

BUT THOSE WHO WAIT ON
THE LORD, SHALL RENEW
THEIR STRENGTH; THEY
SHALL MOUNT UP WITH
WINGS LIKE EAGLES,

ISAIAH 40:31

MIGHTY CHAMPIONS

THEY SHALL RUN AND NOT
BE WEARY, THEY SHALL
WALK AND NOT FAINT.

JUST FOR
TEENS

ليس هو ههنا لأنه قام
كما قال
متى ٢٨

He is not here;
he has risen,
just as he said.

Mt 28:6

WHY

RESURRECTION MATTERS

JUST FOR
TEENS

Mighty Champions Spring Edition

2015

**WHY
RESURRECTION
MATTERS**



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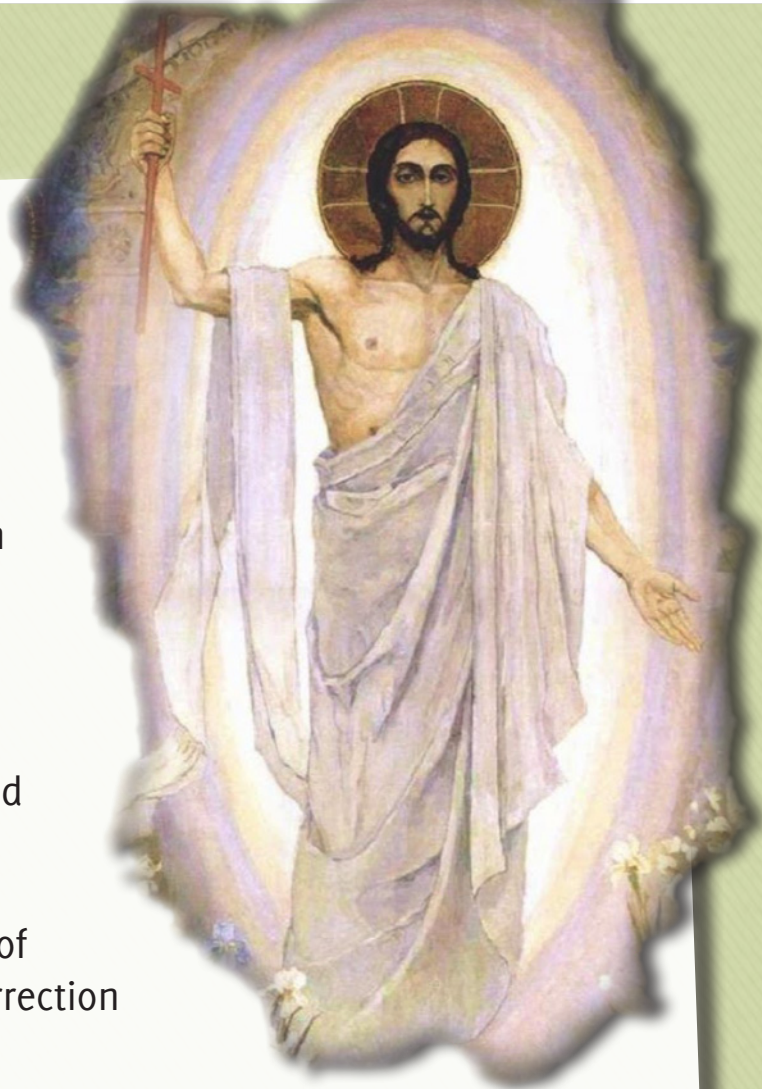
MISSION STATEMENT We, the magazine staff, have a mission regarding you, the reader: to encourage you on your Christian walk and to strengthen you through articles, answers, and more about God's very special plan for you.

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MY BELOVED YOUTH.

Resurrection matters are matters of salvation. Does your salvation matter to you? If you answered correctly, yes, then all the matters of the Holy Resurrection are of great relevance to you. The Holy Resurrection is the beginning of a new life for all of humanity. Christ is the first fruit into this new life personally prepared for you. Prior to Christ's resurrection, humanity only knew of birth and death. No longer does death have that sting of finality, sadness, and mourning. Resurrection matters because it is eternal.



There is much thought put into the articles that you are about to read in this Spring 2015 Edition of the Mighty Champion Magazine. Think about the beautiful life that awaits you after this temporary life—with all its vanities, heartache, and struggles vanishes. Strive to make and keep a good relationship with Christ, our Good Savior, so that where He is, we will be too.

God bless you.

BISHOP YOUSSEF.

Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

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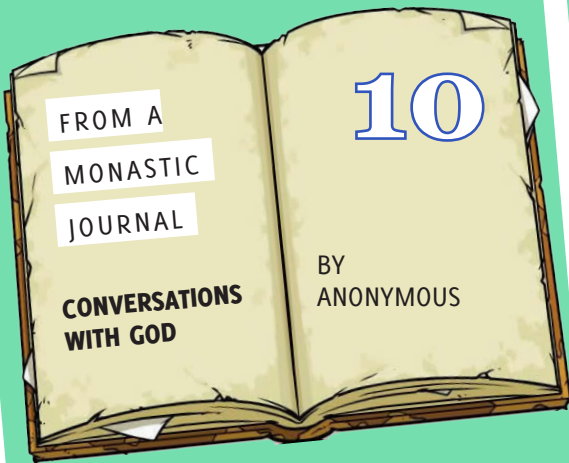
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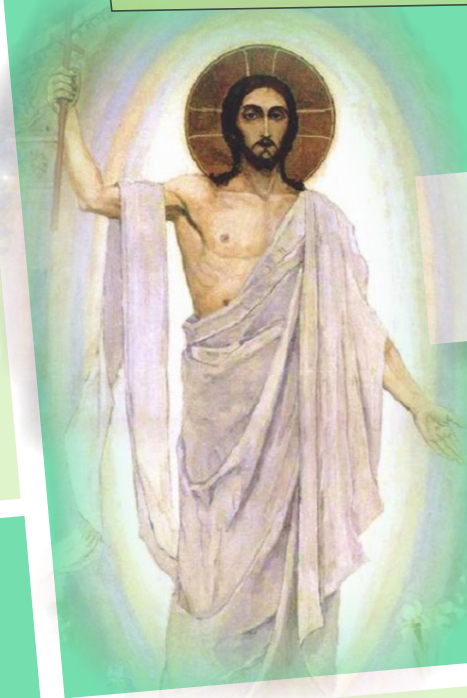
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<p>Joseph Hyman Institute (JHI) An Arabic theological seminary.</p> <p>Family Ministry Program JHI's Spring Registration deadline: December 10, 2014</p> <p>LEAD Program A program for learning Christian leadership principles.</p> <p>Theological Seminary Program - Nashville Program Registration deadline: March 15, 2015</p> <p>An Arabic theological program located in Nashville</p> <p>Theological Seminary Boarding Program - Abbey A 2 year low-cost program located at St. Mary and St. John's Abbey.</p> <p>Archangel Raphael Ministry (A.R.M.) A program designed specifically for individuals with special needs.</p> <p>H.O.P.E. Social Services A social service program designed to help those in need.</p> <p>St. Clement Christian Academy This is a learning community dedicated to meeting the needs of each learner within its walls.</p> <p>St. Mark Festival Program This is a spiritual competition among the Coptic Churches during the same saint's feast week.</p> <p>St. Verna Resource Ministry (V.R.M.) Traditionals networking together to make a difference and provide resources to our Coptic community. To make a request or to volunteer as a consultant.</p> <p>TIPS: Search for Job & Education Opportunities</p>	<p>Pre-Marital Retreat FL: Jan 9-11, 2015 GA: Jan 12-14, 2015</p> <p>Family Convention TX: Nov 28-29, 2014 FL: Nov 28-29, 2014</p> <p>Florida Semicon Convention FL: Dec 12-13, 2014</p> <p>THY College Convention FL: Dec 17-20, 2014</p> <p>Winter High School Girls Convention FL: Dec 22-24, 2014 TX: GA: Dec 25-26, 2014 TX: TXA</p> <p>Winter High School Boys Convention GA: TX: Dec 21-24, 2014 FL: Dec 23-25, 2014 TX: TXA</p> <p>Winter Kids Camp GA: Dec 21-24, 2014 FL: Dec 23-26, 2014 TX: Dec 28-31, 2014</p> <p>Winter Middle School Convention GA: Dec 26-29, 2014 FL: Jan 1-3, 2015 TX: Dec 28-30, 2014</p> <p>Texas Winter College Convention Jan 9-12, 2015</p> <p>Crossroads Graduate Convention Feb 19-22, 2015</p> <p>CPAR Convention Feb 26 - Mar 1, 2015</p> <p>Arabic Youth Convention FL: Mar 4-8, 2015 TX: TXA</p>

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Faith over Mind and Matter

"The entire virtue of what we call holiness lies in faithfulness to what God ordains."

BY SARA DAWOUD

The above quote is from Jean-Pierre de Caussade's *Joy of Full Surrender*. In the previous issue, I wrote *The Curious Case of the Talking Stone* which was the first part of the mini-series I am developing for this wonderful spiritual book. This article, the second in the series, will primarily deal with the issue of faith in the life of a Christian.

The word *faith* is often used interchangeably with the word *belief*. For example, "He is of Christian faith," or, "What is your belief?" However, the two words are very different from each other. All of us, as Christians, have belief. "We believe in One God..." begins the creed we recite in every Liturgy. A belief is a proclamation of faith, but faith is the essence of holiness, as the above quote states. We all believe that Christ is our Savior, but that belief does not mean anything if we do not have true faith. Even Christ Himself said, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven.*"¹

So who will enter the Kingdom? Christ continues in the same verse, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*"²

Doing the will of God is the only way to Heaven because it encompasses all the virtues that build up a true Christian. It is God's will that we love one another, pray to Him, read His Word, attend Church, and the whole nine yards. Doing God's will means that we must have faith in His promises, and He will never forsake us if we choose to follow Him whole-heartedly.

Faith is not an abstract concept that is used in every Sunday sermon; it is a lifestyle. St. James said, "*Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead,*"³ because having true faith means doing the will of God, and God's will encompasses all the virtues and practices mentioned in the Bible.

At times, God's will may conflict with ours. We may become depressed and angry when something we really want is withheld from us by our Heavenly Father. These circumstances become the ultimate test of faith: it is easy

to love God while life is good, but tribulation is the fire used to test how genuine we really are—either we are gold and the fire will refine us, or we are plastic and the fire will burn us.

