

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
Archangel Michael Church
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“ ... And there were also two others malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This is the King of The Jews. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into they

This Newsletter is a free monthly publication of the Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church, PO Box 256 Howell, NJ 07731, under the supervision of Fr. Antonious Tanious.

The committee welcomes your participation in the form of articles, reviews, news, or comments. Please mail your articles, comments, ...etc. to the church or e-mail them to archangelletter@netscape.net

If you would like this newsletter mailed to a friend or would like your name to be deleted from our mailing list, please fax your request to (732) 821-1512.

How To Benefit Spiritually From Passion Week

By: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III



Excerpts from 11 Reflections on Passion Week Translated by Mary Hanna (from St. John Magazine, Covina, CA, April 2000)

1. Our behavior inside and outside church:

It is very noticeable that many people during Passion Week act very differently inside church than they do outside church. Inside church... black curtains, sad hymns, solemn readings, and complete concentration on the suffering of Christ. However, outside of church, we often laugh, joke around, socialize, think and talk about many worldly issues. We lose all the spiritual depth that we gained inside church. Let us concentrate our

thoughts, conversations, and meditations around the events of this Holy Week and the passion of our Savior.

2. Retreat:

During our regular fasting days, we put the words of the Bible before us, "*Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly*" (Joel 1: 14). How much more then should we apply this commandment during Holy Week?

This week should be characterized by solitude and retreat with God by staying away from idle discussions, various means of entertainment and pleasures. Reserve your time for God and to spiritual activities worthy of this week.

3. Follow the steps of Christ:

Meditate on the events of the week one by one, from Palm Sunday when Christ refused His worldly kingdom and the Jews gave up their hopes in Him, until they crucified and buried Him. On Palm Sunday, ask yourself:

Is Christ King and Lord over everything in my life? Do I, like Christ, turn down worldly glory for spiritual and eternal glory? And during the "general funeral" afterwards, consider yourself attending your own funeral (because during this week the church will not hold funeral services).

Also, when the church denounces Judas' betrayal with a kiss on the eve of Wednesday's Pascha, ask yourself in prayer, "How often, O Lord, have I betrayed You?" "How many times have I told You words of love in prayers, while my actions show the opposite and my heart is far away from You?"

4. Share in the fellowship of His suffering:

St. Paul said "*That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death*" (Philippians 3:10). Can we give ourselves an exercise this week to share in the fellowship of His suffering and be conformed to His death? Can we follow Him in His suffering and ascend with Him to the cross? Can we say with St. Paul "*With Christ I have been crucified; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal. 2:20).

Therefore, in order for Christ to live in us, we have to carry our cross and follow Him. If you have a cross in your life, don't complain about it, but rather rejoice in it and bear it for Christ's sake. "*For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him but to suffer for His sake*" (Phil. 1:29).

5. Asceticism:

Whoever puts the suffering of Christ before Him will not take any pleasure in eating, drinking or pampering the body. But in order to succeed in pursuing asceticism, we must satisfy our souls with spiritual food so that it may thrive and overcome physical hunger.

6. Spiritual readings:

Spiritual readings are also food for the soul. The church has organized for us a treasure of appropriate readings for every day of Holy Week. This consists of Gospel readings, Old Testament prophecies that correspond to the events of each day, spiritual explanations and sermons of the church fathers and on Holy Saturday (Apocalypse night) the church reads the entire book of Revelation.

7. Hymns:

The hymns of Passion Week are moving and full of spiritual depth. Also, Hymns, like reading, preserve thoughts from wandering and guides them in a spiritual direction.

8. Prayer:

Since the prayers of the Agpeya are not used during Holy Week, we are to substitute personal prayers in their place. This is in addition to the intensive prayers of the church asking the Lord, who bore the sins of the world and died for us, to forgive and have mercy upon us according to His great mercy.

9. Confession and communion:

During this week, each person must sit with himself, remember his sins, put them on Christ's shoulders and tell Him in shame, "Carry O Lord my sins also, with the sins of the rest of humanity. Take my sins and nail them to the cross with you, so that Your Blood may wipe them away!" Look carefully at your sins and know that they are the cause of His crucifixion. Many people cry out of their sorrow for Christ's suffering, while they crucify Him every day with their sins. We should not feel sorry for Christ during this week, but should be sorry for our sins that caused Him these pains. As Jesus told the women that were crying over Him, "*Daughters of Jerusalem do not cry for Me, but cry for yourselves and your children*" (Lk. 23:28). Before the cross, we all stand as sinners, all under condemnation. "*No one is righteous, not even one*" (Ps. 14:3). We confess our sins and prepare ourselves for communion. There are 3 liturgies during Holy Week: Passover Thursday, Holy Saturday, and Resurrection Sunday (preceded, of course, by the Liturgy of Palm Sunday).

