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MIGHTY MAGAZINE MARROWS

Life. God. Truth. For Coptic Youth



Friends
and Fellowship

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

Psalm 127:4

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

My Beloved,


Friendship and fellowship are two distinguished features in the practical life of all Christians in society. Though friendship and fellowship are different in concept, they embody love as the key ingredient. Friendship can be amongst all people of different races, nationalities, religions, ethnicities, and socio-economic and political classes. Fellowship pertains to a community of believers who share their faith and common values. Fellowship also includes friendship at a deeper level. The Church is not merely an architectural structure, but a congregation of fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Summer is usually the time for relaxation, exploration, recreation, and vacation. Use this time to connect and reconnect with family and friends and strengthen your fellowship with members of your Coptic community by engaging in activities at your church, in the diocese, on mission trips, and through spiritual and enrichment events. Learn something new, read a spiritual book, or aid in an underserved community. Plant sincere friendships on good ground, so that they have the potential to evolve into genuine fellowships.

I hope you will enjoy and benefit from this edition of the Mighty Arrows Magazine, which presents various relationships illustrating valuable friendships and fellowship in the spirit of love, concern, and goodwill.

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25

God bless you,



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



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Love 103

Love is not an illusion.

BY JAMES HELMY

We live in a world of shadows, according to the language of old philosophers.

To put a modern spin on the idea, we live in a world of holograms. I remember once walking through a famous museum of oddities when I chanced upon a large box with a spacious cavity cut into the center of it. A sign hung above asking, “Can you grab the diamond?” I looked into the space and found a hologram of a diamond suspended in mid-air, tempting me to reach out and touch. Of course I complied with the sign’s suggestion; when I stretched out my hand, it simply passed through the diamond as if it were simply a trick of the eyes, and a gust of air, accompanied by a loud electric buzz, suddenly shot onto my hand to reproach me for my silliness.

Now, in a way, the experience with that odd exhibit was parabolic. It was a life-lesson, a succinct warning, an admonition against following false and frivolous illusions—effectively delivered not by a forty-five minute sermon but by a five-second prank. The floating diamond was real enough to the eye. It had a shape, size, color, and distinct visual appeal. But when it was put to the hard reality-test of physical touch, it was found to be a fraud. I cannot count how many times the Holy Bible cautions us to steer away from “pleasures of this world” that act exactly like this hologram. Everything from Adam and Eve’s fruit, to Jacob’s lentils, to Samson’s lust for Delilah, to Satan’s three offers to Christ fit into the category of the floating diamond. It gleams to the eyes, but utterly fails to deliver on its promises of happiness when grasped by the hand. What makes the *wise man* different from the *fool* is the discernment and

discipline he has in order to choose the real diamond over the false.

I must admit to having begun marital life with the idea that it would be somewhat easy, somewhat pleasurable, and a very convenient arrangement. But after forming that sacred bond, I soon realized that my faint conceptions of marriage were considerably off-course. My assumptions were quickly brought to a sudden halt, and I found myself with a need to reassess the whole situation. As I turn around now and look back at my more naïve younger self, I see a person who might have had good expectations, but poor intentions. Isn’t it an unfortunate but tolerably certain fact that most people enter the marital bond with the intention of enhancing their own lives or increasing their own pleasure? And would it be much of an exaggeration to say that all people who kindle that spark of romance expect to receive some form of self-fulfillment?

Of course, there is nothing strictly wrong with personal enhancement or self-fulfillment. But, as I said, if taken to the extreme, one may easily turn into a fool. In other words, if a person makes the primary goal or objective of *love* to be something that rebounds to one’s own advantage and excludes or forgets about his spouse’s nurture and growth, all the behavior in that love-relationship becomes foolish. Some of the most disreputable and shameful acts I have witnessed were committed against wives by men otherwise quite prudent in their social circles and professions. But why should I place myself so far above these men? Haven’t I also often acted in ways that were at variance with the chivalric attitude I had professed to have toward my wife on our wedding day?

But this isn’t meant to be a counseling essay on marriage, but rather a clarification on how love should be viewed. We tend to dwell excessively upon the physical appeal of the lover, but that is a floating diamond. We focus on the

surface features of the lover’s personality—charm, wit, eloquence (smooth-talk), fashion—but they also prove to be floating diamonds. We closely assess the social standing or wealth of our to-be lover, but those are just as much a hologram as any airy diamond waiting for its next dupe.

There are times when I look at my wife in all the artless simplicity of her day-to-day activities like reading a book, cooking a meal, or napping on the couch, and love spontaneously wells up inside me to a saturation level beyond anything I felt for her even in our engagement days. No emotional tug, no flutter in the gut, no thumping of the heart—that is all unnecessary now—but a calm, serene movement of joy in my heart for realizing who she is, simply because she is. It has taken a considerable amount of time and effort to reach this point. I once viewed love as a fool views fool’s gold—a shiny rock that may quickly serve my ego and my purposes; or as a child sees the ephemeral hanging diamond. But those are mere illusions. The *fun* feelings young people crave may be the early symptoms of a soon-to-be love, but are not the love itself. Love is never easily grasped or possessed. It should not be confused with a visual illusion. It is rather something very solid and durable, as long-lasting as the pyramids. It is the reward only of those willing to take the time (“*Love is patient*”¹) and expend the effort (“*Love never fails*”²) to develop it in all its richness. I discovered that once long ago, and I continue to discover it until today.

¹ 1 Corinthians 13:4.

² 1 Corinthians 13:8.

Part III

The Joy of Working with the Lord

Paying careful attention to how God works.

BY MARIAM GUIRGIS

Previously, Uncle Saad had contacted several realtors to help with the church’s search. Only two of those realtors were faithfully doing their job. At some point, Uncle Saad needed to make the decision of working with a single realtor. He chose the one who seemed to be the most diligent in her work. After a while, he was ready to give up on the search, and was discouraged to the point of thinking his congregation would never find a church that they could afford. That was when he heard the voice that made him realize his lack of faith, and that he had to wait on the Lord and observe His miraculous work.

Not long after, Uncle Saad received an e-mail from the realtor informing him of a church building that was not listed on the market, but the owners were ready to sell it quickly. Uncle Saad decided to go alone and have a look before he informed the rest of the board members. By this time, Uncle Saad had a pretty good idea of what they were seeking. If the building was not up to certain specifications, it would be an easy elimination. He drove to the area and found a beautiful stone-building sitting on a hill with a vast area of land around it. The building looked very sound and big enough for the church. He knew that before he got all excited, they needed to see the building from the inside and get more details about it.

Uncle Saad went back to his office and called the realtor to make sure that the building he saw was actually the one to which the realtor was referring, and to get more information. The building was over seven thousand square foot with about six or seven acres of land around it. No sale price was disclosed and it was a *distress sale*. This meant the seller was trying to sell the building quickly, otherwise it would be auctioned. It turned out that the building was on the

market for a long time, even before the church had started looking, but had no luck selling. It was then taken off the market and the only reason the realtor had come to know of it was because she personally knew the realtor working with the seller. When Uncle Saad knew this piece of information, he realized that the choice of the realtor he had made was actually guided by God; for only God knew that that specific realtor would be the venue through which this church would be brought to his attention.

The board members were informed of the new possibility. They set up a time to view the church from the inside. When they went in, they were blown away by the soundness of the building, the stain glass on the walls, the strong and beautiful pews, and the space for the sanctuary. There was an ample amount of Sunday school rooms, a pleasing kitchen, bathrooms, and a fellowship hall. They liked the building very much and decided to schedule another viewing where the congregation was invited to see the church.

On the set date, members of the congregation came with a Coptic realtor from a nearby city, who was asked to join and give her professional opinion. Everyone liked the church and was very excited about the possibility of it being theirs. It is worth mentioning that of all the buildings they had previously viewed, this was the only one upon which everybody agreed: the priest, the board members, and the rest of the congregation. The only hurdle that was facing the board members was the price the seller was willing to accept. The building was worth at least 3 times what the church could afford; they wanted to be fair, yet offer a price that was affordable for them. They did not want their first offer to be too low lest it be rejected and the case then



would be closed. Yet, they did not want to offer something they knew they could not fulfill financially. That is where the advice of the Coptic realtor was important. She advised them to start lower than they were willing to pay and negotiate up to the price they could pay; thus, started the process of filling out all the necessary paperwork and making the offer.

The first counteroffer from the seller revealed how much they were willing to take for the building; it was definitely a reasonable price, but was still higher than what the church could afford. So after several counteroffers, discussions with the realtors for both parties and a letter to the seller explaining that the board members certainly understood the value of the building, yet they were not going to put their church in a financial situation they knew would later cause problems, an agreeable price was reached. During the process, the members of the church had been praying fervently that they would not miss out on this deal and that the Lord would work with the board members and guide them to make the right decisions. When the acceptance letter came, everyone was filled with inexpressible joy and many could hardly believe that they were able to find such a beautiful building, one that exceeded their expectations, with such a price. It was clearly the work of the Lord.

Even though the accepted price was placed down by the board members, the church was still quite a few thousand dollars short of that amount. In the next article we will see how the Lord continued to work with this church beyond just finding the building.



David and Jonathan

A true friendship of love, selflessness, and faithfulness.

BY MAREYA NAGUIB

To have a true friend is a blessing from God. But what are the qualifications of a true friend?

St. Ambrose advises us that when someone finds a true friend, one should hold them tight and not let go. He states, “Preserve, then, my sons, that friendship you have with your brethren, for nothing in the world is more beautiful than that. It is indeed a comfort in this life to have one to whom you can open your heart to, with whom you can share confidences, and with whom you can entrust the secrets of your heart. It is comforting to have a trusty man by your side; who will rejoice with you in prosperity, sympathize in trouble, and encourage in persecution.”¹ Indeed all these classifications that St. Ambrose expressed were seen in the two great friends, David and Jonathan, who were revealed to us in the Old Testament.

