



ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
Archangel Michael Church
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**ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED**



**MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER**



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“**5** Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? **6** This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. **7** For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. **8** And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. **9** If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. **10** He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. **11** And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. **12** He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. **13** These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. **14** And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: **15** And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. **16** If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. **17** All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. **18** We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. **19** And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. **20** And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” (1John 5: 5-20)

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.

CHRIST CAME TO SPREAD

SPIRITUALITY OF LIFE

By His Holiness Pope Shenouda III



Best wishes on the beginning of the New Year and on the occasion of the Glorious Nativity. We wish you a holy life, steadfast faith and abiding in the Lord. We pray God to safeguard our dear country and all the Middle East and to give peace and prosperity here and everywhere.

On the Lord Christ's Nativity, we remember that He used to teach the people to live in the spirit, a virtuous life, not subjected to material leading to sins

and falls. He taught the people to aspire beyond the lusts and yearning of the flesh, which contradict with the nature and way of the spirit.

We all know that man is formed of the dust of the ground, and God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living being. This reminds us of some verses of poetry we wrote in the beginning of our interest in Arabic poetry. In these verses we concentrated on the creation of man from dust. The verses say: O dust of the earth, all people's ancestor as well as mine; you are my origin, you are older than Adam; you are my last abode when I lie in a grave at the end of my life.

Afterwards, having grown in spiritual knowledge and becoming aware of the sublimity of man's creation, we compiled some other verses that reflected this new vision. The verses say: I am not dust, nay, but in dust I have dwelt. I am not dust, nay, but a spirit from God's mouth. I'll return to God, to live where I first dwelt.

This is man; body and spirit. With beginners there is conflict between both; for the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh and these are contrary to one another (Gal. 5:17). With the spiritually mature, there is no such conflict between body and spirit, but a kind of perfection, each completing the other. In the spiritual person, the body submits to the spirit, and the spirit submits to God's Holy Spirit who leads the human spirit, which in turn leads the body! Thus, there is no duality, no conflict nor contradiction because man as a whole, body and spirit, takes one direction, a spiritual one.

The Lord Christ came to lead people to the spiritual way from all aspects. When the Samaritan woman asked Him whether worship should be in the Mountain of Samaria or in Jerusalem, He said to her, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:24). God wants us to worship Him in a spiritual way. Our prayers should be spiritual prayers and our fasting spiritual fasting. Even our behavior, our words and our movements, should have a spiritual mark. When we face problems, we should solve them in a spiritual way. The power of the spiritual person lies within, in the heart and the spirit. No outer

temptations or problems can affect such a person because the spirit lives in complete peace not shaken by any troubles, and in high sanctity not deviating by any lusts. Many are those who do their best to avoid any worldly temptations or influences. This is good, but it is better for them to have inner power in the spirit that makes them refuse every outer influence, however tempting that may be. They are not influenced by such temptations nor overcome by them, as such temptations are contradicting with their nature.

Take for example Joseph the Righteous. Sin was easy for him and was pressing, but he overcame because he was powerful within. His spirit was more powerful than any external temptation. In this way walks every noble person living in the spirit. Whenever stumbling blocks press on one from outside, one's virtuous spirit resists easily, flees and continues in victory. Would, that you become like that; that the truth in you be more powerful than the evil fighting you.

A person who is powerful in the spirit does not take the outer pressures as a plea for falling. If one is truly powerful, one will overcome, but the fault is in one's personal weakness. A person who is powerful in the spirit is always victorious, because if one controls and overcomes oneself internally, one will overcome external wars. The Lord Christ wanted our spirits to be virtuous, to seek holiness and perfection (relative perfection of course, because absolute perfection relates solely to God). Therefore the Lord commanded us, "Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Mt. 5:48). This is how a spiritual person should walk, not to be satisfied with the life of repentance against sin and evil fit for beginners, but to grow continually in the life of righteousness till one attains the farthest extent possible of perfection. In seeking perfection one should focus on the depth. In one's prayers, one should not care about the length or the frequency of the prayers, but rather for the depth, zeal, faith, love and awe accompanying the prayer. It is worth noting that the word "prayer" in Arabic has deeper significance than in many other languages. In Arabic the term is "salah" which means attachment to God.

