



ARCHANGEL MICHAEL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

**Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
Archangel Michael Church
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Emmanuel

“God with us”

By: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III



Blessed and sweet is this name which our Lord Jesus Christ was called in His birth; EM-MANUEL, GOD WITH US. A name that gives comfort and God's love to us. The blessing of the Nativity is this; to feel that Christ is God with us, God is among us, dwelling with us and within us. God in fact

loves mankind very much. His *"delight is with the sons of men"* (Proverbs 8: 31). He likes to give us the pleasure of being with Him. Since God created man, He wanted his heart to be a place for His residence. Thousands of years passed away and our good Lord is trying to find a place in our hearts. But *"As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; there is none who does good, no, not one "* (Rom. 3:10-12). God found no place in the hearts of men to lean His head what about you? Does God look at your heart and say, *"This is My resting place forever. Here I will dwell for I have desired it"* (Ps. 132:14).

The Tabernacle of God with Men:

The dwelling of God with people is an old story. It is the story of the tabernacle, the tent of meeting. It is also the description of heavenly Jerusalem in eternity, *"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people and God Himself will be with them and be their God"* (Rev. 21:3). God explained that meaning in a stronger way depicting His love. He said that He is the head and we are the members of His body. St. Paul described us as a Church, that we are *"Christ's body."* This is also what the Lord meant by saying, *"I am the true vine and you are the branches"* (Jn. 15:1-5). He asked us *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me"* (Jn. 15: 4).

This is part of His long prayer, *"I in them and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one"* (Jn. 17: 23). God who dwelt in virgin Mary's womb to take the form of man from her, wants to dwell in your heart to fill it with love. The best place of God's dwelling is your heart. He prefers to dwell in your heart more than heaven and stand at the door of your heart knocking waiting for you to open to Him (Rev. 3:20). The Lord considers your body a temple of His Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God dwells in you (1Cor. 3:16). Your heart is God's true heaven. Therefore, He always says, *"My son give me your heart"* (Prov. 23:26).

The verse, *"God with us"* doesn't mean that Emmanuel is with us here only, or in the time of His incarnation, but that He is with us always and forever. He said, *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matt. 28:20). He also says, *"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"* (Matt. 18:20).

The Lord will continue to be with us in eternity. He said to the Father, *"Father, I desire that they also, whom You gave Me, may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world"* (Jn. 17:24). The Lord Jesus assured us, *"I go and prepare a place for you and come again to receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also"* (Jn.

14:3).

The blessing of Christmas is focused in this word, "Emmanuel," God with us. If you, my brother, feel that you are with God and God is with you, then you have really enjoyed really the blessing of the nativity. Do not think that Christmas is just a feast to break your fast. All the celebrations of Christmas are designed to make you feel the fellowship with Emmanuel, God with us.

God wants to make friendship with you. The Bible says: *"And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him"* (Gen. 5:24). It is a wonderful view to imagine Enoch while walking with God, seeing that God did not disperse with Enoch, instead, He took him.

St. Paul explains the second coming of Christ on the clouds and our rapture to Him and ends saying, *"And thus we shall always be with the Lord"* (1 Thess. 4:17).

All the saints used to feel that they are always in the presence of God. They see Him with them always and at their right hand. It is a repeated statement by the prophet Elijah, *"As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand..."* (1 Kings 18:15). The person that feels God's presence will not sin and will be ashamed of God if he sinned. Once a prostitute threatened St. Ephram the Syrian to spread evil rumors about him if he would not yield to sin with her. The saint pretended that he agreed on the condition that they commit the act of fornication in the market

place! The woman was surprised and asked, "How can we do that in a market place? Don't you feel ashamed that all the people around us will see us?" Then the saint answered her, "If you feel ashamed of people, then how come you are not ashamed of God whose eyes penetrates the darkness?!" The woman was touched of his answer, felt a deep conviction and repented.

Do you think, my brother, that only atheists deny the existence of God?! I assure you that every sin you commit proves that you have forgotten the existence of God or denied His presence. When we always think of the presence of God, that mere thought gives us purity, holiness and protection always.

Also, feeling the existence of Emmanuel gives us courage and will deliver us from any fears. When Joshua started his service, the Lord told him, "*No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage... for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go*" (Josh. 1:5-9). The person who feels the presence of God with him will not fear and will feel a great power with him which removes any fear and grants him peace and trust. For example, someone may ask you a critical question and you get afraid to the degree of lying! Why are you scared since God is with you?

The sin of fear is a sin of unbe-

lief in Emmanuel and His care. David was courageous and used to say, "*The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear...though an army may encamp against me, in this I will be confident*" (Ps. 27:1,3). In such a statement we see the difference between the courage of the saints and the courage of the world. The courage of the people of the world results in trusting their own power, but the courage of the saints is caused by their trust in Emmanuel, God is with them.

