Warm Hearts In A Cold-Hearted World
Winter months can be brutally cold at times in different parts of the world, but weather climate is more tolerable than cold-hearted people. People can purchase outer gear to insulate themselves, but what about emotional frostiness? We hear of so many callous acts committed against innocent victims, children, spouses, and the list goes on. Christians are different.

A kind warm heart, a gentle warm hand, a tender warm voice are the first characteristics people ought to notice about us. This warm-heartedness in us is not generated from us, but from God in us. His word in the Holy Scripture, and a life of repentance is the essence of this warm and heartening energy. This we learn from the eloquence of speech filled by the Holy Spirit and divine wisdom of our early church father, Abba Poemen:

“The nature of water is soft and that of stone is hard. But if a bottle is hung above the stone, allowing the water to fall drop by drop, it wears away even the hardest stone. So it is with the word of God. It is soft, and our heart is very hard. But the man who hears the word of God often opens his heart to the fear of the Lord.”

Let us consider the many thoughts shared in this edition of the Mighty Arrows Magazine to help us assess our true function in society. If nothing else, we can be the warm heart in a cold-hearted world.

God bless you,

Bishop Youssef
Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States
CONTENTS

MIGHTY ARROWS MAGAZINE

4 PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS’ FIRST COMING - PART 2. Fundamental Realities for every Christian to Know. By Mounir Ragheb.


9 A MOTHER’S HEART. “Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.” By Germene and Mariam Guirgis.

10 HOT, NOT WARM. Feeding The Fire. By Boulis Ibrahim.

12 THE TOWER AND THE WELL.

14 CONTEMPORARY COPTIC MARTYRS. Statement by H.G. Bishop Youssef on the Botrosiya Martyrs.

15 “LIGHT OF THE WORLD”. “Living as God’s children in the contemporary world.” By Theopeste Kerelos.

17 ACHIEVING A WARM HEART. The benefit of pursuing a warm heart. By J.D.

18 Questions & Answers

19 - 23 DIOCESE PHOTOS. Photos of events from all over the diocese.
Prophecies about Jesus’ First Coming - Part 2
Fundamental Realities for every Christian to Know

By Mounir Ragheb

Jesus’ Birth- Jeremiah was told about the root and the holy name of Jesus. This is when God revealed the following to him: “‘The days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘That I will raise up to David a Branch of righteousness’ A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth…. This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness”.1 Who else can be described or will be designated as such?! Moreover, three other prophecies predicted that the Messiah would be born of a woman2, would be born of a virgin 3 and would be born in Bethlehem. “Out of you [Bethlehem] will come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”4 Also, He will be called Immanuel,5 and He will flee to Egypt in His infancy.6 Moreover, it was foretold that His ministry will begin in Galilee.7 All of which were completed to the letter.

Furthermore, predictions that would point to Jesus’ characteristics and purposes were presented by Isaiah when saying, “For to us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”8 In addition, around 500 BC, God clearly declared through Malachi that a messenger will precede the arrival of the Messiah: “Behold, I will send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming.”9

Around that time, Israel was longing and thirsty, prepared, expecting, and waiting for the Messiah to show up. However, from the 5th century BC on, no prophet communicated with the people of Israel, used as a stoppage period of prophecies, pausing eagerly for the arrival of the mighty and Savior Messiah. Even the Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well, at variance with the Jews, was aware of Jesus’ arrival, saying to Him: “I know that Messiah is coming.”10

Jesus’ Ministry- The purpose of the arrival of the Messiah, in
God’s plan, was determined before the establishment of the earth. His great, widespread mission was not only the restoration of Israel for their salvation, but also provided the light to the Gentiles, reaching the ends of the earth. Restoration inclusion was God’s fair and just plan, as expressed clearly by Isaiah: “To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel.”

The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.”

The fulfillment of this prophecy was achieved by the spread of God’s word in Asia (i.e. China, India, the Philippines, and Indonesia), Africa, and Latin America, in addition to the old world.

Salvation from death was Jesus’ main intent of His coming to us, as promised: “I will redeem them from death.” Job, in the midst of his suffering and pain, had foreseen the redeemer coming to the earth, when saying, “I know my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth.”

What is also significant is when Zechariah assured humanity that the Messiah would bring salvation.

