



ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

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

ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED



MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER



December 2001

Volume 2

Issue 23

Kiahk 1718

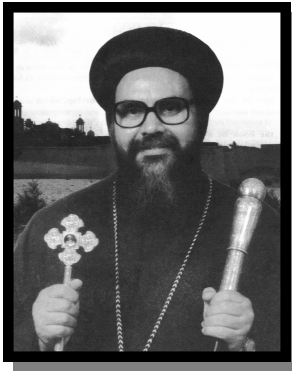


“**26** And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, **27** To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. **28** And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. **29** And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. **30** And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. **31** And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. **32** He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: **33** And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. **34** Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? **35** And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. **36** And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. **37** For with God nothing shall be impossible. **38** And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.” (Luk 1:26-38)

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

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



How Can I Benefit From Confession?

By His Grace Bishop Mettaous

Bishop of Saint Mary Monastery, El Soryan

The meeting of the son with his spiritual father is the true Christian discipleship, which prepares the believer for the spiritual graces that help him achieve quiet and continuous growth in his life. Holy Communion is one of those spiritual graces, which makes a person worthy of a life of discipleship.

When the Lord Jesus Christ, glory be to Him, instituted the Last Supper in the Upper Room in Zion, He gave His Body and Blood to His disciples only. Therefore, only those who are disciples should partake of the Holy Sacraments; that is, only those who have a father of confession and a spiritual guide from among the clergy. Thus, one becomes the priest's disciple and learns spiritual economy and the Christian virtues from him.

During the waiting period before you go in for confession to your father of confession, occupy yourself with some spiritual readings from a book that you get with you in order to increase your spiritual fervor, to keep yourself from evil thoughts and from the attacks of Satan who tries hard at that moment to prevent you from confessing and, subsequently, from taking Holy Communion. When your turn comes, enter with reverence and greet your father with respect, kissing his hand and the cross. Sit quietly and know well that you sit as one accused before the judge, no matter what your position or status may be. Be prepared to make your confession, whether this preparation is done mentally or on a piece of paper that you have with you and which contains what you want to confess as well as the questions you want to ask your father. Church history tells us that one of the Patriarchs would sit on the ground when he was confessing to his father of confession and when the latter said to him apologetically, "Sit beside me, Father," the patriarch would insist on sitting humbly and submissively on the ground, saying: "You now represent God and in your hands is the authority to forgive my sins. Allow me to feel that I am a defendant before the judge who has the power to acquit me."

Confess your sins and errors in detail, whether they are in your mind or on the paper and be careful not to hide anything no matter how ugly or embarrassing it is, keeping in mind the advice of the apostle: "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1Jn. 1: 9). Do not blame others or your circumstances and justify yourself of wrongdoing, remembering what the apostle said: "*If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us*" (1Jn. 1: 10).

Confess all you know of your failings, recalling what the prophet said: "*Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord*" (Lam. 2:19). The prophet

mentions water in particular, for water does not leave any trace or odor after it is poured from the vessel in contrast to oil which inevitably leaves some remains in the vessel no matter how thoroughly you pour it, and in contrast to vinegar which leaves an odor in the vessel after it is poured out. Therefore, your confessions should be a total outpouring of your sins before God in the presence of the priest so that no trace or odor of sin is left within your heart. Know that the pouring out of your sins in confession is done before God, "before the face of the Lord" and not before a human being because the Holy Spirit is present to hear and forgive.

The Holy Bible tells us this story: When the people of Israel entered Jericho, the Lord warned them and forbade them to take anything, but Achan, the son of Carmi, found some valuables and stole them. The anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel and they were defeated by the small town of Ai. When Joshua asked the Lord about the reason for this unexpected defeat, the Lord said: *"There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you"* (Jos. 7:13). So Joshua fetched Achan son of Carmi and ordered him to confess to the Lord before him (Joshua) saying: *"My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me"* (Jos. 7: 19). *And so Achan son of Carmi confessed before the Lord in the presence of Joshua son of Nun. Know that you are in the presence of the spiritual physician who will heal you of all your sins and weaknesses, recalling the apostle's advice: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed"* (James 5:16). The psalmist said: *"I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin"* (Ps. 32: 5). Solomon said: *"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy"* (Pr. 28:13). The Lord encourages you to confess saying: *"Put Me in remembrance; let us contend together; state your case that you may be acquitted"* (Is. 43:26).

