



EL-MANARA

AN INITIATIVE OF THE MEDIA COMMITTEE - DIOCESE OF SYDNEY & AFFILIATED REGIONS

COPTS' NEWS

"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." - Luke 2:52



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FIRST YEAR COMMEMORATION OF HH POPE SHENOUDA III



On Sunday, 24th March 2013, a group of choirs from different churches presented some hymns under the leadership of maestro Nasr Sharoubim. The function was held at Star Palace Function centre in Fairfield and was attended by His

Grace Bishop Daniel and some of the diocese priests. May the Lord repose the soul of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III in the paradise of joy.

ORDINATION OF HIS GRACE BISHOP ZOSIMA



On Sunday, March 10, 2013 His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, along with our fathers the metropolitans and bishops, consecrated His Grace Bishop Zosima (formerly Fr. Zosima El-Antoni who served at St Mary & St Abu Sefein Church, Rhodes, Sydney, Australia) as Bishop of the Diocese of Atfih and El Saf.

His Grace Bishop Daniel, the clergy and congregation of the diocese of Sydney and its affiliated regions, Spring of Love Magazine and El-Manara Newspaper would like to congratulate His Grace Bishop Zosima and pray that His Grace's service will be fruitful and blessed.

(more pictures on page 4...)

HIS GRACE BISHOP DANIEL VISITS ST MARY AND STS KOZMAN & DEMIAN COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH



The Congregation of Saint Mary and Sts Kozman and Demian Coptic Orthodox Church would like to thank Bishop Daniel for blessing us with his presence on Sunday the 24th March

2013. His Grace ordained a number of Deacons and this was greatly appreciated. We thank him once again and pray that God may bless his services for many years to come.

HIS GRACE BISHOP DANIEL VISITS ORANGE



HG Bishop Daniel prayed the Holy Liturgy at Orange on Saturday 30th March 2013. The students at Charles Sturt University and some families attended the Mass. His Grace has delegated Fr Amounious El Anba

Paula to pray Mass there every Saturday, until they establish a church at Orange in the name of St Mary and St Anthony and St Paul. It was a happy event to the congregation in Orange.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES DURING FASTING

By HH POPE SHENOUDA III

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

These drills may include resisting some weak facets in the life of a fasting person, certain virtues that such a person lacks, or spiritual longings pervading his heart. A person who fasts must feel that he/she has before them certain TARGETS to attain from fasting.

1. Drills pertaining to fasting: Some of the drills pertain to self-control:

They may include the person who fasts stopping himself from eating kinds of food that he covets, to reduce the quantity of food, or to abstain from certain items of delicious food. Self-control drills may include the period of abstinence, its limitation, during such a period. Some people resort to a system of gradation even within one fast. For example, Lent covers eight weeks during which one who fasts may gradually advance as to the degree of his asceticism and abstention from food.

Self-control also includes pre-fast days. Eating on these days should not be gluttonous and uncontrolled. Drills and exercises may be for the virtues accompanying fasting:

In this way they include the spiritual aspects of fasting such as self-control in general outside the scope of eating, general control of body, abstention from bodily lusts and all sensuous luxuries sitting-up-late, and staying away from luxuries.

2. Drills pertaining to repentance:

Since fasting is a period of repentance, the repentance drills are numerous such as:

a) Concentration on a point of weakness or a favorite sin: Everyone knows well which sin is always repeated in his life and confessions. Let one then take such sins as a field of training to overcome them.

b) One who fasts may train himself to quit a certain habit: An example of this is a smoker who trains himself while fasting to quit smoking. Likewise is the one who is addicted to drinking and can't get rid of this dominating habit, and the one who is addicted to wasting much time watching television which affects his responsibilities.

c) Fasting may be a period of drilling in quitting a sin like anger or judging others. This is one of the well-known sins into which many people slip. Drills may deal with a number of verbal sins that man has become accustomed to. In fasting, he may train himself in their elimination one by one.

d) Remembering certain verses dealing with sinfulness: For instance, if he/she slips into the sin of nervousness, he reminds himself of the Bible verse "For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). He should repeat this verse often every day especially in situations where anger attacks him. He should rebuke himself saying: What would I benefit by fasting if during it I got angry and did not do God's will? If he/she slips into any of the verbal sins, he puts the following words of the Bible before his eyes: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment (Matt. 12: 36). He then says to himself in reproach: what would benefit me if I fasted, but didn't control my tongue and said to my brother, "You fool" and thus deserved "hell- fire?" (Matt. 5:22).

e) Whenever you feel hungry and covet food, rebuke yourself: Say to yourself: when you give up this sin, I shall allow you to eat, for the Bible says, "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess: 3:10).

f) Take your point of weakness and make it the target of your prayers during fasting: Fully concentrate on it from the point of view of aspiration, accuracy and resistance. Pour out yourself before God and ask Him: "Save me, O Lord, from this sin, I admit that I am weak in this particular case and will not conquer it without your help. Have mercy, O lord, on my weakness and helplessness.

g) Collect Bible verses that deal with this sin. Place them before you to read them continuously.

3. Seclusion and silence drills:

The Bible states: "Sanctify you a fast, call a solemn assembly" (Joel 1:14). What is meant by seclusion is being in seclusion with God, not with the radio, or TV, or arguments at home. The spiritual seclusion needed is in your closed bedroom with God alone. Seclude yourself with the Bible, with the history of the saints and prayers. If you have a spiritual schedule you will love seclusion. Use the drill of some "closed days"... If you cannot close your doors during a fast, then at least close your mouth against sinful talk. As one of the fathers said: "He who talks much is empty inside". Which means that he is void of spiritual grace inside his/her heart.

