

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

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Archangel Michael Church
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ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED



MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER



March 2001

Volume 2 Issue 1 5

Amsheer 1717



“... He came to a city of Samaria which is called Suchar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink". For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the -gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have Him, and He would have given you living water". The woman said to Him, "Sir You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?". Jesus answered and said to her "Whoever drinks of this water will

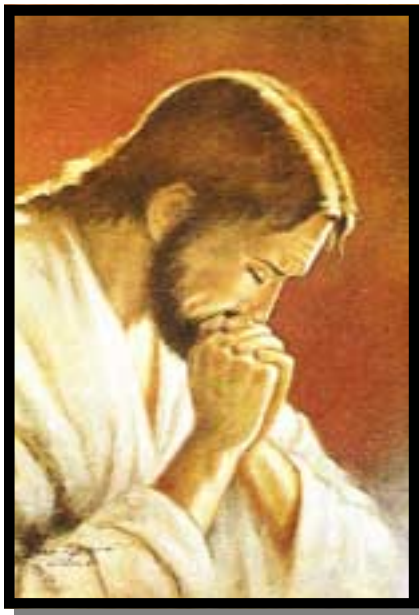
This Newsletter is a free monthly publication of the Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church, PO Box 256 Howell, NJ 07731, under the supervision of Fr. Antonious Tanious.

The committee welcomes your participation in the form of articles, reviews, news, or comments. Please mail your articles, comments, ...etc. to the church or e-mail them to archangelletter@netscape.net

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The Spirituality of Fasting

By: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III



On the Mount of Transfiguration:

On the Mount of Transfiguration, three stood radiating glorious light. The three of them brought fasting to perfection, for everyone of them fasted, for forty days and forty nights. They were: The Lord Jesus Christ, (Matt. 4:2), Moses (Exodus 34:28), and Elijah (I Kings 19:8). Does this magnificent scene teach us that by conquering the body through fasting, the spirit becomes manifest and the body is transfigured? Did Jesus Christ select two people that were fasting to be with Him in transfiguration in order to show that, that nature, which is transfigured in eternity, was the one that vanquished the body through fasting?

Fasting is the Earliest Command-

ment: Fasting is the earliest commandment known to mankind. God commanded our ancestor Adam to refrain from eating a certain fruit from a certain tree (Genesis 2:16,17) and allowed him to eat from the rest. In this way God set for the body certain limits which it should not be surpassed. Thus man did not have absolute freedom to take whatever he laid eyes on or whatever he liked. There were things he had to abstain from, which means he had to control his inclination towards them. Thus it is that man, since the very beginning, has had to control his body. A tree may be "*good for food and pleasant to the eye*" (Genesis 3:6) and yet one must turn away from it.

By abstaining from food, man rises above the level of the body and also above matter. This is the wisdom behind fasting. If the first man had succeeded in this test, triumphed over his bodily desire for food, and controlled his bodily senses that saw the tree as an appetizing sight... if he had succeeded in this test, it would have been proof that his soul had overcome his bodily desires and he would have then deserved to eat from the Tree Of Life. However, he was defeated before his own body which then dominated over him. Man went on slipping into several bodily sins, one after the other until he was condemned to walk

after the flesh and not after the spirit (Romans 8:1). Then the Lord Jesus Christ came to restore man to his initial status. Since man had slipped into the sin of eating a prohibited fruit at the call of his body, Christ's temptations started by Him being triumphant in this particular point, over eating in general and even over that which was legitimate. Christ started His service with fasting and rejected the devil's temptation to make Him eat for the life of the body. The Lord Jesus Christ showed him that man was not a mere body, but had in him another element which is the soul whose nourishment is a word emanating from the mouth of God. He said to him: "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4).

This was not a new spiritual rule introduced by the New Testament but an old commandment given to man in the first written law (Deut. 8:3).

