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The Feast of the Apostles

By: Fr. Augustine Hanna

On Wednesday, the 12th of July (the 5 of Abib), we celebrate the Feast of the Apostles, commemorating their great love, sacrifice, ministry and martyrdom. All the apostles were killed, tortured and shed their precious blood for Christ, except the apostle John who was persecuted, tortured and exiled. In this occasion we remember especially the martyrdom of the two great apostles Peter and Paul at the hands of the Roman Emperor Nero in the end of the year 67 and the beginning of the year 68 A.D.

The Apostles are considered the pillars of the church. St. Paul says, "Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets and Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20).

They are also described in the Book of Revelation as the foundations of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14). This explains why the churches were built on 12 pillars as a symbol of the 12 apostles.

Only Matthew and John out of the 12 apostles who wrote gospels. Some of them wrote letters as Peter, James, John and Jude.

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And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.....

These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying "the kingdom of heaven is at hand". Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons.

Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. (Mathew 10:1-10).

FAITHFULNESS

By: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III



By faithfulness, I do not merely mean honesty in monetary and material matters; in which a person does not rob or plunder others, but I mean faithfulness in its full sense, that is, faithfulness in the whole of one's behavior and spiritual life: Faithfulness in man's relationship with God, with others and with himself.

The Lord Jesus Christ called us to this faithfulness when He talked about the faithfulness in the ministry and about the prudent and faithful steward "*Whom his master will make him ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season*" (Lk. 12:42). Moreover the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned that faithfulness is the criterion of judgment and the basis of entry into the Kingdom of God. For He will say to the person who merits entry into His kingdom: "*Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord*" (Matt. 25:21, 23).

But to what extent should we be faithful? The Lord says: "*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*" (Rev. 2:10). "*Until death*", that is, to the point at which you sacrifice yourself and expend your life for the sake of faithfulness. This reminds us of the words of Saint Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews when he upbraided them for their faithlessness in resisting sin saying: "*You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin...*" (Heb. 12:4)".

Faithfulness helped the righteous attain their goal. Many simultaneously started the path but some attained while others did not and yet others tarried. What was the reason for this difference? It was because some-contrary to others-were faithful in all their devotional practices and thus were able to gain crowns. Faithfulness should be in worldly matters as well as in spiritual matters. In the same way as the person gives concern to this spiritual life, he should also be faithful in every work he does. The student should be faithful in his studies and the laborer in perfecting his work and keeping his time, likewise with the employee and whoever is in responsibility.

The chaste Joseph was a spiritual person and honest in his work. He was so honest in his service to Potiphar that his work prospered. He was so sincere in his work as a minister for Egypt that he saved it and the surrounding counties from famine. He was so honest in his work when he was a prisoner that the jailer entrusted him with responsibilities.

In practical life there are matters, which test a person's honesty. An example is when a person obtains a false sick certifi-

cate to get undeserved leave from work. It does not suffice him to be dishonest himself but he makes the doctor err as well. Another example is when a person claims overtime allowance or reimbursements when he could have performed the work during normal working hours. The examples are numerous, among them are those who spread news dishonestly, those who disclose secrets entrusted to them and those who do not perfect the errands given to them.

Someone may ask. "The spiritual path is Long, how can I reach its end? How can I reach the sanctity without which no one will see God?" How can I reach the perfection that is required of me? The answer is easy and feasible: Be faithful in the few things and God will entrust you with much. For this is God's way and promise, and this is what He will say to people in the Day of Judgment (Matt. 25:21, 23). Therefore, this is all that you have to do. You do not have to think of getting to the destination in one go. But you should know that one single step is the beginning of the longest journey.

Be faithful in the first step then God will entrust you with the rest be faithful in your Spiritual goal then God will design for you the means to reach the goal. Be faithful in the intention and God will entrust you with the deed.

The devil may complicate the way and make it appear difficult before you, instilling within you fears which make you imagine that there are too many things requested of you which are not in your power and beyond your capabilities, to make you despair.

But God requests from you only faithfulness in the few things. As for the many things, He will entrust them to you. Therefore, it is beautiful that Psalm 119

starts with the verse: "*Blessed are the blameless in the way*" (119-1). It suffices that you walk in the path of the Lord blamelessly. That is what He requires of you. As or reaching the destination, leave it to Him. He disposes with His own hand when and how.

