

# ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

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**MONTHLY  
NEWSLETTER**



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“ 26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets. 27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, 28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which spitefully use you. 29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. 30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. 31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. 32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. 33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. 36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. 37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: 38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

( Luke 6: 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](mailto:archangelletter@netscape.net)**

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# The Holy Great Fast and Spiritual Discipline

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



*"The true fast is that in which sins, anger, tongue and instincts are under control."*

(St Basil the Great)

The Holy Great Fast is often referred to as "The Spring of Our Spiritual Life." Spring being the most beautiful season of the year and a time of spiritual renewal.

The 55 days of the Holy Great Fast are considered the most holy days of fasting of the Coptic Church. Fifty days include the 40 days which were fasted by the Lord Himself, the Passion Week, plus the first initial week to spiritually prepare us for this great season of renewal. We fast to commemorate His sufferings on the Holy Cross, for spiritual discipline and our salvation. Much has been written regarding foods associated with fasting. Yet, fasting is not only abstaining from certain foods. It is a time for us to have our hearts filled with the Holy Spirit. How can our hearts be filled with the Holy Spirit and guarded against all sin?

When we fast, we exercise self-control. Fasting provides an occasion to enrich the soul and elevate it to a higher level of spiritual discipline. St Isaac said, *"Having control of what we say is better than having control over our bodies, and guarding our hearts against sin is best of all."*

St. John Cassian wrote, *"We should not be confident that the outside fasting of food is enough alone for the purity of the heart and body, unless it is accompanied by the fasting of the soul."* He further said that, *"Fasting is an important means which leads to purity of heart and not as a goal in itself."*

Fasting of the soul is spiritual discipline. The importance of spiritual discipline can be found in the Holy Book of Proverbs 25:28, ***"Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control."*** This tells us that a man without self-control and discipline is defenseless and disgraced.

St. Paul believed that spiritual discipline prepared a Christian to exercise faith and enter the Kingdom of God:

***"Do you know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus not with uncertainty. Thus I fight not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it under subjection, lest, when I***

***have preached to others, I myself should not become disqualified."***

(I Corinthians 9: 24-27)

Self-control incorporates dominance over desires including the physical desires of food and sex. Psychological desires of fame and love of praise must also be quenched. Periodic ascetic practices are good within marriage. This includes temporary abstinence from sexual relations for the sake of prayer during fasting. The Holy Book of I Corinthians states, "***Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.***"

It has often been said that one has reached the pinnacle of spiritual success as soon as one becomes uninterested in money, compliments, or publicity and fame. "***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility considers others better than yourselves.***" (Philippians 2:3) Spiritual discipline must always be accompanied with spiritual knowledge. This type of knowledge is not primarily mental but spiritual in nature and personal. It is experienced with faith, exercise, control and will bear good fruits in the Lord Jesus Christ.

***"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."*** (II Peter 1: 5-8)

During this Great Holy Fast let us all further develop our need for spiritual discipline. The Holy Book of Wisdom of Solomon 8:7 tells us, "***Do you love justice? All the virtues are a result of Wisdom's work: justice and courage, self-control and understanding. Life can offer us nothing more valuable than these.***"

To develop self-control during this Holy Great Fast it is recommended that one begin with:

A) Love of Godliness and Righteousness (St Felix says, "*When any person sets on the way of righteous, he starts with fasting, for without asceticism all other virtues like prayer, thoughts, and mind are not pure, and the inner man cannot be renewed.*")

B) Clear Goals (Our Lord Jesus Christ warns us, "***Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life.***" Luke 21:34)

C) Brotherly Kindness ("***And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.***" Acts 24:16)

D) Desire for diligent practice of spiritual exercises (St Paul said, "***I***

**keep under my body and bring it into subjection.**" I Corinthians 9:27. Spiritual exercises capture our bodies and senses by not giving into the things desired. Spiritual discipline is training to the body and senses, which leads to purity of the soul.)

