusion, and no ignorance to ponder! Perhaps You were keeping watch over me, over my sins, confusion, and ignorance. Lord, when will I keep watch over my wrongs? When will I cease to be a burden on You, and be a joy to Your heart instead? When will I

fulfill Your will in me? When will I love You and Your creation as You do? When will I wholly belong to You? When will Your joy be fulfilled in me and my joy in You? When will I learn to love You befittingly? When will I delight Your heart? When will I stop being lazy, stop sinning against You? When will I be complete (2 Tim 3:17), holy (Lev 19:2), and perfect (Mt 5:48) as You commanded me? Why is it You keep vigil over me – like a father who watches over his sleeping babe, while I don't keep vigil over my own self; and You sit waiting for me while I run around drenched in mud? Oh my sweet Lord, when and how will I correct myself? When will I be corrected? When will I live in You? Oh my Lord, how I long for You, although every bone in my body knows I don't deserve You, don't deserve Your love, Your faithfulness, Your security. Oh my Soul, what would I do without You – please don't let me know, oh my Love, what would be my condition if I were further without You. Oh my beloved limitless amazing Creator, please don't leave me. Amen.

Coptic News

Pope Francis asks St. Mary to Pray for Egypt

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis joined religious-liberty advocates in voicing grief at the "painful news" of more than 600 deaths and numerous attacks on Christian churches in Egypt's latest wave of violence.

"I wish to ensure my prayers for all the victims and their families, the injured and all those who are suffering," the Pope said before the Angelus prayer Aug. 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption. "Let us pray together for peace, dialogue and reconciliation in that dear nation and throughout the world."

Pope Francis addressed the violence in his remarks after the Mass for the Assumption. He sought the intercession of the Virgin Mary.



Source: copticworld.org

"Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us," he told crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square on Aug. 15. "Let's all say it: Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us."

News Source: <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/pope-francis-mourns-as-christians-die-and-churches-burn-in-egypt/>

H.G. Bishop Youssef Statement Regarding Christians in Egypt

We entreat God of all compassion and Lord of all consolations to look from heaven upon Egypt and to protect her from these times of tribulation encountered by the most horrific beatings and killings of Christians, the sabotage of Christian businesses, and the desecration and burnings of churches throughout Egypt. The world is witnessing the most deplorable bloodshed of Christians, who are relentlessly being attacked in the most vicious and barbaric manner on a day-to-day basis. Since August 14, 2013 till now, more than sixty churches were burned, innocent victims suffered broken bones, and callous murders continue to be vent upon the Christians of Egypt.

These events began long ago, but reached a peak after June 30, 2013, when the Egyptian people, Muslims before Christians, made their voices known on the issues regarding the Egyptian president and demanded that he vacate his office of the presidency in peace. This was the will of the people, a nation that has strived for democracy and courageously declared their voices to be heard for his impeachment. Demonstrations throughout Egypt were peaceful until his

supporters decided to retaliate and deliberately poured out their vengeance upon the already indigenous Christians who comprise merely one-tenth of the population. The Coptic Christians have never incited any violence toward anybody. To what avail are these lethal attacks? How can such atrocious barbarian tactics be justified by any religion or any civil nation?

On behalf of the innumerable amount of Coptic Christians incessantly subjected to inhumane treatment, violence, and slaughter, and their livelihood being ripped away from them by the destruction of their churches, businesses, belongings, and their own lives, we implore God to have mercy upon Egypt, to protect our country from the escalating aggression against her Christians, to help stabilize this country for peace, and protect the Christians from their day-to-day mangling, as He promised, "Blessed is Egypt My people..." (Isaiah 19:25).

The time has come, my beloved brothers and sisters, faithful in the Lord and good citizens

of the earth, to come together in



Source: egyptianstreets.com

humble prayer. Let us reach out to our friends, colleagues, and neighbors who have been outraged by these ungodly events. Let us continue to love and educate the world about our strong and unwavering Christian faith. Let us remain confident in the promises of our Lord to protect His children." For thus says the Lord of hosts: "He sent Me after

glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye." (Zechariah 2:8).

Pray for all in Egypt

QUESTION & ANSWER

New SUMMER 2013 Edition

GENERAL QUESTION

And its Answer

Q: What happened to the cross that was guarding the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve had been expelled?

