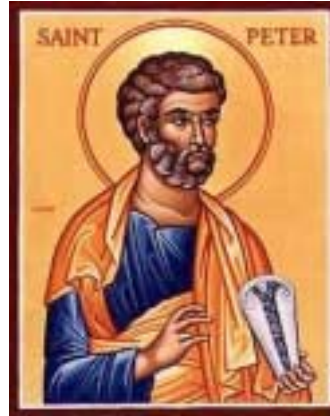


ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
Archangel Michael Church
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MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER



July 2001

Volume 2 Issue 1 9

Baona 1717



(PSALMS 127)

“Except the LORD build the house,
they labour in vain that build it: ex-
cept the LORD keep the city, the
watchman waketh but in vain. **2** It is
vain for you to rise up early, to sit
up late, to eat the bread of sorrows:
for so he giveth his beloved sleep. **3**
Lo, children are an heritage of the
LORD: and the fruit of the womb is
his reward. **4** As arrows are in the
hand of a mighty man; so are chil-
dren of the youth. **5** Happy is the
man that hath his quiver full of

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 email your request or fax it to (732) 821-1512.

False and Rejected Fast

By: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III



Not every fast is acceptable to God, for there are false fasts which are in truth not considered as such and which are rejected by God. The Bible gives us examples of these rejected fasts.

Fasting to get people's praise:

About this fast, the Lord said in His sermon on the mount: "*When you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash*

your face; that you do not appear to men to fast, but to your Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly" (Matthew 6:16-18).

A fast, which is for the people to praise, is not for God who has nothing to do with it. Therefore it is false.

The proud Pharisee's fast:

The Pharisee stood before God flaunting his virtues and saying: "*I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess.*" At the same time, he condemned the publican saying about himself "*I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican*" (Luke 18: 9-14). That is why he did not leave the temple as justified as the crushed-hearted publican.

This example shows us that fasting, that is not accompanied by humility and a crushed heart, is one refused by God because the one who performs it thinks that he is righteous and despises the others (Luke 18: 19).

A fast with a wrong aim is unacceptable:

An example of this fast was set by those Jews who banded together "*And bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy*" (Acts 23:12). Naturally their fast was a sin. More-

over, we cannot call it a fast in the spiritual sense.

The people's sinful fast during the days of the prophet Jeremiah:

The Lord did not accept this fast and spoke to Jeremiah about these people saying: *"Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offerings and oblations, I will not accept them; but I will consume them"* (Jeremiah 14: 11,12).

The Lord did not accept these people's fasts, prayers, and oblations because they led an evil life and their hearts were not pure before Him.... Thus, this fasting without repentance is unacceptable. God wants a pure heart more than He does a hungry body.

A person's fast is invalid if his heart does not abstain from sins and his tongue from untruth. Even if he gives his body up to be burned, it will not profit him (1 Corinthians 13: 3).

Fasting which is far from mercy and charity is unacceptable:

The Lord explained this point to the Prophet Isaiah, saying: *"Wherefore we have fasted, they say, and you do not see? Wherefore we have afflicted our soul, and you took no knowledge? Behold, you fast for strife and debate... Is it such a fast that I have chosen? Will you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed*

go free... Is it not to give your bread to the hungry and you bring the poor that are cast out of your house?" (Isaiah 58:37).

A Fast that does not go hand in hand with merciful deeds and a pure heart is unacceptable though it may be performed with humility, anointment, ashes, and bowing of the head.

Fasting that is not from God:

Someone may fast because doctors have ordered him to. Another may fast to have a graceful figure and good looks. Both of them are not doing it for God and so they do not get any spiritual benefit from it.

A third person may fast in the manner of a hunger strike and not with a spiritual aim or for the sake of God. A fourth may forsake food in distress or despair. We cannot consider any of them fasting in truth. Here we reiterate saying: any fasting that is not for God and that is not for a spiritual purpose cannot at all be considered a fast and is not accepted by God.

What is then a spiritual fast accepted by God:

It is one where a profound relationship with God is established and where you feel God in your life. It is a sacred period, which you feel that God owns, which is devoted in its entirety to God and throughout which the presence of God is very visible in all your behavior. Everyday of the fast your relationship with God increases and grows in a spiritual ecstasy that makes you long for your fast to stretch and become endless.

St. Bishoy

The Beloved of Our Good Savior

By Mary Ann Michail



Anba Pishoy was born in the town of Shesna to a family of six children. One night, an angel appeared to his mother in a dream and asked her to give one of her children to the Lord. The dream pleased her and the Lord then picked Anba Pishoy. However, Anba Pishoy was physically very weak, so his mother asked the Lord to pick a stronger child to serve Him, but the angel insisted that Anba Pishoy was the one the Lord had chosen. Anba Pishoy went on to take the vows of monasticism and devoted his life to God.