Additionally, the purpose of the Lord’s first coming was not to judge (e.g. not condemning the woman at the well), but rather for Him to be judged: “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

In sum, the salvation and redemption of all humanity—the Israelites, God’s people, as well as the Gentiles—were the main purposes for the arrival of God’s Son to the earth. No ordinary human, nor a special prophet, was competent or capable enough to achieve human salvation and save souls from death.

Jesus’ Suffering—“For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet.” That ferocious attack was declared in advance before it happened to the Lord Jesus Christ. The realization of this prophecy is evidence and documentation for those who claim that Jesus was not the true and real Messiah as described to them in the Old Testament. Accordingly, they need to realize that the crucifixion and piercing of hands and feet are no longer practiced beyond that historical era, and never will be. This is because it was a unique method of punishment to crucify criminals, as practiced by the system of the Roman Civilization.

Jesus’ barbaric cruel treatment was beyond human endurance, as demonstrated by David to happen. It was foreseen that He would be scorned, despised, mocked, and insulted: “They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.” It was also foreseen that He would be slapped, mocked, and spat on. Likewise, it was known 600 years beforehand that He would be betrayed by a friend for thirty pieces of silver.

All of these are prophecies about Jesus that were fulfilled.

Jesus’ Death and Resurrection—Besides those predictions, Jesus’ exact time of crucifixion and the destruction of the temple of Israel were envisioned in Daniel in the 6th century BC: “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off...And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” This prophecy has been fulfilled literally. Jesus’ three days in the grave were pictured by Jonah, as well as His coming back to life to preach repentance.

How was Jesus’ resurrection predicted? King David had foreseen it: “O Lord, You brought my soul up from grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.” So far, according to both the Old and New Testaments, no human has ever been spared from the grave, except for what we know in the New Testament of Lazarus being spared from the grave by the power of Jesus Christ Himself. Likewise, Jesus’ ascendance into heaven was foreseen by Daniel, as follows: “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which
shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.”  

25 Until that time, being spared from death and resurrection to heaven were not heard of or experienced on earth as they happened to the Lord Jesus.

The resurrection proved not only that Jesus Christ was truly divine, but was also evidence that He is the mighty Son of God with the Holy nature of God Himself.  

26 Also, the resurrection proved power to forgive sins and power over death: “...Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more...” accordingly, defeating God’s enemy, Satan.

The resurrection is so unique, confirming Jesus’ deity. Also, it is an affirmation of God’s plan that Christ would die as an innocent sacrificial lamb, as a substitute payment, for the sins of humans. It was unique as an occurrence that had no precedent, unheard of as an incident. That instance never happened before, it is the first resurrection as “the first fruits” for there will be many who will follow after Him as He promised. Those “many who will follow” will be believers who will walk behind Him and stay on His road.

The resurrection was necessary to substantiate that He was who He claimed to be, the Son of God. As a result, we will be saved from the wrath of God through Him. The resurrection was also necessary in order to fulfill biblical prophecies, accumulated over more than 1,000 years. Furthermore, it is a necessary element of a saving faith. The resurrection is a matter of eternal life, eternal destiny, eternal existence; which humanity will encounter, in His second coming that will come.

**Currently the population of the world is more than 7.4 Billion (B) persons. Asia’s population is 4.427 B (China, 1.357 B. of whom 100 Million (M) Christians (C); India 1.252 B., 28 M. C.; Philippines 98 M., 86 M. C.; Indonesia, 249 M., 45 M. C.; Korea 50 M., 15 M. C.; and Pakistan, 182 M., 3 M. C). This is while Africa’s population is 1.111 B., of whom 420 M. C., Latin America, 6,277, of whom close to 5,649 M. C. (90%); that is in addition to the Old World. The issue is that Christianity and the Gospel of Jesus Christ are spreading all over the earth, as was prophesied.

1 Jeremiah 23:5-6
2 Genesis 3:15
3 Isaiah 7:14
4 Micah 5:2
5 Isaiah 7:14
6 Hosea 11:1
7 Isaiah 9:1-2
The Adventure of Faith – 2

By James Helmy

There is a memorable scene in that wonderful book, The Robe, in which the protagonist, Marcellus, a secular Roman tribune, spends the night at an inn. The morning silence is broken by the sound of savage commands and thudding blows, and Marcellus goes to the window to see what all the commotion is about. He finds a dozen Roman legionaries, in full battle array, fiercely clubbing a group of people who were discovered to be Christians. One legionnaire bursts into Marcellus’ room and bawls, “Who are you?” “I am a Roman citizen,” replies Marcellus, “and you would do well, fellow, to show better manners when you enter the room of a Tribune.” “We are rounding up all the Christians in the city, and I am sorry, for you are not a Christian,” says the Legionnaire as he turned to leave. “Stay!” shouts Marcellus, “How do you know I am not a Christian? Can’t a Roman Tribune be a Christian?”

