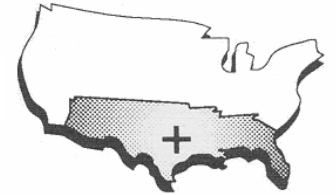


The Office of
His Grace
Bishop Youssef

Coptic Orthodox

DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES



My Beloved Brethren,
Peace and grace.

The Great Fast is a season of repentance and return to God. Through the intercessions of St. Mary and the cloud of witnesses, I pray that this fast will be different in the depth of its spirituality and how you experience God. At the end of it, I hope that all of us can say with the man born blind, "Now I can see." Amen.

Bishop Youssef
Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Brothers and Sisters, the youth of our beloved Church:

"How disappointed Christ must be in the church that does not answer to the calling of leading the whole world to His love and to a new life in Him. The cause of this terrible sin among Christians is a result of the lack of understanding of the great debt that was forgiven us. We live as though what Christ had done for us was of little value... " [St. John Chrysostom]

This is why we write this letter—to unite us with one purpose: **to earnestly draw near unto God.**

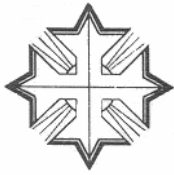
This letter is a call to **ACTION**. It is time for our lives to truly be *defined by Christ*.

Our work is **three-fold**: (1) to grow closer to Christ, (2) to **ACTIVELY** resist the enemy and (3) to bring the world to the knowledge of the Truth which sets us apart, which St. Peter urges us to do in his first epistle:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith..."

During this Great Fast our prayers and fasting in *one accord* will allow the Spirit to work with us and through us in an **unstoppable, mountain-moving way**. We must rise and stand together WITH **BOLDNESS** as the Body of Christ, and make a commitment to take action for HIS glory:

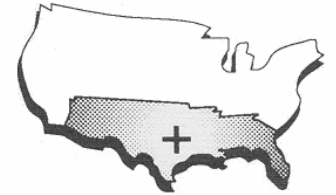
- 1. Dig deeper in the Word:** EVERY reading is His daily message ESPECIALLY tailored for YOU... Make time to read His words that "are SPIRIT and they are LIFE..." [John 6:63]
- 2. Pray consistently:** We must stay in constant communication with our Creator and utilize the Agpeya, the perfect balance of all forms of prayer. Lift up your hearts and cry to Him!



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3. **Fast with faithfulness:** Fast with our minds and hearts first and our bodies will surely follow.
4. **Spiritual Books:** We ask that we all read ***Have You Seen the One I Love*** by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III; this will help to occupy our minds, conversations and activities with Him and keep us focused on our goal.
5. **Show Him to the world:** We must show the world the reason for our joy, and share this joy with those who have not yet tasted Him. Unite your energies and make a difference in your city! Do not let the enemy make you think that your efforts are small or without value; altogether we must be known as “those who have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6)

Finally, do not be afraid to be known as being spiritual. YOU are needed to *create a new norm*—a norm that reflects the Christ this world thirsts for. Our Lord has enlisted you as a member of his heavenly army! Join His ranks and fight the good fight until the whole world knows that our God is the God who parts the seas and calms the raging waters!

We are the future of our church, and the present image of His Body. God has entrusted each youth with energy and life and if used for His glory, we have the power to change ourselves ...and the world.

Half the battle is for us to BELIEVE...

"O young men and young women! If you have energy, enthusiasm, zeal and ambition let them all be raced by the Holy Spirit. Let the violence you have be violence of love and bearing witness to truth."

Agape.