



ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

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

MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER

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“**10** And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. **11** And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. **12** And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. **13** And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side. **14** Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. **15** And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. **16** And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. **17** And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? **18** Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? **19** When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. **20** And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. **21** And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?” (Mark 8: 10-21)

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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 **newsletter@archangelmichaelchurch.net**

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INCENSE

His Grace Bishop Youssef
Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese
of the Southern United States



For it is written, "From the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My Name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My Name, and a pure offering; for My Name shall be great among the Nations, said the Lord God of Hosts (Malachi 1:11)."

This prophecy is related to the Church of the New Testament as evidenced by:

1. The Jews were only allowed to offer incense in the Temple. Deuteronomy states, "take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; but in the place which the Lord chooses, in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you (12:13-14)." In Malachi's prophecy, he specifically states, "incense shall be offered in every place."

2. Only after Christianity, was the Lord's Name exalted. In Malachi's prophecy the Lord said, "incense shall be offered to My Name, for My Name shall be great among the Nations."

Malachi's prophecy foretells the future as is the general rule regarding "prophecies." Jews offered incense thousands of years before Malachi's prophecy. Therefore this supports the other evidence of this prophecy being directed toward the Christian Church and not the Jews.

The offering of incense is documented in the Book of Revelations:

1. "And the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints (Revelations 5:8)."

2. "Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand (Revelations 8:3-4)."

Symbolism of Incense:

First, incense is a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is symbolic of His Priesthood and for this reason the Wise Men gave Him frankincense. With its sweet odor, the incense is similar to the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ during His life on earth. The Song of Solomon tells us, "Because of the fragrance of Your good ointments, Your Name is ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love you (1:3)."

The symbol of the incense as related to the Lord Jesus Christ is apparent in the Coptic Church's rites and hymns. For example, in the hymn of Tishori we say, "The golden censor is the Virgin; her aroma is our Savior." Also while the priest says in the Divine Liturgy "was incarnate and became man" he puts incense in the censor symbolizing the coming down of the Lord Jesus Christ (the incense) in the Virgin's womb (the censor).

Incense has a second symbolism. It is of the Church. In Song of Solomon 3:6 we read, "Who is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchants' fragrant powders?" St Paul uses this symbolism when making this statement; "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing (II Corinthians 2:14-15)."

Characteristics of Incense:

1. Carries prayers, offerings and confessions bringing them to the throne of God (Revelations 5:8 and 8:3-4).
2. Always ascends up, therefore it reminds us of Heaven. It is a reminder that our lives should be directed upward towards eternity.
3. Forms clouds when offered. "Then he shall take a censor full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die (Leviticus 16:12-13)."

The cloud is a sign for the presence of the Lord. "The Lord said He would dwell in the dark cloud (I Kings 8:12)." The clouds further remind us of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30)."

Often those unfamiliar with the offering of incense, question its use related to worship in the Coptic Church. Its existence from Jewish times to the New Testament Church is well documented Biblically. As a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a symbol of the Church, and in reference to prayer, the use of incense in worship is indisputable. It is found in every revelation of the worship of God in Heaven (Exodus 30:1-8, Matthew 2:9-11, and Revelations 5:8).

Short Story

The Three Trees

Selected By: Hany Moussa

Once there were three trees on a hill in the woods. They were discussing their hopes and dreams when the first tree said, "Someday I hope to be a treasure chest. I could be filled with gold, silver and precious gems. I could be decorated with intricate carving and everyone would see the beauty."

Then the second tree said, "Someday I will be a mighty ship. I will take kings and queens across the waters and sail to the corners of the world. Everyone will feel safe in me because of the strength of my hull."

Finally the third tree said, "I want to grow to be the tallest and straightest tree in the forest. People will see me on top of the hill and look up to my branches, and think of the heavens and God and how close to them I am reaching. I will be the greatest tree of all time and people will always remember me."



After a few years of praying that their dreams would come true, a group of woodsmen came upon the trees. When one came to the first tree he said, "This looks like a strong tree, I think I should be able to sell the wood to a carpenter," and he began cutting it down. The tree was happy, because he knew that the carpenter would make him into a treasure chest.

At the second tree the woodsman said, "This looks like a strong tree, I should be able to sell it to the shipyard." The second tree was happy because he knew he was on his way to becoming a mighty ship.