4. Resisting lost time drill:

Someone's main problem may be wasting time. To him, time is a trivial thing. He wastes this time without benefiting of it. This is a primary sin. As a result of wasting his time, he neither prays, reads, nor have any spiritual thoughts. Consequently, Spiritual laxity, and perhaps slipping into sin may ensure. Save the

time lost in talking with people, in meetings and visitation in useless discussions, in reading newspapers and commenting on the news. This drill helps us in another one, which is: Fasting of the tongue. St. Isaac the Syrian said, "a tongue's fast is better than the fast of the mouth". So, train yourself to keep silent as long as you could. If you are unable to do so, then use the following three exercises:

a) Do not initiate a conversation except when necessary.

b) Give short answers.

c) Occupy your mind with some spiritual acts that help you to keep silent.

5. Penitence & self-abasement drills:

Train your self in them until pulling yourself down to the level of the dust and ashes. Use penitent words in your prayers like psalm 6, "O Lord do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your displeasure". If you feel hungry or sit down to eat, say to yourself, "I do not deserve this food because of my sins. Fasting days offer a good opportunity for confession and self-reproach.

6. Memorization drills:

You may also take the period of fasting to memorize verses, psalms, chapters from the Bible and hymns.

a) Memorize for instance the Sermon on the Mount, which includes 111 verses. If you memorize 3 verses a day, you will finish them in 37 days.

b) Memorize the 36 passages of the Agpeya.

c) Memorize the thanksgiving prayer, psalm 50, the Trisagion (Holy God, Holy mighty, Holy immortal), the hours absolutions, which include 8 of them, and the conclusion of every prayer...

d) Memorize selected Bible verses, preferably with their references. If you memorize 3 verses every day, then you will memorize 150 verses every year during Lent alone.

e) Memorize golden chapters like 1 Corinthians 13, which is devoted to love: Romans 12:1; Thess. 5; Eph. 6:10-18; Phil. 3: 7-14, etc. You may also memorize Biblical verses in an alphabetical order, or verses about the seven sacraments or about certain virtues or dogmas.

7. Prayer drills:

a) Prayer drills on the road: While on your way, let your heart be occupied with God through a Psalm or short



prayers.

b) Train yourself to pray while among the people: Whether you are in a meeting, or in the midst of people anywhere, lift up your heart to God with a secret prayer. In this way you keep silent while your heart is busy with the Holy Spirit.

c) Drill in praying while working: Manual work helps a lot in getting one involved in prayer. Even if your work is totally mental, Lift up your heart to God from time to time with a short prayer.

d) Drill in continuing to pray: Train yourself that whenever you find that prayer is about to come to an end you prolong it for some time.

e) Drill in the spirituality of prayer: These drills include prayers performed with understanding, depth, warmth, humility and without distraction.

f) Drill in praying for the sake of praying: Saint Issac was asked, "How do we learn to pray?" He answered, "By praying".

g) Drill in praying for others: Let not your prayer be for yourself alone, But train yourself to pray also for others, for any hardship, or sickness and for the departed. Pray for the church, the safety of the country, for those who do not know God with metanyas (bowing down).



HH POPE TAWADROS ENTHRONES & ORDAINS BISHOPS FOR THE FIRST TIME



Source: CopticWorld Reports from Coptic Channels

For the first time since the enthonement of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, he has, along with 75 metropolitans and bishops, members of the Holy Synod, enthroned the following bishops:

- H.G. Bishop Botros - Diocese of Shebeen and El Qanater;
- H.G. Bishop Daniel - Diocese of El Maadi;
- H.G. Bishop Mina - Diocese of Mississauga and Vancouver;
- H.G. Bishop Theodosius - Diocese of Central Giza;

and ordained the following monks to be bishops:

- Fr. Epiphanius el Maqary (Bishop Epiphanius) - St. Macarius Monastery;
- Fr. Maqaar al Baramousy (Bishop Maqaar) - Diosece of Al Sharkeya and 10th of Ramadan;
- Fr. Saleeb al Samoeely (Bishop Samoeel) - Diosece of Tamoooh;
- Fr. Zakareya al Souriany (Bishop Domadius) - Diocese of 6th of October and Oseem;
- Fr. Yoannes al Souriany (Bishop Yohanna) - Diocese of Northern Giza;
- Fr. Zothima Al Antoni (Bishop Zothima) - Diocese of Atfeeh;
- Fr. Yulius avva Mina (Bishop Yulius) - General bishop in the Diocese of Cairo.

During these prayers, the Pope announced there will be a three day ceremony to celebrate the first anniversary of the passing of the late Pope Shenouda III.

He also said that the true meaning of being a bishop is to serve, love and be a true father. It is the highest-rank of priesthood after the Papacy. A bishop must be a father to his flock, priests and diocese in every meaning of the word. He must provide care and protection for those under him. He must be pure, following in the angelic path of being a monk. A bishop must be a good example and a model of the love that God has poured on man. The bishops represent the Apostles in the Orthodox Church. They must apply Orthodox thought and preserve the canonical historical heritage of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The Ambassador of Canada and his wife attended the ceremony in honor of the enthonement of Bishop Mina as bishop of Canada.

Pray that God may bless the service of our beloved Pope, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, and his brothers in the Apostolic ministries our fathers the bishops

THE FOURTH LENTEN SUNDAY - THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

By HG BISHOP DANIEL

*Gospel Reading from:
Jn. 4:1-42.*

My beloved flock of God in the Diocese of Sydney I congratulate all of you on the fasting of the Holy Lent. I greet you with the Peace of our Lord and I pray that He bestows on you the same blessings which he gave the Samaritan Woman: Forgiveness, Love and Reassurance.

Today is the Fourth Sunday, which speaks about our Lord's meeting with the Samaritan Woman.

"Jesus found it necessary to pass through Samaria" (Jn.4:4). He had a message of Salvation to the Samaritans. When he arrived in Samaria, St. John tells us:

It was noon. In other words the sun was vertical, the heat was scorching and Jesus (in his human nature) was at the extreme of his weariness and thirst after walking a long distance.

We note that the Lord endured all these hardships because he had a certain aim. He was after saving a soul and after that, several souls. He was willing to endure all sufferings (including the ultimate crucifixion for the sake of his mission of salvation).

