

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate Archangel Michael Church Howell, NJ



October, 2000

Volume1

Issue 10

Tut/ Babah 1717



Experiences in Life

St. John the Baptist was stronger than Herod:

Do you imagine that king Herod was stronger than St. John the Baptist because he was able to present John's head on a plate?

There is no doubt that he was not! His victim was stronger. Herod continued to fear John the Baptist even after he killed him. And when Christ appeared, Herod thought that John had risen from the dead (Matthew 14:2). How amazing people's estimations are! They imagine the strength where there is weakness, and weakness where there is victory.

In the New Year:

Is it just a new year according to the calendar, or is it really a new year in your life? How can it be a new year if you enter it with the same habits, same characters and same faults without changing anything with yourself, just letting your personality becomes frozen in its particular ways?

If only you would move during this New Year and make even one practical step towards a better way of living. In the new year, do not just present to God your vows, your promises and pledges, for these are above the level of your will

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. **He who says, "I know Him", and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**

(1John 2:1-4)

and strength, but gather up all your desires and present them to God as a prayer, acknowledging your weakness, and do not make your promises as if you are relying on your own ability. Instead of promising to God that you will change yourself for the better, take from Him a promise that He will change you for the better.

My Eyes and My Ears:

They tell me sometimes, "The job is well done." As I thank them, I smile and say jokingly, "I am used to believing my eyes more than my ears!" Then I would go and see how it was done for myself.

Popular Songs:

Sometimes people compose a hymn using the same tune as a popular song. They think that as long as the words are fine, it does not matter about the music! However, music in itself has a great effect upon the emotions which is no less than the effect of the words. So the spiritual words must agree with spiritual music.

Pain:

Pain is stronger and deeper than joy and also more sincere. A person in pain stands before the reality of life and before the reality of himself and perceives that all the delights of the world are feeble and vanity.

Winning People:

Real success is not that you triumph over people, but to win them, "*for the winner of souls is wise.*" (Proverbs 11:30). Our Lord Jesus was at His strongest point on the cross for then He had won the whole world.

The Devil Said to God:

The devil said to God, "Leave to me the strong, I can cope with them, but as for the weak, since they are conscious of their weakness, they will ask for your strength and will fight me with it and conquer me."

God and the Problem:

Do not look at a problem but look at God to solve it. Your faith in God and feeling that God is standing with you in your difficulties will give you hope and strength.

Is Silence a Virtue?

Silence is not always a virtue. Sometimes we would be guilty for keeping silent. The issue requires wisdom, so that we know when to speak and when to keep silent, and if we speak, what words to use. The wise person is one who does not remain silent when he should speak and does not speak when he should remain silent.

One Way of Life:

We must reconcile our way of life within the church and our way of life outside it, so that they proceed along the same line without any contradictions. It is not good for a person to have two personalities; one for the House of God and another for the world. The righteous person is always the same, he does not wear a different face for each different occasion.

Advice to a Driver:

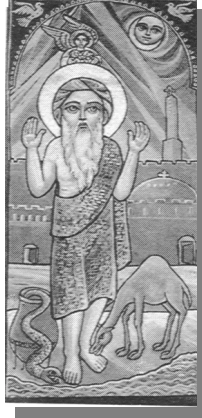
I said to the driver of my car one day, "It is not important that we get there quickly, but that we arrive safely. "

In One Day!

Sometimes a person may take forty years to build a good name, fame and reputation, then he may lose all that in one day or one hour or one act!

It is a real tragedy.

Saint Reweis



Saint Reweis was born in a village called Miniēt Yameen in the Egyptian Delta region. His father, Isaac and his mother, Sarah, called him Freig; they brought up their son in the fear of God. Because of their poverty, Freig had to work from his boyhood. He had a camel whom he called Reweis (meaning small head). Freig lived this simple frugal life for twenty years. As he grew, his heart blazed with love for his Lord, his church, and his people. Such was his ardor that he memorized whatever he heard of the Holy Bible, the Divine Liturgy, and the sayings of the Fathers.

The persecutions suddenly flared up with fierceness and brutality. Freig, worrying that some Christians may weaken and deny their Lord, left his village and went to Cairo intending to enthruse their hearts.