Anba Pishoy was a great preacher. He exemplified the teachings of the Bible and lived his life accordingly. Anba Pishoy taught many people the ways of the Bible and convinced them that, with Christ, they would find salvation. Anba Pishoy's only desire was to see Jesus. While serving God, Anba Pishoy was promised by the Lord that He would appear to him on the mountain of Sheheet. So he gathered the monks and told them the good news and everyone became joyful and anxious to see the Lord. On the appointed day, the monks were in a great hurry to see Jesus. On their way, they passed by a man who was trying to join them, but had great difficulty because of his age. The old man kept reaching out for help up the mountain, but no one paid him any attention. When Anba Pishoy passed by him, he stopped and carried him on his shoulders. While doing so, he felt that the old man was becoming lighter and lighter. As he turned to see what was happening, he realized that it was Jesus Christ, the one that everybody ignored. Anba Pishoy received his blessing from the Lord then died in peace giving his soul the freedom to go and live with the one he always wanted to be with, Jesus Christ.

Short Story

The Fork

By: Christine Michael

There once was a woman that was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Knowing from her doctor that she had only one month to live, she made an appointment to meet with her priest from the church she attended regularly. Upon meeting, they discussed any final wishes that the woman wanted done before her death and the funeral service that would take place. She explained all the details that she wanted to occur at the funeral and requested to be buried with her Bible in her hand.

Then, when the priest was ready to leave her house, she suddenly remembered something important that she wished to have at the service. "There is just one more thing father," she told him. "What do you wish for?" the priest replied. "I would like to be buried with the Bible in my hand and a fork in my other hand" she answered. The priest was very surprised with her reply and didn't know what to tell her. The woman told him, "father, in attending all the church socials, festivals, and celebrations, I always remembered people telling me 'keep your fork' after we have completed the dinner because dessert would be served next." The woman smiled as she continued to tell the priest, "This would be the best part of the celebration because I always knew that something better was coming after."

"So father, my last wish is for you to tell my message to everyone at the service when they ask 'why is she holding a fork?' You must tell them 'keep your fork, the best is yet to come!'"

Upon hearing this, the priest's eyes welled up with tears because this would be the very last time he'd be with his beloved daughter. As he embraced her, he knew that she was ready to pass away to the 'better place.'

At the funeral, the people did indeed ask about the fork and as she wished, he passed on her message and told them about what she told him. They all could not stop thinking about her view of death and her symbolism behind the fork.

Therefore, next time you reach for your fork, just remember, the best is yet to come!

BIBLE STUDY



LETTER OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

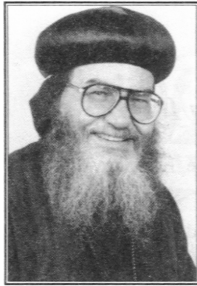
BY: DAVID GIRGIS

Author and Date: St. Paul identifies himself as the author of Second Thessalonians, and even calls attention to his own handwriting at the end of the letter. Some modern scholars have questioned the letter's authenticity. Some have asserted that First and Second Thessalonians teach contradictory doctrines about the Second coming. The first letter is said to teach an imminent return of Christ, but the second to include an intervening period of "lawlessness" before Christ's return. A closer examination of the question reveals that the instructions of the two letters concerning the end times are complimentary, not contradictory. First Thessalonians emphasizes the suddenness of the Lord's coming to events that will occur before Jesus returns. Since St. Paul wrote Second Thessalonians to correct a misunderstanding that had arisen from his first letter, the difference between the two letters is understandable. Second Thessalonians was written from Corinth shortly after First Thessalonians, or around A.D. 51 or 52.

Background: St. Paul had to write this letter to correct false ideas about the Second Coming that had arisen in the church. St. Paul had encountered stiff opposition when he first preached the gospel in Thessalonica, forcing him to flee at night to Berea. His travel brought him to Corinth. From that city, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to ascertain the condition of the church there. Timothy returned with an encouraging report; the Thessalonian Christians were enduring despite persecution. Not only that, but the testimony of the Thessalonians' steadfast faith was spreading throughout Macedonia. St. Paul wrote to encourage the young church and to answer a few questions that they had sent with Timothy.