He arrived in Samaria, at Sychar, near Jacob's well. A comparison can be drawn here: Jacob's well satisfied the physical thirst of its population, while He went to satisfy the spiritual thirst of the same population. When He sat by the well, it was a spot of His choice and not per chance.

St. John spoke of "a Samaritan woman" who came to draw water from the well. It was not mentioned that there were others who also came to draw water. As we learn from the Gospel, the woman was a Samaritan, she was married five times and was in an illegitimate relationship with a sixth man. Thus, by the standards of those days, she was considered a woman of bad reputation. She must have chosen that particular hour of the day, to avoid the evil talk of the townsfolk, being a sinner and a Samaritan.

When Jesus saw her, He asked her for a drink. She must have been shocked by the request, and questioned Him: "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (Jn. 4:9).

Note that the question is in two sections: "You, a Jew" i.e. a Jew

who considers Himself above the Samaritans who were considered rejected people, and a man to ask a Samaritan woman, who in those days was considered beneath a man's level, and who was also regarded by the Jews as unclean i.e. the water vessel became also unclean when she handled it.

It is not clear whether the tone of her question was defiant or sarcastic. However, when Jesus initiated the conversation, he humbly descended to her level and showed her that he needed her help by asking for a sip of water (Jn. 4:7).

When in response to her question, He answered: "If you knew ... who it is who says to you ... you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." (Jn. 4:10) she was still, up to that moment measuring Him within the scope of human abilities to draw the water from the well, which was deep, He had no rope, nor a bucket to draw water (Jn.4:11). In other words, He did not have the human tools to satisfy the human thirst. It was only when He spoke to her about her private life "You have had five husbands..." (Jn. 4:18) that her soul felt His supernatural powers: "You are a Prophet" (Jn. 4:19).

We can gather that this Samaritan woman was not a wealthy woman, because if that was the case, she would have had a maid or maids to fetch the water for her: "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." (Jn. 4:15). It can also be assumed that she was worried about the way Samaritans worshipped God and felt comfortable discussing this with Jesus "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." (Jn. 4:20)

When, eventually, the LORD revealed Himself to her as being the awaited Messiah "I who speak to you am He." (Jn. 4:26) she must have had a flood of emotions, because she felt:

- His forgiveness, because He told her of her past, but He did not condemn her. On the contrary, He praised her truthfulness.
- His love, because He was willing to give her His "living water"
- His reassurance, because He revealed Himself to her "I ... Am He"

The Gospel does not tell us that she did actually give the Lord a drink: "The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into



the city" (Jn. 4:28). She was so absorbed in what Jesus had said to her, that she forgot that in the first place, He asked her for a drink of water, to such an extent that in her rush to convey the message to the townsfolk, she "...left her waterpot". On the other hand, Jesus endured his weariness, the scorching heat and His thirst so that one soul, and others were to be saved.

When His disciples arrived with the food, they were astonished that he was talking with a woman, but no one questioned Him (Jn. 4:27) because in those days a Rabbi did not talk with a woman in public. Obviously, by then His disciples realized that their Rabbi did not take random decisions: every act had a purpose.

From the way He looked, His disciples must have realized how hungry he must have been, and offering Him food, He replied: "I have food to eat of which you do not know." (Jn. 4:32). Although the disciples did not understand it at the time, but for us it is clear: what satisfied His thirst and His hunger was Jesus' joy at saving the Samaritan woman whom He also foresaw, was to be followed by the salvation of many other "numerous Samaritans". Later on, he accepted the Samaritans' hospitality, even though they were despised by the Jews, and remained with them for two days before proceeding to Galilee (Jn. 4:43).

I pray that the LORD may bless all of us so that He may find room within our hearts and may He pour the blessings of this Great Lent on our souls and our homes, through the intercessions of our Lady Virgin St. Mary, and the prayers of our beloved Father of Fathers His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria & Patriarch of the See of St Mark. May the Lord bless his life for many years to come to serve God's Kingdom on earth.

*Glory be to the Lord, for ever.
Amen*

THE ORDINATION OF HIS GRACE BISHOP ZOSIMA AS BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF ATFIH & EL SAF (FORMERLY FR. ZOSIMA EL-ANTONI)



ST PAUL'S MISSION EASTER DINNER

"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

By ANDREW HANNA

Did you know that on any given night there are 105,000 homeless people in Australia! Or did you know that more than 50% of Sydney's homeless are on the streets as a result of family breakdown or unemployment, while another 50% of the people suffer from domestic violence, eviction, mental illness and drug, alcohol, gambling addiction? Also, did you know that 43% of homeless people are aged 24 or younger and that 44% of the homeless are female? Or did you know that every Wednesday night St Paul's Mission serves the homeless in Sydney's CBD?

On Wednesday the 27th of March 2013, however, St Paul's Mission did not go and serve in the CBD, but rather it brought our brothers and Sisters in Christ to St Mary's and St Mina's Cathedral Bexley to serve them there! As Easter is a very special time, St Paul's mission holds an annual Easter function for Sydney's homeless by hosting an elaborate dinner at St Mary's and St Mina's Cathedral.

The evening commenced as buses came in filled with multitudes of homeless people from different areas of the CBD being warmly welcomed by an entourage of servants who were ready to be their hosts for this special night! While our guests were enjoying the wonderfully prepared dinner, they were kept entertained by short video presentations and also the youth conversing and keeping them company.



During the dinner also, our guests were uplifted by St Demiana's and St Athanasius' Church Choir who engaged the homeless with an amazing and interactive performance. All our guests and servants participated enthusiastically in singing and clapping along to the beautiful arrangement of songs prepared by the choir. The homeless were then escorted to the Cathedral where they listened to some enlightening spiritual words from Fr Yousef, and had the opportunity to ask questions. The night concluded

with a group photo within the Cathedral. The homeless were really appreciative of the performance of the choir along with the spiritual words given by Father Yousef. Moreover, at the end of the night each person received a handful of Easter gifts, to remind them of this wonderful event.