Thus did Prophets fast: We hear the Prophet David say: "*I humbled my soul with fasting*" (Psalms 35:13), "*I wept and chastened MY soul with fasting*" (Psalms 69:10), and "*My knees are weak through fasting*" (Psalms 109:24). He also fasted when his son was sick and "*besought God for the child,*" lying "*all night upon the earth*" (2 Samuel 12:16). The Prophet Daniel fasted (Daniel 9:3) and so did the Prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 4:9). We hear that Nehemiah fasted when he heard that "*The wall of Jerusalem... is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire*" (Neh. 1:3,4). Thus did Ezra, the scribe and priest, fast and call upon the whole population to fast. (Ezra

8:21). It was recounted that the prophetess Anna "*departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers*" (Luke 2:37).

The Apostles fasted: In the New Testament, as Christ fasted so also did the Apostles. The Lord Jesus Christ said "*When the bridegroom shall be taken from them... then shall they fast*" (Matt. 9:15). And they did fast. Thus the Apostle's Fast was the oldest and first one kept by the Christian Church. It was said that the Apostle Peter was fasting and felt so hungry that he longed to eat (Acts 10:10) at which time the vision about the acceptance of nations appeared to him. Thus it was during the fast that the declaration of the acceptance of nations took place. The Apostle Paul served God "*in labors, in watching, in fasting,*" (2 Corinthians 6:5), and moreover "*in fasting often.*" (2 Corinthians 11:27). During the Apostles' Fast, the Holy Ghost spoke to them. Therefore, the Bible says: "*As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away*" (Acts 13: 2,3). How beautiful are the Lord's words to the Apostles about fasting and its relation with the casting out of devils: "*This kind does not go out but by prayer and fasting*" (Matt. 17:21).

Fasting of the whole population: This is included in collective worship (and is other than special fasts). In it, all the people's hearts meet together in self-abasement before God. As people pray together with

one soul and spirit to offer their prayer to God *"with one accord"* (Acts 4:24), so is the case with fasting. This is different from private prayers offered in a closed bedroom. There are many examples in the Holy Bible of collective fasts in which all the faithful participate together and with one spirit, presenting to God a unified fast. It is one for the whole church. The most prominent of these fasts was the one undertaken by the whole population in distress, during the reign of Queen Esther, seeking God's mercy (Esther 4:3,16). They fasted with tears and dressed in *"sackcloth with ashes"* until the Lord hearkened and saved them. The whole population also fasted at a call from Ezra (Ezra 8:21,23). Together with Nehemiah, they also *"assembled with fasting, and with sack clothes, and earth upon them"* (Nehemiah 9:1). In the same way, the people fasted in the days of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20:3). The Epistle of Jeremiah tells us of the people fasting in the days of Jehoiahyd the son of Josiah (Jeremiah 36:9). There was also another collective fast during the days of the Prophet Joel (Joel 2:12).

Nations also fasted: The most outstanding example of this is the fast of the people of Nineveh (Jonah 3) and how God accepted it and forgave their sins. Another example is the fast of Cornelius the Centurion (Acts 10:30) and how God accepted it and sent to him the Apostle Peter who preached to, and baptized him. The Old Testament tells us about the fast of King Darius during Daniel's ordeal and how he *"passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him"* (Daniel 6:18). In the life of the famous spiritual leader, Ma-

hatma Gandhi, we see that fasting was the most manifest and distinctive practice of his life and the one he often used when facing problems. Once, he fasted for a long time until the doctors told him that his blood had started to disintegrate. Fasting was not confined to individuals alone, for the whole population faded.

Fasting is a gift: When we get to know the benefits of fasting, we find that it is a gift from God. Yes, fasting is not only one of God's commandments, but is also a Godly gift, a grace and a blessing. God created us as body and soul and knows that we are in need of fasting, which is required for the good of our spiritual life, our spiritual development and our eternity. Therefore, He granted us the knowledge and practice of fasting. As a kind Father and a wise Teacher, He has recommended it to us.

Fasting precedes every grace and service: Every blessing that God offers us, we receive with fasting so that we may be "a spiritual condition fit for it." Feasts bear for us certain blessings and that is why every feast is preceded by fasting. It also precedes every sacrament.