When the woodsmen came upon the third tree, the tree was frightened because he knew that if they cut him down his dreams would not come true. One of the woodsmen said, "I don't need anything special from my tree, I'll take this one," and he cut it down.

When the first tree arrived at the carpenters, he was made into a feed box for animals. He was then placed in a barn and filled with hay. This was not at all what he had prayed for. The second tree was cut and made into a small fishing boat. His dreams of being a mighty ship and carrying kings had come to an end. The third tree was cut into large pieces and left alone in the dark. The years went by and the trees forgot about their dreams.

Then one day, a man and woman came to the barn. She gave birth and they placed the baby in the hay in the feed box that was made from the first tree. The man wished that he could have made a crib for the baby, but this manger would have to do. The tree could feel the importance of this event and knew that it had held the greatest treasure of all time.

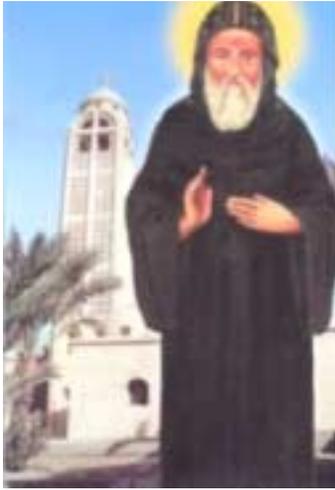
Years later, a group of men got in the fishing boat made from the second tree. One of them was tired and went to sleep. While they were out on the water, a great storm arose and the tree didn't think it was strong enough to keep the men safe. The men woke the sleeping man and He stood and said "Peace" and the storm stopped. At this time, the tree knew that it had carried the King of Kings in its boat.

Finally, someone came and got the third tree. It was carried through the streets as the people mocked the man who was carrying it. When they came to a stop, the man was nailed to the tree and raised in the air to die at the top of a hill. When Sunday came, the tree came to realize that it was strong enough to stand at the top of the hill and be as close to God as was possible because Jesus had been crucified on it.

My friend, always remember that, when things don't seem to be going your way, always know that God has a plan for you. If you place your trust in Him, He will give you great gifts. We don't always know what God's plans are for us. We just know that His ways are not our ways, but His ways are always best.

SAINT SAMUEL THE CONFESSOR

Selected By: Hany Moussa



Born at the village of Dakluba (Mileeg-El Nasara) Shebeen-El-Kom in the year 597 AD, became a monk in 615 in the desert of Makarios. He also became a disciple of St. Agathon for 16 years and then he went to the Hill of Kalamoun where he passed away in 693 AD.

The daring saint refused the decision of the council of Chalcedon and received severe persecutions until his right eye was lost, hence called the Confessor.

The Barber captured him and he spent three years in slavery. They tried severely to force him to worship their idols, but he refused. Very chaste, they put him in chains with a young girl and left him to guard camels day and night, but he sustained his purity in the grace of God. As result of the miracles and his pure Christian life, many Barber became Christians.

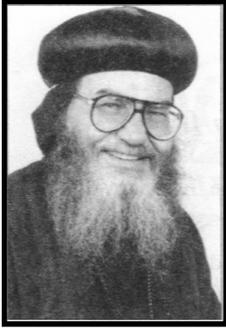
St. Mary the Virgin appeared to him at Kalamoun valley, after his return from deportation, blessed him and promised to help him and all his monks.

Among the Saints of his monastery are: St. Istos, St. Abollo, St. Misaeel, St. Stephen and St. Ghalion the anchorites. The monastery building is traced back to the third century during the Diocletian rule, 284-305.

Certain documents state that St. Anthony visited the area of the monastery.

Monastic life flourished at Kalamoun under St. Samuel and contained over 200 monks and 12 churches.

May his prayers be with us and glory be to God forever. Amen



Coptic youth ask **His Grace Bishop Moussa**

“ From the youth Bishopric web site”

Question: What should I do when I constantly do the same sins over again?

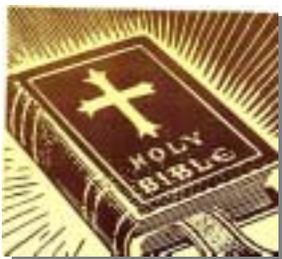
Bishop Moussa’s Answer: Because we are not infallible, it is expected that we may commit the same sins again, especially during certain stages of life. But you must always struggle against this sin by nourishing yourself spiritually in order to be victorious and you must confess your sins to the priest so that he may help you overcome this sin by praying for you and giving you guidance.