In the book of 1 Samuel 20:1-42, one can read about the story of Jonathan and David and their unconditional love towards one another. Despite the trials that they faced throughout their life, it did not hinder their friendship and fellowship, to the point that Jonathan was willing to lay down his life for David.² A true friendship is filled with sacrifice, love, and joy towards one another. Jonathan was Saul’s son, and accordingly, he would have been next in line to be king. However, Jonathan knew that God had anointed David to be king and he was happy for him rather than being envious that David would take his place. Their friendship was based on a pure heart, each willing to see the other succeed and move forward.

The lives of David and Jonathan illustrates the true meaning of what a faithful friendship should be like. One should be able to discern the types of friendships he or she has with others since

*“evil company corrupts good habits.”*³ Those who try to divert our path away from God are not true friends. St. Paul exhorts us to *“comfort each other and edify one another.”*⁴ A true and a faithful friendship must be blossoming with love. St. Peter also reminds us, *“Above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another.”*⁵

In conclusion, to find a true friend is a jewel from heaven that should be treasured forever. Cherish those who want to build you up and care for you. Those who are selfless and always want to see you happy are a blessing from God, so hold onto them tightly. Learn from the example of David and Jonathan’s care for one another and always put the other first. Hide each other’s weaknesses and do not gossip about the failures. As St. Anthonia, St. John Chrysostom’s mother, asserts, “It is not possible to express in language the pleasure which the presence of true friends causes, but only those who have experienced it know.”⁶

¹ St. Ambrose, On the Duties of the Clergy, Book 3, Chapter 22.

² 1 Samuel 20:32-33.

³ 1 Corinthians 15:33.

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

⁵ 1 Peter 4:8-10.

⁶ Anthonia the Venerable, Letter to her son, on ideal friendship. Monachos.net. <http://www.monachos.net/mb/messages/4226/78.html?1065185831>.

By this all will know

Our actions betray our love

BY MYRIAM FAHIM

“You won’t believe what happened to me,” said Paula.¹

“What?” I wondered. Paula wasn’t the type of person to engage in long dramatic stories. I knew this would be good.

“I was backing out of the shopping center parking lot and accidentally made contact with the car behind me. Naturally, I got out and looked to see if there was any damage. As I suspected, there was nothing but a very small scratch that would come right out in a car wash. I was running late but decided to wait until the owner came out to tell them what had happened.”

“And did they?”

Paula paused as if remembering something painful.

“Yes. The owner was an elderly woman by the name of Mrs. Liam. She was not happy! She yelled at me and called the police. I was really upset! The scratch was no big deal! The police arrived and said it was nothing important. Mrs. Liam kept wringing her hands and yelling hysterically. She said that even if it was small, it was my fault and I had to pay up. The policeman told me that it was her right to have me fix it.”

I looked at Paula, incensed: “I hope it didn’t raise your insurance!”

“Actually, I decided to pay for it myself. Mrs. Liam agreed but insisted that she was going to choose the garage. We immediately headed there. The manager of the garage remarked that there was barely any damage. It would take \$300 to completely erase the scratch so she told Mrs. Liam it wasn’t worth it. Mrs. Liam disagreed, ‘It’s my car and my car didn’t have a scratch before. I want my car to be like it was before.’”

“That Mrs. Liam is really something!” I said, clenching my fists.

“That wasn’t the worst of it,” continued Paula. “The garage owner told us that she had a lot of appointments and it would take three days for her to be able to squeeze us in! Mrs. Liam told me that this wasn’t her problem and that I had to rent her a car for three days.”

“This is abusive!” I interjected angrily. “I hope you didn’t rent her a car! That lady is taking advantage of you, Paula! You’re not rich!”

Paula smiled. “You know, I could just tell that Mrs. Liam had a lot of bitterness in her life. She was so angry with the world. I couldn’t afford to rent her a car so I decided that I would drive her to and from work until her car was fixed.”

“But that’s absurd, Paula! You have a million things to do. Why should you have to drive her around?”

“It was a great learning experience! As I drove her, I learned about the bitterness in her life. She was divorced, and her children hated her and never visited. She was such a sad person. I felt sorry for her. Then, something amazing happened. The owner of the garage called. She felt bad for me because Mrs. Liam was so mean. She cut my bill in half and finished the car up in one day. I am going to go with Mrs. Liam later this evening to pick it up.”

“That’s excellent, Paula!” I said with feeling. “You’ll be rid of Mrs. Liam for good! That woman sounds like trouble!”

Paula looked at me sheepishly.

“Well, not quite. I told Mrs. Liam that I would take her out to lunch at my favorite restaurant tomorrow.”

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. “You did what?”

“I think Mrs. Liam would enjoy that. I would also enjoy the conversation. I have a lot to learn from the mistakes she made in her life.”

I looked at Paula, amazed. Her love of this awful stranger affected me deeply. I instinctively knew that it had also affected the garage manager. As for Mrs. Liam, after meeting Paula, her life would probably never be the same.

I meditated that that’s how the very first Christians probably acted around others. What made them different was that they did not try to protect their own interests. That must have been why people joined the ranks of Christianity even if it meant facing death.

I will end this account by telling you that Paula is neither a Copt, nor a Christian. She is currently considering Christianity and enjoying the teachings of Christ in the Holy Bible. I hope that, by the grace of God, some day, I will act like a Christian, just like her.

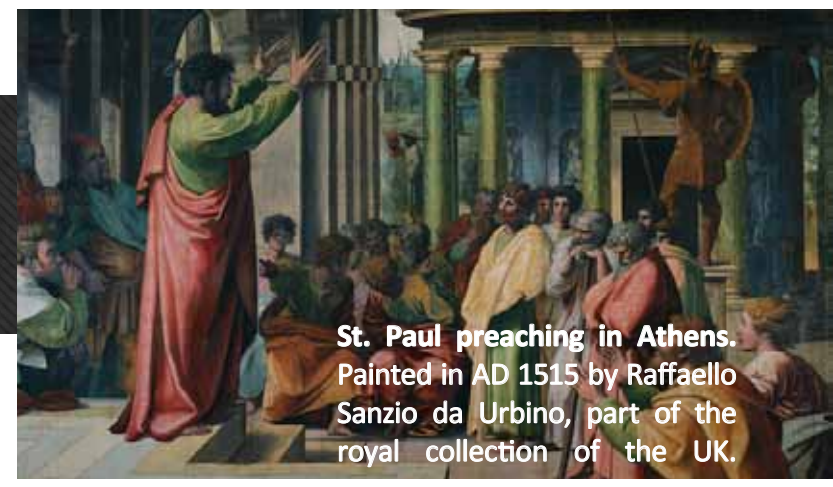
“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”²

¹ Names have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

² John 13:35.



“Learning to be assertive is a skill that can help alleviate one’s stress.”



St. Paul preaching in Athens. Painted in AD 1515 by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, part of the royal collection of the UK.

St. Paul statue in front of St. Peter's Basilica (Vatican). (Sculptor: Adamo Tadolini)

When Assertiveness Meets Aggressiveness

Special featured article
BY HIS GRACE BISHOP YOUSSEF

Challenges and confrontations are common elements endured throughout one’s life (at different stages more than at others, for some), from friends and from foes, and for reasons unanticipated and unprovoked. Learning to be assertive is a skill that can help alleviate one’s stress. Some people have a difficult time saying ‘no’ to various favors or requests, even if they do not have the time or ability to complete the task requested. Some people cannot express themselves at all, so they seem to go along with the flow, but inwardly they do not want to have anything to do with a particular activity or event. They become overwhelmed, and the situation can turn negative, because they miscommunicate their needs, desires, or comforts. Their response will usually come out in one of five forms:

- Passive
- Vindictive
- Accusative
- Aggressive
- Assertive

The **passive** response is one of apathy and indifference to a situation—whether just or unjust. This person accepts being the victim to the point that one accepts the identity of a victim. *It is what it is.* These individuals have succumbed to their reality and accepted the abuse, derogatory remarks, and indignity as the *norm*.

The **vindictive** response is more of a passive-aggressive approach, that is, this one appears to accept the warped reality, but

inwardly, is determined to retaliate. Because retaliation could pose further self-injustice, or perhaps preferring to maintain a public persona of a peacemaker, this person may respond to an adverse situation in a hostile manner (but without the clamor of hostility), so that the blame is not easily retracable; nonetheless, the opponent feels the intended pain inflicted by vindication.

The **accusative** person will blame and find excuses. *Someone else is at fault.* Never does this one take responsibility or feel accountable for any disturbances that may have instigated the situation, or might have occurred as a result. It is someone else’s fault and responsibility; this person is not burdened in any way by guilt or remorse.

The **aggressive** person will lash out, demand rights, and will pursue it very publically, vocally, and even physically. Aggression is learned behavior. Aggressive people are often bullies, whether young or old, man or woman, rich or poor. They could be single or married, servants or laity. The aggressor is one who may dominate by foul language and derogatory statements, regardless of being in the right or wrong. This includes cyber-bulling and spreading rumors.

Assertiveness is responding calmly, diplomatically, and courageously. Assertiveness demands justice based on the law, rules, expectations, and other declarations of equality and justice for all. *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*¹ Assertiveness requires five key characteristics:





When Assertiveness Meets Aggressiveness
HIS GRACE BISHOP YOUSSEF

- Knowledge
- Articulation
- Courage
- Fairness
- Responsibility

So, what happens when assertiveness meets aggressiveness? Every adversarial situation can easily elicit assertiveness if one is willing to learn these skills. If you are wondering how to assess your assertiveness skills, then check to see if your speech and approach embody these five features listed below in various circumstances. If you lack in any area, then strive to work at it, so that you may embrace all these characteristics:

- Truth
- Grace
- Faith
- Confidence
- Humility

Aggressiveness produces intimidation, while assertiveness produces empowerment. Aggressiveness invokes fear, while assertiveness summons honor. The character of our Lord Jesus Christ is one of assertiveness. He was mild-mannered, though He knew His foes well. His speech did not demoralize His foes, nor did it have double-meanings that relied upon each person's own interpretation. Rather, Jesus Christ was straightforward, truthful, and spoke plainly and gracefully.