We would like to thank Fr Yousef, the choir of St Demiana's Church

and all the St Paul's Mission servants who attended - you helped make this Easter Dinner a wonderful and successful night! We strongly encourage the youth of Sydney to attend St Paul's Mission, we meet at 7:00pm every Wednesday night at St Mary's and St Mina's Cathedral Bexley.

Happy Easter!



The 40 day
commemoration of

Afifa Soliman

was held on 23rd March 2013 at
St Anthony and St Paul church
Guildford



Children:

Marie Youssef, Husband Adel
Mounir Soliman, Wife Mimi
Maurice Soliman, Wife Afaf
Madleen Hanania

Grandchildren:

Tarek, Peter, Danial, Andrew, Michael,
Niven, Heidi
Jean, Husband Joseph Israfil
Rosie, Husband John Dimian

Great Grandchildren:

Jonathan, Marina, Gabriella, Christine,
Luke, Dylan



What is exodus youth worx?

www.exodusyouthworx.org.au
facebook.com/exodusyouthworx

Some poems from Exodus:

By ABANOUB SALAMA

I've been lying for far too long.
Saying I've yet to find a lover.
Simon introduced us
Antony brought me back to her
She allowed me to fall inlove with my pen. Again.
Fall in love with writng in that room over there... like
David in the lion den
She helped me to unblock the block that was hard as
rock and stone,
She is the shepard of my sheep
Protecting me when I feel I'm alone.
She's the neumonic devices helping me to remember
She's the veins and arteries that keep her warm and in
turn warming me.
She turns impossible to I'm possible
Unstoppable.
She is the back bone that supports me through the
labours of this life.
She is my chauffeur



by NANCY LOUKA

MAKTOOB, it is written
In the moments
that made him
LAHAZAT moments
And while

Defiant to the disability
used his liquid company
to pour out pages
of Arabian literary works

saltier than Bukowski
sweeter than the GREAT Gibran
Khalili Baba
could it be a possibility?
that you're the chosen
sacrificial Lamb
to teach this fam to stand
feet firm on solid land
while we float on cloud beds
crafted by your now aged hands

where . . .my infant hands
use to cut and paste
your newspaper clippings
guard books keep safe
2 decades of LAHAZAT, moments
Our families name sake

precious treasures
my hearts divine
I wish I could read
between these rhythmic lines

precious treasures
my hearts divine
flicking through this book
each page feels like
delicate papyrus
nostalgia kicks in
and I can almost smell
the aromatic air of Turkish coffee
beaming through the morning sun
background sounds of
Abdel Halim & Oma Kalsoom
belting out their lungs
Im there . . .
and reminded
why I write

you see for me,

Driving me wherever and whenever I need it. Rain, hail
or shine
I am grateful for everything this love has provided
this love I can call mine.
The rules of this relationship? She's written on the
tablet of my heart.
not yet broken like Moses' tablet of commandments,
written in the book of... Exodus.
That book, I would like to emphasis.
it means escape - so I escape to her room in the corner
where it's not belittling to be a man and a mourner,
This is why I adorn her
so as we sit here every week and we recite and repeat
let us remember that Foxes have holes and birds of the
air
have nests,
but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head
Except for Exodus, the promised land.
where colloquially, we can chill man.

MAKTOOB

the pen provides more stability
than any man I've ever . . . met
these LAHAZAT, moments
born under the midnight moon
like shooting stars
pulsing through me
I reach out to catch them
hoping the bright sparks grace my index
finger and thumb
Im competing before the sun
so I can paint electric rainbows, with my pen
as the wand
before the magic 'moment' passes me by

words are like
pearl drops from the oceans of wisdom,
soft butterfly kisses to my cheek
and silent hero's that bloom as they land on
my page

becoming my patience in tribulation
ordaining me with strength
when I feel vexed
oh how these words
lead the captive out of captivity

MAKTOOB it is written
for you, for all of us
as our forefathers have inscribed
through the hungry spirit of my heart
I live solid and ascribe
to the wise words that came to save
my back bone, the spine of my pride

And even though I can't read between these
Arabian soliloquies
I hold in my now adult hands
I cherish them all the same
Cause they are
precious treasures
my hearts divine
I wish I could read
between these rhythmic lines

every week i'll ask
'Baba, please read me one of your articles,
what would you call your style of writing
short stories, memoirs, poetry, what?'
'Nancy, they say life is days, weeks, months or
years, I don't
I call it a collection of moments, LAHAZAT
already pre written, MAKTOOB'



WE NEED YOUR HELP

Dear All Beloved
Supporters,

Kindly we need your
financial support in
order to continue to
offer our community
services & train new
leaders!



We appreciate your
TAXABLE DEDUCTED DONATIONS in person or direct debited to:

Bexley Coptic Scout Group, CBA Bank Account, BSB: 062235,
Account Number: 10489908

Our Coptic Scout Group is now running meetings on a regular basis
@ Bexley Hall and St Abraam Church Hall (Peakhurst) on Friday
nights as well as St Demiana Church Hall (Punchbowl) on Saturday
nights, this could not happen without your generous donations
which support these activities.

Above is a picture of the attendants of tha latest family camp
early this month @ Glenrock camp near Newcastle for St Mary,
St Demiana Scouts and 1 family from each of St Abu-Sefien & St
Antony Churches - Also 3 newly arrived families from Egypt and 1
family from the Central Coast.

May our Lord Jesus Christ reward you with His Heavenly Rewards

In Scouting,
Amin NASSIF (Tiger), GL Bexley Coptic Scout, 0421 833 533

GREAT LENT & FORGIVENESS

By FR. ALEXANDER SCHMEMANN

So many people under various influences have come to think of Lent as a kind of self-inflicted inconvenience. Very often in Lent we hear these conversations: "What do you give up for Lent?" - it goes from candy to, I don't know what. There is the idea that if we suffer enough, if we feel the hunger enough, if we try by all kinds of strong or light ascetical tools, mainly to "suffer" and be "tortured," so to speak, it would help us to "pay" for our absolution. But this is not our Orthodox faith. Lent is not a punishment. Lent is not a kind of painful medicine that helps only inasmuch as it is painful.

