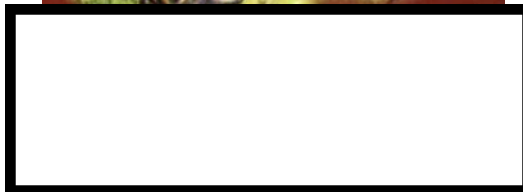


ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

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“1 Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. 3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. 4 Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. 5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. 6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. 7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. 9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. 10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. 11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. 12 The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. 13 The LORD shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. 14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. 15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. 16 A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous. 18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. 19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. 20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. 21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth. 22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. ” (Ps 27: 1-22)

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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

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“BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT”

*Pastoral Message of H.G.
Bishop Serapion for the
Coptic New Year (The Feast
of Nairouz) and the 1st Anni-
versary of the tragic events of September 11th*

As we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, we remember the power which the apostles received when the Holy Spirit descended upon them, fulfilling our Lord's promise to them that, "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

This power, which the disciples received on the Day of Pentecost, is clearly seen in the Book of Acts where it is written that after the Day of Pentecost, St. Peter stood courageously and powerfully witnessed to his Teacher and Savior in front of all the Jews, telling them, "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36) This was the same Peter, who in the past was fearful and trembling, denying his Master in front of a servant girl. Afterwards, we find him strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he attracted three thousand souls to believe in Christ, and they were baptized.

The disciples, who were previously fearful and gathered with the doors shut, because of fear from the Jews, and who doubted and didn't believe the news about Christ's resurrection, became strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. By the power of the Holy Spirit within them, the apostles witnessed to our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection and great grace was upon all of them (Acts 4:33).

The Holy Spirit, the spirit of power, (Is. 11:2) changed the apostles from a small weak group, who argued among themselves as to who was the greatest amongst them, into a strong group, which had one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32). By the power of the Holy Spirit, they changed from

a group shaken in their faith to a strong group, whose members performed many signs and wonders among the people (Acts 5:12).

The apostles, who were not able to stay awake with Christ for one hour in Gethsemane, became, by the power of the Holy Spirit, not fearful of the high priest and all the Jewish elders. They were not afraid of their threats and command not to teach in the name of Jesus Christ. Instead, they answered them, "We ought to obey God rather men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." (Acts 5:29-31)

After the Pharisees have beaten the apostles, commanding them not to speak in the name of Jesus, they released them, and the apostles were joyful that they suffered for the name of Christ and continued in their ministry and witnessed to Christ everywhere. "So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." (Acts 5:41-42)

The Holy Spirit is the spirit of power and many were strong in the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. St. Stephen, the first deacon was "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, did great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:51) When some from the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia) disputed with him, they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke (Acts 6:9-19).

St. Paul was strong by the power of the Holy Spirit and in his preaching, he did not depend on human wisdom, but rather on the power of the Holy Spirit. He said, "And my speech and my preaching were not with human wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:4-5)

St. John the Baptist was strong in the Lord and went in the spirit and power of Elijah (Lk. 1:17), because he was filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb. Therefore, his ministry was strong and inflamed (kindled) by the fire of the Spirit. In a few months, he was able to prepare the way for Christ and "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Lk. 1:17)

David the prophet was strong in the Lord and faced Goliath while he was a youth. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he was able to si-

lence the one who disgraced Israel. (1 Sam. 17)

Moses the prophet, when he was 80 years old, was strong in the Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit led the stiff-necked Israelites through the wilderness for 40 years.

Daniel the prophet and the three youth were strong in the Lord. They refused to defile themselves neither with the king's delicacies nor with the wine. Therefore, the Lord gave them health and wisdom more than all the other young men. The three youth refused to bow down to worship the king's golden image and were strong in the Lord. Therefore, the fire did not harm them, because the fiery power of the Holy Spirit kept them safe from harm.

All the martyrs: males, females, and children were strong in the Lord in the power of His might. Therefore, they did not fear torture. Instead, they powerfully witnessed to Christ and their injured bodies conquered the tools of torture. Their blood became the seeds of the Church.

The heroes of faith such as St. Athanasius, St. Cyril the Great, and St. Dioscorus were strong in the Lord and stood against the heretics and the deviations in the faith. Thus, they were able to preserve for us the Orthodox faith.