Repentance is a second baptism; its action is strong and its effect is great. Listen to what St. Athanasius, the Apostolic, says: "Just as the one who is baptized by a priest is enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, so is the one who confesses his sins to the priest granted forgiveness through the grace of Christ.

Some people believe it is enough if they tell the father of confession some of their sins during the readings of the Liturgy "the Pauline epistles....". The problem with this method is that the time is very limited; especially if the priest is serving the Liturgy alone and there is no other priest in the church. Because of the lack of time, the penitent cannot confess all his sins and the priest cannot listen with concentration and give necessary advice, good solutions, or useful exercises. Moreover, the climate is not appropriate to the sacredness of this holy sacrament.

Even worse, some people do not go for confession and in spite of this awful shortcoming in the care of their souls, they partake of Holy Eucharist. All they do is that they ask the priest to give them absolution just before Holy Eucharist. Unfortunately, some priests respond to these people and do grant them absolution without knowing anything about them or even asking them some basic questions. After they get the absolution, they feel relieved and their consciences are drugged. They partake of the sacraments without repentance or worthiness and so add a new sin to their other sins and incur a greater judgment.

What I ask now is: what is the use of absolution if it is not preceded by confession? Is it a magic formula that forgives and removes sins that the person has not confessed to, revealed, or exposed before God in the presence of the priest, the steward of God's sacraments?

There is another very strange and widespread phenomenon in our churches. Some people who have confessed their sins, are prepared for Holy Eucharist, attend the Liturgy from the beginning and attend all the ritual absolutions, might ask the priest, before the Holy Eucharist for a special absolution. Why? I wish the priests would draw the people's attention to this prevalent error.

Know dear reader, that if you come to church after the gospel is read, you have no right to partake of the Eucharist as the church rites teach us. However: if you come between Matins with its absolution and the reading of the gospel; and if you've confessed and are prepared to take the Holy Eucharist, do not request a special absolution. This is for the following reasons:

1. You have confessed and are prepared and have received the absolution at the end of your personal confession.
2. The priest will grant a general absolution after the Fraction prayer of division. You will attend these absolutions and will offer repentance and contrition with the whole church at that time.

Therefore, you do not need a special absolution, which everybody is in the habit of asking the priest for separately, as though it were an official permission to partake of Holy Communion. This wrong procedure on the part of the congregation harasses the priests and affects their performance of the liturgy in the correct way.



St. Andrew the Apostle, the Brother of St. Peter.

On the fourth day of the blessed month of Kiahk, St. Andrew the Apostle, the brother of St. Peter, was martyred. He was chosen to go to the city of Lydd and to Kurdistan. He entered the city of Lydd, where most of its people had believed at the hands of St. Peter. His disciple, Philemon, who had a sweet voice and was a good reader, accompanied him. St. Andrew commanded Philemon to go up to the pulpit and read.

When the priests of the idols heard of the arrival of St. Andrew the Apostle, they took their spears and went to the church. They stood outside the church to hear if he was cursing their gods or not. They heard Philemon reading the words of David the Prophet, "*Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak: eyes they have but they do not see: They have ears, but they do not hear: noses they have, but they do not smell: They have hands, but they do not handle: feet they have, but they do not walk: nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them*" (Psalm 115:4-8).

Their hearts rejoiced because of his sweet voice and their emotions mellowed. They entered the church and bowed down at the feet of St. Andrew the Apostle. He preached to them and they believed in the Lord Christ. Then he baptized them with the rest of those who worshipped idols. St. Andrew the Apostle then left them and went to Kurdistan and to the cities of Aksis, Aregnas and Henefores, to preach there.