Feeling tired, he slept under a tree. In his sleep, he saw a brilliant vision, two radiant men appeared before him and said "You are weary and hungry, come partake of the heavenly food." They led him to the Sanctuary where he took communion; they then took him back to where he was. Waking up refreshed and joyous, he went to Cairo and from there to Upper Egypt. On this journey he took for himself the name of his camel, 'Reweis', out of sheer humility. Like our Lord, he had nowhere to lay his head. As he journeyed, he preached words of comfort and strength. At the same time, he worked

for a living and spent his nights watch-

ing and praying. Because he prayed with fervor, humility, and tears, many joined him and were thus consoled.

On one occasion, he warned a disciple of his saying, "Mind the scorpion under your foot."; the disciple discovered that it was a gold coin.

He started training himself in abstinence, and succeeded in remaining without eating for twenty-six days. On his visits to families in their homes, he would pray for them, bless each member, fill them with the Peace of the Lord, and heal their sick.

In his deep love for Christ the King, he persisted in partaking of the Eucharist. He both advised and warned his disciples to prepare their spirits incessantly that they may be worthy of this 'wondrous Mystery'. He was given to see the Glory of God filling the Sanctuary, and His Light over the head of each communicant.

Content with a leather girdle about his loins, he was with bare a head, body and legs and was assaulted by many ruffians. Once they stoned him, but he did not open his mouth despite his sufferings. When they left him, some of his disciples carried him to a nearby wood store, where they revived him and dressed his wounds. As he sat talking with them, they suddenly saw a fire in the corner opposite them. Naturally, they were frightened, but he said unto them, "Fear not, this is no fire, but the Light of Christ, appearing unto us to prove to us His promise that He will strengthen us upon the bed of languishing."

This divine apparition was by no

means a solitary incident, for our Lord appeared to him five other times, once conversing with him. For these numerous revelations, Saint Reweis is entitled, "Theophanires", that is, 'he who beholds God's Revelations.'

Among his practices was his endeavor to control his tongue; he succeeded in remaining without uttering a word for months on end. Knowing this, some wicked men went to him during a period of silence, and tried to rouse him to speak. At their failure they threw a live coal at him, but despite the burn, he maintained his silence. Though the saint's heart overflowed with love for everyone, he had a special corner in it for youth.

Because Saint Reweis greatly hon-

ored the Blessed Virgin, he implored her saying, "Please, allow me to depart from this world on a day of your commemoration." Our Lady graciously granted his request for he died on the twenty-first day of Paopi (or 'Baba') at 11am (the twenty-first day of each Coptic month being dedicated to the commemoration of the Blessed Virgin). At the hour of his departure, no one was beside him, but a firm believer living nearby attested that he saw a woman whose radiance outshone the sun come down from heaven, received his pure spirit and carried it up to heaven.

May his blessings be with us all.



From the Coptic Synaxarium A Miracle At Sea

On October 10 (30 Tute), we commemorate the miracle that God performed to St. Athanasius, the 20th Pope of Alexandria. When Emperor Constantius, the son of the Emperor Constantine adopted the teachings of Arius who said that the Son was not in existence before He was conceived in the womb and therefore not equal to the Father. Emperor Constantius sent a man whose name was Gawargios, to Alexandria and with him he also sent five hundred horsemen and letters appointing Gawargios patriarch of Alexandria instead of Abba Athanasius the Apostolic. He ordered Gawargios to support the faith of Arius and slay all who would not be obedient to him. When this man arrived in the city, he preached the teachings of Arius but only a few of the men of the city accepted his words. Therefore, he killed a large number of people. St. Athanasius hid himself for a period of six years.

After this time, St. Athanasius came forth and went to the city of Constantinople, and asked Emperor Constantius either to restore him to his See or to slay him to receive the crown of martyrdom. But the Emperor ordered his men to place him in a small boat and to leave him in the sea without food or water or a guide.

The Emperor thought that he would die of hunger or thirst or drowned. The boat sailed along smoothly and in peace with the Lord's will and His care. St. Athanasius was surrounded and cared for by the Angels until he arrived at Alexandria three days later. When the believers heard that their shepherd had arrived, they rejoiced and went out to him and received him with candles and songs of praise. Then they brought him into the church and expelled Gawargios and his followers. St. Athanasius set that day as a great feast to the Lord. May the blessings of this great Saint be with us, and glory be to God, Amen.

