

Life of Thanksgiving **H.H. Pope Shenouda III**

The highest level of thanksgiving is to give thanks for tribulations. We thank God for the tribulations from which He saved us, and this is the least. But, what is greater than this is also thank Him for the prevailing tribulations which we bear and live in. And with faith we believe it is for our benefit. To endure and bear the tribulations is a virtue. To be content with the tribulation and accept it is a greater virtue. And more important is to give thanks for the tribulation, to thank with joy and not as mere duty.

Believe me, if we thank for the gifts only, then our love is for the gifts not for God their Giver! But, if we give thanks to God for the tribulation we prove that we love God Himself and not His gift. We do not only love Him for what He gives us (wealth, generosity, comforts of life) or what He grants us (calmness and peace). God only is our goal whether He gave us tribulations or good things we thank Him on every occasion and in every condition. We thank Him whatever happens, and do not allow mishaps to lessen our faith in God's protection or lessen our thanks to Him. We do not allow such events to take away our peace from us, or our joy in the Lord. We rejoice in the Lord always - whatever the outer circumstances may be - and live in peace with God and man.

This thanksgiving and joy has its effects on others. And therefore, when they see our thanks over the tribulation, our calmness and joy, they are comforted. Assuredly, when they see our peace of heart, they will be consoled by the spiritual principles presented in the Bible through the example of our life and behavior. It is said that the fruit of the Spirit is "Love, Joy, Peace...". He who possesses such fruit, he gives thanks to God... In tribulations, we see the hand of the Lord working. It shows us the Lord and His work, His coming into our lives and His protection. It shows us the power of God and His wonders. It gives us spiritual experiences which we could not attain without the tribulation. Also, it sifts the church and separates the tares from the wheat. For all these reasons and others, we give thanks to God for tribulation and consider it a blessing. Of course, he who gives thanks over tribulation shall give thanks for all other things.

Pg. 4



St. George & St. Shenouda Coptic Orthodox Church Bulletin

Dec 2012

St. Gregory Nazienzen

On the Nativity of Christ

Christ is born, give glory; Christ is from the heavens, go to meet him; Christ is on earth, be lifted up. "Sing to the Lord, all the earth," and, to say both together, "Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice," for the heavenly one is now earthly. Christ is in the flesh, exult with trembling and joy; trembling because of sin, joy because of hope. Christ comes from a Virgin; women, practice virginity, that you may become mothers of Christ. Who would not worship the one "from the beginning"? Who would not glorify "the Last"?

.... This is our festival, this is the feast we celebrate today, in which God comes to live with human beings, that we may journey toward God, or return—for to speak thus is more exact—that laying aside the old human being we may be clothed with the new, and that as in Adam

Pg. 1

we have died so we may live in Christ, born with Christ and crucified with him, buried with him and rising with him. For it is necessary for me to undergo the good turnaround, and as painful things came from more pleasant things, so out of painful things more pleasant things must return...Therefore we celebrate the feast not like a pagan festival but in a godly manner, not in a worldly way but in a manner above the world....

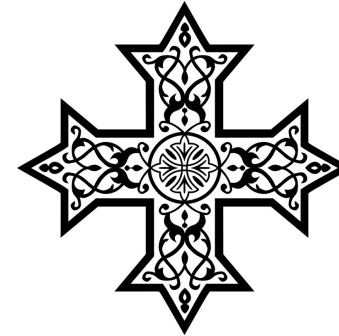
And how will this be? Let us not put wreaths on our front doors, or assemble troupes of dancers, or decorate the streets. Let us not feast the eyes, or mesmerize the sense of hearing, or make effeminate the sense of smell, or prostitute the sense of taste, or gratify the sense of touch. These are the paths to evil, and entrances of sin. Let us not be softened by delicate and extravagant clothing, whose beauty is in its inutility, or by the transparency of stones, of the brilliance of gold, or the artificiality of colors that falsify natural beauty and are invented in opposition to the [divine] image; nor by "revelries and drunkenness" to which I know "debauchery and licentiousness" are linked, since from bad teachers come bad teachings, or rather from evil seeds come evil harvests.... Let us not assess the bouquet of wines, the concoctions of chefs, the great cost of perfumes....For to me all that is superfluous and beyond need in dissoluteness, particularly when others are hungry and in want, who are of the same clay and the same composition as ourselves.

Pg. 2

Book Review

On The Incarnation
St. Athanasius
ISBN: 0-88141-427-1

Any Christian will tell you that "Christ died for me," "He's my savior," and that "He's my redeemer." That's all well and true, but what does that even mean? If Christ died in our place, what was it that necessitated our death to begin with? Did God really have to become a man? Couldn't someone else do it? In this book our 20th pope, St Athanasius, answers these questions and more regarding one of the most fundamental Christian dogmas: The Incarnation of the Logos.



Contemplation Verse

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
--Hebrews 4:12

Pg. 3