The Lord Jesus appeared to the apostle Paul in a vision and said to him, "*Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you*" (Acts 18:9, 10). St. Paul believed in this statement and lived with it all his life. He was filled of the power of faith and stood before kings like Agrippa, governors like Festus and princes like Lisias and none of them could harm him. But on the contrary, they were the ones who feared him. He was under arrest and chained, but still they were frightened of him because of his God. We read, "*Now as he (Paul) reasoned about righteousness, self control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid...*" (Acts 24:25). This is Emmanuel who was with the three children of Israel in the fiery furnace and the fire had no power over them (Dan.3: 27).

Saint Stephen the Archdeacon



On the first day of the blessed month of Tobah, we commemorate the martyrdom of St. Stephen, the Archdeacon and the first Christian martyr. St. Luke testified about him in the Book of Acts saying, "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8). "The Jews stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us. And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel" (Acts 6:12-15). Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?" And Stephen answered with a convincing speech and told them the history from Abraham to Moses. Abraham got out of Haran, had Isaac and circumcised him. Isaac had Jacob and Jacob had Joseph and his brother, who sold him to Egypt. Then Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. St. Stephen continued to tell them all the events until the build-

ing of the temple. St. Stephen concluded by saying, "You stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it" (Acts 7:51-53).

When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God. And Jesus standing at the right hand of God and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" (Acts 7:54-56). Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord and cast him out of the city and stoned him. They stoned St. Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep (Acts 7:57-60). Devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him. May his prayers be with us. Amen.



Second Corinthians begins by identifying the author as Paul (1:1, 2:1). The style of the letter confirms Paul's authorship, as does the testimony of the early church.

Paul wrote First Corinthians during the last year of his ministry at Ephesus, on his third missionary journey, probably in the early spring of A.D. 56. Second Corinthians was written shortly after first Corinthians thus the date of Second Corinthians is probably the fall of A.D. 56.

Paul wrote Second Corinthians out of his concern for the Corinthians (7:12). He wanted to offer the church some further instructions concerning the repentant offender (2:5-11) as well as about the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (9:1-5). However, the second Corinthians is primarily a personal letter, defending Paul's ministry among the Corinthians and appealing to the factions in the church to reconcile themselves to each other. Yet Paul still uses doctrine to address this church's problems. He speaks of the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith: the Trinity (1:21, 22; 13:14), as well as the deity (1: 12, 19; 4:5), humanity (8:9), death (5:19, 21) and resurrection of Christ (5:15). Paul reaffirms that all believers have been sealed by the Holy Spirit (1:22) and have been given the Spirit as a deposit (1:22,- 5:5). The believing Corinthians are in Christ (5:7) and Christ is in them (13:3, 4). They will be resurrected (4:14; 5:1-8) and evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ (5: 10), where they will either be ashamed (5:3) or rewarded (5:9, 10). Paul points out that part of the reason for the Corinthians' difficulties and division was Satan's opposition to the church. He blinds unbelievers to truth (4:4) and uses every opportunity to divide the believers (2:11). That is why Paul exhorts the Corinthians to lead holy lives, to repent of the sins of the past, and to be reconciled to each other. Thus in this personal letter defending his ministry and authority, Paul still weaves doctrine into the fabric of his discussion. For Paul the essence of Christian faith touched on every facet of life.

“From The Nelson study Bible: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville”

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"For there is born to you this day in the city of David
a Savior, who is Christ the Lord"

(Luke 2:11)

Christmas Service:

The Christmas Eve. Divine Liturgy starts at 7 PM on Saturday January 6th.

Christmas Party:

Sunday school Christmas party will be held after Saturday the 13th Divine Liturgy.

Feast of the Epiphany:

The Divine Liturgy celebrating Christ's Epiphany will be held on Thursday night, January 18th. The Liturgy of the water will start at 7 PM and the Divine Liturgy will begin at 8 PM and end at midnight.



*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 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:

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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

January, 2001

Fridays, January 5,12,19 and 26

-7:30 PM-8:30 PM Hymns Lesson
-8:30PM-8:45PM Prayer Meeting
-8:45PM-9:30PM Bible Study

Saturday, January 6, 13, 20 and 27

-8:30AM-11:30AM Divine Liturgy
-11:30AM-1:00PM Sunday School & Youth group meeting

Christmas Eve. Divine Liturgy:

Saturday January 6 7 PM 12 AM.

Christmas Party:

Saturday January 13 11: 30 AM – 1 PM

Feast of the Epiphany Divine Liturgy :

Thursday January 18 7 PM – 12 AM

COPTIC FEASTS

January 7 ----- Nativity
January 9 ----- The Martyrdom of St. Stephen the Archdeacon
January 14 ----- Circumcision Feast
January 19----- The Epiphany
January 21----- Wedding at Cana of Galilee
January 30 ----- St. Anthony's Feast