This passage in *The Joy of Full Surrender* is particularly relevant:

When you are conducted by a guide who takes you through an unknown country at night across fields where there are no tracks, by his own skill, asking no advice from anyone, giving no inkling of his plans, what choice do you have but to give yourself completely to his guidance? The plans of fancies of a guide who insists on being trusted will have none of this! He will take pleasure in overcoming your anxiety and distrust and will insist that you surrender entirely to his guidance. If you are convinced that he is a good guide, you must have faith in him and abandon yourself to his care.

¹ Matthew 7:21.

² Ibid.

³ James 2:17.

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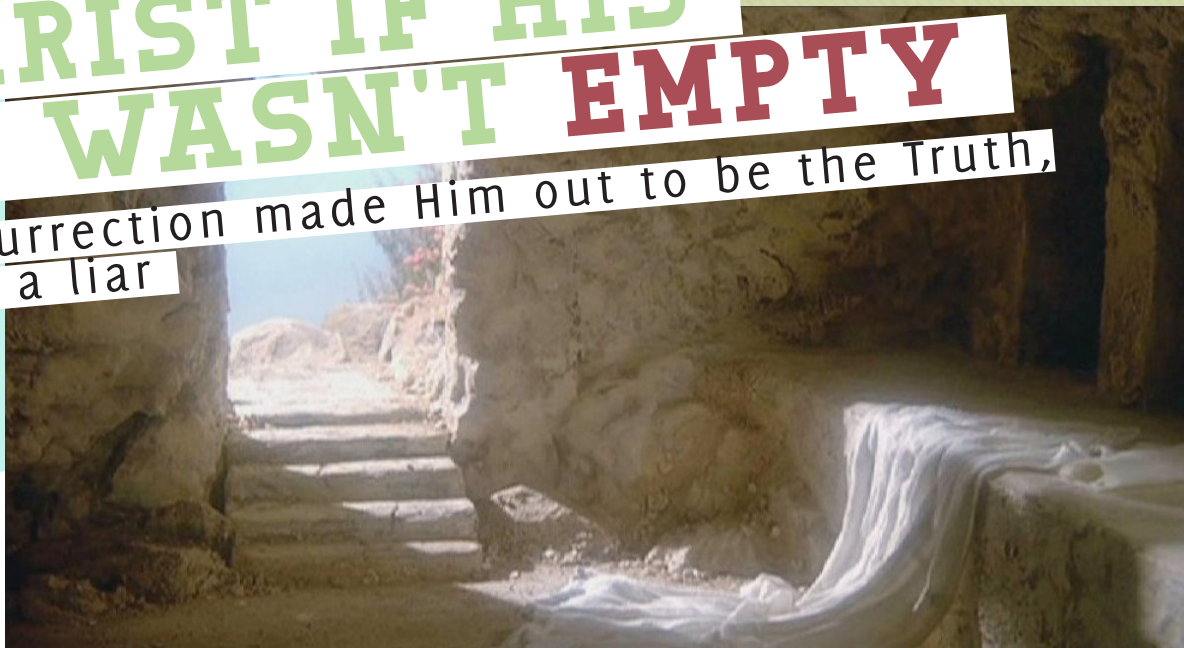
When the Resurrection enactment became part of the Divine Liturgy of the Resurrection feast, is not known. In this enactment, the priest or the bishop stand inside the sanctuary symbolically guarding the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, just as the Cherubim stood in the Garden of Eden guarding the tree of life, while two deacons stand outside the sanctuary with the resurrection icon signifying the angels that accompanied and served the Lord Jesus Christ during His life on earth. The resurrection enactment starts with a dialogue between the angels outside the sanctuary and the cherubim inside the sanctuary. After this dialogue, the doors of the sanctuary open just as the doors of the Paradise were opened; and the lights are turned on symbolizing the light of the Resurrection that has enlightened the whole cosmos. The deacons carrying the icon of resurrection enter the sanctuary and proceed around the altar three times' chanting the resurrection hymn, "Christ is risen" symbolic of the Lord Jesus Christ's entering Paradise with His angels and the souls of the righteous. Then the procession goes around the nave of the Church three times; symbolizing the apparitions of the Lord Jesus Christ and that of some of the saints after His holy Resurrection and their entry into the Holy City. At the end, the procession goes again inside the sanctuary for one more time around the altar signifying the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection of all the believers and their entry to the Kingdom of Heaven on the last day.

You can read in more details about the significance of the Resurrection Enactment at http://suscopts.org/literature/literature.php?subaction=showfull&id=1081605001&archive=&start_from=&ucat=12&.

I WOULDN'T BELIEVE IN CHRIST IF HIS TOMB WASN'T EMPTY

Christ's resurrection made Him out to be the Truth,
rather than a liar

BY JOHN HABIB



“I don’t know if I really believe God exists. I mean, I’ve just believed what you and the servants and the priests have been telling me. But I’m not sure of it myself.”

That’s what a teenage boy at church told me one day.

How can we help this boy believe in Christ for himself, instead of just believing in Christ because it is what he was told to do?

The answer comes down to the greatest proof of all: Christ’s tomb is empty—He resurrected.