Nabal provoked King David to war and the king was justified to demolish Nabal and his army. However, Abigail, Nabal's wife, exercised wisdom and discretion.² Courageously and humbly, she personally approached King David, and accepted the responsibility of her husband's foolishness. She was assertive

and spoke the truth, averting a war that would have destroyed her and everyone in her country. Abigail possessed all the key elements of assertiveness, and applied them in her speech and demeanor.

The three youth, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah demonstrated assertiveness when recruited against their will to serve in the army of Nebuchadnezzar. Enticed to eat uncustomary food, they refused. In his feeble attempt to produce robust warriors, Nebuchadnezzar insisted on a diet of delicacies from his own table. The three youth knew that their strength was from a different source—a true Higher Power. Confidently, they appealed to the king's servant to try them by allowing them to eat their simple portion of vegetables and grains from the earth—and God proved their righteousness.³

When St. Paul was wrongfully accused and treated as though he was not a Roman citizen, he was beaten and imprisoned.⁴ Later, the soldiers apologized to him privately after discovering that indeed he was a Roman citizen. Boldly, St. Paul reprimanded them for their cowardly apology and demanded that the same magistrates who mandated this injustice (inflicting lashing and imprisonment on a Roman citizen—being himself) make the apology—and they fulfilled his request.

Assertiveness skills require conviction and training in articulating the circumstances that are undermining one's rights. *"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."*⁵ Certain elements need to be kept out of the dispute, in order to illicit an assertive response that will be appreciated and respected:

- Emotions/Self-Pity
- Hearsay/Gossip
- Intentions
- Partiality
- Entitlement

If these elements are not omitted

in a disagreement, you will be unable to present a fair and unbiased depiction of the actual incident. Rather, you may add further insult and injury to the already compromised situation. Thus, you must remain levelheaded, and present a logical and precise report of the actual account. Your testimony will be proof of your dignity regarding the situation at hand. This way, you will acquire more attention from the listeners than if the situation is presented with tears, shouts, and examples rooted in rumors rather than in facts.

How do you approach an austere person who has authority and make a case for yourself about an unfair grade, practice, demotion, or any other policy that was wrongfully applied to you? First, imitate Christ. Second, know that there are many forms of blatant and discreet persecution, prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and oppression. Third, be assertive.

All children, youth, college students, and young professionals should learn assertiveness skills and apply them in the most reverent Christian manner. Thus, as they matriculate into their professional field, God will give them grace in the eyes of their peers and they will accomplish many goals and serve their communities with fairness, dignity, and justice. They will be honored and respected by their peers—whether friends or foes, and they will empower those who are struggling to achieve their rights.

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."⁶

¹ Galatians 3:28.
² 1 Samuel 25.
³ Daniel 1.
⁴ Acts 16.
⁵ Matthew 5:37.
⁶ James 1:19-20.

F E L L O W S H I P

Among Christians in the First Two Centuries BY DAVID W. T. BRATTSTON

The New Testament and other Christian literature before AD 200 contain many exhortations for believers to live together in love, harmony, and mutual help. The following four authors indicate that Christians in this period took these teachings to heart and were noted for their sense of friendship and fellowship.



First is the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament itself:

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.¹

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.²

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.³

Justin Martyr flourished as a Christian teacher at Rome in the mid-second century AD. His *First Apology* is a description of the beliefs and practices of Christians for non-Christian readers:

We who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions, now bring what we have into a common stock, and communicate to every one in need; we who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of their different manners would not live with men of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies (Chapter 14).



Justin Martyr

The wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all... And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want (Chapter 67).

Tertullian had been a lawyer in Rome who converted to Christianity and became a clergyman in his native North Africa. He was the founder of Latin Christian literature. He wrote his *Apologeticum* in AD 197, along the lines of Justin's:

We are a body knit together as such by a common religious profession, by unity of discipline, and by the bond of a common hope. There is no buying and selling of any sort in the things of God. Though we have our treasure-chest, it is not made up

of purchase-money, as of a religion that has its price. On the monthly day, if he likes, each puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and only if he be able: for there is no compulsion; all is voluntary. These gifts are ... not ... spent on feasts, and drinking-bouts, and eating-houses, but to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old persons confined now to the house; such, too, as have suffered shipwreck; and if there happen to be any in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut up in the prisons, for nothing but their fidelity to the cause of God's Church, they become the nurslings of their confession. But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. "See," they say, "how they love one another" (Chapter 39).



Tertullian

Lucian of Samosata was a widely-traveled pagan who was unfriendly towards Christianity. He wrote the *Passing of Peregrinus* in the late AD 160s, soon after the events it describes, about an actual Cynic philosopher who had converted to Christianity and been active in a Christian community in Syria-Palestine. Lucian describes Christian fellowship through non-Christian eyes, especially its ready acceptance of converts, and moral support when a brother is imprisoned for the Faith:



Lucian

When Peregrinus had been imprisoned, the Christians... left nothing undone in the effort to rescue him. Then, as this was impossible, every other form of attention was shown him, not in any casual way but with assiduity, and from the very break of day aged widows and orphan children could be seen waiting near the prison, while their officials even slept inside with him after bribing the guards. Then elaborate meals were brought in, and sacred books of theirs were read aloud.

Indeed, people came even from the cities in Asia, sent by the Christians at their common expense, to succor and defend and encourage the hero. They show incredible speed whenever any such public action is taken; for in no time they lavish their all. So it was then in the case of Peregrinus; much money came to him from them by reason of his imprisonment, and he procured not a little revenue from it (Chapters 12 and 13, excerpts).

¹ Acts 2:42. ² Acts 2:46. ³ Acts 4:32.



Fellowship and Friendship Defined

The company you keep.

BY BOULIS IBRAHIM

In the Holy Bible, fellowship has the transliteration chabar (pronounced khā-var'), meaning to unite, join, bind together, be joined, be coupled, be in league, heap up, have fellowship with, be compact, or be a charmer.¹ Two such prominent verses say, *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."*²

The Holy Bible specifies two forms of fellowship. One is vertical with the Lord through His Word and prayer, the filling of the Holy Spirit, and the abiding life. The other, which essentially emanates from the first, is horizontal with the body of Christ, which is the Church through meeting together as a whole body,³ in small groups,⁴ or one-on-one;⁵ sharing the truth and building up one another;⁶ worshiping and sharing together the Holy Communion;⁷ singing hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs;⁸ praying;⁹ ministering the Word;¹⁰ and sharing together as partners in the needs, burdens, concerns, joys, and blessings for the purpose of encouragement, comfort, challenge, exhortation, praise, prayer, and physical help according to their needs and abilities.¹¹

In the Holy Bible, friendship has the transliteration ra'ah (pronounced rä-ä'), meaning to pasture, tend (figuratively as in to shepherd, of ruler or teacher, and of people as flock), graze, feed (as of cows, sheep and figuratively of idolater and Israel as flock), to associate with, to be companions, to be a special friend.¹² One of the prominent verses is, *"Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set snare for your soul."*¹³

Friendship, or companionship, can take on numerous forms with creatures as diverse as angels, humans, or animals.¹⁴ These forms, however, share characteristics that include affection, sympathy, empathy, honesty, altruism, understanding, compassion, trust, and the ability to be one's self and express one's feelings. Obviously, the companionship between friends can lead to their wills either leaning towards or acquiring each other's habits. As the saying goes, *"You are the company you keep."* If you keep good company you may benefit, but if you keep bad company you may lose out or, even worse, learn their ways and *"set a snare for your soul."* This does not mean that we should not associate with sinners and non-believers, as it would then be necessary to abandon most human company. Christ did not pray to His Father to take us out of the world, but to keep us from the evil one.¹⁵ Thus, the Holy Bible commends good company and admonishes bad company, *"He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed."*¹⁶ With regard to good company, the Holy Bible highlights, *"He who loves purity of heart and has grace on his lips, the king will be his friend,"*¹⁷ and, *"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."*¹⁸

Fellowship, therefore, is different from friendship. Fellowship resonates an intonation of communion, coupling, and a strong intimate sharing of intents and wills, while friendship is the keeping of company

and companionship without necessarily the communion of intents and wills. Neither subsumes the other, and either can lead to the other. One can have both fellowship and friendship intertwined; fellowship without friendship, such as communion with believers at church without all of them being friends; or friendship without fellowship, such as the keeping of company of non-believers at school, college, or work and with whom you may share interests, hobbies, and time, but not necessarily a communion of wills and deep religious beliefs.