The world does not like us. We often console ourselves of this fact by citing Christ’s famous remark to His disciples: “The world will hate you, because it hated Me first.” The problem is that we don’t fall squarely into the category indicated by this prophecy. I intentionally say that the world dislikes us, because I don’t think it really hates us. The world had treated Christ and His disciples with a venomous and implacable enmity; the previous excerpt from The Robe vividly captures the intensity of this feeling running through society back then. But today, society looks upon us with a feeling more akin to disdain or resentment. The world once feared Christ and His disciples; now it merely looks down on us. The reason, I think, is that while we openly claim to be “not of this world,” our lifestyles betray a comfortable worldliness, and society is repulsed by this two-faced lifestyle.

Roman society in the first
few centuries of our era hated the Church because it was so thoroughly counter-cultural. If you read through the epistles of St. Paul with a little attention, you will realize how uncompromising he is in his moral demands of the churches. The Church was supposed to run straight against the currents of the time. But today we drift peacefully along with the world, with just an occasional protest against this or that trend. The church of the first century was proactively subverting the world—in a spiritual sense. Today we are definitively reactionary—that is, when the world does something that offends us, we complain and grumble, and teach our kids “not to be like them.” Meanwhile, we ourselves possess so little real spiritual energy. We don’t like to be pestered by too many religious demands. We just want to enjoy ourselves as much as possible within legal boundaries. Above all, we fear inconvenience. If there is a worldly comfort or amusement that is not explicitly prohibited by religious law, then we seize and consume it with a fury equal to that of the world. It is hard to be witnesses to the world when in fact we’re covertly its comrades and accomplices.

There is another memorable scene in a book I cannot now recall, in which a detachment of Soviet guards during the Stalin regime storm into a Russian Orthodox Church during the Divine Liturgy. The frightened worshipers are huddled into a corner by the barrels of the soldiers’ rifles, and are given two options: they may either renounce their faith and leave the building alive, or profess Christ and be shot on the spot. The majority of them disown their faith and escape, while a remnant remains, who are then shuffled off into an enclosed room. The soldiers enter the room, shut and lock the door behind them, and cock their rifles. The victims are given one last chance to recant their faith and leave before being executed. Not one of them moves. After a tense pause, the soldiers put down their guns and say, “Now, please tell us about Christ. We want to hear about Him only from those who are willing to die for their faith.”

The remarkable thing about the believers in these stories is that they were just simple men and women. The majority were not philosophers or logicians or historians or anything impressive at all. How is it that their faith, unadorned by scholarship or mental acumen, was able to fortify them so astoundingly against their adversary, and make them strong in the face of death; while our faith—sustained by so much study and apologetics—is barely capable of lifting us from our couches to go attend a liturgy? The answer may be in a slogan I heard in a recent sermon: “Lots of information, but no transformation.” Or, as St. Paul puts it, “...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

I particularly feel guilty of this sad truth. Yes, one may be forever learning new and interesting facts about biblical interpretation, church history, dogmatic theology, and all the other paraphernalia of religion—without actually being changed inwardly. It is a frightening prospect. A person begins his religious scholarship, thinking that the more knowledge he amasses, and the better the facts he takes grasp of, the closer he will be to the faith that overcomes the world; but after years of study and hundreds of books, he finds himself no nearer the truth than when he first began. The realization comes as a shock, but also as a second chance. One then closes his books on miaphysitism, hermeneutics, and Aquinas, and goes back to the simply-stated verses: “Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.’”

The complicated theological books certainly have their place; but if they are not preceded by genuine inward transformation, they become just a heap of useless information. I don’t think there is any other way to change the world than by challenging it. And, in the last analysis, the courage to challenge it will not come from books, but from a changed heart.

1 John 15:18
2 2 Tim 3:7
3 Matthew 18:2, 3
Warm hearts are merciful hearts. Merciful hearts are loving hearts. And love is the essence of God. He who acquires love acquires the greatest of gifts God has bestowed on us in His beloved Son on the cross. Examining the Bible, we find many examples of warm hearts that brooded great characters.