10. Spiritual stock-up:

Passion Week should not be limited to a one-week opportunity to benefit. It should be a time to store up spiritual nourishment, enough to last us the whole year. This is particularly needed during the 50 days after the resurrection when there is no fasting.



ST. MARY OF EGYPT

(Not to be confused with the Theotokos)

One day, Mary saw the crowds of pilgrims preparing to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. It sounded like fun. She went along, announcing to her fellow travelers, "I have a body and that will serve as both fare and food for me." The trip was an eventful one as Mary explored the outer limits of lust and passion with her companions (both those who were willing and those who were not, she added). In Jerusalem, when the day of the Feast came around, Mary too set off for the church, drawn by the energy of the crowds thronging to venerate the True Cross. But something happened. At the doors of the church, at its very threshold, Mary was driven back "by some kind of force". Trying as she might, she could not enter, although

those around her went in with no difficulty at all. Then she understood, it was her own self that prevented her entrance. The sinfulness of her life held her captive outside the church. Praying fervently to the Virgin Mary, with her heart open and clear, Mary begged for forgiveness and again sought entry to the church.

Guided by a vision of the Theotokos, Mary left at once for the desert beyond the Jordan River, for there, her vision told her she would find rest.

On the way, she stopped at a church built on the riverbanks. There, she washed herself in the Jordan and partook of the Eucharist in that church. From there, she went to the desert, still led by the vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her new life had begun.

When Zosimas (a priest and a monk) first found Mary, she fled from him while he ran after her. Finally, she stopped and addressed him by name, "Father Zosimas, forgive me." The priest was struck with dread, was she an angel? Mary, though, was alarmed because of her nakedness and begged him to lend her his cloak so that she could stand in modesty before him. She then asked for his blessing. With difficulty, he said to her, "O mother in the spirit, it is plain from this insight that all your life you have dwelt with God and have nearly died to the world. But since grace is recognized not by office but by gifts of the Spirit, bless me for God's sake and pray for me out of the kindness of your heart." So Mary gave the blessing. Eventually, with great difficulty, Fr.

Zosimas extracted her story from her. Then she asked for a favor, for she understood that the Lord had sent Fr. Zosimas for a purpose. She asked him to return to his monastery and not tell anyone about her, but in a year's time return to her on Holy Thursday and bring her the Eucharist.

At last, he returned at the appointed time. She came to him, walking on water, crossing the Jordan, while he again was awestruck. As he knelt in reverence to her, she reproved him, "What are you doing, Fr. Zosimas... you who are a priest of God and carrying the holy mysteries?" At once he obeyed her. Again she sent him away, to return again the following year at the same time. But when the time came and Fr. Zosimas hastened on his journey, he found his beloved guide dead, with a letter to him written in the sand beside her body. From this he learned that she had died within an hour of receiving the sacrament the previous year. He also learned her name for the first time. She signed herself "Mary the sinner."

Grieving and marveling, Fr. Zosimas buried the holy woman with the help of a lion who came to venerate the body of the saint. Then, Fr. Zosimas went back to the world to give the gift of her story to others.



BIBLE STUDY

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

BY: IHAB GUIRGUESS

During his imprisonment, St. Paul maintained his faith and strength and continued writing letters to the towns he visited. Even under his circumstances, Paul wrote this thank-you letter to the Philippians expressing his joy in what God was accomplishing through them.

Although the authorship of this letter is unanimously agreed upon, it is not quite clear where St. Paul was imprisoned when this letter was written. Some scholars believe that St. Paul was in Corinth when he wrote this letter due to its proximity to Philippians. However, those who are against this view cite Acts 18:10 in which the Lord indicates to St. Paul that He would protect him from harm in Corinth. Other scholars point to Ephesus as the place of St. Paul's imprisonment noting his troubles in that city, however, no passages directly state that he was imprisoned there. The most favored location where Paul is believed to have been while writing this letter is Rome despite its distance from Philippi. Paul spent a great deal of time in the city and there is a great deal of scriptural evidence (Acts 28:16-31) documenting Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

The main theme of the Epistle to the Philippians is Joy. Despite being imprisoned, Paul was gracious that God was still doing wonders through the Philippians. Another theme of this letter is "partnership in the Gospel." Paul was filled with joy because of the fellowship of the Philippians who were actively involved in furthering the Good News.

However, when one becomes too content with his state of being, he stops striving for perfection and loses site of his ultimate goals. Knowing this, Paul also took the time to point out some of the Philippians' weaknesses. For example, the two components of fellowship are love and discernment. Although the Philippians were filled with love, they lacked discernment. Paul not only wanted the Philippians to be filled with love, but to focus more on their relationship with God to better understand his ways.