There are numerous biblical examples of both good and bad company, as well as fellowship and its lack. King David experienced all of them. His friendship with Jonathan was an example of *"a friend that sticks closer than a brother,"*¹⁹ while his companionship with Achish the son of Maoch, king of Gath, endangered his life and those with him and almost led him to fight the army of God.²⁰ His confiding to Nathan the prophet of his desire to build a house for the Lord, and the Lord's response with an eternal promise,²¹ was an example of David's deep vertical fellowship with God and horizontal fellowship (and friendship) with Nathan that reaped large rewards – *"two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labour."*²² On the other hand, David's sin with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband²³ severed his fellowship with God, who then saw it necessary to use Nathan's companionship with David to restore fellowship—*"for if they fall, one will lift up his companion,"*²⁴ and *"though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken."*²⁵

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|---|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|--|------------------------|---|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. The Hebrew concordance of the KJV (Strong's Number: H2266). The word was translated into Greek and used in the New Testament as koinōnia (Strong's Number: G2842). | 2. 1 John 1:6-7. | 3. Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25. | 4. 2 Timothy 2:2. | 5. 1 Thessalonians 5:11. | 6. Romans 1:11-12; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Philemon 6. | 7. 1 Corinthians 10:16. | 8. Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16. | 9. 1 Corinthians 14:16-17. | 10. Acts 20:20; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 4:10-11. | 11. Philemon 1:5,19,27; 2:4; 4:3; Romans 12:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:11,14,15; Hebrews 10:33. Paragraph source: Bible.org/article/Christian-fellowship. | 12. Strong's Number: H7462. | The word was translated into Greek and used in the New Testament as philia (Strong's Number: G5373). | 13. Proverbs 22:24-25. | 14. Angels: St. Macarius of Scetes was known to have a cherub as a companion; Humans: Daniel the prophet had Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael as close friends; Animals: St. Barsoum (El-Erian) had a python as a friend. | 15. John 17:15. | 16. Proverbs 13:20. | 17. Proverbs 22:11. | 18. Proverbs 17:17. | 19. Proverbs 18:24. | 20. 1 Samuel 28:1-2. | 21. 2 Samuel 7:2,12,13. | 22. Ecclesiastes 4:9. | 23. 2 Samuel 11. | 24. Ecclesiastes 4:10. | 25. Ecclesiastes 4:12. |
|---|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|--|------------------------|---|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------------|

St. Barnabas and St. Paul

Loyal Friends and Devoted Ministers.

BY THEOPESTE KERELOS

Barnabas and Paul are two names which coincide so often in the Holy Bible (especially in the Holy Book of Acts), that readers might take the combination of the names for granted. In fact however, St. Paul and St. Barnabas are two very unique apostles whose lifelong relationship unites them even to this day. This in-depth relationship includes both a personal friendship, a fellowship in preaching, and, in many cases, an overlap between both aspects. Their relationship began early in their childhood and united them in various ways throughout their lives.

In the Holy Book of Acts, St. Paul testifies about himself that he was raised in Jerusalem and educated by the distinguished scholar, Gamaliel.¹ Likewise, although it is not mentioned in the Holy Bible, St. Barnabas was raised in Jerusalem and educated by Gamaliel.² It was during this period of their childhood that St. Barnabas and St. Paul—at that time Joses and Saul—first became friends. After that, Joses believed in the Lord Christ and became one of the 70 apostles known as Barnabas, meaning *"Son of Encouragement."*³ Saul became a persecutor of the Christians. Nevertheless, their childhood friendship was not in vain because St. Barnabas was the one who introduced St. Paul to the apostles who were afraid and suspicious of the sudden conversion of the former cruel persecutor of Christians.⁴ Not only did St. Barnabas open the door for St. Paul, but he also received him as a companion even before the Holy Spirit bound them together as fellow ministers to the Gentiles. For example, St. Barnabas brought St. Paul from Tarsus in order for St. Paul to remain with him in Antioch where he was sent to preach and where the disciples were first called Christians. Also, when Agabus prophesied about a worldwide famine and the disciples wanted to send help to those in Judea, they sent both St. Barnabas and St. Paul.⁵

Afterwards, St. Paul and St. Barnabas were chosen by the Holy Spirit to preach to the Gentiles, so their bond became a call from God in addition to an earthly friendship. They traveled together, mainly in the area of Antioch, as fellow ministers preaching the word of God to the Gentiles. Interestingly, they chose to preach in every place in Antioch together instead of dividing up the area to spread the word of God more efficiently, thus, demonstrating their heartfelt attachment to one another. While the two apostles did everything hand-in-hand, St. Barnabas humbly took the backseat and allowed St. Paul to gain renown as the prominent speaker and performer of miracles. For instance, they preached in Pamphylia together, but St. Paul was the chief speaker.⁶ Then in Iconium, they preached together and escaped together from the people's uproar, once again never forsaking one another. They fled to Lystra where St. Paul healed a cripple. Although St. Paul's miracle is mentioned as the first step of the preaching in Lystra, it is clear that both St. Paul and St. Barnabas were working together because the Gentiles' initial reaction was to label both apostles as gods, not just St. Paul. They called St. Barnabas Zeus, who is the head of the Greek pantheon, and St. Paul they called Hermes, who is the messenger of Zeus according to Greek mythology. This corresponds perfectly to the



relationship between St. Barnabas and St. Paul, in which St. Barnabas was older and had converted to Christianity before St. Paul, yet he introduced St. Paul to the Christian community and let him be the more prominent messenger of the word of God. The narrative of the preaching in Lystra also shows the two apostles' loyalty to each other. After preaching in Lystra, St. Paul was stoned by a hostile multitude, yet St. Barnabas awaited him until he recovered the next day and the two apostles continued their travels.⁷ Additionally, St. Paul and St. Barnabas were sent together, along with some others, to defend the case for uncircumcision at the council of Jerusalem, and they were sent back together with Judas and Silas, carrying the decree from the council to Antioch.⁸

Eventually, St. Barnabas and St. Paul had their well-known dispute regarding who should accompany them in their ministry, and St. Barnabas chose St. Mark while St. Paul chose St. Silas.⁹ However, this physical parting did not end their friendship. It is clear that their interchangeable love did not diminish and that they remained in contact. For example, in his epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul associates himself with St. Barnabas¹⁰ even though it is not mentioned that the two apostles went to Corinth together. Similarly, St. Paul commends St. Mark, *"the cousin of Barnabas"* to the Colossians,¹¹ although it was St. Paul who had preached to the Colossians.

In summary, the relationship between St. Barnabas and St. Paul was, no doubt, established, driven, and overshadowed by God. They did their part in loving each other and performing the ministry given to them by the Holy Spirit, and God granted them grace and acclaim both on earth and certainly in heaven. This magnificent liaison can in no way be taken for granted or overlooked as a mere coincidence.

¹ Acts 22:3.	⁴ Acts 9: 26-27.
² "St. Barnabas the Apostle." stbarnabas-sunburyohio.org. St. Barnabas the Apostle Orthodox Church, 2014. Web. 9 May 2014.	⁵ Acts 11:22-30.
³ Acts 4:36.	⁶ Acts 13:13-52.
	⁷ Acts 14:1-20.
	⁸ Acts 15:1-29.
	⁹ Acts 15:37-40.
	¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 9:6.
	¹¹ Colossians 4:10.

BY CHRISTINE MASSOUD

It was in the middle of the week, the middle of day, and in the Middle East. Her life was in the middle, stuck between where she's been and where she's going.

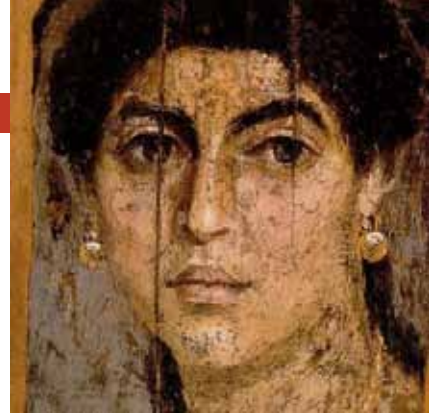
"How did I get here?" She asked herself, "This is certainly not how I thought my life would turn out." But there was no time to think about it now, she had to go. "No time to dwell on the past, move on," she sternly instructed herself. She even motioned with her hands as if to emphasize the moving action. She left the house, slowly and quietly locking the door behind her. She turned the corner, almost hugging it, peering at every corner to make sure no one was around. The sun was at its highest. The only relief is the narrow shadows of roof overhangs. "Is hell hotter than this?" She questioned knowing full well the answer. She would rather be out now than earlier, though, if it meant she'd avoid everyone.

She'd had enough of people, their glances and their stinging whispers. She knew what they were saying, what they were thinking even. She used to care, used to get worked up over it all, used to cry over it all, but no more. If it means losing community, friends, and even family, so be it. Alone she will be.

And alone she was that day, heading over to the well. The jug pushed deeper into her shoulder. She picked a big one, that way—it would be one trip to the well. In and out, she thought. It would dig even deeper once it's filled, but she again reminded herself that it's better this way. "Almost there, just another mile," she said, the dark tunic doing nothing to help her bear the heat. One more turn and she'll see the well. "Please God, let no one be there."

Almost as the words came out, she spotted someone at the well. A man. Surprising, for sure. "What is he doing here?!" She thought with attitude. "Even at high noon!" She didn't debate whether she should wait for the man to leave or not. She looked closely at him.

"He's not from around here," she thought. "Dressed like that, he must be a Jew," she said with a sigh of relief. He must not know about her. He wouldn't know of her past or even her present. She thought she was safe, so she kept walking closer. But first, she set the jug down, and drew her veil over her head. "He won't be talking to me anyway, but better safe than sorry," she murmured. A Jewish man would not speak to a Samaritan woman, let alone her out of all women.



She took a good look at him. He was younger than her, ten, fifteen years minimum. He was dressed plainly, sandals worn out, from the journey no doubt. He wasn't rich, that's for sure. "But what is he doing here? Why is he alone? Why didn't he leave when he saw me approaching? Why... is he staring at me?!" She looked away, quickly, shrinking back but not able to help herself.

She felt His gaze, but it wasn't the same as other men's. His was different somehow. She could feel it even though she didn't look directly into His eyes. Her mind was racing with questions when all of a sudden, He spoke.

"Will you give me a drink?" She froze. He asked again, "Will you give me a drink?" She didn't have time to think, He shouldn't be talking with her. "Why shouldn't He again?" She questioned herself. "Tradition! Blame it all on tradition. Ever since the kingdom was divided into two, kings have tried to reunite them. Of course, Samaria being the capital city of the north made it an easy target. The religious divisions alone were enough to make them hate us and we hated them too. They thought themselves high and mighty since the Messiah will come from their land."

Her thoughts must have only taken up a few seconds because He was still waiting on an answer. So she gave Him one, "Should you even be talking to me?"

"If you knew Me, you would know I don't care about that. You'd ask Me for a drink for yourself and I would have given it to you. Not just any regular old water but fulfilling, satisfying, and endless water." She thought for a second or two. "Satisfying, huh? Is there such a thing? Is there anything truly satisfying? Alright, I'll play along."