St. Anthony, St. Macarius, St. Pachomius, St. Shenouda, as well as others of the desert fathers were strong in the Lord and became vessels for the Holy Spirit. They lived in the desert and wilderness and presented to us living examples of a life of purity, asceticism, and holiness.

Our Need to Be Strong in the Lord:

As we look at our own spiritual lives and find ourselves defeated by the temptations and passions of the world, we ask the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of power, to give us the power of purity and asceticism to live as our holy fathers lived.

As we hear of divisions and schism between the Christians and even within the same church, we ask that the Holy Spirit unite us and give us the power to be of one accord in spirit and heart.

Nowadays, we are flooded by different heresies, and there are strong attacks against our Christian faith by member of other religions and even by heretics within Christianity. We ask that the Holy Spirit give us wisdom and the ability to defend our precious faith and not fear the winds of doubts and religious fights. Instead, let us look up to the heroes of faith such as St. Athanasius, who by the power of the Holy Spirit, was able to stand against the world, defending the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we see that our ministry is weak, even amongst our own congregations, while the other religions are spreading and adding new members

daily, let us not fear or tremble, but become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We ask Him to give us the spirit of courage to preach and witness to God's salvation in front of everyone as our fathers the apostles did. In a few years, they were able to bring Christianity to Asia, Africa, and Europe.

We should not be saddened by our past and our weaknesses, but become strong in the Lord, remembering the Lord's promise, "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with the wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." (Is. 40:31)

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the Church with might, "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of rushing mighty wind... Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire." (Acts 2:2-3) The Holy Spirit is fiery and can strengthen our weak nature. Therefore, let us not be sad, because of our weaknesses, since we don't depend on our human nature, but we are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

To encourage every weak and fearful soul, I end this article with a quotation from the writings of H.H. Pope Shenouda. "Let us take the lighted coal as an example. Coal by its nature is black and cold. But when it is lighted, its nature changes. It becomes a red ember. Ask yourself: Did the Holy Spirit enflame your black coal? By becoming inflamed, you can joyfully say, "I am dark but lovely." (Song of Solomon 1:5) the Holy fire has made me an emblem and transfiguration has penetrated my nature giving me heat, brightness, and light that I may forget my first coal nature and become as a fire."

Bishop Serapion



The Departure of St. Discorus the great The 25th Pope of Alexandria



On the 7th day of the blessed month of Tute of the year 451 A.D., the blessed father and the great champion of Orthodoxy, Saint Dioscorus, 25th Pope of Alexandria, departed. His departure took place on the island of Gagra after he had fought the good fight defending the Orthodox faith.

When he was summoned to the Council of Chalcedon by the order of Emperor Marcianus, he saw a great assembly of 630 bishops. Saint Dioscorus asked, "In whom is the faith lacking that it was necessary to gather this great assembly?"

They told him, "This assembly has been convened by the emperor's command." He replied, "If this assembly has been convened by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ I shall stay and speak with what God may give me to say; but if this assembly has been convened by the emperor's command, let the emperor manage his assembly as he pleases."

When he saw that Leo, Archbishop of Rome, was teaching that Christ has two natures and two wills after the Union, he took the charge to refute this new belief. He stated that our Lord Jesus Christ is one, He who was invited to the wedding as a man and changed the water into wine as a God, and that the two natures were not separated in all of His works. Quoting Pope Cyril, he said, "The Hypostatic Union of the Word of God with the flesh is like the union of the soul with the body and like the union of fire and iron: even as they are of two different natures, by their union they became one. Likewise, our Lord Christ is one Messiah, one Lord, and one Nature." None of those who were gathered at that assembly dared to contradict him. Among them were some who had attended the Council of Ephesus, which had been convened against Nestorius. Some informed the Emperor Marcianus and the Empress Belkarya that no one disobeyed their commands concerning the faith except Dioscorus, Patriarch of the City of Alexandria. They brought St. Dioscorus, and the leading bishops of the Council who debated and discussed the matter till it was evening, but St. Dioscorus would not deviate from his Orthodox belief. The emperor and empress were irritated at this, and the empress commanded to smite St. Dioscorus on his mouth, and to pluck out the hair of his beard.