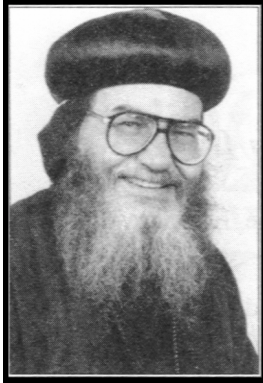
He also went with St. Bartholomew to the city of Azrinus. Its people were wicked and did not know God. They went on preaching and teaching them until they lead many of them to the knowledge of God, because of the signs and wonders they performed before them. Those who did not believe plotted against him. They sent for him so that when he arrived, they would attack him and kill him. When their messengers came to St. Andrew and heard his sincere teachings and saw his shining face, they believed in our Lord Christ and did not return to those who had sent them. The unbelievers decided to go to him and burn him. When they gathered around him to do what they had intended, the apostle prayed to the Lord, and immediately fire came down from heaven and surrounded them. They were terrified and believed.

The report of St. Andrew the Apostle was heard throughout all these countries and many believed in the Lord. Nevertheless, the priests of the idols did not

cease looking for him in order to kill him. Afterwards, they gathered and went to him; they bound him and beat him severely. After they dragged him around the city naked, they cast him into prison, so that they might crucify him the following day. Their custom was to stone those who were to be killed by crucifixion. The apostle spent his night praying to God. The Lord Christ appeared to him and strengthened him saying, "Do not fear or worry for the time of your departure from this world is near." He gave him peace and disappeared. St. Andrew's soul rejoiced for what he saw.

On the next day, they hung him on a tree and stoned him until he departed. Certain believers came and took his holy body and laid it with great honor in a private grave. Many signs and wonders were made manifest from his body.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen



Coptic youth ask **His Grace Bishop Moussa**

“ From the youth Bishopric web site”

Question: I have tried to talk to my non-Christian friends about God, but they never seem interested. What can I do?

His Grace Bishop Moussa: It is better to talk to them through your example and not through words. If you are holy, praying for them and genuinely like and care for them, a time will come for talking to them. But first you must start by being a good example and then the Lord will open the door for them, on a certain day and in a certain way.

Question: What is the church's viewpoint on certain haircuts?

His Grace Bishop Moussa: The church wants to cut the sins from your heart and mind and not the hairs of your head. But if you want to be characterized, it is more preferable to be characterized and distinguished by your personality, rather than by a certain haircut.

Question: I will only go to confession once I give up my particular sin. Is that okay?

His Grace Bishop Moussa: NO! You must go to confession, simply because you are always going to commit this particular sin and new sins. Please confess regularly, and never be discouraged when you repeat your sins, because through confessing, you will actually be improving, for the number of sins you commit will decrease. PLEASE, NEVER STOP CONFESSING!

Archangel Michael church
Appreciation Dinner 2001



We were blessed by the presence
of His Grace Bishop Macarius



*Hail, thou that art highly favoured,
the Lord is with thee:
blessed art thou among women.*

(Luke 1:28)



**The 1st Baptism
at our church**

Fr. Mikhail Tobia baptizing
baby Myron Georgy.

CHURCH SERVICES
DECEMBER 2001

Fridays

-7:30 PM– 11 PM : Kiahk's Praise(7&4)

Saturdays

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

COPTIC FEASTS

December 4 Martydom of St. Philopater
Marcorious (Abu Sefien)

December 12 St. Mary's Entry into the
Jerusalem Sanctuary



The Congregation
of the Archangel Michael
church congratulates Fr.
Mikhail Tobia
on his 21th ordination's
anniversary

Starting Friday
December 7th
the church will hold
Kiahk's Praise(7&4)
every Friday from 7:30
PM to 11 PM.

New Year EVE.
Monday,
December 31, 2001

- 8:30 PM – 11:00 PM
New Year Celebration &
Aghapi

-11 PM– 3:30 AM
Midnight Praises

-3:30 AM– 6:00 AM
Divine Liturgy.



The church will have a two-days skiing trip on January 12,
2001. for further information please contact Mrs. L. Michail.