LENT IS A GIFT! Lent is a gift from God to us, a gift that is admirable, marvellous, one that we desire. Now a gift of what? I would say that it is a gift of the essential - that which is essential and yet which suffers most in our life because we are living lives of confusion and fragmentation, lives which constantly conceal from us the eternal, the glorious, the divine meaning of life and take away from us that which should "push" and, thus, correct and fill our life with joy. And this essential is thanksgiving: the acceptance from God of that wonderful life, as St. Peter says, "... created out of nothing..." created exclusively by the love of God, for there is no other reason for us to exist; loved by Him even before we were born, we were taken into His marvellous light. Now we live and we forget. When was the last time I thought about it? But I do not forget so many little things and affairs that transform my whole life into empty noise, into a kind of traveling without knowing where.

Lent returns to me, gives back to me, this essential - the essential layer of life. Essential because it is coming from God; essential because it is revealing God. The essential time, because time again is a great, great area of sin. Because time is the time of what? Of priorities. And how often our priorities are not at all as they should be. Yet in Lent, waiting, listening, singing ... you will see, little by little that time - broken, deviated, taking us to death and nowhere else, without any meaning. You will see that time again becomes expectation, becomes something precious. You wouldn't take one minute of it away from its purpose of pleasing God, of accepting from Him His life and returning that life to Him together with our gratitude, our wisdom, our joy, our fulfilment.

After this essential time comes the essential relationship that we have with everything in the world, a relationship which is expressed so well in our liturgical texts by the word reverence. So often, everything becomes for us an object of "utilizing," something which is "for grabs," something which "belongs" to me and to which I have a "right." Everything should be as Communion in my hands. This is the reverence of which I speak. It is the discovery that God, as Pasternak once said, was "...a great God of details," and that nothing in this world is outside of that

divine reverence. God is reverent, but we so often are not.

So, we have the essential time, the essential relationship with matter filled with reverence, and last, but not least, the rediscovery of the essential link among ourselves: the rediscovery that we belong to each other, the rediscovery, that no one has entered my life or your life without the will of God. And with that rediscovery, there is everywhere an appeal, an offering to do something for God: to help, to comfort, to transform, to take with you, with each one of you, that brother and sister of Christ. This is that essential relationship.

Essential time, essential matter, essential thought: all that is so different from what the world offers us. In the world everything is accidental. If you don't know how to "kill" time, our society is absolutely ingenious in helping you to do that. We kill time, we kill reverence, we transform communications, relationships, words, divine words into jokes and blasphemies, and sometimes just pure nonsense. There is this thirst and hunger for nothing, but external success.

Don't we understand, don't we understand, brothers and sisters what power is given to us in the form of Lent. Lenten Spring! Lenten beginning! Lenten resurrection! And all this is given to us free. Come, listen to that prayer. Make it yours! Don't even try to think on your own; just join, just enter and rejoice! And that joy will start killing those old and painful and boring sins... And with that you will have that great joy which the angels heard, which the disciples experienced when they returned to Jerusalem after Christ's Ascension. It is that joy which was left with them that we nobly adopted. It is first of all the joy of knowing, the joy of having something in me which, whether I want it or not, will start transforming life in me and around me.

This last essential is the essential return to each other: this is where we begin tonight. This is what we are doing right now. For if we would think of the real sins we have committed, we would say that one of the most important is exactly the style and tonality which we maintain with each other: our complaining and criticizing. I don't think that there are cases of great and destructive hatred or assassination, or something similar. It is just that we exist as if we are completely out of each other's life, out of each other's interests, out of each other's love. Without having repaired this relationship, there is no possibility of entering into Lent.

Sin - whether we call it "original" sin or "primordial" sin - has broken the unity of life in this world, it has broken time, and time has become that fragmented current which takes us into old age and death. It has broken our social relations, it has broken families. Everything is diabolos - divided and destroyed. But Christ has come into the world and said: "... and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (Jn. 12:32).

It is impossible to go to Christ without taking with me the essential. It is not the abandonment of everything as we go to Christ; it is finding in Him the power of that resurrection: of unity, of love, of trust, of joy, of all that which, even if it occupies some place in our life, is at the same time so minuscule. It is tragic to think that from churches, from seminaries, what comes to heaven are complaints ... being tired, always something not going right... You know, sitting in my office from time to time, I am admiring people for inventing new "tragedies" every half hour.

But we are Christ's and Christ is God's. And if we had - because we know - just a little bit of that which would bring us together, we would replace all my little offenses with even a little amount of that joy. That is the forgiveness we want and ask God to give us. Because if there is a strict commandment in the Gospel, it is that commandment: "if you forgive ... your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive ... neither will your Father forgive ... " (Mt. 6:14-15). So, of course it is a necessity. But the NOW of that, I repeat it once more, is to be horrified by the fragmentation of our own existence, by the pettiness in our relationships, by the destruction of words, and by the abandoning of this reverence.

Now we have to forgive each other whether or not we have any explicit sins or crimes against each other. That reconciliation is another epiphany of the Church as the Kingdom of

God. We are saved because we are in the Body of Christ. We are saved because we accept from Christ the world and the essential order. And finally, we accept Christ when we accept each other. Everything else is a lie and hypocrisy.

So, fathers, brothers, sisters: let us forgive one another. Let us not think about why. There is enough to think about. Let us do it. Right now, in a kind of deep breath, say: "Lord, help us to forgive. Lord, renew all these relationships." What a chance is given here for love to triumph! - for unity to reflect the Divine unity, and for everything essential to return as life itself. What a chance! Is the answer we give today yes or no? Are we going to that forgiveness? Are we gladly accepting it? Or is it something which we do just because it is on the calendar - today, you follow, forgiveness; tomorrow, let's do...? No! this is the crucial moment. This is the beginning of Lent. This is our spring "repair" because reconciliation is the powerful renewal of the ruin.