**"I would have you learn this great fact: that a life of doing right is the wisest life there is. If you live that kind of life, you'll not limp or stumble as you run." (Proverbs 4:11-12)**

## ***EGYPT: Shock Acquittals at El Kosheh Retrial***

In a repeat of an earlier verdict, the Sohag Criminal Court in Egypt yesterday acquitted nearly all 96 suspects charged with atrocities in connection with violence which broke out in the village of El Kosheh in January 2000, leaving 21 Christians and a Muslim dead.

As in the previous February 2001 ruling, only four men received sentences. Mayez Amin Abdel Rahim was sentenced to 15 years for the killing of the sole Muslim victim, an increase of 5 years from the previous verdict. The other three men, all Muslims, received two-year and one-year sentences for setting alight a truck.

The acquittals have come as a deep disappointment to Egypt's Christian minority, who had hoped to see justice done at the retrial.

Coptic Bishop Wissa of Baliana Diocese, which includes El Kosheh, articulated the dismay of many in the Christian community. He told CSW: 'If those accused are really innocent, where are the real killers? The 21 Christians who were so brutally murdered in January 2000 did not kill themselves.' The Bishop added: 'If the perpetrators of the murders are allowed to walk free, it will be seen as a green light to kill Christians.'

Mamdouh Nakhla, a lawyer at the Court of Cassation and General Manager of AlKalema Human Rights Centre in Cairo, spoke of police negligence and complicity during the whole affair, from the outbreak of violence itself to withholding vital evidence during the trials. He told CSW: 'The killings occurred 48 hours after the police had imposed a curfew and 10,000 policemen were stationed in and around El Kosheh at the time. Moreover, during the trials, the police suppressed vital evidence such as fingerprints and suspected murder weapons.'

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said: 'We are shocked and dismayed at the latest turn of events. It is unacceptable for such brutality to go unpunished. We stand with the Christian community of Egypt in calling for the murderers of the 21 Christians to be found and brought to justice'

## Short Story

### CALLER ID



### Isn't it amazing how God works in our lives!

On a Saturday night several weeks ago, this pastor was working late, and decided to call his wife before he left for home. It was about 10:00 PM, but his wife didn't answer the phone. The pastor let it ring many times. He thought it was odd that she didn't answer, but decided to wrap up a few things and try again in a few minutes.

When he tried again she answered right away. He asked her why she hadn't answered before, and she said that it hadn't rung at their house. They brushed it off as a fluke and went on their merry ways.

The following Monday, the pastor received a call at the church office, which was the phone that he'd used that Saturday night. The man that he spoke with wanted to know why he'd called on Saturday night. The pastor couldn't figure out what the man was talking about. Then the man said, "It rang and rang, but I didn't answer."

The pastor remembered the mishap and apologized for disturbing him, explaining that he'd intended to call his wife. The man said, "That's, OK. Let me tell you my story.

You see, I was planning to commit suicide on Saturday night, but before I did, I prayed, "God if you're there, and you don't want me to do this, give me a sign now." At that point my phone started to ring. I looked at the caller ID, and it said, 'Almighty God.' I was afraid to answer!"

The reason why it showed on the man's caller ID that the call came from "Almighty God" is because the church that the pastor attends is called Almighty God Tabernacle!!

## Martyrdom of St. Matthias, the apostle



On the eighth day of the blessed month of Baramhat, St. Matthias the Apostle was martyred about 63 A.D. He was born in Bethlehem, followed the apostles and was chosen in place of Judas Iscariot in the upper room on the Mount of Zion. Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (who numbered about 120), and said, 'Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David con-