Question: Monastics dedicate all their time to prayer, but in the world there is not much time for prayer. What can we do?

Bishop Moussa’s Answers: In the world, it is not a matter of calculation, but of depth. As a monk, I may pray for five hours to take the blessing, but for one living in the world, they may only need to pray for five minutes for God to bless them. This is because there is limited time as a result of responsibilities and so on. Therefore, depth is the measure and not length of time.

Question: We hear in stories of the Wilderness Fathers that they may go without Holy Communion for a long time, even though our church says that 40 days without Holy Communion makes one spiritually dead. So what becomes of these fathers?

Bishop Moussa’s Answers: For these Desert Fathers, the rule would surely differ because they live in complete solitude for long periods of time. Some of these fathers may have a small church inside their cave and occasionally, other desert fathers gather together and celebrate the Holy Liturgy. Yes, we must take Holy Communion regularly so that we may abide in the Lord. However, these wilderness fathers are abiding constantly in the Lord, day and night, through prayer, praises, Bible reading, fasting, and contemplation, so this will definitely compensate them.



Jonah' S fast

By: Joseph Michael

The three days of Jonah's fast, or to better correctly term, the Fast of Nineveh, commemorates the repentance of the Ninevites after the visit and preaching of Jonah the prophet. The three days of the Fast refers to the time spent by Jonah in the belly of the great fish (man times erroneously thought of as a whale); a symbol of Christ, Who was in the tomb for three days before His Holy Resurrection.

The Fast begins on the Monday, two weeks before the start of Great Lent. Strict abstinence and fasting is observed from Monday to Wednesday. The FEAST of Nineveh is celebrated on Thursday. The hymns of the fast are chanted in the tune of the weekdays of Great Lent. The hymns of the Feast day, for the most part, are the same as the annual hymns.

The rites of the fast are also similar to the weekdays of the Great Lent. Vespers are not prayed during this period. After the priest prays, "God have mercy on us" during the Matins prayers, the Sanctuary curtain is closed, the candles are extinguished, the lights turned off, and the prophecies of the day are read. The third, sixth, ninth, eleventh, and twelfth hours of the Agpeya are prayed before the Offering of the Lamb on the three fasting days. Aspasmos hymns are not chanted and the cymbals are not used, as well.

It is the recommendation of our Fathers, that we as Christians, read the Book of Jonah during the fast, and to meditate and contemplate its doctrine. This Book challenges God's people not to exalt themselves over others. The Lord, the great King, is free to bless and be gracious to all the nations of the earth. But Jonah's view of God was too restrictive. He believed that God was the Creator of everything, but that He was compassionate only toward the elect of Israel. Jonah believed that's since God had chosen Israel from among the wicked nations, He had to show mercy to Israel, even if the people were rebellious. Jonah had failed to appreciate that the Lord may be equally forbearing with other nations as He was with Israel. The Book of Jonah affirms God's freedom, sovereignty, and power. Human misconceptions can never bind Him.

Jonah's story contains a strong warning to all godly people. The elect may miss the blessing of seeing God's grace extended outside their own lives because of the human imposed limitations, they foresee, as being on God. While Jonah was praying anxiously for his personal deliverance, the sailors had already been experiencing the Love of God for three days. Likewise, the people of Nineveh who repented of their sins rejoiced that the coming judgment had passed. Jonah, however, was miserable. As we laugh at him, we may need to wince at ourselves. Jonah's silly sin is no laughing matter. We are condemned along with him if we share in his faulty thinking and unjust limitations on a limitless God.

From: The Nelson Study Bible: NKJV & The English Deacon's Service Book compiled by Anthony Aboseif

From The Nelson study Bible: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville

**Labour not for the meat which perisheth,
but for that meat which endureth
unto everlasting life**

(John 6:27)

**Church General
Meeting
Friday
February 15th**

**Fr. Bishoy Dimitrious,
Fr. Mikhail Tobia and
Fr. Antonious Tanious
will joint us for Vesper
prayers at 8:00 PM
and a general meeting
at 8:30 PM**

All are invited

**Church Services
February 2002**

Fridays

-7:30 PM-8:30 PM

Hymms 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

February 9 ——— Depatrure of St. Paul the first Anchorite

February 15 ——— Presentation of the Lord into the Temple

February 25 ——— The first day of Jonah's fast

February 28 ——— Jonah's feast