A: The Holy Bible says, "So He (God) drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life." (Gen 3:24). God placed a cherubim which is an order of angels holding a flaming sword (not a cross) to guard the Garden. The flaming sword could be a sword-like, or pointed flame not a concrete object. We should look at this picture not in the literal sense of the words, but in the spiritual sense, which is that God wanted to prevent any sinner from approaching the tree of life. The exact location of the Garden of Eden is not known, because there is a strong reason to believe that the great flood changed the geography of our world. The geography of our world today is different from what it was like at the creation, and there is no Middle East river that branches into four rivers, Pishon, Gihon, Euphrates and Tigris (Gen 2:8-14). Josephus the historian said that river Pishon is the Nile River, but there is no biblical, historical, or archaeological support for the claim. The location of the Gihon River is also unknown. The land of Cush includes the current lands of Ethiopia and Arabia. There is no river surrounding these lands. Today there are two rivers called the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, but the locations of these rivers at the time of Adam and Eve are uncertain.

New SUMMER 2013 Edition

BIBLE QUESTION

And its Answer

FROM THE HOLY BOOK OF NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 5

Q: Compare Nehemiah as governor and those who preceded him?

A: The former governors had paid their own expenses with the people's taxes. They had made life difficult for the people. Nehemiah had not acquired mortgages on land. As governor he could easily have acquired real estate and sold it at great profit. But instead of making money for themselves Nehemiah and his servants worked on the wall of Jerusalem for the protection of the people and the glory of God.

2013 High School Teen Photography Competition



Overview

The Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States is proud to announce the first High School Photography Competition. This year's theme is "God is my Strength" focusing on the verses:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling" (Psalm 46:1-3).

Twelve photographs will be chosen to be included in the Diocese calendar for 2014 which will be made available for purchase on the Diocese online bookstore.

These images will then be judge

d by the committee of Diocese clergy, servants and youth and our top 3 will then be selected. The winners will be announced during the 2013 WTL High School convention and posted on the Diocese website after the convention.

For more information see www.suscopts.org.

Events & Activities

DIOCESE PROGRAMS

St. Verena Resource Ministry (SVRM)

Professionals Networking Together Make a Difference in the Lives of Others

www.suscopts.org/svrm/

Family Ministry Program:

fmp.suscopts.org

Spring Registration: Dec 20, 2013

Theological Seminary Program

<http://tsp.suscopts.org>

Program Registration: March 15, 2014

H.O.P.E Social Services hope.suscopts.org

Help Other People Excel: Social Services Ministry

St. Mark Festival Program

Spiritual competition among the Coptic Churches world-wide

Archangel Raphael Ministry (ARM)

Special Needs Ministry

www.copticangel.org

✝ Your generous donations will go directly into the program and convention. To help sponsor a child, family, or an activity at the annual Special Needs Convention, please contact: father_joachim@yahoo.com

DIOCESE EVENTS

Arabic Youth Convention

Nov 15-17, 2013

Florida Family Convention

Nov 27-30, 2013

Pre-Marital Retreats

TX: Nov 15-17, 2013

FL: Jan 10-12, 2014

WTL High School Conventions

Girls: Dec 21-24, 2013

Boys: Dec 25-28, 2013

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



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MIGHTY MARROWS MAGAZINE

Life. God. Truth. For Coptic Youth



Press release from the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt concerning recent events

August 16, 2013

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt is following closely the unfortunate incidences occurring in our nation and confirms its strong stance with the Egyptian law enforcement, the armed forces, and all civil Egyptian institutions in confronting violent armed organizations and dark malicious forces, both internal and external. The attacks on our government entities and peaceful churches are terrorizing our citizens both Coptic and Muslim. These actions stand against all religions, morality, and humanity.

We value the stance of the friendly and loyal countries who understand the nature of these events. We strongly denounce the fallacies broadcasted by the western media and invite them to review the facts objectively regarding these bloody radical organizations and their affiliates instead of legitimizing them with global support and political protection while they attempt to spread devastation and destruction in our dear land. We request that the international and western media adhere to providing a comprehensive account of all events with truth, accuracy,



and honesty.

Our sincere condolences are extended to all the victims and martyrs of duty that gave their lives, and we pray for the recovery of all those injured and afflicted. We persevere in our strong national unity and repulse any attempts to polarize our great nation into a secular conflict. We absolutely reject even partial foreign interference in our internal affairs. As the hand of evil extends to burn, kill and destroy; the Hands of God are nearer to protect, strengthen, and build. We have full faith and confidence in the Divine intervention that will navigate the Egyptian people in this delicate time of our history to a better tomorrow and a brighter future filled with justice, peace, and democracy that the people of the Nile Valley so rightly deserve.

Long live Egypt; Free and Proud.
The Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt
Translated by popetawadros.org