Jochebed, for example, was Moses' mother. She gave birth to him and hid him for three months, driven by her loving, compassionate, motherly heart. It was a cruel environment she was in; soldiers seeking to kill male babies upon their birth; a heathen world who did not know nor fear God; hearts of stone protective of power, authority and earthly kingdom. How did Moses escape this deadly fate? It is through God's providence as He gave Jochebed the wisdom to keep her child for three months and then, when she could not hide him anymore, she made an ark of bulrushes and placed the baby in it. The Lord also gave Miriam, Moses' sister, the kind heart to watch the ark and follow it to know what would happen to her brother. Through her wisdom she was able to suggest to Pharaoh's daughter a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby. She brought her mother, Jochebed³.

In that way, this mother was not deprived from watching her son grow, but had the chance to raise him and instill in him the love of God and His people, the Hebrews. It was through this mother's passionate heart, and that of the sister, that God prepared a great leader that would save His people from the bondage of the Egyptians.

Another example is St. Monica, St. Augustine's mother. She cried for her son's salvation night and day, with unceasing tears and prayers. St. Augustine was drawn to the earthly wisdom, philosophy and the search for truth away from The Truth. He joined the Manichaean cult, a dualistic religious system made of pagan beliefs and philosophy.⁴ Despite the darkness in which her son lived, St. Monica never stopped pleading for God's mercy upon him. She was reassured by a Bishop Ambrose of Milan that “the son of so many tears could not perish.” She had a fiery spirit, a loving heart that never gave up, and her prayers were answered to bear fruits. St. Augustine became one of the greatest saints in the Church—a “Saul” who became a “Paul.”

There are many more examples of such warm-hearted mothers and other people throughout history, in a world that lives away from the Light and the Truth. They are the light in darkness, the oasis in deserts, the kind hearts and shoulders to lean on in hardships. They are people who do the work of God in privacy. They do not sound a trumpet before them because they do not seek their reward from men.⁵ They serve humanity in different avenues: healthcare needs, financial needs, and spiritual needs. They are warm hearts seeking to fulfill justice and providing for others without being prompted to do so through good deeds, however small they may be. They are merciful and compassionate hearts that empathize with those around them and hurry to offer help no matter what the cost may be.

Let us strive to be those tender, kind, and warm hearts after our Master's heart, despite the dark, cold and stone-dead hearts that may be around us. Let us be like Him who lived on this earth healing all sickness, fulfilling the needs, comforting the widows, and visiting those who are imprisoned. May the Lord grant us this kind of love and hearts of flesh instead of the hearts of stone. Amen.

1 Proverbs 3:3
2 Exodus 1:15-16
3 Exodus 2:3-9
4 http://www.copticchurch.net/topics/synexarion/augustine.html
5 Matthew 6:2

Photo Credit: St. Monica Icon - http://www.ukcopticicons.com/private-commissions.html
The Bible advises us to be ‘hot’ in spirit. In fact, in the Lord’s admonishment to the Church of the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:16, He noted a preference to being ‘hot’ or even ‘cold’ rather than to ‘lukewarm,’ which is a spiritual state likened by God as a cause of nausea and vomiting. The reason for this church’s tepidity is that they thought they had sufficiency in everything, even to matters of the spirit. They thought they were “rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” while the truth in the eyes of the Lord was that they were “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” From whence the Lord counseled them, an excellent counsel, to buy from Him ‘gold refined in the fire’ to be rich, ‘white garments’ to cloth their nakedness, and eye ‘salve’ to see. Gold is the sign of spiritual fervor, a meek and quiet spirit and complete acceptance of the kingship of God and the good works of faith. White garments are the sign of purity and life of righteousness that has been cleansed with the blood of the Lamb. Finally, eye salve is the sign of internal vision and spiritual discernment of knowing right from wrong. The Lord’s counsel was essentially for them to repent, to restore their heart to God through the proclamation that they belong to Him and not to their own selves (His Kingship). He exhorts them to lead a righteous life and to open their spiritual sights in order to perceive and discern the things from above and the wondrous spiritual gifts that God had given them. This also tells us what we need to do if we ever become spiritually ‘lukewarm’. The Lord has given us a wealth of channels of grace in the holy Church. These are the seven Holy Mysteries and the fellowship of the faithful. Through them He has not left us orphans, but is with us all the days and until the end of times. The seven Holy Mysteries are: Baptism, Anointment, Confession, Eucharist, Matrimony, Unction of the sick, and Priesthood. They all involve mystical and unobservable acts of the Holy Spirit through an observable material medium that suits our human nature. Baptism, Anointment and Priesthood are performed only once, for once is sufficient. As
Priesthood, Matrimony and Unction of the sick relate to special events for some, but not necessarily all, believers, I will focus on the others.