Themes: In Second Thessalonians, St. Paul stated emphatically that he had never taught that the day of the Lord had already come. To counter false doctrine, St. Paul gave the Thessalonians a good dose of the truth, explaining to them the emergence of the man of lawlessness and the prevalence of sin during the end times. Furthermore, he reminded them they had been called by God and saved through Christ's work. In view of this fact, he exhorted them to stand firm in Christ and to work hard, always patiently waiting for Jesus' return.

From The Nelson study Bible: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville



Coptic youth ask **His Grace Bishop Moussa**

“ From the youth Bishopric web site”

Question: Why are the icons in the church anointed with the Myron oil?

His Grace Bishop Moussa: The Myron gives the icon a spirit; it is a declaration that this saint is living and is among us. The icon of Jesus Christ is also anointed with the holy Myron oil. It keeps the mystery of the presence of the saint inside the church with us. We even consecrate the curtains and the walls and the vessels of the church in order to spiritualize them, because SPIRIT means life. When we ask this saint to intercede on our behalf, they can surely hear us, and they can pray on our behalf.

Question: Is all the turmoil and violence and sin in the world today a sign of the Second Coming?

His Grace Bishop Moussa: You may consider it a sign, for there are many signs but the coming of the Lord will be a total surprise. We do not have the capacity to determine an exact date. There is one sign that has not occurred yet, and this is the conversion of the Jews to Christianity (Romans 11). We are not sure how this will happen. Another sign is the coming of the Antichrist; whether this be a religion, a person, or otherwise, is not clear. What is required of me is that I be ready and alert and repentant.

Question: Why are men given Holy Communion before women?

His Grace Bishop Moussa: Simply because women are more humble than men! So I ask you to please stay humble and accept this regulation. Out of humility we do not think about who is first, but we prefer who is last.

—

Mary and Martha

Luke 10: 38-42

Read the Scripture and then circle each word from the word bank hidden in the puzzle. Words may appear forward or backwards, moving up, down, or diagonally.


Y P L E H M Y S E L F M B A F
A R I Y A D I S C I P L E S E
W H S R A S C N H O S E T E E
N W T H N E S O H C A D T T T
I H E M O H S I B E I A E T T
A E N N E K A T R S A M R N D
I T I H L W W A T H I N G S I
Y T N E O L L R N E E D E D O
R E G R R N A A L L E T O T P
A S K E D C B P V I L L A G E
M P E T T A D E R E W S N A N
S U S E J K S R E N O H A W E
A Y D R F H O P C A M E I R D
Y A W A E W A Y O M A H E M R
E M A C S I S T E R N T F E L

Word Bank (in **bold** letters)

"As **Jesus** and His **disciples** were on their **way** (2), He **came** to a **village** where a **woman** named **Martha** **opened** her **home** to **Him**. **She** (3) had a **sister** called **Mary**, who sat at the Lord's **feet listening** to what He said. But Martha was **distracted** by all the **preparations** that had to be **made**. She came to Him and **asked**, 'Lord, don't you **care** that my sister has **left** me to do the **work** by **myself**? **Tell her** to **help** me!' 'Martha, Martha,' the Lord **answered**, 'you are **worried** and **upset** about many **things**, but only one thing is **needed**. Mary has **chosen** what is **better**, and it will not be **taken away** from her." Luke 10:38-42"

**“ Unless the LORD builds the house, they
labor in vain who build it“**
(Ps. 127:1)

By the grace of God, the church has begun the process of purchasing a 15-acre parcel of land directly off of Route 9 for \$500,000 dollars.

- The Church is starting several fundraisers such as: the sales of Egyptian groceries; purchasing gift certificates for local stores and supermarkets; a youth Bowl-a-Thon and more. Your continued prayers and participation will ensure the raising of an Altar to the Lord in Howell.
- The Graduation Party for the high school and college graduates has been scheduled for Saturday July 21 after the Divine Liturgy at 11:30 AM. 
- The youth of the Archangel Michael Church have recently started doing midnight praises every Friday night from 9:00pm to 11:00pm. 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.



*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.*

CHURCH SERVICES, JULY, 2001

Fridays, July 6, 13, 20 and 27

-7:30 PM-8:30 PM Hymns Lesson
-8:30PM-8:45PM Prayer Meeting
-8:45PM-9:30PM Bible Study
-9:30PM-11:30PM Midnight Praises

Saturday, July 7, 14, 21 and 28

-8:30AM-11:30AM Divine Liturgy
-11:30AM-1:00PM Sunday School & Youth group meeting

COPTIC FEASTS

July 1 ——— Martyrdom of St. Mousa the strong
July 12 ——— Apostles' Feast
July 14 ——— Departure of St. Shenouda the Archmandrite
July 15 ——— Departure of St. Pishoy