"I want that water then." Anything that would keep her from coming here every day was a plus. She'd avoid even the strangers like Him.

But then He struck a nerve, "Go get your husband." That question struck a big nerve. "Why did He ask that?"

"I don't have a husband." She quickly answered. The hurt was creeping up. The love of men failed her. Her people failed her. Her world failed her. She's without: without

God came near Encounter One

Unexpected meeting, awaited message

a man, without protection, without love, without provision; she's just without. It's like He saw through her loneliness, through her heart, and through her pain. "What is He going to say to that? Maybe now He'll give me that satisfying water and be on His way."

"You don't have a husband now," He said. "You have had five and the one you left this morning is not your husband." Shock wiped every color off her face. He wasn't obnoxious, He wasn't derogatory. He was factual, but still, "How could He have known? Is it that obvious that I'm broken! Is He a prophet maybe? He must be to know that. I've never seen Him before," she thought.

"You must be a prophet! But what are You doing here? Shouldn't You be in Jerusalem worshipping?" He replied, "The place of worship doesn't matter. It's the heart and spirit of the worshipper. The Father is looking for just that. So if you want to worship Him, do so in spirit and truth. He hears your soul."

"How does He know that! I wonder if He's that Messiah?! Could He be? I will ask." And she got her answer, "I am He."

In a swift motion, she dropped her jug on the floor. All her worries, pain, and hurt were left behind too. "Who needs this well water?! We've been waiting for generations. He's the Messiah! He's talking to me! I've got to tell people! This is big! This is huge!" She ran into the city, screaming at the top of her lungs, "Come see for yourselves, He's the Messiah! Come see for yourselves!" And many came rushing to Him and believed in Him. "We have heard Him for ourselves and we know that He is for sure the Christ, the Savior of the world."

In seeing this encounter differently, I was able to see myself in the Samaritan woman. She cashed out on the earthly: the job, the status, the love of men, etc. She came to the same conclusion that most of us reach at different times: Jesus. The world and all its goods are blessings. But not if worshiped or desired above all else, they become just idols that we trade out for the real God who desires our hearts' and spirit's worship. So leave the thought that all this will satisfy and fill you, and ask the one who will never run out for some eternal water. He's going out of his way to meet you, right where you're at, just as you are, with all your raggedness, your past falls, and your present struggles. He wants to give you the best future you could ever have. So COME near to Him as He came near to US.

God's *Expectation* of His **SERVANTS**

Striving to shepherd His flock

BY RANYA BOTROS

We live in the 21st century. Two thousand years ago servants would carry around manuscripts. Now, our servants carry around smart phones and iPads. As times change, we adapt to changes that technology and innovation bring. But how far should we go with this adaptation? Should we *go with the flow*, or does our Lord call us to do otherwise? Does God expect something unique from our servants? The answer is an obvious "Yes." They are called to bring souls to Christ.

In order for one to become a bishop, he *"must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous."*¹ What about deacons? *"Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless."*² Servants are called to *"shepherd the flock of God which is among [them], serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to [them], but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, [they] will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."*³ God gives servants clear guidelines on how they should behave and minister to His children. These are commandments from God. The consequences of not following God's will are very severe for servants. They should know better than to engage in evil activities. They must set an example for their spiritual children. This means they must take up their cross, and go against the waves of this world. They should not be negatively influenced by this world or by the people whom they serve. They are soldiers fighting for true righteousness. They are called to defend the faith. Every time a servant gives into evil, this servant submits to the evil one's goals. If you are tempted to depart from God's ways because of pressure from people or this world, ask yourself this: "If I give into their demands or the world's demands, am I serving God or the devil?" Do not compromise your faith and values for anyone or anything; the minute you do, you will find yourself falling down a



slippery slope.

As servants we must please God, not people. Are we going to suffer if we follow Christ? Yes, we are going to suffer as Christians. *"Remember the word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."*⁴

In an age of instant gratification, we all want everything now! We want everything to be easy without breaking a sweat. Who wants to suffer these days? That is not the Christian way, however. Our Christian way is the way of the cross. We need to practice the virtues of patience and longsuffering, because without the cross, we do not have the glory of Christ's resurrection. Have you ever heard of the saying, *"no pain, no gain?"*

Our servants must strive to meet God's expectations, not people's expectations. This is a difficult task, but *"with men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."*⁵ We live in very trying times. What is right has now become wrong, and what is wrong is the new right. We need to be witnesses to Christ, not Satan. *"Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*⁶ We need to *"enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*⁷ Life is not easy; some of us are called to suffer more than others, but all of us are called to suffer in one way or another. A contemporary monk said, *"Suffering is purifying."* How can we truly appreciate blessings and joys in our lives without feeling the sting of suffering? If we are afraid of the waves of this world, we should look to our fathers for some encouragement. Saint Athanasius said, *"If the world is against me... then I am against the world!"*⁸

None of us are perfect. We all make mistakes; we are all sinners. Nevertheless, having weaknesses does not excuse

us from striving to be perfect like our Father. God looks at our efforts. If we are not trying to root out our own sins, then we are not true disciples of Christ. Our faith requires love, effort, hard work, tears, hope, and perseverance. Servants are human and make mistakes, but they should not let the cares of this world weigh them down, as the Holy Spirit is in them, and guiding them to shepherd His flock. There is great power in our Christian faith; we should utilize this power, and depend on God, not people. This world is passing away, and we should always prepare ourselves for the second coming of Christ. We should not worship money, power, technology, or anything else, because that is idolatry. Our sights should be on Christ, not on this world.

Finally, servants represent all the ranks of the priesthood and laity. They all have a huge responsibility, which is why they should be honored and respected by all. Servants are physicians of our souls, who should follow in the footsteps of Christ, and His saints and apostles, such as St. Paul. *"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."*⁹

¹ 1 Timothy 3:2-3.

² 1 Timothy 3:8-10.

³ 1 Peter 5:2-4.

⁴ John 15:20.

⁵ Mark 10:27.

⁶ Luke 14:34-35.

⁷ Matthew 7:13-14.

⁸ Hogg, William. *Talks on the Book of Revelation*. California: County church of Hollywood, 1934, 36.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.

"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." Matthew 25:40

H.G. Bishop Youssef is welcomed by the children in one of the centers in Nuba, Northern Sudan



Witnessing Christ in Sudan

Are we giving or are we taking?

BY BARBARA HANNA

When I decided to join a group from the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States on a trip to Sudan, I had no idea what to expect, other than hot weather, long flights, and general issues in Sudan that could pose danger to natives and foreigners. Despite these things, I agreed to go on the trip because I thought that it would be a good experience, even if stressful. Little did I know that this trip would forever change my outlook on life.

The first few days in Sudan were so distressing. There was dust everywhere and there was no way to escape the heat. People would sleep in the courtyards of their homes because of the heat, and children roamed the deserts of Nubia alone. However, when we started visiting various areas and meeting the people, I learned to understand and appreciate their culture and manner of life much better.

The area had Christian centers for worship and education. It was a

place where people would gather to learn about their heritage and folklore. Various meetings for children, youth, and their families were held there. When we went to one of the Centers, all my worries suddenly melted away. The children were happy: they sang songs, told stories, and flawlessly recited Bible verses. I thought I knew many hymns before this trip, but they put me to shame.

After their daily lessons, our group was able to get to know the Nubian children, youth, and their teachers better. We were able to interact with everyone; they were happy to have us and we were happy to be there. We played games and gave them toys that we brought from the United States. I will never forget the looks on their faces when I pulled out a bottle of bubbles – it was like they had never seen soapy water before. I realized then that maybe they hadn't. All of the kids jumped up and down ecstatically, saying, "انا! انا!" translated in English, "Me! Me!"

When I looked at these children, I remembered the verse that tells us that when we give to others, we give to Christ. Those were my feelings—I saw Jesus as I watched the children joyfully sing while living so simply. I was seeing Christ through their eyes.

We were a small group of ten from all over the United States, of various ages, education levels, and backgrounds. Our group consisted of two physicians, one medical student, one science major, one nurse, three pharmacists, one counselor, and me—a high school student aspiring to become a physician. We became good friends with some of the locals who guided us and served as our translators.

Despite our limited resources, we seized any opportunity to respond to anyone's needs, especially the medical needs. We treated approximately thirty patients in a few hours, which we thought to be a lot until we realized that 150 more heard about us and were waiting to be helped outside. We also

spoke to several women's groups about many issues. The people understood that we were happy to be with them and they trusted us, sharing their ailments with us. We didn't expect to serve so many people, but wherever we went, we were graciously welcomed. We gave what we could from the heart.

I remember several of the patients that we treated. One was a woman, 35 to 40 years old, who had had three prior miscarriages. She suspected that she had also lost a fourth. I could not even begin to imagine what she was feeling. Ironically, in the next station, another physician was trying to comfort a 19-year-old who was crying because she was pregnant.

The trip ended all too soon. Once you go to a country like Sudan, you can never believe that what you have done is enough. When we returned home, I remember being angry with my

sister when she wanted to throw away the crust from her bread. I was angry because I remembered the humility of the Sudanese children who never asked for more than their portion and were very grateful for whatever they received. I was angry because she did not know that those children would look at that same crust as though it was a delicacy! She did not understand because she was not there, and to see is to know.

I wish all would see, because Jesus is visible on the streets and in the corners of blessed Sudan. God protected the man who slept with dust for blankets. He led the children who had wandered off to return safely back to their homes. He looks out for His beloved ones everywhere in the world. This summer, I witnessed Christ in Sudan. I hope one day you will too.