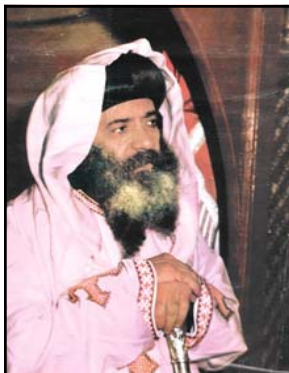
He took the hair and the teeth that were knocked out and sent them to Alexandria saying, "This is the fruit of Faith."

When the rest of the bishops saw what had happened to Dioscorus, they agreed with the emperor, being afraid of undergoing the same fate. They signed the document of the belief that Christ has two distinct and separate natures. When St. Dioscorus knew this, he sent for the document and pretended that he wanted to sign it too. But when he read the document, he wrote at its foot that he excommunicated everyone who had signed it, as well as everyone who deviated from the Orthodox Faith. The emperor was enraged and he commanded to banish St. Dioscorus to the island of Gagra, along with St. Macarius, the Bishop of Edko, and two others, and the Council of Chalcedon was resumed.

When they took St. Dioscorus to the island of Gagra, its bishop, because he was a Nestorian, met him with contempt and disdain. However, God performed at the hands of St. Dioscorus many great signs and wonders, so that all obeyed him, respected and revered him greatly, for God honors His chosen ones in every place. St. Dioscorus told St. Macarius, his companion in exile, "You shall receive the crown of martyrdom in Alexandria." He sent him with one of the believing merchants to Alexandria, where he received the crown of martyrdom.

St. Dioscorus, having ended his good fight, departed from this vain life and received the crown of eternal life. He departed on the island of Gagra where his body was laid.

His blessings and prayers be with us all. Amen.



Coptic People ask His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

Question: How can the Lord Christ be the maker of peace and the king of peace, and at the same time tell His disciples "he who has no sword let him sell his garment and buy one." (Luke 22:36) "What did He mean by ordering

His disciples to buy a sword? Why when they told Him "here are two swords He replied "it is enough." (Luke 22:38).

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III answers: The Lord Christ absolutely did not mean the sword in its literal sense. As an evidence of that, hours after He said this statement, and during His

arrest *"Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest servant and cut off his ear... Then Jesus said to Peter: put your sword into the sheath"* (John 18:10-11), "for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. " (Matt. 26:51-52). If the Lord was asking them to use the sword, he would not have stopped Peter from using the sword in such circumstances.

But the Lord meant the symbolic meaning of the sword which is the spiritual struggle.

The Lord was talking to them on his way to Gethsemane (Luke 22:39) in His last minutes before His arrest to be crucified. He said *"Let him sell his garments and buy a sword"* then right after that He said *"for I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me"*, *"and He was numbered with the transgressors"* (Luke 22:37). What is the common line between these two statements? It seems as if He was telling them, while I was with you, I guarded you, I was the sword that protected you, but now I am going to give myself up in the hands of sinners and the saying *"numbered with transgressors"* will be fulfilled... Then take care of yourselves and struggle.

Since I am going to leave you, every one of you should fight the spiritual fight, and buy a sword.

St. Paul had spoken about "the sword of the spirit" in his epistle to the Ephesians and about: *"the whole armour of God, the breast plate of righteousness, and the shield of faith"* (Eph. 6:11-17). That is what the Lord Christ meant by that; so we might be able to be steadfast in face of the snares of Satan in these spiritual fights.

The disciples did not understand that spiritual symbol at that time so they answered: here are two swords.

As He told them before in the same symbolic concept *"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees"* (Luke 21:1), He meant their hypocrisy but they thought He spoke about the bread (Mark 8:17). In the same manner they answered Him, when He talked to them about the sword of the spirit, here are two swords, so He replied that "It is enough"... It is enough discussion in this subject since there wasn't enough time... He did not mean the swords by the statement "It is enough" otherwise He would say they are enough...

We should distinguish between what the Lord meant to be understood symbolically and what literally. The flow of the conversation usually indicates that.

Delight thyself also in the LORD:
and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

(Ps. 37:4)

COPTIC FEASTS

August 21
September 12
September 18

Assumption of ST. Mary
Coptic new year "Nayrouz"
Departure of Pope Discours the great

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