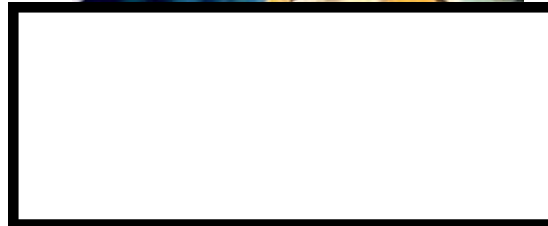


# ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate  
Archangel Michael Church  
P.O. BOX 256 Howell, NJ 07731

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MONTHLY  
NEWSLETTER



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“ Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. **3** And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. **4** And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. **5** And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. **6** For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. **7** And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. **8** And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. **9** And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

**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.**

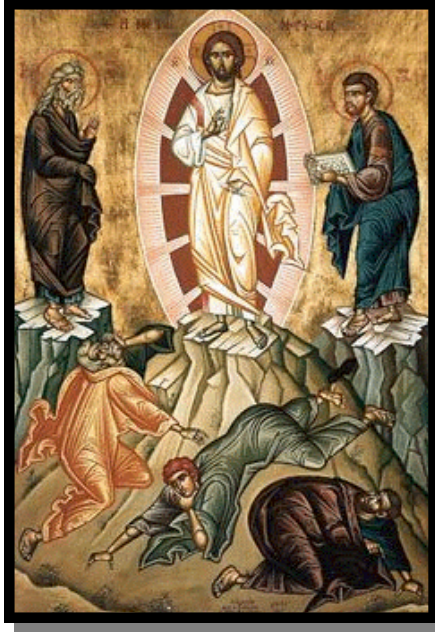
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# **THE TRANSFIGURATION**

*From: The Transfiguration and some meditations  
upon the feast of the Transfiguration*

by: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III



## **THE STORY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION**

According to the gospel of the apostle saint Mark, the story of the Transfiguration was mentioned like this: "Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves, and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus: "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make

three tabernacles: one for You,

one for Moses, and one for Elijah", because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying: "This is My beloved Son, hear Him!" Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves." (Mark 9: 2 -8).

In the narration of the apostle Saint Luke, he added saying: "And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep, and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him" (Luke 9: 30-32).

## **THE GLORY AND DIVINITY OF CHRIST**

The expression "glory" is mentioned more than once in the gospel of St. Luke. In regards to His divinity, it is evident that in a moment, He was transfigured to this illuminating bright aspect, whose brightness was magnificent. It was said that "His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them" (Mark 9:3).

**His divinity is also evident in the manner of His capacity to bring Elijah and Moses to be present with Him...**

In how He brought them with Him...! in how they spoke with Him...! and suddenly disappeared...!

In His sudden appearance, and His sudden disappearance! How did they come with Him in a moment?! And how did they disappear in a moment?! Where did they come from?! And where did they go?!

Yes, how was Christ the Lord able to bring Elijah, body and soul, from that place which we do not know, since he was elevated alive to heaven in a chariot of fire, out of the earth. (2 Kings 2:11). And we also do not know to what place in heaven!

His calling Elijah to stand with Him on the mount of the Transfiguration, then his dismissal in a single moment, undoubtedly refers to the power of His divinity... Then, how could He bring the soul of Moses, who was dead and buried, and *"no one knows his grave to this day"* (Deut. 34:6). It is known that the prophets and the righteous of the Old Testament were, before the redemption, lying on hope, in their place of waiting *"into the lower parts of the earth"* (Eph. 4:9).

There is no doubt also, that the calling of Elijah happened ac-

ording to the power of His divinity.

**The Lord willed to show to his disciples that He had put on this human body, simply out of His humility and His self-denial.**

But at that time, they did not understand His divine nature. This glorious transfiguration was supposed to establish an equilibrium in the moral condition of the apostles. For when they will see the Lord at the time of His crucifixion. As the prophet Isaiah described: *"He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him"* (Is. 53:2).

All this is added to the testimony of the Father for Him, with a voice which they heard out of the cloud which overshadowed them, saying: "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Mark 9:7), (Luke 9:35). This testimony of the Father was heard during the baptism of repentance when the Lord humbled Himself "(Matt. 3:17), (Luke 2:23).

And this testimony was also heard during the glory of the Transfiguration.....