Baptism is the first of all the Holy Mysteries and the door to salvation, whereby the new believer (or child of believers) is immersed thrice in anointed and prayed-upon water in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Baptism the believer dies with Him (and puts off the nature of the ‘old man’ with his deeds) and rises with Him (to the newness of life), akin to a lively chick breaking out of the inert crust of an eggshell. It is the second birth and the entry to the membership of The Body of Christ – the Holy Church. The believer is then ready to be a temple for the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of the Anointment, which usually follows baptism immediately. It is the confirmation of the indwelling of God and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

The Holy Mysteries of Confession and the Eucharist can be repeated throughout the believer’s life. In the Holy Mystery of Confession the believer repents from a particular sin and Christ grants forgiveness through absolution from the priest.

Through Confession, the Holy Spirit restores this believer to a place of blessedness in God’s sight. Beside forgiveness, Confession is also essential for internal psychological healing of hurt emotions and damaged feelings, as the Bible says in James 5:16, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed”.

The Holy Eucharist is also of special significance. It is the Holy Mystery of partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ. As the priest says in the (Anamnesis) Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil, “For every time you eat of this bread and drink of this cup you proclaim My death, confess My resurrection and remember Me until I come.” Proclaiming, confessing and remembering are works of faith. This is the food of life, which “is given for us for salvation, remission of sins, and eternal life to those who partake of Him” (“The Confession,” Liturgy of St Basil). As the Lord instituted, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”

The Eucharist is the Mystery of thanksgiving, the presence of Christ, and the celebration of the unity of Christ and His body—the holy Church. It is the bread and wine of life because although their apparent material is made of flour, water and grape juice, they transubstantiate into the Body and Blood of Christ by the unobservable mystical work of the Holy Spirit at consecration. Material bread alone may sustain the body for a while, but does not give eternal life, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”

Thus, partaking of the Holy Mysteries is essential for keeping us linked, bonded and rooted in the Tree of Life, who is Christ, and alive by the nourishment of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and His Body and Blood.

In addition, we should not grow complacent knowing that we have these wonderful and holy gifts and channels of grace, but be continually mindful of God and His love. This we do by always seeking to know God and feeding His holy fire within us with the right fuel of prayers and fasting, hymns and spiritual songs, giving alms and offering acts of kindness and charity, ...etc. Moreover, we should “be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” as the Lord said in John 16:33. With these gifts and channels, the Holy Fire will keep our hearts in spiritual fervor and communion with Him throughout our days.

1 Revelations 3:17
2 Colossians 3:9
3 Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12
4 John 3:5
5 John 6:53
6 1 Corinthians 12:27
7 Luke 4:4
The Tower and The Well

By His Grace Bishop Youssef

“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”¹

Think of the many times that you felt crushed when someone dealt with you with unexpected sternness. The sharp words ring in your ears like a crackling whip and the color of their eyes enflame into a volcanic red. The angelic image you once beheld dearly is suddenly transposed leaving you on the edge of confusion and pain. It is a hard thing to bear when it comes from someone dear to you. You question your relationship, if ever there really was one? Was this just an acquaintance of convenience? Was I deceived? Was I used? You brand yourself a fool for trusting, believing, loving, and caring for this beloved who did not turn the other cheek, but rather verbally smote you on both. You make some choice either at that moment or as your wounds heal to define your situation, gather strength, find stability, and move on. Some will become bitter and impose a similar pattern of cruelty on others. Some will become better and cognizant of this negative impact and vow never to use it on others.

Are you building a tower or are you digging a well? We need to lift each other up. We need to build each other up. A warm heart is like a ladder that reaches upward to God’s heart. “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”² Cold-heartedness is a deep well in which harmful words thrust their victims. Can you imagine using the same tone and facial expression with Christ or with someone whom you highly respected? There is no need to search for excuses. They are readily provided when you are sincerely loved though you may have wronged the one who loves you. Thus, do not trample on the lowly, and do not forget Him who gave the example. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”³ A warm heart is a rare gem in a world that is filled with calamities. If you thought you could lose a beloved who bore the brunt of your wrath, you may rethink the carelessness by which you choose harsh rebuke. Would
The Tower and The Well

By His Grace Bishop Youssef

The Tower and The Well

Special Featured Article

it surprise you that this same person loves you just the same as if nothing happened? No, such harsh words could never have been released from your lips? No, this could not come from you. There is no need to make extravagant travels just to appease you. A few minutes with you is cherished as gold. The thought of you is just as wonderful as ever!

