



KOINONIA

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*“So we, being many, are one body in Christ”
(Romans 12:5)*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JULY 2020

Coptic Calendar: 24 Paone 1736 – 24 Epep 1736

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Bible Readings

5 July 28 Paone	12 July 5 Epep	19 July 12 Epep	26 July 19 Epep
Psalms 69:32-33,30	Psalms 89:7	Psalms 119:1-2	Psalms 145:17-18
Luke 6:27-38	Luke 10:1-20	Matthew 18:1-9	Luke 9:10-17

Coptic Feast Days

- + **July 1 (24 Paone):** The Martyrdom of the Mighty Saint Abba Moses the Ethiopian
- + **July 4 (27 Paone):** The Martyrdom of St. Ananias, the Apostle
- + **July 7 (30 Paone):** The Nativity of St. John, the Baptist
- + **July 9 (2 Epep):** The Departure of St. Jude, the Apostle (Lebbaeus whose surname was Thaddaeus)
- + **July 10 (3 Epep):** The Departure of St. Cyril (Kyrillos) I, 24th Pope of Alexandria
- + **July 12 (5 Epep):** The Martyrdom of Sts. Peter and Paul, the Apostles
- + **July 14 (7 Epep):** The Departure of St. Shenouda, the Archimandrite
- + **July 15 (8 Epep):** The Departure of Sts. Anba Pishoy and Anba Karas the Anchorite
- + **July 22 (15 Epep):** The Departure of St. Ephrem the Syrian
- + **July 25 (18 Paone):** The Martyrdom of St. James the Apostle, the Brother of the Lord, Bishop of Jerusalem
- + **July 27 (20 Paone):** The Martyrdom of St. Theodore of Shotep
- + **July 30 (23 Paone):** The Martyrdom of St. Marina, of Antioch



The Martyrdom of Sts. Peter and Paul, the Apostles

After the coming down of the Holy Spirit on the disciples they spread to preach the kingdom of God. The apostle St. Matthias went to a city called Bartus, in the region of Galatia in Asia Minor. He preached there the name of the Lord Christ and most of its people believed. However, the rest of the people accused him to the governor who ordered to seize and imprison him along with many of the Christians. St. Matthias prayed along with all the Christians in prison to God to save them. The Lord sent to them His mother St. Mary who came on a heavenly cloud. When she entered the city and came to the prison, she prayed to God and all the iron therein the city melted, as wax. God saved St. Matthias and all those were with him from the iron fetters and the iron gates of the prison and they all were freed. The jail keepers

and the people of the city went in hurry to inform the ruler of the city. When the governor inquired of the reason, they told him about the virgin St. Mary and because of her prayers all the iron in the city melted. The governor requested to see the virgin St. Mary. She came to him along with St. Matthias and he asked her who melted the iron. The virgin replied, "Our true God, Jesus Christ, is the One Who melted the iron." The governor had a son who was possessed with an unclean spirit. He brought him to the holy virgin who cast out the devil immediately. The governor rejoiced and all the people of the city believed and St. Matthias baptized them. St. Mary prayed and all the iron changed back to its former state.



The intercession and prayers of the holy virgin St. Mary be with us all.



The Holy Journey in Egypt

The important stations where the holy family took shelter are:

1. Bubastis Hill

The holy family left Bethlehem on its way to Egypt through Sinai. They followed the Southern Caravan way along the Mediterranean coast, passing through Gaza-Raphia (Rafah)-Rhinocolura², (now El-Arish), and then to Ostrakini which became a diocese of Bishop Abram who joined the council of Ephesus 431 A.D. The last station for the Holy Family in Sinai was Pelusium (now Al-Farma), which is located between El-Arish and Port-Said and which is considered the key entrance to Egypt from the Eastern side. From Pelusium they crossed to Bubastis (Tel-Basta), where they rested under a tree, that is said to have survived till 1850 A.D. Here, at Bubastis Hill, a spring of water erupted, from which the holy family used to drink; and its water healed many from their sickness. Soon after the Holy Family resided in the city, the pagan statues began to collapse and this consequently aroused the anger of the pagan priests against the Holy Family. Therefore, the Holy Family left to the outskirts of the city to a place now called "Mastard."

2. Mataryah

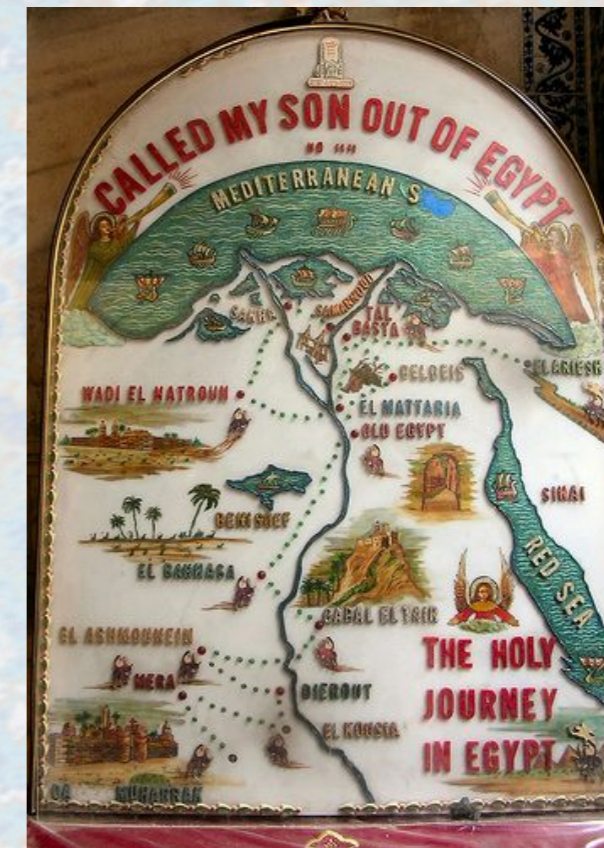
The Holy Family traveled to Bilbais, then to Miniat-Genah (now Miniat Samanoud), crossing the River Nile to Samanoud and from there to Borolos. They crossed the River Nile to the Western bank to Sakha, then they traveled westward along Wadi-el-Natroun (Natroun alley), south of the "Sheheet" wilderness. This wilderness became a paradise of monks, the earthly angels. The Holy Family then traveled to Heliopolis, to a district called "Mataryah," where they took shelter under a tree, known as the "St. Virgin Mary Tree." The Coptic church is taking care of this tree which is still blossoming despite its old age. Near this tree a spring of water shot and balsam plants are still growing. These plants are added to the ointments used to make the Holy Chrism (Oil for confirmation). Pilgrims in the middle ages used to visit "Mataryah" and "St. Mary's Tree" regarding them as sacred places. Until today tourists come to visit them.