**He is the beloved Son, whether in His humility or in His glory.....**



## Assumption of the Body of the Pure Virgin St. Mary

While our pure lady St. Mary, the mother of God, was keeping vigil, praying in the Holy Tomb, and waiting for the happy minute of her liberation from the bonds of the flesh, the Holy Spirit informed her of her forthcoming departure from this vain world. When the time drew near, the disciples and the virgins of the Mt. of Olives (Zeitun) came and the Lady was lying on her bed. Our Lord, surrounded by thousands and thousands of angels, came to Her. He consoled her, and announced her with the everlasting joy which was prepared for Her. She was happy, and she stretched out her hands, blessed the Disciples, and the Virgins. Then, she delivered up her pure soul in the hand of her Son and God, Jesus Christ, Who ascended her to the higher habitations. As for the pure body, they shrouded it and carried it to Gethsemane. On their way, some of the Jews blocked the way in the face of the disciples to prevent the burial. One of them seized the coffin. His hands were separated from his body and remained hanging until he believed and repented for his mischievous deed. With the prayers of the holy disciples, his hands were reattached to his body, as they had been before. St. Thomas was absent at the time of St. Mary's departure, but he came after the burial. On his way back to Jerusalem, St. Thomas saw angels carrying St. Mary's pure body and ascending with it to heaven and one of the angels said to him, "Hurry and kiss the pure body of St. Mary." When he arrived to the disciples, they informed him about St. Mary's departure. He told them, "I will not believe, unless I see her body, as you all know how I did doubt the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ before." They took him to the tomb, to uncover the body but they did not find it and they were perplexed and amazed. St. Thomas told them how he saw the pure body ascending to heaven, carried by angels. The Holy Spirit then told them, "The Lord did not Will to leave Her Holy body on earth." The Lord had promised his pure apostles that they would see her in flesh another time. They were waiting for the fulfillment of this truthful promise, until the sixteenth day of the month of Misra, when the promise of seeing her was fulfilled. They saw her sitting on the right hand of her Son and her Lord, surrounded by the angelic Host, as David prophesied and said, "*At your right hand stands the queen.*" (Psalm 45:9) St. Mary's life on earth was sixty years. She spent twelve years of them in the temple, thirty years in the house of the righteous St. Joseph, and fourteen years in the care of St. John the Evangelist, as the Lord commanded her saying, "Woman behold your Son," and to St. John, "Behold your Mother." May Her intercession be with us. Amen

## Short Story

### A Butterfly

*By: Christine Michael*

A man found a cocoon for a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared, he sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through the little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and could go no farther.

Then the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. Something was strange. The butterfly had a swollen body and shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened. In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and deformed wings. It was never able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand, was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the small opening of the cocoon are God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon. Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life.

If God allowed us to go through all our life without any obstacles, that would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. Not only that, we would never be able to fly.

# BIBLE STUDY



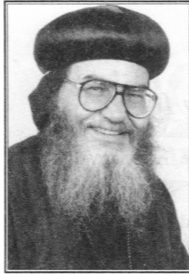
## ~~EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE TO~~ TIMOTHY

Sometimes the most difficult part of a teacher's job is to let the students go, to let them graduate and make their way in the world. One can sense this kind of anxiety in St. Paul's first letter to Timothy. He affectionately calls Timothy "*a true son*" (1:2), charging him again and again to remain faithful to what he had taught him (1:18; 4:12-16; 5:21; 6:11-13). The letter concluded with St. Paul's heartfelt cry: "*O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust*" (6:20). Timothy has accompanied Paul for years (Acts 16:1-3; 17:101- 20:4), assisting him and acting as his liaison to a number of churches. Paul had not only taught Timothy the essentials of the Christian faith, he had modeled Christian leadership to him. Now Paul was leaving Timothy in charge of the church at Ephesus. From Macedonia, Paul wrote to encourage his "son" in the faith. In effect, this letter is Timothy's commission, his orders from his concerned teacher, the apostle Paul. The letter names Paul as its author, and the author's statements about his life in 1:12, 13 are consistent with what is known of him. The early church fathers accepted the letter as one of St. Paul's.

Timothy was a native of Lystra in Phrygia (Acts 16:1-3). His father was Greek and his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois were godly Jewish women (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14,15). It was through the influence of these women that Timothy learned the Hebrew Scriptures as a child. Paul calls Timothy a "*true son in the faith*" (1:2), suggesting that he was converted during Paul's first missionary visit to Lystra ( Acts 14:6, 19).

The central purpose of First Timothy is found in 3:15 "*I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*" The church is God's primary vehicle for accomplishing His work on earth (Matt 16:18-20). The Lord has ordained that men and women who have trusted Him as Savior should be involved in working out His will in local assemblies around the world (1 Thess. 1: 1 ; Heb. 10:24,25). St. Paul wrote First Timothy in order to instruct his young protégé on how the church should function and how mature men and women of God should interact in it (6:11-16). Specifics are given on developing and recognizing godly leadership and avoiding false doctrine in' church (3:1-13; 4:1-6). Paul insists that Christian maturity should be expected in leadership, while it is developed in the lives of all believers (4:6-10). Paul offers Timothy a whole list of extremely practical advice for leading a church.