Who is this person that turned the other cheek? Yes, it is the same one whom you loved, the same one who proudly bore the name of Christ, the same one who essentially attracted you in the beginning of a loving but envied relationship. The devil is clever, but Christ is just. What kind of person have you allowed yourself to become? Are you now pompous and elevating those like yourself? Why has your warm heart been tempered that you easily stomp on the one who strove to lift you? You are better than that. Let your heart be enflamed with the love that enabled you to be utterly desirable and satiating to everyone in your presence. Christ is in you. Do not hide Him. Do not hide in pretext. It is His love that was reflected in you. It is His love that attracted others to you. A candle not only brings light but also warmth. This cold world is in dire need of tender hearts. We are witnesses that this kind of tender-hearted people can exist even in our convoluted world today, not only in the clergy and religious, but also in the average laity, who may not be well versed in Scriptural aptitude, but know tenderness—a genuine sweetness evinced in smiles, embrace, encouragement, and Christ-centered love. Reap this love from genuine warm hearts and do not gamble with souls in this cold-hearted world.

1 Proverbs 15:1
2 Matthew 25:14-46
3 Matthew 11:29
A Statement from His Grace Bishop Youssef regarding the bombing at St. Peter Coptic Orthodox Church in Abassiya, Egypt on December 11, 2016, coinciding with the blessed month of Koiahk 2, 1733 A.M.

Today, heaven’s gates opened wide to many victims of terrorism, angels placed the crowns of martyrdom upon their heads, and our Lord Jesus Christ welcomed them into the paradise of joy. Shortly after receiving the Holy Eucharist, a bomb exploded on the side of this ancient church, where women, infants, and young children await their turn to partake of the Holy Eucharist. There is no God in any religion that can accept this savagery, for it is incomprehensible that heaven can be comprised of murderers. Where is the bravery in these atrocities? Where is the heroism in such violent acts? Bravery and heroism are marked by the courage of all Christians, regardless of their dire circumstances, whether poor, ill, or disadvantaged, but greet each day with faith and fill every church in this great land that has been blessed by the blood of the martyrs for more than 2000 years. We are not praying for our martyrs, for they have won the kingdom of God. We are praying and fasting for those who commit these cowardice acts and hide behind the cloak of religion to destroy a nation trying to recover from years of the poison of extremism. We are praying and fasting, not for our martyrs, for they have obtained forgiveness through the body and blood of Christ, but for those who do not know the meaning of love and will not be forgiven until they learn the power of love. We are praying and fasting, not for our martyrs, for they held their children in their arms so that they would grow in their footsteps and follow the rules of love and forgiveness, but for those who are steered by hate and teach their children to kill. We are praying and fasting for the healing of all Egyptians, Christians and Muslims, that we may live together in peace, safety, and civility for the good of all citizens. We are praying and fasting, not for our martyrs, for they followed God’s commandments, but for those who do not denounce these horrific crimes, that will worsen matters by not taking a stand. We are praying and fasting that the Lord will be swift in hearing the call of the martyrs’ blood and bring these murderers to justice here on earth and in eternity. May the Lord comfort the families and loved ones of our beloved martyrs and may He root out all aggression from His beloved Egypt, and may He heal the pain of all Egyptians suffering from the consequences of terrorism.

“And when you hear that we look for a kingdom, you suppose, without making any inquiry, that we speak of a human kingdom. Instead, we speak of that which is with God, as can be shown from the confession of their faith made by those who are charged with being Christians, even though they know that death is the punishment awarded to those who so confess. For if we looked for a human kingdom, we would deny our Christ, so that we might not be killed. We would try to escape detection, so that we might obtain what we hope for. But since our thoughts are not fixed on the present, we are not concerned when men cut us off; since death is a debt which must at all events be paid” (Justin Martyr, c. AD 150, First Apology 11).

We ask the Lord to protect His church and the Christians all over the world, to grant His peace upon us, to support our beloved father and patriarch, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, and to guide all the leaders and governors entrusted with the lives of all the people in the whole world.