So, please, for the sake of Christ: let us forgive each other. The first thing I am asking all of you, my spiritual family, is to forgive me. Imagine how many temptations of laziness, of avoiding too much, and so on and so forth. What a constant defence of my own interests, health, or this or that... I know that I don't even have an ounce of this self-giving, self-sacrifice that is truly a true repentance, the true renewal of love.



PROTEST AGAINST OPPRESSION

by ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN

A certain woman of distinguished birth, shortly after the death of her husband, was being violently importuned by the assessor of a judge, who sought to draw her into marriage against her will. Not knowing how to escape this oppression, she adopted a plan no less prudent than daring. She fled to the holy table and made God her protector against outrage. In the name of the Trinity Itself to adopt somewhat the language of the courtroom in my panegyric what should have been done, not only by the great Basil, who had established laws for all in such cases, but by any other who, although inferior to him, nevertheless was a priest? Was it not his duty to act in her defense, to receive her, to protect her, to raise his hand on behalf of the mercy of God and the law which commands respect for the altar? Was it not his duty to be willing to do and suffer all rather than take against her any inhuman measure, and outrage the holy table and the faith of her supplication?

'No', said this strange judge; 'all must

yield to my authority, and Christians must be traitors to their own laws.' The judge sought to seize the suppliant, but Basil protected her with all his power. The former became furious and finally sent magistrates to search the saint's bedchamber, not from any necessity, but rather to dishonor him. What are you saying? Search the house of that man who was above passion, whom the angels treat with respect, upon whom women shrink to look? But this was not enough. He ordered him to appear in court and justify himself, not in any mild or kindly manner, but as if he were a man condemned. And Basil obeyed the summons.

The judge was in his seat, full of wrath and arrogance. Basil remained standing, like my Jesus before the judgment seat of Pilate. The thunderbolts did not strike; the sword of God still glittered, but remained suspended. The bow was stretched, but was being held back to furnish an occasion for repentance. Such is God's custom.

Now watch another struggle between our champion and his persecutor. The judge ordered that

the ragged pallium be torn from his neck. "I will strip myself of my tunic as well, if you so desire", said Basil. He threatened to lash that fleshless body. Basil bowed his back to have it torn with barbs. 'By such laceration' he said, you will cure my liver - You see how it is wearing me away. Such was the interplay between them.

But the city, as soon as it was aware of the evil and the peril common to all, for each person considered this outrage a danger to himself, became completely distracted and fired with passion. And like a swarm of bees roused by smoke, one after another was stirred and arose, men of all classes and ages, but particularly the imperial armorers and weavers. For in such circumstances these men are rather impetuous and are daring because of the freedom they enjoy. Each man had for a weapon what his craft supplied him or anything else improvised for the occasion. With torches in their hands, with clubs ready, and hurling stones before them, they ran in a single mass and with one cry in an enthusiasm they all shared. Anger makes a formidable soldier or general. Even the women, provoked by the situation, were

armed at this time. They no longer remained women, but, strengthened by zeal, they took on the courage of men. The rest of the account is short. Their hairpins were their spears. They thought they would be sharing in an act of piety if they tore him to pieces, and that he would be most pious in their eyes who should be the first to lay hands on him who had dared this outrage.

What of that bold and haughty judge? He became a suppliant, pitiable, wretched, cringing in a most abject manner until that unbloody martyr appeared, who had won his crown without blows, and who forcefully restrained the people. He overcame them through the reverence they had for him, and he saved his persecutor, now his suppliant. This was the work of the God of saints, who makes and transforms all things for the best, who resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. And why should not He who divided the sea, and stayed the river, and subdued the elements, and by the stretching of hands set up a trophy to save a fugitive people, why should not He have also delivered this man from his dangers?

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

By BROTHER ADEL KAMIL

Jesus and His Disciples were passing through a town called Samaria. The Disciples went into the town to buy some food, Jesus was tired out by the journey so He sat down by the well. It was the same well that Jacob had used long ago.

It was about noon when a woman of Samaria came to draw water from the well. Jesus said to her "give me a drink of water" the woman answered: you are a Jew and I am Samaritan. So how can you ask me for a drink? (Jews had nothing to do with people from Samaria.)

Jesus answered "if you only knew what God gives and who it is that is asking you for a drink of water, then you would have asked me to give you life-giving water." The woman said Sir you have nothing to draw water with and the well is deep. Where will you get this life giving water? It was our ancestor Jacob who gave us this well. Jacob and his sons and his flocks drank from it. Do you claim to be greater than Jacob?

Jesus answered "anyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give will never be thirsty again. The water that I give will become like a spring within you. A spring that provides life giving water. It can give real life that lasts forever. The woman said: Sir give me that water! Then I will never be thirsty again nor will I have to come here to draw water.

Then Jesus told her go and call your husband and come back. The woman answered I haven't got a husband. Jesus said "You are right when you say you haven't got a husband. You have been married to five men and the man you live with now is not really your husband. You have told me the truth." Then the woman said: Sir I can see that you are a prophet. My ancestors worshipped God on the mountain, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where we should worship God.

Jesus said to her "Believe me woman the time will come when people will worship The Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans do not know why you worship, but we Jews know Who we worship. The Saviour will come from the Jews but the time is coming, it has already come when the true worshipers will worship The Father as He really is. Those are the worshipers that God wants. God is Spirit, only by the power of God's Spirit can people worship Him as He really is. The woman said: I know that The Messiah will come, when He comes He will explain everything. Jesus answered "I am He".

Then the woman left her water pot and she went back to the town. She said to the people there come and see the man who told me everything that I have ever done. Could He be the promised King? They left the town and went with her to Jesus. (Jn 4: 5-26, 28-30).