Well, how does that make me believe in Him? That is because without that proof, Christ was either a liar, or a lunatic. Imagine a man walking around saying this:

- My name is Joshua, and I was born in a barn. But actually, before I was born in a barn, I was born from God and have existed forever.
- I haven’t really done anything that notable for thirty years, but you should leave your job, follow me around, and listen to my words carefully.
- Thanks for following me. Now let me

reveal more: remember that story about manna that fell from heaven in the Old Testament (the bread that appeared from heaven to feed the Israelites while they were wandering in the wilderness)? That bread actually symbolizes me, Joshua. And you have to eat my flesh so you can live forever.

- Don’t believe me? Watch as I heal this person, make that person’s eyes appear when he didn’t have any, make this food multiply, tell you what you are thinking before you speak a word.
- Oh, and watch as I revive that guy who has been dead for four days. If you walk around with me, and believe that I am who I say that I am, and eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will become immortal, like me. Because I am not only able to give life, I am Life itself. I am the source of life. The only source.
- I bet you’re starting to believe me now! Well believe this: I am God (if it wasn’t clear already).
- I see you are all looking at me funny, but I’ll prove it to you. I’m going to get arrested, be killed like a criminal, but I’ll be back! Just give me 3 days.

Now, think about this: the only way anyone would accept that everything

Joshua had been saying about himself is true is if he actually did rise from the dead like he predicted. If not, then Joshua was a liar or was crazy.


Christ rose from the dead, proving that He was God, and everything that He said about himself was true. But how do we know for ourselves that He actually rose from the dead? You can trust the witnesses who told us this.

What witnesses? The disciples and the other witnesses of Christ’s resurrection.

But why can we trust them? Because they verified for themselves the truth of Christ’s claims after they overcame an overwhelming weight of personal doubts. Only then were they willing to die for the truth they discovered.

Let’s examine the extent to which the disciples believed Christ’s words about Himself as their journey with Him progressed.

Throughout their time with Jesus, they were trying to figure Him out. Remember that Christ had more followers than just the Twelve, but eventually most left, especially when He started saying that people have to feed on Him and eat His body and blood to live forever. *“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’”* For those that remained by His side, all their belief was built up over time, as they heard all His words,



saw His life, witnessed the miracles, and eventually finally became convinced of all that Christ was saying. As St. Peter declared, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*²

But once He was arrested, they all forsook Him. "Okay, He said He was God, and I believed, but what if He isn't after all? How can God be so weak that He is arrested and subdued by His own creation?" That's what I imagine they were thinking, in line with the same logic applied by the priests and robbers around Christ as He was crucified: *"Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"*³ Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing."³ The Bible tells us the reaction of the disciples right after He was captured: *"Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled."*⁴ And St. Peter, who had just recently declared belief in Christ as Son of God, strongly denied Him with a curse when pressed to answer: *"Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak!'"*⁵

If they knew Christ was Lord, the disciples would not have feared death. But before we get those faithful disciples, we have the ones who are afraid after His death. After Christ died, we find them all locked up in a room afraid of being persecuted: *"On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the disciples had gathered together and locked the doors of the place because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders."*⁶

Because we know that after they had their fears set aside and their belief in Christ restored, they joyfully accepted suffering and death, *"rejoicing because they had been considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name [of Christ],"*⁷ so that they willingly felt *"to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*⁸

How did the disciples suddenly change? Why can we trust their witness?

It is because these disciples proved to us to be normal in their logic, and normal in their response. They saw the person they thought was God arrested and killed. And like any normal person, when they heard the news that He resurrected, it was not sufficient for them to just believe the news told them by Mary Magdalene. Peter and John ran to the tomb to verify it for themselves! They *"both ran together, and the other disciple [John] outran Peter and came to the tomb first."*⁹ And after seeing the empty tomb, against all odds, they *"saw and believed."*¹⁰

But this was not all that happened. Do you think when Peter and John went to the other disciples and told them the news that everyone freely believed without any doubt? It took more, and more they received. As they were locked shut in the room, Christ Himself appears. *"Jesus came and stood among them."*¹¹ And as if appearing was not enough, He made them touch His side.

So then, after all these disciples believe, you would also think that Thomas would believe them too? Thomas wasn't there, as you know. He, like the rest of the disciples, needed to be *sure* before they went out and proclaimed what they were afraid was a lie. Like the rest of the disciples, like many of us, like this boy who I was speaking with, everyone was skeptical. Why should I believe just because *they* told me so? Thomas vehemently said, 'I will never believe it!' unless I see it for myself. We all know that is exactly what happened.

THE DISCIPLES GAIN NOTHING BY LYING, BUT RATHER LOSE EVERYTHING

See, it's very simple. These disciples were not willing to go suffer without being *sure* that what they were dying for was the *truth*. Unlike many religions out there whose founders often gained much from what they declared (be it fame, money, girls, etc.), what did the disciples and apostles gain?

Nothing, though they could have gained much. That is what St. Paul says. As messengers and servants of God, they could have asked for food, a wife, or

other material things. However, St. Paul tells us, *"We have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ... I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than anyone should make my boasting void."*¹²

Why then St. Paul? Why? Why would you suffer all these things? Because he was convinced that what he was doing was not based on a lie, but on a truth. He was persecuting Christians and had an amazing change of heart, in spite of the fact that he was joining a group that he helped make public enemy number one. Why? He too saw for himself and believed when Christ appeared to Him (Acts 9).