The prayer of a spiritual person is composed of love, awe and faith, and the spirit is lifted to God. The prayer starts in the heart where it is translated into feelings and words. Even if one does not speak, the throbbing of the heart is a prayer, the pulse is a prayer and the emotion is a prayer. God tests the hearts and minds, hears this throbbing or pulse, receives one's emotions and feelings, and accepts this silent prayer. One might enter God's house, kneels or bows with the body, but the spirit is not bowing and the heart might be full of pride or arrogance. That is why the Lord Christ talked about "worship in spirit and truth." It is not true worship where the head touches the ground while the soul is walking happily with conceit and arrogance. In fasting, likewise, it is not sufficient that only the body fasts, but the spirit also should fast forsaking every sinful desire. Life in the spirit accompanies a person after death because the spirit does not die, whereas the actions of the body end at one's death. Would that we care for the work of the spirit, because it alone does persist and continue. The Lord Christ came to teach us how to live in the spirit and to make us know that faith and God's commandments are not mere formalities. When the body weakens or gets sick, we treat it medically. The spirit, likewise, should be treated. The spirit might get

sick and need spiritual physicians, i.e. spiritual guides and teachers. It might need medicine, which includes spiritual exercises, reproach, rebuking, disciplining, blaming... etc. To what extent, then, do we treat our spirits so that we might continue in the life of the spirit? If we do not treat the spirit, it will die, the same as the body.

The death of the body is the separation of the body from the spirit, whereas the death of the spirit is the separation of the spirit from God. This is called "spiritual death."

This spiritual death is mentioned by the Lord in His words to the angel of the church in Sardis, "You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead"(Rev. 3:1).

In the light of this contemplation, we should ask ourselves, are we really alive, in the true meaning of life, the life of the spirit? If we are really alive, let us work, for work is related to life.

Let us work for the sake of ourselves, that we might always be attached to God and long to do what pleases Him. Let us work for our community and do whatever we can for the whole society.

May the Lord God bless our dear country EGYPT, and all workers for it, under the leadership of President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak who is praised by all. May the Lord God safeguard him and every person faithful to this beloved country.

Best wishes to all of you.

The Departure of St. John Kama (Khame).

On the 25th day of the blessed month of Kiahk, departed the great Saint John Kama. He was from Shubramento of the region of Sa. His parents were God-fearing Christians and he was their only child.

They forced him to marry against his will. When he entered his wife's room, he stood, prayed for a long time, then came near the young girl and said to her, "My sister, you know that the world and all of its lusts will go away. Do you agree with me to keep our bodies pure and clean?" She answered and said, "My brother, the Lord's Name lives. This also is my desire and now the Lord has given me what my heart desires."

They mutually agreed to live together as brother and sister and to keep their virginity. When they slept, the angel of the Lord came and covered them with his wings. For their many virtues, God planted a vine for them, which grew up and covered their place of sleep. That was a sign of their purity and holiness, for what they did was above human nature, that two young people, a man and a woman, would sleep next to each other without being driven by the lust of the flesh. For who can come near a fire and not be burnt, unless it is God's divine power and care that keeps them and preserves them.

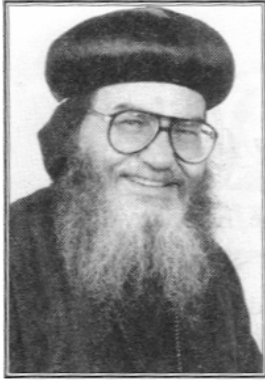
When their parents saw that they lived together for a long time without having any children, they thought that this was due to the fact that they were young. One day John said to his wife, "My sister, I desire to go into the wilderness to become a monk and I cannot do that without your permission." She gave him her permission and he placed her in one of the virgin's convents. There she became a virtuous nun and she performed many miracles, so they chose her to become the abbess of the convent.

As for St. John, when he left his town, the angel of the Lord appeared to him and guided him to the wilderness of Scetis (Sheheet). He went there and became a monk in the cell of Saint Da-rudi in the monastery of St. Macarius. He stayed with this saint learning piety from him until the saint departed. Then the angel of the Lord told him to go west of the monastery of St. John the Short and to build a cell for himself there. He went and did as the angel commanded him. Three hundred brethren gathered around him and became his disciples. They built a church and a house with a garden for themselves and Saint John Kama taught them how to pray and the use of the Psalmody (Epsalmodia).

One night, St. Athanasius the Apostolic appeared to them while they were singing the song of the three young men. St. Athanasius revealed many mysteries to him. Another time, St. Mary appeared to him and told him, "This is my dwelling forever, and I shall be with them as I have been with you and this monastery will be named after me." The church of the monastery was named after the Virgin St. Mary.

Some of the monks of Upper Egypt desired to be under the guidance of St. John Kama and they asked him to come to see them. He called a brother named Shenouda and gave him the responsibility of caring for the brethren until his return. When he returned, he found that he performed the task perfectly. When St. John Kama completed his course, he departed in peace.

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: Can a priest tell others about a sin I confessed?

His Grace Bishop Moussa: NEVER! I assure you that a priest is not allowed to tell your secrets to anyone - this is just your imagination, because sins are more or less the same, especially in certain stages of life. Your secrets and your confessions are guaranteed, for if the priest mentions your sins to others, he would in fact be committing spiritual suicide. Please do not hesitate to confess, for these thoughts are just a war against confession from Satan.

Question: What is your opinion on near death experiences?