(BELOW)
H.G. Bishop Elia (Khartoum and Southern Sudan); H.G. Bishop Youssef (Southern U.S.); H.G. Bishop Sarabamon (Omdurman, Adbara, and Northern Sudan)

Congregation and Visitors from the SUS Diocese (Summer 2014)

Nuba Folklore presentation at St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Orthodox Church in Southern Sudan

(ABOVE)

Front Row: H.G. Bishop Elia: Diocese of Khartoum and Southern Sudan; H.G. Bishop Youssef: Diocese of the Southern United States; H.G. Bishop Sarabamon: Diocese of Omdurman, Adbara, and Northern Sudan

Back Row: Priests from the Diocese of Northern Sudan and the Diocese of Southern Sudan

Occasion: Farewell Appreciation Celebration in Honor of H.G. Bishop Youssef: Visit to Sudan in June 2014



Silence unites you to God Himself

BY HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III



Monastic Sermons Delivered by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III
During His Detainment in 1983-1985
St. Pishoy's Monastery in the Natrun Valley, Egypt

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

The person who only seems silent while his mind wanders in many topics is not silent at all. This person only takes the image of silence. To attain true silence, silence your tongue for your heart to speak, and silence your heart for God to speak.

One keeps silent in order to speak with God. They asked St. Arsenius why he would not meet or sit with them: “Do you not love us?” He answered, “God knows that I love you, but I cannot speak with God and with people at the same time.”² He kept silent, to speak with God; he speaks with God because he loves Him.

Likewise prayer, if it is void of love it is not prayer. We pray to God out of our love for Him: “How beloved is Your name, O Lord! It is my meditation the whole day... I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be filled as with marrow and fatness...³ My soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You [as] a dry and thirsty land ... As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God.”⁴ The point is love for God. People, with their different natures, reach the love of God through various ways. If silence will bring you to the love of God, that is good; if stillness will bring you to the love of God, that is good; if service will bring you to the love of God, that is good. The important thing is that the person lives in God’s love.

This is what we want out of monasticism, for God’s love to reign over our heart. Out of God’s love, we enter solitude, not for the honor, image, reputation, or glory

of solitude. For the sake of God’s love, we enter silence, not because the silent person is a saint, but because silence gives us an opportunity to speak with God and live with Him. According to my knowledge from the lives of the fathers, I believe that, in its essence and profundity, the monastic life was love for God—love for God more than family, more than relatives, more than women, marriage, friends, food, drink, the world and everything in it, and even more than service. Love for God is what took on the image of monasticism, because out of love for God, the person reached the point of full consecration for God, whom one loves, being set apart to be with God and speak with God.

One would ask how a person could live this monasticism amidst responsibilities. The greatest example in my mind is St. Paul the Apostle. If I wanted to add another example, I would add David the Prophet. David the Prophet had massive responsibilities. I assume none of us have such responsibilities. He was king of a nation at a time when the king assumed all responsibilities. There were not many ministers to carry the burdens with him. This was the life of David. Additionally, he was the commander of the army, judge for the people, and also had a large family with at least eight wives and many children. He lived in an era replete with problems, yet we see David, amid these responsibilities, his heart clinging to God day and night, “How beloved is Your name, O Lord! It is my meditation the whole day.”⁵ The whole day! Where then did all the responsibilities go? “Seven times a day I have praised You because of the judgments of Your righteousness... I remembered Your name, O Lord, in the night and kept Your law...⁶ Evening and morning and at noon I will pray.”⁷ Even when he lies down to sleep he says, “When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches... At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, because of Your righteous judgments.”⁸ This one who remembers him at night, evening, on his bed, and at midnight adds, “My eyes

are awake through the night watches... I will awaken the dawn. I will praise You.”⁹ After all this, he says, “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You.”¹⁰ David, did you even sleep, did you neglect one moment—at dawn and before dawn? He is amazing! “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God.”¹¹ Beloved, were you not all the time with God? David had many responsibilities. Any person weighed down by responsibilities needs to remember David the Prophet.

What about St. Paul the Apostle? There was not a person who labored in ministry and service more than St. Paul. Even he said, “I labored more abundantly than they all... in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea,”¹² in epistles, etc. Despite all this, he was able to ascend to the third heaven and see unutterable things. He was granted many spiritual gifts that not all the other apostles received.

I would give one piece of practical advice to all who are in positions of responsibility, to those who work inside or outside the monastery. It would be great if they could follow this advice: train yourself on praying while working, even in an elementary way that progresses over time. Train yourself how to combine your work with prayer; how to pray while walking along the way, how to pray while sitting with people; how to pray while overseeing a job, how to pray while working. We all, without exception, can pray while in the cell with the door closed. This is possible for everyone. How a person can pray while amid people, while working, this is the core spiritual training. If a person is able to do this, this person can reach unceasing prayer, even if one begins with a simple method that progresses over time.

I told you of David and Paul. I want to give you another example of one of the saints: Joshua the son of Nun. Joshua was the commander of the army, the successor of Moses, and he bore all Moses’ responsibilities, yet God told him, “This Book of the Law shall not

depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night.”¹³ What about all of Joshua’s responsibilities? Could he fulfill this commandment? If this were not possible, God would not have commanded it. A person only needs to train on praying while working. If one trains on praying while working, the work will be blessed and will be without errors (or with minimal errors).

The other piece of advice I would like to add to this first piece is to be faithful over the few and God will give you much. Be faithful over the few moments you are able to pray, and God will grant you unceasing prayer. Be trustworthy; that is what is important. One says, “No, I’m going to lock myself in my cell and pray.” You might remain in your cell, but not be able to pray, because you have not trained yourself on praying outside your cell. Many people remain in their cells, and in their cells, they waste time. They are fought with boredom, with sleep, or by thoughts—these three things. Otherwise, they waste time in anything, perhaps in cleaning, organizing the cell, cooking, reading anything useless, visiting other monks; they find any means to waste time, as St. Isaac said, “A man may remain for a hundred years in his cell without learning how to live in the cell.”¹⁴ Be trustworthy over the few and God will entrust you with much. To what extent should you be trustworthy? Until death. What does till death mean? It means, if need be, suffer martyrdom for your faithfulness.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

¹⁰ Miller, Dana. The Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian. Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984, 307.

¹ Ward, Benedicta. The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection. Revised Edition. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984, 188.

² Cf. Budge, E A Wallis, trans. The Paradise of the Holy Fathers. Revised Edition. II vols. Putty: St. Shenouda Monastery, 2008, 20.

³ Azmy, Fr. Abraham. The Agpeya: The Coptic Prayer Book of the Seven Hours. Hamden: Virgin Mary and Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church, 2009, 127, 55.

⁴ Psalms 63:1; 42:1.

⁵ Ibid. Azmy, 127.

⁶ Ibid, 132.

⁷ Psalm 56:17.

⁸ Psalms 63:6; 119:62.

⁹ Psalms 119:148; 57:8-9.

¹⁰ Psalm 63:1.

¹¹ Psalm 42:2.

¹² 1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 11:26-27.

¹³ Joshua 1:8.

¹⁴ Ibid. Ward, 180.



“The man who speaks for God’s sake does well; but he who is silent for God’s sake also does well.”¹

Christian Fellowship

BY JOSEPH GHEBRIAL

Jesus is indeed a friend to us sinners,¹ but He had true fellowship with the disciples. Needless to say that friendship and fellowship are not the same thing. People who do not know the difference live a worldly life and view things from a *me-first* perspective. On the other hand, knowing that Christians are the temple of God, and understanding that every believer is a stone that makes up the temple with the headstone being Christ, then one can see how we all *fit* perfectly well together. In the same way, a Christian can spend time with an unbeliever, but until that person is part of the body of Christ, there can be no permanent fellowship. A person who has not yet accepted the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ will not feel what the Christian feels, see what the Christian sees, think like the Christian thinks, or labor for eternity as every believer must.

The biblical word for fellowship is *koinonia*, which means to have things in common. It is where we get the English word community. In our church today and every day, fellowship is central. We see that fellowship in its New Testament sense is an inner unity with God expressed outwardly onto others. It is not just being together but *doing* together! It is not just doing anything together but it is working together to accomplish God's will. *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst."*² When you spend time with a fellow Christian, God is in the midst. You are not spending time with one other person but two: that person, and God. This is the difference between fellowship and *hanging out*.

Fellowship means God is also there, participating, saying words through His children, stirring their hearts up to feel what He feels, to have the insight and wisdom that He has. This is what happens when you are gathered together with others in His name. I remember, as a teenager living in California, one Saturday every month the youth would gather in the church basement, make and prepare bagged lunches for the homeless living along the beach coast of Santa Monica, and also hand out godly messages for them to read at their leisure. For some that could read, we even offered Bibles and certain passages to give them hope and understanding. Those who could not read gave us that opportunity to read and pray with them, gaining them and us many blessings. Not only did all this give us an excuse to gather and have fellowship together as church youth, but it had a much more magnificent and awesome blessing when many of the unnamed, unknown, faceless homeless realized that indeed someone cares, someone loves, and someone always accepts each one of them, flaws and all. That someone is Christ and the Holy Trinity. Therefore, this was our *koinonia*, our community, or common connection to each other and the world—Christ!



Friendship in God and fellowship with Christ.

For this reason, we must quit thinking of Christian fellowship as primarily doing things such as having potluck dinners or watching football games or playing basketball with other believers. Of course these have their place and time, but they are only fellowship to the extent that rest, exercise, and eating are doing the work of the Lord. There is no spiritual growth there. Fellowship involves actively doing God's will. The things we usually think of as fellowship are certainly not the primary meaning of the word!

Now we must ask with whom is fellowship best made possible? Your closest friends should be as close to Christ-like as possible. Thus, a like-minded Christian friend is a great start. Find these close friends and do not give them up easily. Meet regularly with them. Cherish them, for a good friend is a gift from God. These are people with whom you can have deep fellowship. He or she can pray for you and plead with the Lord on your behalf, talk with you about spiritual things, give you godly advice, share your burdens, inspire you, rebuke you, help guide you back to the truth, and understand your trials and tribulations from an eternal perspective. Do not forget that they are working together with you toward a common goal—to live with Jesus and acquire eternity with God. You tell me if there are even a handful of other gifts greater than a person like this! This helps create a deep Christian fellowship. Attend a church with godly people that have a zeal for the Lord, people that talk about God beyond the Sundays. And lastly, be that same person to others. Be the type of person that can and will encourage and build up another friend, Christian or not.