The story is simple. Why should you believe the testimony of everyone who teaches you today? Because the first witnesses upon whom those teachings are founded would not have suffered for a lie. They were afraid to suffer until they verified for themselves the truth. Then, and only then, did they accept suffering, and proceed with their mission to present Life to others so that they may pass the Truth to you today.

In the end, the following is the reason we believe in Christ's claims about Himself, and the claims of those who witnessed His life:

- Confucius's tomb: occupied
- Buddha's tomb: occupied
- Mohammed's tomb: occupied
- Jesus' tomb: EMPTY.

¹ John 6:66-67.

² Matthew 16:16.

³ Matthew 27:41-44.

⁴ Matthew 26:56.

⁵ Mark 14:71.

⁶ John 20:19.

⁷ Acts 5:41.

⁸ Philippians 1:21.

⁹ John 20:4.

¹⁰ John 20:8.

¹¹ John 20:19.

¹² 1 Corinthians 9:12,15.

From a Monastic Journal

CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

By: Anonymous

The Lord says:

"I love you. I want you to be with Me forever.

All that I have created is for your happiness. I keep watch over you throughout the night and give you the breath of life to wake up in the morning. I give you My light to brighten your day, and enlighten My path before you. I hold you under the shadow of My wing so you are not afraid, so you are not cold, so you feel the warmth of My embrace. During the heat, I fan you with My own hands so your frail, precious body doesn't faint from heat exhaustion. This body you live in is weak, but I love you, so I strengthen it and strengthen you beyond what is humanly possible. I love you and I stay awake all night thinking of you. My mind is always on you, concerned for you, longing for you. There is not a second I don't love you and think of you and strive for you to be with Me.

You are why I came to the world and took the form of man, walked on their roads, was circumcised, baptized, and shed My Blood on the cross... so we can be united in love forever. I died so that when you die we may live eternally in My Father's house. I died and resurrected so when your spirit departs your body, I will raise you up to stand before My Father who will unite us in His great wedding feast...

O, My beloved soul, how can you betray My love for you? How can you run after another? How can you not think of Me continually as I think of you? I am pure and perfect, how can you come to Me defiled with imperfection? Do you not know that My Father will not let us wed like this? How can you betray My love? After all I do for you and all the love I pour on you, how can you say that another has done this for you, or even worse, say that you are the one who has done or deserved this?! How can you betray My love so? How can you think that you don't need Me, that you don't want Me, that you don't love Me? How can you look to another, after all I have loved you? How can you love the world? How can you love the praise of other people? How can you love sin? How can you allow the devil to entice you? How can you choose him over Me?

I love you and labor for you continually, and think of you always! Why will you not return My love?

Do you not know that every time you overeat, oversleep, fail to pray or read or spend private time with Me, do you not know how much I pain, how much I long for our time

... CONTINUED

together, how much I crave your company? I want us to dine together, but you go out to eat and then you come to say, 'I'm too full to eat with you, sorry.' I want to stay up late talking to you and spending time with you, but you busy yourself with everything or everyone else, so that when you come to look at Me you are so exhausted that I just let you sleep in My arms, as I watch over you. I glow when you walk in the door thinking we can spend time together, hear about your day and relieve your stress, but you are too distracted by thoughts of others that you do not let Me in... My advice you won't even hear. I watch over every second of your life, but you are too busy to notice, and too busy to look at Me.

What will I do? What will I say to My Father when He asks Me about you? With what shame does My head dangle as I relate to Him how You don't love Me, how you ignore Me, how you don't think of Me, but rather busy yourself with the world and have no time for Me! Will He let us wed? Of course not! He will answer Me, 'Why do You love such a wretched creature? Go marry one who loves You. As for her, she deserves hell for not loving My Son!'"

My Lord, Your heart is so sensitive and so gentle, it can be broken easily and quickly, yet You continue to love this poor wretched soul and try to call her to You. When I don't return Your love, I truly deserve hell, but I can't endure the thought of separating from You. Lord, I'm comfortable knowing You are there and that You love me, but I don't know why I'm not ready to commit myself totally to You. I enjoy the attention You give me, and the love You shower upon me, but if I commit myself totally to You, that would mean giving up all the other lovers I have... the ones who feed my pride and keep my ego alive... Ah huh! In Your presence all others are forgotten! I know what I'll do... I'll take You with me everywhere I go... If I can't do it physically, then I will do it mentally... I will always think of You as You always think of me... In the face of such intense love, who could resist?

O my sweet Lord, I have promised: now I ask Your strength to truly take You with me everywhere, to hold Your Hand for support and ask Your advice.

Lord, I truly do love You; please help me forsake all to truly unite with You.

AVOIDING DRYNESS AFTER THE SPIRITUAL SPRING

Celebrating the
right way

BY MIRYAM NESSIM

The Great Fast is a time of spiritual renewal for many of us. In denying our flesh through fasting and prayer during this time, we fill ourselves with the presence of Christ in our lives. The Great Fast is the time when we return to our spiritual roots—that time when we were only a few days old and were baptized and became cleansed of sin. It is a journey to become a step closer to perfection, as Christ commanded, *“You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”*¹

However, when the Feast of the Holy Resurrection comes upon us, we are ready to do just the opposite of everything we’ve done in the last 55 days. We are quick to give our bodies everything that we deprived it of during the 55 days: food, sleep, TV, internet, etc. This can sometimes cause us to neglect our spiritual lives, maybe more than prior to the Great Fast. Thus, while this is a time of feasting, it is important to remember why and with Whom we are celebrating.