His Grace Bishop Moussa: There is a book called "Life After Life" which tells of the experiences of people who clinically die and then come back to life. They mention such things as traveling through tunnels and seeing bright lights and so on. We do not believe in the details of this book, but these experiences would definitely give the world an idea that there is another life after this life and this is a good support for Christianity.

Question: What is the church's view on birth control within marriage?

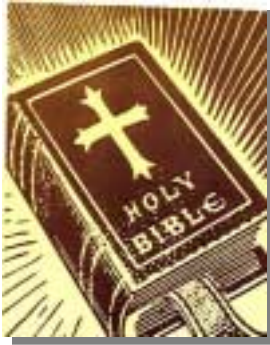
His Grace Bishop Moussa: The church never stands against birth control within marriage as long as the means of achieving this purpose are not killing the embryo or hurting the wife or the husband.

Short Story



Hangs His Farageia on A Ray of the Sun

Anba Abraam, the Bishop of Fayoum received furniture for the episcopate. He refused to use it, and asked the servant to put it in storage. Then a woman came to him complaining that her daughter's engagement is not going to result in a wedding, because they don't have money to buy furniture for her and her future husband. Anba Abraam told the servant to show her the new furniture and let her take what she needed. Some of the people complained to Pope Kyrillos V about having given away the furniture. Afterwards, there was a collection to build a new house of the episcopate. Anba Abraam gave that money also to the poor and needy. There went another complaint. The Pope summoned for him and he went without delay. Anba Abraam was an old man with poor eyesight. When he arrived, he was rushed in to see the Pope in his office. It was a summer afternoon and there was a ray from the sun that shone through a hole in the shade of a window. Anba Abraam mistook this for a rope (stringing up a rope to hang clothing on was a habit in those days). Anba Abraam threw his overcoat (faragiya) on it and it stayed there. The Pope saw how the Lord works wonders to not embarrass this saint on earth. The Pope changed the purpose of the call and instead inquired about his health and gave him 15,000 Egyptian Pounds to build a new house for the episcopate. When the people came back to see the Pope, he scolded them for their lack of faith, concluding: "How can I argue with a man of God who was able to hang his coat on a ray of the sun." The new house of the episcopate was not built in Anba Abraam's life. The money was used to help the poor.



BIBLE STUDY

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO PHILEMON

BY: CHRISTINE MICHAEL

This epistle of Saint Paul to a slave owner, Philemon is his petition that his former slave, Onesimus, no longer be looked down upon as a runaway slave, but instead as a “beloved brother.” However, this would require something called *forgiveness*, which the slave owners of that time didn’t know of or understand. Therefore, St. Paul brought forth his encouragement to forgive others through his letter to Philemon, which went against what the culture that Philemon followed, a new Christian life of forgiveness, service, suffering, and love for all people.

The letter of St. Paul to Philemon is said to be written at the time of his first imprisonment in Rome, which is around 60 AD, when he wrote other letters in addition to this one. The greeting of the letter introduces himself as “Paul, a prisoner of Christ” and is addressed to Philemon, the slave owner who probably lived in Colossi, a Roman province of Asia Minor. Philemon was converted to Christianity with Saint Paul’s ministry at Ephesus. The background information about the story of Philemon and Onesimus was that Onesimus the slave had ran away and stolen something from his master. The slave then fled to Rome and met up with Paul who converted him to Christianity. After serving Paul while in prison, he went back to Philemon where he wanted forgiveness from his owner. Therefore, this led St. Paul to write a letter to Philemon pleading for the cause of Onesimus. In the end, no one knows what happened to Onesimus.

The letter of Saint Paul to Philemon is not to teach doctrine, but to bring together principles of salvation, substitution, imputation, and redemption. The relationship between Paul and Onesimus symbolizes the relationship between us and Christ in that “we were once slaves to sin, but Christ redeemed us from our awful fate of death. The letter, in essence, is a genuine plea for Christian love that would change the cruelty of the culture of that time. Paul offers to pay Onesimus’ debt by writing this letter and through this exemplifies true Christian love.

From The Nelson study Bible: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville

Glory to God in the highest, and on
earth peace, good will toward men.

(Luke 2:14)

Christmas Service:

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

Christmas Party:

Sunday school Christmas party will be held on Saturday the 19th From 12:00 to 4:00 PM.

Feast of the Epiphany:

The Divine Liturgy celebrating Christ's Epiphany will be held on Friday's 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.

CHURCH SERVICES
JANUARY 2002

FRIDAYS

-7:30 PM-8:30 PM

Hymns Lesson

-8:30PM-10:00PM

Arabic Bible Study

Arabic Prayer Meeting

-8:30PM-11:00PM

Midnight Praises

Midnight Prayers

SATURDAYS

-8:30AM-11:30AM:

Divine Liturgy

-11:30AM-1:00PM:

Sunday School &

Youth group meeting

COPTIC FEASTS

January 7	Nativity
January 9	The Maryrdom 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