Many of the Samaritans believed in Jesus because of what the woman had said. In the end Jesus went with them to their town. He stayed with them for two days.

Many believed Jesus when they heard His message and they said to each other we know that He really is the saviour of the world.

A PAPAL MESSAGE ON FASTING

by H.H. POPE KYRILLOS
(CYRIL) VI

The late Pope Kyrillos VI of triple blessedness, wrote this moving message to his children that had emigrated to other countries on the occasion of holy Lent. It was written shortly before his departure. We are reproducing it on the occasion of Lent and also on the occasion of the anniversary of his Holiness' departure on March 9, 1971.

Peace to you from the Lord and grace and blessing. Our Good and Compassionate God, Who preserves His children everywhere and in all ages, Who gave us His promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.", the same be with you in your sojourn, preserve you from every offense, from every wickedness and from every vile thought, confirmed in His love and keeping His commandments, grounded in your Orthodox dogma and in the traditions of your church, which we have received from our fathers the Apostles and from the holy Saints of the church. May the Lord grant us to hear all good news concerning you, at all times.

I write you in these holy days wherein our Lord has fasted forty days and forty nights on our behalf, wishing you on the occasion of the Fast, the fullness of the blessing and the fullness of Grace. May you complete it in purity and in righteousness, that ye may rejoice in the resurrection of the Lord and in it's effectiveness in your life.

Fasting was the first commandment:

Fasting, my children, is the first commandment that God has delivered unto mankind, when He commanded our fore-parents Adam and Eve that they should not eat certain fruits in the Garden. And fasting was the first deed that our Lord and Master Jesus Christ did after being baptized, even before He started His preaching ministry among the people.

And fasting was the first deed that our fathers the Apostles did when the Bridegroom was taken from them. And while they fasted and prayed, the Holy Spirit spoke unto them (Act 13:2).

Fasting is the weapon by which we defeat the devils, for the Lord said, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." (Mat 17:21).

Fasting is a necessary weapon:
Fasting is a weapon the Prophets have used, for Moses, Elijah, David, Ezra and Nehemiah have all fasted.

Even the Gentiles fasted, entreating the mercy of God, like the inhabitants of Nineveh who fasted and the Lord did cast His wrath away from them.

And Daniel the Prophet fasted even as he sojourned, and how beautiful is the saying of the Bible concerning him, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat." (Dan 1:8) And he did eat vegetables. The three holy children also fasted with him and while they fasted, God gave them favour in the eyes of every one and granted them health and strength, so that "their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." (Da 1:15).

Fasting, my children, is a weapon by which we subdue the lusts of the flesh, that the spirit may be lifted up and strengthened. That is why fasting is laced by spirituality, for it is not a virtue of the flesh. Indeed christian fasting is abstaining from all food for a period of time, followed by eating food that is devoid of animal fatness, however, in addition to this, fasting has to be accompanied by spiritual virtues that would give it it's spiritual nature.

The importance of repentance:
Fasting must be accompanied by repentance, compunction and confession of sins. When the Ninevites fasted, they put on sackcloth and they turned, every one, from his evil ways and from the violence that was in their hands. And they cried mightily unto God. And God saw their repentance and showed mercy unto them. The importance of repentance to accompany fasting is expounded for us fully in the Book of Joel, where the Lord exhorts us, "Turn ye even to me with all your heart and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning....sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly." (Joel 2:12_15).

In the same manner did Daniel the Prophet fast, "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. And I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession." (Da 9:3,4). In the like manner did Nehemiah, Ezra and David fast. God desires this repentance while fasting, when the spirit has victory over the flesh, when we subdue the flesh and crucify it with all it's affections. (Gal 5:24).

So, make your fast, my children, pure and holy, that it may be acceptable before God like the fasts of the saints. Preserve your purity in the land of your sojourn. Live the life of repentance that is

pleasing to God. Let this season be a season for confession of sins and communion of the holy Mysteries, that ye may abide in the Lord and He abides in you, even as the living branches that bear fruit abide in the True Vine. And the God of all mercies preserve, confirm and strengthen you.

Fasting and other spiritual means:

Let your fast be also accompanied by prayer and by reading the Bible and spiritual books and the lives of the saints. Let your fast be also accompanied by meditation, especially concerning the holy and precious memories with which this blessed season abounds.

Celebrate the holy Pascha, with all it's profound chants and lections and moving memories, with all befitting ascetism and compunction, knowing that this season, so profound in it's spiritual rituals and prayers, is but a fountain for the spirit, that satisfies and satiates man and provides him with a wonderful provision that is profitable unto eternity.

Set your minds on all the spiritual means that avail unto your edification. Walk worthy of the Gospel of Christ, according to the vocation wherewith ye are called. (Eph 4:1).

Be a light unto the world:

Be a light wherever ye dwell, that men may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Mat 5:16), showing in your lives a good example and a living testimony to the Spirit of God that works in you.

Offer unto all a bright image of your holy church, her true orthodox faith, her glorious and wonderful history and her profound and ever_felt influence in the christian world.

And our Loving God, Who was with Abraham in the land of his sojourn and preserved him bound with His obedience, and Who was with Daniel and the three children in the land of their sojourn and preserved them in their faith, in their fasting and in their prayer, and Who was with Joseph the righteous in the land of his sojourn and preserved him in his purity and truth, the Same be with you also in the land of your sojourn. May He preserve you with His strong right hand, holy and perfect and abounding in every good work.

Fare ye well in the Lord, my blessings and earnest prayers accompany you. May you enjoy a holy season and a happy and blessed feast.



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The Australian Coptic Movement Association Ltd

TRIBUTE TO HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III OF ALEXANDRIA AND THE PATRIARCH OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH.