Through fasting God intervenes: This was tried by Nehemiah, Ezra and Daniel, by Queen Esther and by the Church in the 4th century for the heresy of Arius. Fasting is a sound period for us to let God in at every problem. It is a period for a crushed heart to call and wait for God to listen. He who realizes the benefits of fasting and its effectiveness in his life as well as in his



THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

BY: IHAB GUIRGUESS

This letter was written by St. Paul while he was imprisoned by the Romans. This letter was written to the Ephesians to strengthen their congregation. Despite his imprisonment, the Romans could not stop the spread of the Good News.

Although Paul identifies himself at the beginning of the letter and towards the middle, (1:1; 3:1), the authorship of this letter is still in dispute. Some argue that the style of writing differs slightly from Paul's other letters while others believe that Ephesians was written by someone else as an introduction to Paul's other works. However, substantial proof has been achieved by the early church fathers who ascribed this letter as one of St. Paul's.

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia (now Turkey). It was at the center of several trade routes, making it an ideal location for the exchange of beliefs and ideas as well. Although Paul was shunned by the Jews, his teachings were accepted by the Greeks and eventually the Jews. Through Paul, many miracles were performed in Ephesus, spreading the Good News even farther.

The main theme of this letter is that salvation is achieved through faith alone and not through the works or human strivings. The letter emphasizes the unity of the Church whether Jew or Gentile and the only requirement for membership in the Church was a belief in Christ the Savior. Paul urges Jews and Gentiles to work together and unite in the fight against evil. Individuality is also stressed as the church body cannot function without the efforts of each individual. Each person has to display Christ's love, patience, humility, and gentleness as they use their gifts to build up the church, from parent to child, employee to employer.

"From The Nelson study Bible: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville"

Short Story

The Pastor's Son

Every Sunday afternoon, after the morning service at their church, the Pastor and his eleven year old son would go out into their town and hand out Gospel Tracts. This particular Sunday afternoon, it was very cold outside as well as pouring rain. The boy bundled up in his warmest and driest clothes and said, "OK dad, I'm ready." His pastor dad asked, "Ready for what?" "Dad, it's time we gather our tracts together and go out." Dad responds, "Son, it's very cold outside and it's pouring rain." The boy gives his dad a surprised look asking, "But dad, aren't people still going to Hell, even though it's raining?" His father hesitated for a moment then said, "Son, you can go. Here are the tracts; be careful son." "Thanks Dad!!!" And with that he was off and out into the rain. After 2 hours of walking in the rain he was soaking, bone chilled wet and down to his VERY LAST TRACT.

Then he turned toward the first home he saw and started up the sidewalk to the front door and rang the door bell. He rang the bell, but nobody answered. He rang it again and again but still no one answered. Again, he turned to the door and rang the bell and knocked loudly on the door with his fist. He waited, something holding him there on the front porch. He rang again, and this time the door slowly opened.

Standing in the doorway was a very sad looking elderly lady. She softly asked, "What can I do for you son?" With radiant eyes and a smile that lit up her world this little boy said, "Mam, I'm sorry if I disturbed you, but I just want to tell you that JESUS REALLY DOES LOVE YOU, and I came to give you my very last Gospel Tract which will tell you all about JESUS and His great LOVE." With that he handed her his last tract and turned to leave. She called to him as he departed, "Thank you son! And God Bless You!"

Well, the following Sunday morning in church, Pastor dad was in the pulpit and as the service began, he asked "Does anybody have a testimony or want to say anything?" Slowly, in the back row of the church, an elderly lady stood to her feet. As she began to speak a look of glorious radiance came from her face as she said, "None of you in this church know me. I've never been here before. You see, before last Sunday I was not a Christian. My husband has passed on some time ago, leaving me totally alone in this world. Last Sunday, being a particularly cold and rainy day, it was even more so in my heart as I came to the end of the line, where I no longer had any hope or will to live. So I took a rope and a chair and ascended the stairway into the attic of my home. I fastened the rope securely to a rafter in the roof then stood on the chair and fastened the other end of the rope around my neck. Standing on that chair, so lonely and brokenhearted, I was about to leap off when suddenly the loud ringing of my doorbell downstairs startled me. I thought, 'I'll wait a minute, and whoever it is will go away.' I waited and waited, but the ringing doorbell seemed to get louder and more insistent and then the person ringing also started knocking loudly. I thought to myself again, 'Who on earth could this be?!' I loosened the rope from my neck and started for the front door, all the while the bell rang louder and louder. When I opened the door and looked I could hardly