BIBLE STUDY

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

By: Mark Michael

The Good News of the new Christian faith spread like wild fire. Within thirty-five years, the gospel had reached cities from Jerusalem to Rome. Everywhere the Apostles went, there was opposition, but the world was not sure how to refute this new idea of Christianity.

St. Luke wrote the Book of Acts in order to show the fulfillment of Jesus' words. He ends his gospel with Jesus giving his Apostles the message to make disciples of all nations. St. Luke then reiterates this at the beginning of the Acts. By doing so, St. Luke was able to write the gospel as well as the book of Acts.

The Book of Acts begins with the story of Pentecost and how the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and empowered them to go and be witnesses to the faith. The first part of Acts deals with the ministry of St. Peter to the Jews then shifts attention to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, now St. Paul. It then continues with St. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. In chapter 7 verse 60, we see for the first time persecution in the New Testament. This scattered many believers to Samaria and the rest of the known world.

St. Luke has been identified as the author of the Book of Acts because of his reference to his "former account" written to Theophilus. St. Paul also calls the author the "beloved physi-

cian." St. Luke was the doctor that took care of St. Paul during his missionaries and later on, St. Luke includes himself in St. Paul's missions. This section is called the "we" section of Acts and begins in chapter 16 verse 10.

Scholars have dated the Book of Acts between 60 and 64 AD because of various reasons. First, St. Paul had not died by the completion of the book. As a matter of fact, St. Luke states at the end that St. Paul had just begun his house arrest in Rome, which occurred in 60 AD. Also, St. Luke does not mention anything about the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD) or the persecution under Nero after the great fire in Rome (64 AD). Had these events occurred during the writing of the book, St. Luke would have definitely added them.

The Book of Acts serves as a history book for the early church. It shows how the Holy Spirit authorized the disciples to go and spread the word of Christ. In addition, this book shows the rapid spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. St. Luke tells his audience that the same Holy Spirit who came upon the disciples during Pentecost is the same Holy Spirit whom God has sent to us in order to help us be witnesses of Jesus' ministry.

KNOW YOUR CHURCH

Does the Bible Forbid Using Icons?

From: THE ICON IN THE COPTIC CHURCH

by Fr Georgios Kolta; St. John Magazine; October 1998

The Coptic Orthodox church as well as the traditional churches have icons of the holy martyrs and saint fixed on the iconostasis (the wall that carry the icons, separating the sanctuary from the church) and on walls. The church respects and honors them as St. Paul taught us to remember them, follow their faith and consider the outcome of their conduct (Heb. 13: 7).

The icons are of great benefit to the believers, because they are silent sermons carrying clear examples and continuous lesson. The icons are designed and painted in a way that the life history of those martyrs and saints could be predicted from them. The church offers their icons honor, dignity and reverence.

There are some Christians who consider that using the icons in the churches and honoring them contradicts what is written in the Scripture. They look at the matter as worshipping idols or having the spirit of idolatry. They claim that God has prohibited this through His commandment: "*You shall not make for yourself any carved image or any likeness of any thing..*" (Exod. 20:4). This verse does not explain the purpose of the commandment but the verse, as follows, clarifies that "*you shall not*

bow down to them or worship them" (Exod. 20:5). It is obvious that the church does not teach the believers or urge them to worship the icons or the saints, but our prayers, worship and glorification are offered only to God alone.

The goal of the scripture was to exhort the Israelites from worshipping idols. For in that era, people were worshipping idols of different kinds. On the other hand, using the icons in the church is in accordance with the Scriptures. There are many verses in the Bible that are in agreement with this belief The Lord said to Moses in the same book: "*And you shall make two cherubim of gold.. at the two ends of the mercy seat... and the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings... the faces of the cherubim shall be towards the mercy seat..*" (Exod. 25:18). God ordered Moses to make pictures and different shapes in order to remind the Hebrew people of God's presence in the ark of testimony. The same happened when king Solomon built the temple of God (1 Kings 6:23).

"For the Son of Man has come to seek
and to save that which was lost."

(Luke. 19:10)



**His Grace,
Bishop David
Will celebrate the
Divine Liturgy
with us on
Saturday October
28th**

His Grace will also ordain deacons. Anyone wishing to be ordained or have their children ordained please contact Mr. Raafat Mankabadi at (732) 901-1124

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.



**The Church's Second Annual
Festival will be
Saturday & Sunday
October 7th and 8th, 2000
At Prince of Peace Church**



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