St. John Chrysostom tells us,

Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: Receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness. Let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has



shown forth from the grave.
Let no one fear death, for the
Savior's death has set us free.²

There is certainly plenty to be celebrating, but not without the spirit of continual thanksgiving and remembrance of the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we abandon all spiritual practices after the Great Fast is over, how do we suppose we can spend time enjoying our Bridegroom while He is with us?

His Grace Bishop Youssef helps us with practical ways of keeping ourselves focused on the true feast that has more meaning than giving in to our flesh:

Setting our minds on things above, not on things of the earth means seeking the ultimate spiritual glories of the age to come. Remember your baptism. Live according to His Resurrection! Seek true life in Christ. Put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him (Colossians 3:10). Thus the Resurrection restores to us the IMAGE OF GOD that we had lost due to sin.³

Let us not also forget that the Great Fast is

a journey, not just a season that has a beginning and an end. The Great Fast is the spiritual highlight of the year, and the fruits we reap in the Great Fast are meant to keep us full all year long. Thus, it is imperative that we continue throughout the Holy Fifty Days—and the rest of year after that—the practices we have attained during the Great Fast. That way, the following Great Fast, we begin at a higher spiritual state, otherwise, we would only start again from scratch.

May God give us a heart that celebrates His Resurrection with the virtues we have attained in the Great Fast, that we may properly rejoice with the Bridegroom Who is with us during this blessed season.

¹ Matthew 5:48.

² <http://oca.org/fs/sermons/the-paschal-sermon>.

³ <http://www.suscopts.org/resources/literature/257/feast-of-the-holy-resurrection/>.



ST. ANTHONY OF EGYPT

BY JEREMIAH SOLIMAN

AND THE VIRTUE
OF POSITIVITY

Saint Anthony was the first Christian to carry on an existence of consecrated solitude. As a hermit in the desert, he lived a long and righteous life that impacted endless individuals in his time, throughout the centuries, and even until today. Generally considered to be the father of monasticism, his life had an enormous effect on the history of not only our Orthodox Faith, but also the fundamental history of all of Christianity throughout the world.

His biography was written by one of Christianity's most eminent pioneers, St. Athanasius the Apostolic, who was both his pupil and close friend. The life story of the *Father of all Monks* is known across the Coptic community, exemplifying countless virtues that we as Christians ought to follow. Positivity, one of this saint's many virtues that we can see, is a distinguishing characteristic that grows in the life of wisdom. The wise man is always positive and views every matter with positivity and enthusiasm.

When St. Anthony was about eighteen years old, his parents passed away. Some people would surround themselves with complete sadness when they face a loved one's departure. However, St. Anthony the Great faced this situation in a positive way by not being entangled in earthly desires and cares. Colossians 3:1-4 tells us, *"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."* He did not care about the great amount of wealth his parents had left him, but rather focused on his spiritual journey and looked for what he needed to do to gain a strong relationship with Christ.

As a young man, hearing the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew chapter 19—which mentions celibacy and Jesus telling the rich young man to give everything to the poor—provided him with the answer to his mission. His attendance and attention to the liturgical readings gave him the opportunity to receive a life changing message from God. He listened to this passage and considered it a personal message for him. Pope Tawadros II has said, "How wonderful is the man who considers the words of the Holy Bible a special message for him." Not a general message for anyone at any time, but a private message for you, your life and your circumstances.

Coming from a very wealthy family, it was probably very hard for St. Anthony to sell all that he owned and become a poor man. He took the wealth his parents left him and gave it to the poor and saved a part of this wealth for his sister Dious, who consecrated herself as a bride for Christ in a virgin's house.

At this point, St. Anthony abided by our Lord's commandment. He went to the near wilderness, and he started the life of asceticism. Tradition tells us that there were some hermits who were occupying the area surrounding the Nile River of Egypt, but there was no monastery to gather them. One famous story tells us of a woman who went to bathe in the river one day. The saint met with her and scolded her saying that this region is for the hermits only, and she does not have the right to enter this place. She replied that hermits should not be living here, for they should live in the inner wilderness. He listened to her words, considering them to be another message from God to go live in the inner wilderness. If he did not see the situation as a positive one, he would not have heard God's personal message to him, and may have wronged the woman by rebuking her.

These are a few of the many scenes in St. Anthony's life where he showed positivity and various other virtues in dealing with matters. A lesson for us all: be positive in your life. It is very easy to complain or to criticize, but to see a situation in a positive way benefits you and builds a better life.

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RESURRECTION MATTERS: THE ENDLESS FRONTIER

Special Message for You

FROM **HIS GRACE BISHOP YOUSSEF**

Each week of the Holy Great Fast marks an opportunity to shun temptation and rise from sin. Refusing to repent is a deep slumber into a spiritual demise. There are three forms of resurrection. The first is the holy sacrament of Baptism, which is the first step onto the path of salvation and which cleanses us from original sin. This great sacrament can only take place once in a lifetime. The second is the holy sacrament of Repentance and Confession, which by the grace of God, is an ongoing renewal of heart and mind. The third is the final resurrection from physical death. In this ultimate resurrection, the body, soul, and spirit will rise unto everlasting life.