Glory be to God, forever. Amen.
In his Epistle to the Philippians, St. Paul assigns them and us a task, telling us to live as “children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom [we] shine as lights in the world.”1 This task may seem like a burden if undertaken without guidance. So, where do we get this guidance? Easy enough: search through the Bible, synaxarium2 and other church books to find examples of people who performed this task, and follow in their footsteps.

For instance, the Bible tells us about the apostles and how they preached, and the epistles of the New Testament demonstrate the apostles’ preaching style. Obviously, we’re not expected to randomly go to pagan tribes or peoples and start preaching, but seeing how the apostles preached is an incentive for us to preach the word of God through our actions, words, clothing, and all aspects of our lives. Also, the words of the epistles provide us tools to understand and accept our faith and to be able to explain and defend it. After all, “whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”3 Without these Scriptures, we would be vulnerable to the corruption of our environment, and efforts to strive to shine as lights in the world would be pointless.

In addition to the Bible, we can turn to the synaxarium for the biographies of the saints. Each biography provides a lesson that can be applied to our life. Take the martyrs, for example. Reading the biographies of the martyrs repeatedly not only exhibits how they endured everything for Christ’s sake, but also gives us a lesson about how we can endure as well. They endured physical tortures and persecution. We might have to endure discrimination. They disobeyed the edicts of the emperors and governors and refused to worship idols. We might have to stand our ground against the ways of this world and refuse to participate in the accepted practices that surround us.

The synaxarium also provides us with the biographies of the church fathers that held on to the faith and resisted heresies. It is essential that we understand the foundations of our Christian beliefs just as those church fathers did. Understanding the foundations of our faith and seeing how the church fathers held on to it gives us the courage to defy the deviations that we witness in this “perverse and crooked generation.” When people told St. Athanasius the Apostolic that the whole world...
was against him, he replied that he also was against the world. If we can reach that state of confidence in our faith, we can truly shine as lights in the world.

Then, there are also the biographies of the ascetics and anchorites who forsook everything in the world and left in search for the narrow gate that would lead them to heaven. In this day and age, all kinds of worldly comforts and pleasures are readily available, and it is very easy to become attached to these things. However, our Lord Christ tells us that, “You cannot serve God and money”, so we cannot become attached to pleasures of this world and expect to shine as lights in the world. These ascetics and anchorites show us how they treading on the lusts of the flesh and overcame them for the sake of Christ. Their biographies educate us as to how to live “as children of God without fault” and to not mingle with the perversity of this passing world. On top of that, these saints left behind their sayings and teachings, which are treasures for us to learn from and utilize.

Last, but certainly not least, we have contemporaries whom we can take as role models or turn to for advice. It might be easier to use contemporary saints—people who are living or have lived in the same environment that we live in—as examples of striving to shine as lights in the world. They struggled against the same crooked and perverse generation that we are trying to resist, so perhaps their guidance would be more applicable or more relatable to our life.

In any case, God “[does] not leave Himself without witness,” and at this point we are called upon to be His witnesses in the world. As daunting as this calling may seem, it can be accomplished by turning to the Church’s pillars of faith and our forefathers as role models and sources of guidance.

1 Phillipians 2:15
2 Biography of the lives of saints used in the Coptic Orthodox Church
3 Romans 15:4
4 Matthew 6:24
Achieving a Warm Heart

The benefit of pursuing a warm heart

By J.D.

We cannot begin to talk about a warm heart without starting with the warmest heart of all, the heart of Jesus Christ. On the cross, he prayed for those who tortured Him. Who of us is able to do that? I know I myself am not able to do that. We are able to have a warm heart for those who have a warm heart toward us, but what good is it to love, help and serve those who love us? Is it not that what the wicked do?

A true Christian life is a painful life in which we are only triumphant when our life ends. We are called to love and bless our enemies. How impossible is it to achieve this request from God? While it may seem difficult, all things are possible through God. We have all heard repeatedly in Sunday school class, or in a sermon, but like anything in life, perfection comes from practice. Your first day of class is not like the day of your final exam, as you have attended many lectures, studied and had the chance to ask questions. The same applies to those achieving the virtue of a warm heart. You start with small steps, like praying for the person that cuts you in line. Start with simple exercises, and depending on your abilities and limitations, God will provide the rest.