Be a unit, a whole, a complete being with Christ. It is essential for both a great friendship but even more so for living the life of fellowship. You can practice fellowship by recognizing that your goal is of the will of God, and taking an active part where you can best help. Happy Fellowship!

¹ Luke 7:34.

² Matthew 18:20.

Coptic News

Christians being "slaughtered silently" in Iraq

"Raqqa is being slaughtered silently" is a Facebook campaign launched by activists to draw the attention to the marginalized Ar-Raqqah, controlled by Daash which has been committing the most heinous killing acts against its folks and all Syrians alike.

According to the revolution coordinations union and syrco: "Raqqa is being slaughtered silently" is a media campaign that aims to expose the practices of al-Baghdadi. Ar-Raqqah's name has been linked for months to the crimes of the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (Daash); the news of field executions, lashings and gold levy for

Christians marked the front pages of international newspapers. All news of civilians and the egregious abuses they were subjected to failed to be reported, while the civic and relief organizations fell short in doing their part for fear of the wrath of Daash. As a result to this neglect, activists from Ar-Raqqah civic movement announced the campaign entitled "Raqqa is being slaughtered silently", a few days ago, in an attempt to break the media silence on the province; and expose the organization of



Source: www.do-egypt.com

Public execution of Christians in Iraq

al-Baghdadi, the main perpetrator of conflict in the province.



Source: www.do-egypt.com

ISIS Torches 1,800-Year-Old Church in Mosul; Priest Says City Is 'Now Empty of Christians'

Members of the militant group Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) reportedly torched a 1,800-year-old Catholic Church in Mosul, Iraq and have effectively left that city "empty of Christians" as believers fled the area in fear of their lives, according to Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Louis Sako.

The torching of the church comes on the heels of the destruction of a number of other Christian monuments in Iraq in recent months including the tomb of biblical prophet Jonah, which was dug up by ISIL militants in the east of Mosul.

Many Christians still in Mosul also hurried to leave the city before Saturday when an ISIS ultimatum that Christians convert to Islam, pay a tax or leave came into effect.

"We left Mosul as we saw that [we] were close to being butchered, and under the threat of armed militants. It was serious and firm," a Christian named Mukhalis Yeshua told Shoebat.

"...But the issue that sparked the pain and sorrow was the checkpoints exiting Mosul as the armed men searched the families, and robbed all their money as search parties from the IS (Islamic Caliphate) searched all the

women and robbed their jewelry and money, telling them that such money is Islamic property," added the Christian.

Patriarch Sako told AFP Friday that: "Christian families are on their way to Dohuk and Arbil," in the neighboring autonomous region of Kurdistan. "For the first time in the history of Iraq, Mosul is now empty of Christians," he said.

Once home to an estimated 1 million Christians before the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that ousted former President Saddam Hussein, church officials now place the Christian community in Iraq at about 450,000.

Source: christianpost.com

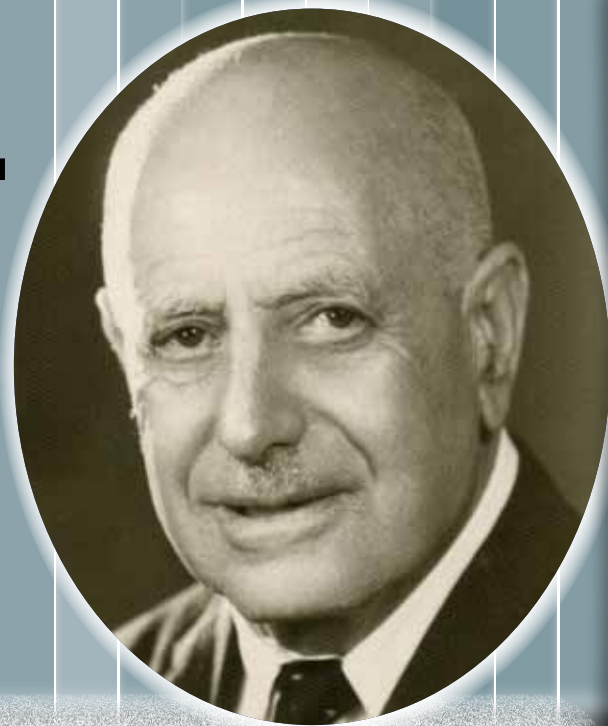


Source: christianpost.com

MAKING AN IMPACT

Ragheb Moftah
(1898-2001)

An Article by the Late Rev. Dr. John H Watson



JUST AS THERE IS A MEASURE BY WHICH ALL COPTIC ICONOGRAPHY MAY BE EVALUATED, THANKS TO THE TREMENDOUS ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ISAAC FANOUS, SO THERE IS A STANDARD BY WHICH ALL COPTIC MUSIC MAY BE JUDGED AND IT IS THAT SANCTIONED BY RAGHEB MOFTAH, a musicologist and scholar of eminence who devoted his life and personal fortune to the modern notation and definition of Coptic music. It is a phenomenal achievement. Dr. Moftah lived in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, dying at the age of 102 in 2001.

Ragheb Moftah was born on 21 December 1898 at al-Faggala in Cairo. Fluent in English, French and German, he was sent to Germany to study at the Faculty of Agriculture in the University of Bonn in the Rhineland. It was a rather obvious field of study for a wealthy Copt living in the Nile Delta. But Ragheb's great passion was music, European classical music and the traditional music of Egypt, and

he eventually obtained degrees in Music at Bonn and in Catholic Southern Germany at the University of Munich. At home in Egypt, both before his departure to Germany and on his return to Egypt, Ragheb found inspiration and collaboration with the traditionalist Coptic musician Mikhail Girgis al-Batanouny. The rest of the twentieth century was devoted to the recording and notation of Coptic liturgical texts. It was a turbulent century for Egypt, even when compared with the long centuries of turmoil in the Nile Valley. While Egypt struggled with experiments in constitutional government, the failure of liberalism, war and occupation, revolution and republic and the growing Coptic revival, this remarkable man stuck to his task of cultural conservation. He disliked anything that interfered with his researches and was not an enthusiast for the 1950s Revolution. In popular English parlance, he kept his nose to the grindstone. It was a firm, indispensable dedication. In the later years of the century Moftah found valued collaborators in the cantors Sadek Attallah and Farag Abdel Messih.

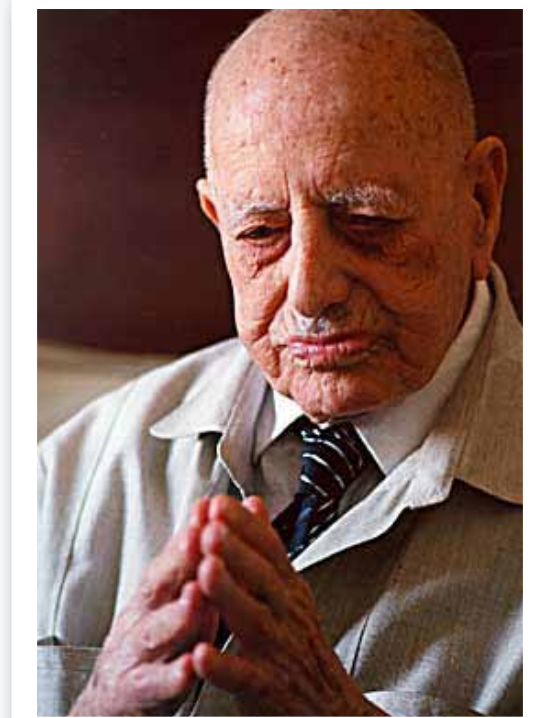
UNESCO championed his work and



Moftah was conscious of the international context of his project. He knew the British scholar Cecil Sharp (1859-1924) who travelled the United Kingdom for half a century, with basic recording equipment, collecting folk songs that would otherwise be lost. Moftah also understood that it was essential to be hard-hearted in pursuit of his ideal. He knew that the Hungarians Zoltan Kodaly and Bela Bartok had started their recordings and transcriptions of folk music in 1913 and that the results were only finally published in 1951. Much later in 1998 the Bela Bartok system of notation was used in Moftah's published transcriptions. Ragheb Moftah worked with the authoritative singers of the time, and produced an enormous number of recordings for critical analysis. The process was slow and careful, involving travels from the furthest reaches of Upper Egypt to the Mediterranean coastline. Coptic singers were everywhere in Egypt. In 1927, Moftah employed an Oxford trained musicologist called Ernest Newland Smith to work in a Nile houseboat investigating the structure and notation of Coptic music. Together, they produced sixteen volumes of musical notation, which could be read by trained musicians anywhere. It was a defining moment in the Coptic cultural and ethnic renaissance. Moftah and Newland Smith believed that the origins of European Music lay in the music of Egypt.

The magnum opus of Dr. Ragheb Moftah is *The Coptic Orthodox Liturgy of St. Basil with Complete Musical Transcription*, an indispensable tool for Coptic Studies. (American University in Cairo Press 1998). The Hungarian ethnomusicologist Dr. Margit Toth undertook the exquisite musical transcriptions, under Moftah's direction. This project alone took thirty years. Moftah has devoted most of his long life to the preservation of the significant Coptic musical heritage. Without this authentic sound of the Christian Nile there is no Coptic worship. The Western Coptologist or the Copt of the lands of emigration who does not understand Coptic Music mediated by Moftah does not understand the Copts at all. The Music is related solely to Coptic and Arabic. It cannot be successfully sung in English or any European language and the attempt ought not to be made. It is an act of cultural barbarism.