"From The Nelson study Bible: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville"

Short Story *By: Michael Mankabadi and Christine Michael*

The empty chair

Once, there was a man who was ill in the hospital. This man's daughter visited him always and noticed that her father spent all his time talking to an empty chair. The little girl was always dismal when she saw her father in such a condition. With this on her mind, one day, the little girl went to a priest and told him about her father's malady. The priest, in turn, came to visit the ailing man and saw him whispering to an empty chair. The priest had remembered what the concerned little girl had said to him before about her father's sickness and he questioned the old man, "Why are you talking to an empty chair?" The sick man responded, "This is how I pray." The old man soon told the priest a story from his past. He told him how he was unable to pray because he could not visualize God with him and could not feel God in his presence. The man felt not only sick from his illness, but also alone and empty inside. The emptiness filled his heart and he sought God in his life. The man talked this over with a friend and told him how he felt. The friend of his had given the man advice to imagine God sitting and talking with him in the room. From that point on, the man would pray towards an empty chair to feel God's presence with him.

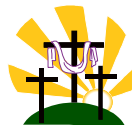
The next day when the little girl went with her mother to visit her father, a nurse told her that he is not doing well. The man's health had become worse overnight. Upon hearing this news, the little girl hurried to her father's room as fast as she could. There, she saw her father, resting his head on the empty chair. She called and shook him... but there was no response. She cried for help and in minutes the room was filled with doctors and nurses who asked her to leave the room. As she stood outside the room with tears in her eyes, daddy's little girl waited for the doctors to come from the room and give her news that would change her life forever. She knew in her heart that the time was approaching...but she refused to give up hope. Just then, a doctor walked out to tell her mother that her father has passed away and there was nothing more to be done. The mother and daughter held each other close mourning their loved one's passing.

A few days later, the little girl met up with the priest again. Then he asked her, "How is your father doing?" She replied, "He has passed away," tears streaming down her face. She continued to tell the priest how he had died resting his head on the empty chair. The priest, remembering his conversation with the man earlier that week, put his arm around her and said, "O my little daughter, only if you could know how much I would love to meet God this way."

" Lord Remember me when You come into Your Kingdom"

(Luk:23:42)

- The youth of the Archangel Michael Church have recently started doing midnight praises every Friday night from 9:30pm to 11:30pm. Please join them in offering praise and worship.
- For information and assistance in State sponsored social programs please contact Mr. Makram Michael at 363-2261.



The Church, Deacons, Servants and Youth offer their condolences to Fr. Mikhail Labib Mikhail, Makram, Michael, Naeem, Rida and their families for the loss of their mother Mrs. Aziza Morcos. May the Lord repose her soul in the paradise of joy and may our Lord receive her prayers on our behalf.

“the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21)

**The Church offer its condolences to the Himaia family for the sudden loss of their little angel
Amanda Himaia**



May our Lord receive her prayers on our behalf

SCHEDULE OF THE HOLY WEEK

Lazarus Saturday, April, 7

Raising of Vespers Incense and distribution of Palms 6 pm - 8 p.m.

Palm Sunday, April, 8

Divine Liturgy 7 AM-2 PM Evening Pascha 6 PM-9 PM

Monday and Tuesday of the Holy Pascha- April, 9 and 10

Morning Pascha 9 AM-12 Noon Evening Pascha 6 PM- 9 PM

Wednesday of the Holy Pascha- April, 11

Morning Pascha 9 AM-12 Noon Evening Pascha 6 PM-10 PM

Covenant Thursday- April, 12

Morning Pascha, Liturgy of the blessing of water &

Divine Liturgy 7 AM-2 PM Evening Pascha 6 PM-10 PM

Great Friday- April, 13 and Bright Saturday- April, 14

Morning Pascha 8 AM-6 PM

Apocalypses Vigil (Abu Ghalamsees) & Divine Liturgy 11 PM-7 AM

Easter Mass Saturday night - April, 14

Divine Liturgy 7 PM-12 Midnight

Sunday School Easter Party - Saturday April 21

After the Divine Liturgy 12 noon - 3 pm

CHURCH SERVICES, APRIL, 2001

Fridays, April 20 and 27

-7:30 PM-8:30 PM Hymns Lesson

-8:30PM-8:45PM Prayer Meeting

-8:45PM-9:30PM Bible Study

Saturday, April 21 and 28

-8:30AM-11:30AM Divine Liturgy

-11:30AM-1:00PM Sunday School & Youth group meeting