Someone may ask- "How can my whole life be for the Lord? Is it possible that God would grant me to devote my life to Him? Is it possible that all my life can be for His service? How?" Let me tell you:

Start with the little you are capable of, by giving your spare time to the Lord. Start by consecrating the Day of the Lord. If you are faithful in this God may entrust you with much. Be faithful in your service in teaching in Sunday School then if God is pleased with your faithfulness he will entrust you with a greater service.

Be faithful in every service commended to you then God will entrust you with dedication. Be faithful in your own house, then the Holy Spirit will entrust you with the house of God. Do the little that you can. Be faithful in bringing up your children then God will present to you His children to bring up. Be faithful over your own soul then God will entrust you with the souls of others

The importance lies in faithfulness and not in the position you occupy....Remember that the man of the two talents received the same honor as that of the five talents because both were faithful (Matt. 25).



Shenouda was born in a village near Akhmin in Upper Egypt. He was raised a

shepherd boy. The boy used to give his food to some shepherds and spend all his day in fasting. When Abbot Pijol, his maternal uncle and Abbot of the Red Monastery, was asked to bless the boy, he took the boy's hand and put it on his head saying, "I am in need of this boy's blessing for he is a chosen vessel for Christ...". When Shenouda reached ten years old, he was put under the guidance of Abba Pijol.

As a youth, Shenouda proved to be a spiritually minded to a rare degree, and strove continuously after spiritual excellence. He enjoyed studying and teaching both monks and lay men. When Abba Pijol departed, Abba Shenouda was elected to take his place as abbot. Under his guidance, the number of monks reached four thousand; 1800 of them in the Red Monastery, which gets its name from the red bricks of which it is built, and the rest in the White Monastery, while a few of them preferred a solitary life.

Abba Shenouda was greatly concerned about organizing the monastic life. He devised a system, that was in fact a combination of St. Antony's hermetic (isolated) life, and St. Pachom's coenobitic monasticism, (living together in monastic community).

The doors of his monastery were opened to the villagers every Saturday evening. Thousands participated in the Vespers prayers, spent the night in the

Abba Shenouda The Archimandrite

monastery, and shared in the celebration of the holy mass the next morning. After the mass, they were invited to share a meal, which the monks prepared and served. Abba Shenouda took advantage of the presence of those people in the monastery to teach them the true faith inherited from the saintly fathers.

In 431 A.D. he accompanied St. Cyril to the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus. He created Egyptian nationalism or Coptism, getting rid of every Hellenistic culture. He used his talents of speaking and writing to inflame the crowds, using the pure Saidic dialect of Upper Egypt. To all who heard him or read his writings, his words had the power of magic. Besides his deep spirituality, he was a political and a social reformer.

Shenouda was blessed with an unusual long life. He lived to be 118 years old. His fatherhood over monasteries and convents lasted 66 years. Abba Shenouda became very sick, and he called his disciples to his cell. After he blessed them, he commended his soul in the hands of his Savior in the 12th of July, 451 A.D. He left a great wealth of literature; some of which are preserved in the museums of Naples and London. His biography was written by his faithful disciple Wisa. May the prayers and supplications of the great Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite be with us all Amen



The Gospel of St. Mark

By: Joseph Michael

The Gospel of St. Mark is unique in many ways. It is not a direct biographical view of Jesus' life as is presented in the Gospel's of St. Matthew and St. Luke. Rather it is an account of Jesus' actions and achievements. St. Mark writes a concise, action-packed gospel, one that presents Jesus as the miracle-worker not the teaching Jesus. This gospel, written in the present tense creating the impression of an eyewitness account, is the shortest of the four Gospels yet is the most detail oriented. For example St. Mark spends twenty verses on the Gadarene demoniac account whereas St. Luke uses fourteen verses and St. Matthew just seven. The composition of the gospel of St. Mark indicates that St. Peter was St. Mark's primary informant. In fact, the outline of events in St. Mark's Gospel follows precisely the outline of St. Peter's sermon to Cornelius at Caesarea (Acts 10:34-43, Acts 13:23-33). The Gospel was most likely written around 64 to 65 AD but no later than 70 AD - when Jerusalem was destroyed. St. Mark wrote primarily to the Gentile Christians, especially the Romans. The Gospel was, in fact, believed to have been written in Italy. St. Mark wrote a Gospel that was meant to strengthen and guide these Christians through the terrible