believe my eyes, for there on my front porch was the most radiant and angelic little boy I had ever seen in my life. His smile, Oh, I could never describe it to you!!! And the words that came from his mouth caused my heart, that had long been dead, to leap to life as he exclaimed with a cherub like voice, 'Mam, I just came to tell you that JESUS REALLY DOES LOVE YOU.' Then he gave me this Gospel Tract that I now hold in my hand. As the little angel disappeared back out, into the cold and rain, I closed my door and read slowly every word of this Gospel Tract. You see, I am now a happy child of the King, and since the address of your church was on the back of this Gospel Tract, I have come here to personally say thank you to God's little angel who came just in the nick of time and, by so doing, spared my soul from eternity in hell." There were now no dry eyes in the church. Probably no church has had a more glorious moment. And probably this universe has never seen a Papa that was more filled with love & honor for his son!

HIS HOLINESS POPE CYRIL VI

**The 115th Successor to St. Mark
the Evangelist**



On March 9 (Amshir 30), the remembrance of the departure of the Great Pope Kyrillos (Cyril) VI, the 115th successor of St. Mark the Evangelist.

Pope Kyrillos VI was born August 2, 1902 as Azer Ata, the son of a church deacon from a middle class family. After completing high school, Azer went to work for a shipping company in Alexandria. He resigned his job with the intention of becoming a monk

and entered the monastery of Baramous in the Western Desert of Egypt in an area called bareyat Sheheet . On the 25th of February, 1928, he was consecrated monk. He was given

the monastic name "Mina" after St. Mina his patron saint. Three years later he was ordained a priest, July 18, 1931. Later, he retired to a cave two miles away from the monastery to live a life of solitude. That is how he came to be known as Fr. Mina the Solitaire.

"Abouna Mina Elmotawahed"

Afterwards, he was appointed abbot of the Monastery of St. Samuel in the eastern desert, near the Red Sea. He devoted a great deal of effort toward the restoration of this historic landmark. When the monastery of St. Samuel was restored, he moved to a deserted windmill south of Cairo. He restored the place and built a small residence and a church on the name of St. Mina.

After the abduction of the late pope Youssab II by militant Copts, the church was in great turmoil which did not last long, because it was the will of God the pope Youssab departed shortly thereafter. In May, 1959, Fr. Mina became pope and patriarch by the laying of the hands of all the bishops of the Coptic Church and he was called pope Kyrillos VI.

His Holiness pope Kyrillos was a holy man who through full dedication to the life of prayer and fasting possessed many higher gifts which included performing wonders and miracles, the gift of knowledge, and an unusual

ability to lead by example, which was missing for generations before his ascending to the throne of St. Mark. He set on the chair of St. Mark for twelve years (1959-1971). He had the honor and showed the wisdom needed to guide the Coptic Church through the difficult times of the 1960's when the government of then Gamal Abdul-Nasser was nationalizing business, real estate, and land including those willed to the churches and monasteries. He was highly regarded by the people of Egypt from all walks of life Christian and non-Christian alike.

One day the head mother of one of the convents wanted to speak to him on the phone, but the staff wouldn't give out his private number. Anba Kyrillos appeared to her in a vision, gave her the number and comforted her. She did not call, but later on she was blessed by seeing him and was rendered speechless when Anba Kyrillos asked her the reason she did not call on his private line. His prayers and the prayers and intercessions of his patron, Saint Mina of Marriot be with us. Glory be to God forever. Amen.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every
word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

(Matt:4:4)

- **The Holy week is approaching, limited copies of the California Holy Pascha book are available at the book store, please reserve your copy now.**
- **The church will have a trip to Myrtle Beach South Carolina in the last week of August. for further information please contact Laura Michael 363-2261.**



*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*

Church Services

March, 2001

Fridays, March 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30

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

Saturday, March 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31

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

COPTIC FEASTS

March 9 ——— Departure of Pope Cyril VI
March 19 ——— The Cross' Feast
March 26 ----- Martyrdom of St. Sedhom Bishay of Dimiat