Week 1: Resurrection from Covetousness

Matthew 6:19-33

Many people—youth and adults are engrossed in materialism. There is a lot of pressure to show off. Our Lord Jesus Christ advises us as to where our treasures ought to be and not to be. Make an everlasting investment in heaven, not in the frivolous earthly things that last for a limited time. If you are not careful, materialism will consume your thoughts and desires, you will drift into the spell of covetousness, and your energy will be spent on meaningless things. Detach and let this be a resurrection from materialism.

Week 2: Resurrection from Deviousness

Matthew 4:1-11

The devil has no boundaries as to how far, and whom, he will try to lure into wickedness. Seeing that Christ had been fasting, Satan tried to seize



this opportunity to tempt Him—as if he could. These same tricks he tries with us. Unfortunately, too often, we do not resist. We may not know how, but remember that Christ taught us how—through the Holy Scriptures, which sustain us. This wakefulness and alertness are a resurrection from temptation.

Week 3: Resurrection from Selfishness

Luke 15:11-32

Two selfish sons had issues, but the focus initially revolved around the recklessness of the younger son, and then turned toward the haughtiness of the older son. The younger—prodigal son thought he was invincible, took money that was not really his to take at that time, and squandered what his father

labored to provide for the family. When he finally came to his senses, he repented. Unfortunately, the older son resented the celebration for his younger brother's resurrection and restoration to the family. Repentance is the resurrection that brings us to the holy Eucharist—Christ's ultimate sacrifice and feast, for which He emptied Himself on our behalf.

Week 4: Resurrection from Obliviousness

John 4:1-42

Obliviousness captivated a Samaritan woman—going from one marital relationship to another. Finally, she gave up on marriage after the fifth attempt and decided to just live with the sixth man. Spurned by society, she continued in a bizarre spiral of spiritual death until her meeting with Christ. From there, she left her water pot—her former thoughts of refreshment. She was renewed and resurrected from her previously prized sins. Empowered by our Lord Jesus Christ who transformed her, she began to evangelize in his holy name.

Week 5: Resurrection from Carelessness

John 5:1-18

Thirty-eight years and this man still could not find anyone to help him enter the water to be healed. No one seemed to care. Perhaps, he did not care either. He did not know who Jesus was and did not express sorrow for the sins that had brought him to this calamity of paralysis. Rather, he merely complained that there was no one to care for him. Therefore, Christ asked him frankly if he really even wanted to be healed. When this man finally took some personal action, to at least respond to the question about his healing, our Lord Jesus Christ healed him, but warned him to sin no more. Not only had this man sinned, which led him to his current state, but he did not even care to acknowledge his transgressions nor take responsibility for his offenses.

Week 6: Resurrection from Sightlessness

John 9:1-41

Born blind, Demas was not alone. Figuratively, all of humanity shared in his sightless body, as revealed in the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew¹ quoting the prophecies of Isaiah the prophet: *"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned."*² Likewise, Zacharias the priest proclaimed similar prophetic words to his son, John, regarding his role as the Forerunner and Baptist: *"To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*³ Admitting to our spiritual shortsightedness is a resurrection from the sins committed in ignorance.

Week 7: Resurrection from Lifelessness

Lazarus Saturday John 11:1-45

Though Hosanna Sunday is the seventh week of the Holy Great Fast, the Church celebrates the raising of Lazarus after having lain in the tomb for four days. His lifeless body arose at the command of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Christ Himself did not rise from the dead, neither would have Lazarus, or anyone for that matter. Lazarus' resurrection was a prelude to Christ's holy resurrection. On Hosanna Sunday—Hosanna meaning *save us*—we welcome the Lord into our hearts, to cleanse us from our sins, and to lead us to the resurrection.

Week 8: The Greatness of the Holy Resurrection

John 20:1-18

Resurrection matters greatly. This is the eighth day, which signifies eternity in Church tradition. Christ is the holy resurrection. There is nothing else and no one else that can be more wonderful, beautiful, and delightful. Thus, we joyfully die with Him, rise with Him, and live with Him, for Him, and in Him.

¹ Matthew 4:15-16.

² Isaiah 9:1-2.

³ Luke 1:79.