## **Coptic youth ask** **His Grace Bishop Moussa**

*“ From the youth Bishopric web site”*

**Question: What happens when we reach a certain level of spirituality, but every so often we fall?**

**His Grace Bishop Moussa:** Even though we may see our spiritual life as progressing in a zigzag, this zigzag is on an upward trend. But each time we realize we are falling, we must call out to the Lord to deliver us, and we must repent. We may look at our spiritual life as being up and down, but God sees that we are improving. Each time I fall, I experience three things: the realization that I am weak so I must be humble, the fact that satan is always attacking, so I must be careful, and how much God is always loving, caring and forgiving. Therefore never feel despair or frustration because of weaknesses.

If your spiritual life is up all the time, it will lead to much pride. For this reason, we do not want people to exaggerate in their spiritual lives by increasing the fasting and prostration's and so on without the guidance of their spiritual father. For if this happens they will be exaggerating out of ego centricism to prove to themselves and to others that they are a hero, and not out of love and sincerity to God. In the Paradise of the Fathers it is written, "If you see a young man moving rapidly towards spiritual levels, pull him down lest he suffer from the danger of pride." So in this sense, weaknesses are helpful because they keep one humble, even St Paul the Apostle said that he had a thorn in his flesh in order to keep him humble.

St. Anthony the Great once said, "This is the great work of man: always to take the blame for his own sins before God and to expect temptation to his last breath, for whoever has not experienced temptation cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, for without temptation no one can be saved" (Sayings of the Desert Fathers).

**Question: How can we choose our partner in life?**

**His Grace Bishop Moussa:** Pray a lot, think a lot, feel a bit, and Ask for spiritual guidance. We are asking you to feel a bit, because the sound of the emotions can be very loud, and they can hide the spirit and the mind. For example, because of emotions, one may enter into a relationship with a non Christian person because they are intelligent, good-looking, etc., but they do not think about the future of living with and raising a family with a non Christian partner. Therefore if we rely on our emotions, it may cause our thinking to stop and our spiritual life to be minimum.

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## FROM THE PARADISE OF THE DESERT

### HUMILITY



- An old man was asked, "What is humility?" and he said in reply, "Humility is a great work, and a work of God. The way of humility is to undertake bodily labor and believe yourself a sinner and make yourself subject to all." Then a brother said, "What does it mean, to be subject to all?" The old man answered, "To be subject to all is not to give your attention to the sins of others but always to give your attention to your own sins and to pray without ceasing to God."
- An old man said, "Every time a thought of superiority or vanity moves you, examine your conscience to see if you have kept all the commandments, whether you love your enemies, whether you consider yourself to be an unprofitable servant and the greatest sinner of all. Even so, do not pretend to great ideas as though you were perfectly right, for that thought destroys everything."
- As abba Macarius was returning to his cell from the marsh carrying palm-leaves, the devil met him with a sharp sickle and would have struck him but he could not. He cried out, "Great is the violence I suffer from you, Macarius, for when I want to hurt you, I cannot. But whatever you do, I do and more also. You fast now and then, but I am never refreshed by any food; you often keep vigil, but I never fall asleep. Only in one thing are you better than I am and I acknowledge that." Macarius said to him, "What is that?" and he replied, "It is because of your humility alone that I cannot overcome you."
- The old men used to say, "When we do not experience warfare, we ought so much the more to humiliate ourselves. For God seeing our weakness, protects us; when we glorify ourselves, he withdraws his protection and we are lost."

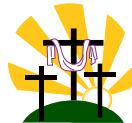
My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit  
has rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
(Luk. 1:46-47)

**By the grace of God, the church has signed a contract for purchasing a 15-acre parcel of land directly off of Route 9 for 500,000 dollars.**



THE 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL FESTIVAL  
WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY  
AND SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> AND 16<sup>TH</sup>, 2001.  
AT PRINCE OF PEACE CHURCH ON ALDRICH  
ROAD IN HOWELL, NJ.

- The Church is starting several fundraisers such as: the sales of Egyptian groceries; purchasing gift certificates for local stores and supermarkets; a youth Bowl-a-Thon and more. Your continued prayers and participation will ensure the raising of an Altar to the Lord in Howell.



*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.*

## **CHURCH SERVICES, AUGUST, 2001**

### **Fridays, August 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31**

-7:30 PM-8:30 PM      Hymns Lesson  
-8:30PM-8:45PM      Prayer Meeting  
-8:45PM-9:30PM      Bible Study  
-9:30PM-11:30PM      Midnight Praises

### **Saturday, August 4, 11, 18 and 25**

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

### **COPTIC FEASTS**

August 7      ——— Beginning of St. Mary Fast.  
August 19     ——— Transfiguration Feast  
August 22     ——— Assumption of St. Mary Body  
August 30     ——— Departure of St. Takla Haymanot