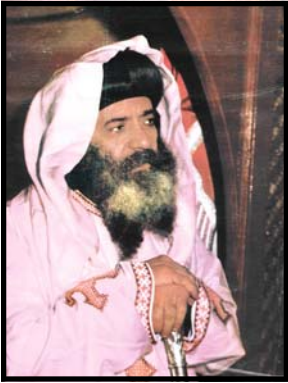
cerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; 'for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.' (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.) 'For it is written in the book of Psalms: 'Let his habitation be desolate, and let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.' 'Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 'beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.' And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, 'You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen 'to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.' And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:15-26) Afterwards he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and went to preach the Gospel until he came to the country of cannibals. The custom of those people was whenever they seized a stranger, they put him in prison for thirty days feeding him grass, then they bring him out and eat him. When St. Matthias came to them and preached among them the message of love they seized him, plucked out his eyes and put him in prison. Before the thirty days were over God sent to him Andrew the Apostle and his disciple. They came to the prison and saw the prisoners and what abominable things the

people of the city did to them. Satan inspired the people of the city to seize them also and kill them. When they were about to seize them, the two Saints prayed to the Lord, and a stream of water flowed from under one of the pillar of the prison. The water flowed out into the city, and rose up until it reached the necks of the people. When the people of the city gave up all hope of saving their lives, they came to the apostles, and wept before them confessing their sins. The apostles told them 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.' They all believed and they released St. Matthias. St. Matthias, along with St. Andrew and his disciple taught them the mystery of the Incarnation of the Lord Christ. The Apostles prayed and entreated God who made the water to cease then they baptized them in the Name of the Holy Trinity. They also prayed to The Lord Christ who removed from them their barbaric nature. The Apostles appointed over them bishops and priests. They tarried with them for a while during which they instructed them and confirmed them in the faith, then they left. The people of the city entreated them to come back to them speedily. St. Matthias went to the city of Damascus and preached there in the name of the Lord Christ. The people of the city became angry so they took him and laid him upon an iron bed, they lighted a fire under it, which did not harm him, but his face was shining with light like the sun. They marveled exceedingly and they all believed on the Lord Christ through St. Matthias the Apostle who baptized them and appointed priests for them. He tarried many days with them confirming them in the faith. Afterward he departed in peace in one of the city of the Jews called Falawon (Pilawon) where his body was laid.

May his prayers be with us. Amen.







## **Coptic People ask His Holiness Pope Shenouda III**

### **Question:**

**How can the saying of the Bible that God created the world in six days coincide with the opinion of the geologists that the age of the earth is thousands even millions of years?**

### **His Holiness Pope Shenouda III answers:**

**The days of creation are not solar days as our days now.** The day of creation is a period of time, not known how long, which could have been a second or thousands or millions of years. This period was determined by the saying "so the evening and the morning were..."

The evidences for this are many, among which are:

- 1. The Solar day** is the period of time between the sunrise and its rising again or between the sunset and its setting again. **Since the sun was only created on the fourth day (Gen. 1:16-19) then the first four days were not solar days.**
- 2. As for the seventh day, the Bible did not state that it has ended.** The Bible did not say [so the evening and the morning were the seventh day], and thousands of years passed from Adam till now while this seventh day is still going on. Accordingly, the days of creation are not Solar days but unknown periods of time.
- 3. As a whole, the Bible said about all the creation and its six days:** *" This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens," (Gen. 2:4).*

**So the Bible summed up in the word (day) all the six days of creation...**

Let the geologists say then whatever they want about the age of the earth; for the Bible did not mention any age for the earth that may contradict the views of the geologists. The way the Lord looks to the measurement of time is explained by the apostle as follows: *"With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day "* (2Pet. 3:8).

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies,  
do good to them which hate you

(Luke 6:27)

## COPTIC FEASTS

**March 3 — Beginning of the Great Lent**

**March 8 --- Martyrdom of St. Polycarp Bishop of Smyrna**

**March 9 — Departure of Pope Cyril VI**

**March 19 — The Cross' Feast**

**March 26 --- Martyrdom of St. Sedhom Bishay of Dimiat**

## CHURCH SERVICES

### FRIDAYS

-7:30 PM-8:00 PM

English Prayer Meeting

-8:00PM-9:30PM

Arabic Bible Study

Arabic Prayer Meeting

-8:00PM-9:30PM

Midnight Praises

Midnight Prayers //

Hymns

### SATURDAYS

-8:00AM-11:30AM:

Divine Liturgy

-12 Noon-1:00PM:

Sunday School &

Youth group meeting



*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.*