Gold Nuggets

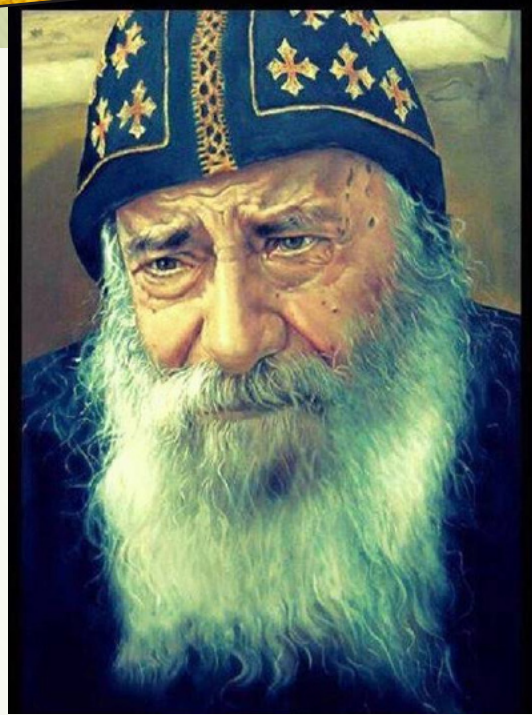
There Is None Upon Earth That I Desire Besides You¹

BY **THE THRICE BLESSED POPE SHENOUDA III**

There are some beautiful verses in Psalm 73 that I would like to talk with you about:

*I was so foolish and ignorant, I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.*²

This last verse is the one I want to focus on with you. The person who loves our Lord, tastes the life of fellowship with Him, experiences life with Him, relishes God's strong Hand in life, and touches upon God's work in life, feels sufficient with God, saying, "And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You." After tasting the sweetness of our Lord, a person cannot put anything ahead of Him, it just does not fit. It is impossible! This is like a woman who wears an expensive silk dress, and then patches it with rags. That



simply does not work. After tasting this sweetness, you cannot place anything else next to it. This is why people who have tasted our Lord, could not put anything else besides our Lord in their lives. Our Lord satiated them fully, such that all desires and pleasures became petty next to our Lord. All desires lost their value, all pleasures lost their taste, and when our Lord became everything, this person started to say, "And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You." To be continued...

¹ From the October 14, 1977 Friday sermon (at that time His Holiness' sermons were held on Fridays, instead of Wednesday) on *There is none upon earth that I desire besides You*.

² Psalm 73:22-25.

Golden Anecdotes

Faith is the mother of virtues¹

BY HIS HOLINESS POPE TAWADROS II



At the start of the twentieth century, there was a nun serving in Africa. Buses had recently been invented. She served amidst tribes in various places, and thought that if she procured a bus, she could gather up the children from many places and bring them to church. She stood before the children and told them, "Children, pray that God sends us a bus." The children raised their hands and asked, "What is a bus?" She took a piece of chalk and drew a bus on the blackboard. The children stood up to pray: "God, send us a blue bus." She was surprised that the children were making a specific request from the Lord. It was blue chalk! Less than a year later, the abbess gathered up the nuns and told them, "There is a bus being gifted to the convent. Which of you prayed for a bus?" This nun stood and shared her story. The abbess said, "Well then, if the bus arrives blue then it is yours. If it is any other color, then

it goes for convent use." The nun wrote in her journal, "How astonished I was to find the bus was actually blue!"

I want to reveal to you a mystery: God answers prayers the most when they are offered up by children. If you have children—or if you yourself have the heart of a child—and you have an issue that needs prayers, no matter how enormous the issue, ask the children to pray. Their innocence and purity of heart makes their prayers rise to heaven directly and return with the appropriate answer.

¹ From a sermon during His Holiness' visit to Canada in September 2014.

QUESTION General Question #1

Q What are the historical, spiritual significance, and symbolic contemplative effects of the Resurrection Enactment performed during the Divine Liturgy?

LOOK FOR THE **ANSWER**
ON ANOTHER PAGE



Diocese

PROGRAMS

Diocese Educational Programs Board of Education

Asaph Hymns Institute

(AHI) is the first ever online hymnological seminary.

Family Ministry Program

(FMP) mission: training men and women from congregations all over the United States to aid clergy in shepherding the flock.

LEAD Program

A program for learning Christian leadership principles.

Theological Seminary Program

Program Registration deadline: June 15, 2015

Theological Seminary Program - Nashville

An Arabic theological program located in Nashville.

Theological Seminary Boarding Program - Abbey

A 2 year live-in program located at St. Mary and St. Moses Abbey.

Diocese Programs

Archangel Raphael Ministry (A.R.M.)

A program designed specifically for individuals with special needs.

H.O.P.E. Social Services

A social services program designed to help those in need.

St. Clement Christian Academy

This is a learning community dedicated to meeting the needs of each learner within its walls.

St. Mark Festival Program

This is a spiritual competition among the Coptic Churches doing the same activity world-wide.

St. Verena Resource Ministry

(SVRM) Professionals networking together to make a difference and provide resources to our Coptic community. To make a request or to volunteer as a consultant.

EVENTS

Pre-Marital Retreat

TX: TBA

FL: Jan 15-17, 2016

TN: TBA

GA: Jun 12-14, 2015

FL Newlywed Convention

Jun 5-7, 2015

Extreme Family Makeover (EFM) Coptic Edition

Jun 19-21, 2015

College Summer Convention - GA/LA/TN

Jul 23-26, 2015

High School Summer Convention - GA/LA/TN

Girls: Jul 12-15, 2015

Boys: Jul 15-18, 2015

Diocese Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Oct 19-31, 2015

BUT THOSE WHO WAIT ON
THE LORD, SHALL RENEW
THEIR STRENGTH; THEY
SHALL MOUNT UP WITH
WINGS LIKE EAGLES,

MIGHTY CHAMPIONS

ISAIAH 40:31

THEY SHALL RUN AND NOT
BE WEARY, THEY SHALL
WALK AND NOT FAINT.

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