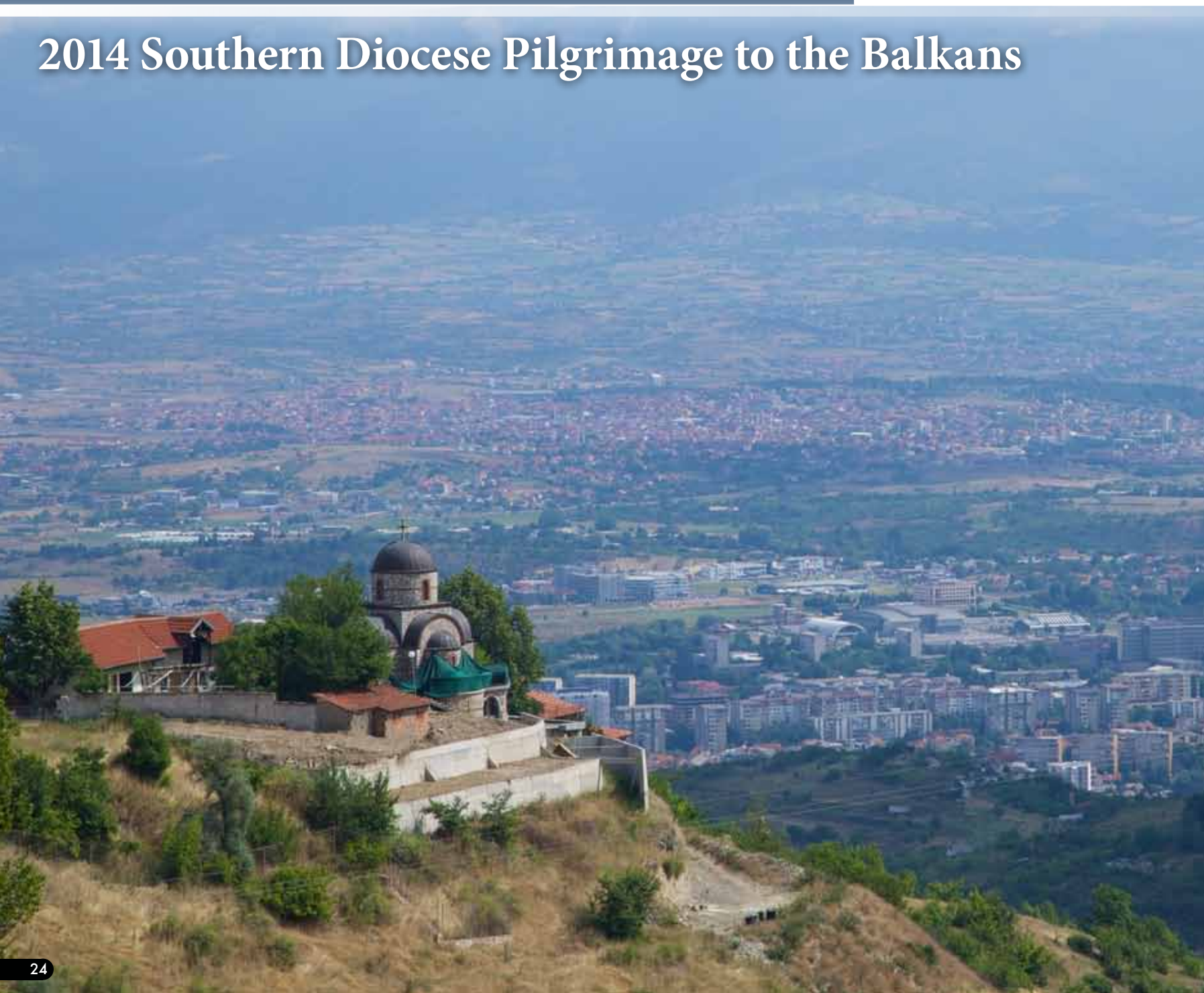
Dr. Moftah's death after so long a life left all those concerned with Coptic language and culture bereft, though it was clear that even those who live longest will be called home.



Evangelism & Apologetics Conference 2014



2014 Southern Diocese Pilgrimage to the Balkans



QUESTION & ANSWER

New SUMMER 2014 Edition
GENERAL QUESTION
And its Answer

Q: Regarding the need for fellowship with one another in the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, what if there is a group of people who bring out the worst in us, for example we lose our temper around them or we fall into sin against them, how then should we maintain fellowship with them?

A: Often fellowship and unity are spoken of together. What exactly does fellowship and unity mean? It means going beyond yourself spiritually in dealing with others. "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being" (I Corinthians 10:23-24).

The Holy Book of Philippians 2:3-4 speaks of fellowship, "If any fellowship of the spirit, let nothing be done in strife or vain glory, let each esteem others better than themselves, look not everyone on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

These verses mean that in fellowship with one another, as one family whose head is the Lord Jesus Christ, we must go beyond ourselves and extend ourselves one to another. We must further take into consideration the Christian spirit and qualities of true love when we enter into an upright fellowship. Thus, *fellowship* will not cause us to spiritually harm ourselves or bring harm to another. The acceptable *fellowship* will have the reverse effect and bring us closer to the Lord our God.

Wrong doing will not be accepted, encouraged nor stimulated within a true fellowship with others and with the Lord Jesus Christ as the head of this fellowship.

* Source: <http://www.suscopts.org/resources/questions-answers/>

New SUMMER 2014 Edition
BIBLE QUESTION
And its Answer

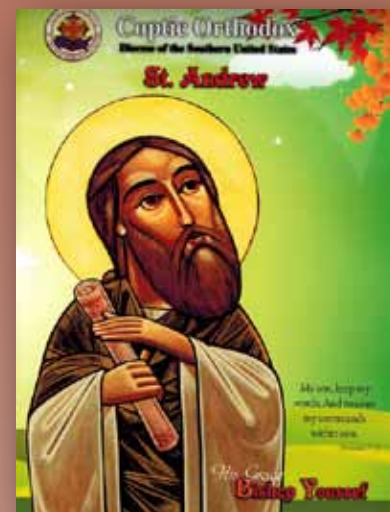
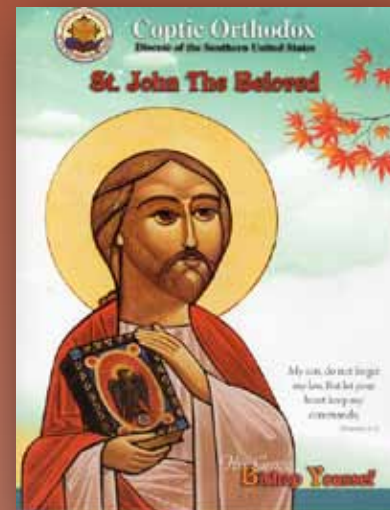
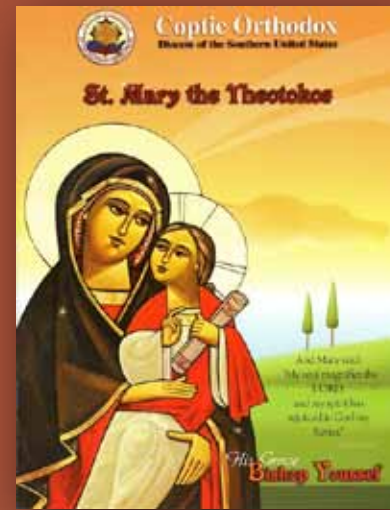
FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS CHAPTER 28

Q: When St. Paul reached Rome, he called all the Jewish leaders to come to his house, but we know from Roman history that Claudius Caesar expelled all Jews from Rome in 49 AD. Where then did these Jews come from?

A: Perhaps these Jews escaped Claudius' expulsion, or perhaps they moved back after Claudius' death by poisoning.

* Source: H.G. Bishop Youssef Holy Bible Study Series.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEYofOBpuZs>

New books by H.G. Bishop Youssef!



<http://www.stmosesbookstore.org/>

Events & Activities

DIOCESE PROGRAMS

Family Ministry Program fmp.suscopts.org
(FMP) Summer Registration deadline: December 10, 2014

Lead Program

A program for learning Christian leadership principles.

St. Clement Christian Academy

This is a learning community dedicated to meeting the needs of each learner within its walls.

Theological Seminary Program

tsp.suscopts.org
Program Registration deadline: March 15, 2015

Theological Seminary Program - Nashville

An Arabic theological program located in Nashville.

Theological Seminary Boarding Program - Abbey

A 2 year live-in program located at St. Mary and St. Moses Abbey.

H.O.P.E. Social Services

hope.suscopts.org
A social services program designed to help those in need.

St. Mark Festival Program

This is a spiritual competition among the Coptic Churches doing the same activity world-wide.

Archangel Raphael Ministry (ARM) | copticangel.org

A program designed specifically for individuals with special needs.

St. Verena Resource Ministry (SVRM)

(SVRM) Professionals networking together to make a difference and provide resources to our Coptic community. To make a request or to volunteer as a consultant. www.suscopts.org/svrm/

Asaph Hymns Institute | www.sushymns.org/

(AHI) is the first ever online hymnological seminary.

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Learn about Evangelism and Apologetics through conferences, literature, and events. CopticTruthMinistry.org

The Mentoring Program - A helping hand

Mentoring is the process of helping an individual develop skills, knowledge, and attitudes in order to set and reach important life goals.

DIOCESE EVENTS

Pre-Marital Retreat

TX: Nov 14-16, 2014 | FL: Jan 9-11, 2015 | GA: Jun 12-14, 2015

Crossroads Graduate Convention | Feb 19-22, 2015

THY College Convention | FL: Dec 17-20, 2014

Winter High School Girls Convention

TX: TBA | FL: Dec 21-24, 2014 | TN/GA: TBA

Winter High School Boys Convention

TX: TBA | FL: TBA | TN/GA: Dec 21-24, 2014

Winter Kids Camp | GA: Dec 21-24, 2014 | TX & FL: TBA

Family Convention | TX & FL: Nov 26-29, 2014

FOR MORE - See suscopts.org

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



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