BORN 3 AUGUST 1923 | DIED 17 MARCH 2012
PAPACY BEGAN 14 NOVEMBER 1971 | PAPACY ENDED 17 MARCH 2012

18 March 2012

EGYPT is enduring tumultuous times: revolutions, economic collapse, escalating attacks against the Coptic Christians – and, now, the death of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria and the Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Although his death has overwhelmed all Egyptians and Coptic Christians, many other populations throughout the world have also been saddened. People throughout Africa and the Middle East have been particularly distressed at the loss of His Holiness. And, even in Australia, almost fifteen thousand kilometres away, seventeen Federal Members of Parliament offered their condolences during parliament.

But the anguish was strongest in Egypt, where His Holiness' funeral attracted one of the largest crowds ever witnessed for a funeral. According to a few estimates, more than one hundred thousand people attended St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo, Egypt, to farewell their beloved pope; however, hundreds of thousands more attended the two days of viewing, prompting many media outlets to call it the "funeral of the century". This huge display of grief can be attributed to his numerous ministries, which touched and changed the lives of countless persons.

Teacher, preacher, poet, reformer, peacemaker – despite all these accolades, which the people bestowed on His Holiness, his favourite title was servant. He served all his people, especially the youth. In a famous quotation, he said, "A church without youth is a church without a future; moreover, youth without a church is youth without a future." And despite his hectic schedule, His Holiness still managed to serve his people and the youth by conducting a meeting every Wednesday night at St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo. These weekly meetings attracted thousands, and the Church blossomed under his pastoral care. Yet this achievement is even more remarkable, considering the hostility to Coptic Christians in Egypt.

His Holiness the reformer helped the Church flourish on every

continent. At the start of his papacy, there were three dioceses and seven churches outside Egypt, including two churches in Australia; now, there are more than twenty-five dioceses and four hundred and forty churches outside Egypt, including fifty churches in Australia. But His Holiness the reformer also enhanced the ministry of women within the Coptic Church and established an order for Deaconesses. Because of his reforms, female servants now teach in the Coptic Institute and the Biblical Institute, while thousands of others instruct catechism at Sunday school.

His Holiness the poet wrote more than one hundred and forty books about spirituality and Christianity, the majority translated into English, French, German, Italian, and other languages. Even while exiled (1981–1985) by presidential decree for protesting against the mistreatment of Copts, His Holiness used the opportunity to serve the best way he could and he wrote sixteen books.

His Holiness the preacher received the 1978 Browning Award for the Best Christian Preacher of the Year. And, because of his scriptural and theological knowledge, he was also awarded eight honorary doctoral degrees from internationally renowned universities in Europe and the United States.

His Holiness the peacemaker received the 2000 UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence. Alluding to the scriptures, he said, "There is a way you can overcome your enemy: it is by changing your enemy into a friend. We need to win friends everywhere ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Gentleness and meekness are needed to have peace."

Although His Holiness was a peacemaker, this never prevented him from defending the rights of his people, the Coptic Christians. And on 3 September 1981 he paid the ultimate price for protesting against the maltreatment of Copts by fundamentalist Islamic groups, when the Egyptian President Anwar El-Sadat issued a presidential

decree exiling His Holiness to the Monastery of St Pishoy. A month after the decree, however, one of the fundamentalist Islamic groups, which His Holiness was protesting against, assassinated President Anwar El-Sadat. Yet it took another three and a half years, and countless appeals from within and without the Coptic Orthodox Church, for the succeeding President Hosni Mubarak to release His Holiness from exile. This finally happened on 2 January 1985.

Even after being exiled, His Holiness never hesitated from defending his people. On 2 January 2000, Muslim extremist mobs massacred twenty-one Coptic Christians in Kosheh, a village in Upper Egypt; though, less than a year later, a criminal court in the Sohag Governorate released without bail all eighty-nine defendants who were charged with the massacre. His Holiness disputed the verdict and said, "We want to challenge this ruling. We don't accept it." But as the sentence could not be appealed, he embraced his belief in pacifism and said, "We revise this sentence by God."

However, some of the worst atrocities against the Coptic Christians happened during 2011 – and, as usual, His Holiness publicly supported his people. The following excerpt about the 2011 Maspero Massacre is taken from the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2012:

On October 9, 2011, at least 26 people were killed, mostly Coptic Orthodox Christians, and more than 300 injured in downtown Cairo after armed men confronted and attacked peaceful protestors. The demonstrators, both Christians and Muslims, were marching to the Maspero state television station to protest the September 30 destruction of a church in Aswan, Upper Egypt. Egyptian state-owned media incited the violence when broadcasters urged Egyptians to go out into the streets to protect security forces from attacks by Christian protestors. Responding to the violence, Egyptian military forces used live ammunition and excessive force, including armored vehicles that

deliberately crushed and killed at least 12 protestors. Dozens of suspects have been detained and interrogated. In December, a Cairo court decided to release, pending further investigations, the remaining 27 Coptic Christian detainees arrested in connection with the violence. The investigation reportedly is ongoing.

Despite his deteriorating health and the countless threats, His Holiness presided over the funerals of the 2011 Maspero Massacre victims, rather than defer the duties to other bishops. Thousands of mourners attended the funerals at St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo, and the scenes were terrifying as the families tried to grasp the tragedy's enormity. This was clearly the most blatant massacre of Coptic Christians by the Egyptian State. Yet the incident was just one of many recent attacks.

His Holiness was also a vocal defender of all Christian people, of Christian unity, of Christian solidarity. In an address given during the International Week of Prayer in 1974, he said, "The whole Christian world is anxious to see the church unite. Christian people, being fed up with divisions, are pushing their church leaders to do something about church unity, and I am sure that the Holy Spirit is inspiring us."

Perhaps, this is the most important lesson that His Holiness the teacher wanted his children to grasp: although these are tumultuous times in Egypt and in other lands, Christians standing united have nothing to fear. And Egypt's Copts, with the support of all Christians, are heeding this lesson and praying for a leader who will continue to shepherd his Church and community during the uncertainty.

For The Australian Coptic Movement Association

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