While it might seem as a weakness doing such regressions, it is far from that. It is power. We know that God manifests himself to the weak and humble. We know that being filled with God’s Grace is happiness to our soul. This training will create gladness to God and where there is gladness there is the presence of God. Training toward a warm heart may take years or decades, depending on each person’s ability and circumstance, but in that road we get to be blessed to see God. This road is not easy, but it is attainable. In that path the devil will make us stumble, fail, be frustrated and will push as far as making us lose hope. You should understand that the bigger the fight, the more valuable the prize. The devil - out of extreme jealousy of humanity - wants us to despair and loose hope. We however are not going to heed that. We can start by looking for help, and the best help is in the scriptures. There is not one person who looked for God and did not find him. When you find God, all what you want is to be with God. You no longer bother about the materials of life. You learn to give and share. You learn to see God in everyone around you, and to appreciate their presence. You lower your expectations from this world, because it does not matter how much you materially achieve, for it will all perish. A successful career will end in retirement, a great marriage will end the death of a spouse, and even children will move out sooner than later. After all of that, our life itself will come to an end, and we will only be left with our good deeds. It is also important to seize any opportunity to do a good deed. Crossing paths with a person that needs help might be an opportunity, like the Good Samaritan. Help could be anything from a simple smile, a caress or service.

Widen your vision to notice your surroundings, our days are not only about our school or work routine. Think of it as a role in a screenplay that you need to perfect. Whatever your role is, whether you’re a king or a peasant, the purpose is the same, to bring about a successful act.

Do not be swayed or misled, for a warm heart is a heart of God, and it is worth pursuing and struggling for.

1 Matthew 5:46
2 Mathew 5:44
3 Mathew 19:26
4 1 Corinthian 1:27
5 2 Corinthians 12:19
6 Mathew 5:8
7 Revelation 3:20
**Questions & Answers**

**Question #1** King David was depicted by God Himself as a man “after My own heart”; who “will not give sleep to my eyes... until I find a place for the Lord”; who praised God seven times a day. However, he had seven wives besides concubines. Was he not satisfied with God, or with one wife?

**Answer,** King David is indeed a great hero of faith. No human being is perfect. That is why biblical writers did not write only of King David’s greatness; but also of his weakness. They showed David as someone who loved God; but at the same time was tempted by thirst for power and his own sensual desires. King David had paid dearly for all his shortcomings. Family strife followed him later in life until his death. He dealt with his wives’ jealousy and strife, his son's rebellion, and his disputed succession.

In spite of all these tribulations, King David’s virtues of devotion to God, valor in war, loyalty, and faithfulness in friendship was so inspiring; that despite his many faults, he was seen as a great king and prophet, described by God as “a man after My own heart” (Luke 10:25-37).

**Question #2** What was the duty of a close relative in the time of Ruth?

**Answer,** The close relative was supposed to buy back family land sold during a crisis, provide an heir for a dead brother, and avenge the killing of a relative and care for relatives in difficult circumstances.

---

**DIOCESE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

**Board of Education**

**Lead Program**

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.

Asaph Hymns Institute | www.sushymns.org/ (AHI) is the first ever online hymnological seminary.

Family Ministry Program (FMP)
Spring Registration deadline:

**DIOCESE PROGRAMS**

H.O.P.E. Social Services hope.suscopts.org
A social services program designed to help those in need.

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

Archangel Raphael Ministry (ARM) | copticangel.org
A program designed specifically for individuals with special needs.

St. Verena Resource Ministry (SVRM)
(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. www.suscopts.org/svrm/

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

**DIOCESE EVENTS**

Pre-Marital Retreat
TX: Nov. 10-12, 2017; GA: May 19-21, 2017; FL: Jan. 19-21, 2018

Zambia Mission Trip for University Students
May 8-22, 2017

Grand Tour of Greece 2017
May 29-June 2, 2017

*Dates are subject to change. Please check www.suscopts.org*
Diocese Photos

Winter College Convention, St. Stephen Retreat Center | Titusville, Florida
Presbyter Ordination of Fr. Hedra Faltaous, St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church | Knoxville, Tennessee

Elevation of Reverend Fr. Boutros Boutros to Hegumen, St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church | Nashville, Tennessee
2017 Joint Clergy Conference in California, Diocese of the Southern United States and Diocese of Los Angeles, Southern California & Hawaii

Diocese Photos
Nativity Feast, St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Church | Pensacola, Florida

Servants Retreat with His Grace Bishop Youssef | Montreal, Canada
Diocese Photos

Crossroads Graduate Convention 2017, St. Stephen Retreat Center | Titusville, Florida