times of Nero's persecution. The content of the Gospel is similar to that of a Greek tragedy which, incidentally, was a major influence on Roman plays and story lines (providing St. Mark with a style or framework to write this gospel). He weaves Jesus' introduction, successes and growing hostility, expectations and conflicts in a mere 16 chapters. But the content is so action-packed, so drama filled that it was meant to transform its readers, not merely inform. St. Mark strongly portrayed Jesus' passion, His promised death and resurrection. The Gospel of St. Mark is in essence the life of Jesus Christ in its most passionate, attention grabbing form.

May the blessings of St. Mark, the Evangelist, be with us all. Amen

Source: The Nelson Study Bible. New King James Version: 1997.

KNOW YOUR CHURCH

Why do we pray looking towards the East ?

Communication with God is definitely not bound by direction or place, one may pray anywhere. Although this is the case, one must consider that our Church is a Traditional Church, thus depending upon Scripture and the teachings of our early Fathers for our rites and practices. Based upon this, here are some facts to consider:

(1) The main reason for praying towards the East is that our Lord's Advent will be from the East, according to the Scriptures "*...as the lightening comes out of the East... so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.*" (Mathew 24: 27)



(2) In Scripture, we also find that Christ is referred to as, "*the East*" in the Old Testament (Zech. 6:12) while in the New Testament He is called, "*the Sun of righteousness and justice*" (**Matthew 24:2**).

(3) According to the Apostolic Constitution, the church must be pointing to the East. At the same time the Didascalia states that prayer be toward the East.

(4) Great fathers such as Saint Basil, Saint Gregory of Nyssa and Saint Ephrem the Syrian have said that we look towards the east awaiting the return of the lost paradise in which God initially placed us.

The Feast of the Apostles

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The others preached verbally and these oral teachings are known as the tradition of the church of which we practice till today. The apostles left us 127 canon laws in two books (the first contains 71 and the second 56). They also left us their teachings in the book of Didascalia, which contains 38 chapters and an introduction, it is very useful especially in the pastoral work.

Freely you have received, freely give

Church Activities

* As summer approaches, the church would like to encourage spiritual reading in order for us to develop spiritually and intellectually. Over the past couple of months, a bookstore for the church has been developed. God willing, it will be open every Friday & Saturday.

* Due to the lack of an Egyptian grocery store in our area, the servants have come up with an idea to serve our community as well as raise funds for the church. There will be a variety of items for sale and orders can be taken for other items.

* Due to the weather, St. Paul's Class postponed its rafting trip to Jim Thorps, Pa., to July 15, 2000. For more information contact Mrs. Laura Michael at 363-2261.

* Summer Activities will start on July 11; every Tuesday and Wednesday from 7 to 9 PM.

Church Social News

* The church congratulates Noura and Medhat Marcous on their blessed marriage, and welcomes them.



*Please do not forget to pray to the Lord
that He may heal the sick
and
repose the souls of those who have passed
away among us in the
paradise of joy ”*

This Newsletter is a free publication of the church, under the supervision of Fr. Antonious Tanious.

The committee welcomes your participation in the form of articles, reviews, news, or comments.

Please mail your articles, comments, ...etc. to the church at:

PO Box 256
Howell, NJ 07731

If you would like this newsletter mailed to a friend or wish your name to be deleted from our mailing list please fax your request to 732-821-1512.

Church Services

July, 2000

Saturday, July 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29

-8:30am-11:30am— Divine Liturgy

-11:30am-1:00pm— Sunday School & Youth group meeting

Fridays, July 7, 14, 21 and 28

-7:30pm-8:30pm— Hymns Lesson

-8:30pm-8:45pm— Prayer Meeting

-8:45pm-9:30pm— Bible Study

COPTIC FEASTS

- July 1 Martyrdom of St. Moses the Black
- July 12 Apostoles' Feast
- July 14 St. Shenouda The Archmandrite's Feast
- July 15 St. Bishoy's Feast