3. Old Cairo

Old Cairo is considered the third station for the Family. Here we have St. Virgin Mary's Church and a nunnery which are both located at Wayla lane. But the most attractive landmark is the cave in Babylon in Old Cairo in which there is an altar and a niche. It is probable that the Holy family might have used this cave as a place for the Child Jesus to sleep. Above this cave, a church had been built in the fourth century and is known as the St. Sergius Church (Abu-Sarga). Within a week, the idols of the pagan temples began to collapse, the pagan priests aroused with anger and, forced the foreign family out of the city. Thus, the holy family left for Memphis then to Maadi where St. Mary's Church has been built. Perhaps, this church was a Jewish Temple. The present structure with its attractive triple granary domes is known from the thirteenth century.

By Fr. Tadros Y Malaty, Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church.



St. Thomas the Anchorite

St. Thomas was born in the village of Shinshif in the area of Akhmim to God loving and pious Christian parents. They raised him up and reared him on the church manners. The love of God kindled his heart and since he inclined to the life of contemplation he went to Shinshif mount. He started to practice his spiritual exercises and he loved praying and praising with his melodious voice. He was strict in his asceticism until he ate only once a week. He memorized many parts of the Holy Bible fulfilling its commandments, living the Bible with joy. He increased in virtues until the sweet aroma of Christ outpoured from him. Some heard of him and they visited him to receive his blessing. He did not associate with any of the brethren except at the time of prayers. Some of the brethren who dwelt in the nearby mount visited him to participate with him in prayers.

Once he was praising using the Psalms, he noticed three men in white garments behind him praising along with him with an angelic voice. St. Thomas rejoiced and went on praising with them all night. Later he knew that they were monks from the monastery of Abba Shenouda, the Archimandrite.

Anba Shenouda visited Anba Thomas often and in his last visit, Anba Thomas told him "This is the last visit, I shall leave you and the Lord informed me that you shall follow me few days later." Anba Shenouda asked him for a sign. Anba Thomas told him; "The rock that you sat on outside your dwelling at the time that my soul will depart from my body this rock will split in half like a book that you open."

When the departure of Anba Thomas from this vain world drew near, the Lord of glory appeared to him, comforted, strengthened, and promised him that a church would be built in this place after his name and people from all nations would come for his name would be wide spread. He also told him that after three days he would leave the body and receive the everlasting crown, and then He bid him peace and ascended to heaven. The Holy Father Anba Thomas departed in a good old age in the year 168 of the martyrs (452 A.D.).

Anba Shenouda saw that the rock had split in half and he said, "Truly, Shinshif has lost the luminous lamp of the desert." Anba Shenouda rose and went to the place of Anba Thomas along with Anba Akhnoukh and Anba Yousab. They shrouded st. Thomas, prayed over him and buried him in the same place of his dwelling.



Many signs and wonders were manifested from his body in the church that was built after his name which still exists till present time. The prophecy of the saint about the departure of Anba Shenouda was fulfilled for he departed on 7th of Epep of the same year.

The blessing of the prayers of St. Thomas be with us all. Amen.



The Feast of Pentecost

The Glorified Lord Christ lived with them in His body until He rose to Heaven then promised them the Holy Spirit to stay with them forever, the Spirit of truth, the Comforter. So what should we know about the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God's Spirit, therefore it existed since ever. We read about it in the first verses of the Genesis Book. The divine response says: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." (Genesis 1:1, 2).

And Isaiah talks about the Holy Spirit and gives Him names in his saying: "The Spirit of the LORD...The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD." (Isaiah 11:2).

And we add to that in the third Hour Prayer (Terce) of every day and say: "a spirit of prophecy and chastity, a spirit of holiness, justice and authority" and call Him by saying: "O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who is present in all places and fills all, the treasury of good things and the Life-Giver".

And the Lord says about Him in the St John's Gospel "the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father" (John 15:26). And the doctrine of being proceeded from the Father was mentioned by the Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in the Faith Creed. Yet our brothers, the Catholics add to it "Filioque" meaning "and from the Son". And this is opposing to the Holy Trinity Doctrine. In assimilating the Holy Trinity to Fire we say: "Fire brings forth heat; and light proceeds from it" and we do not say that the light proceeds from heat! But the light and the heat both come from the origin, which is the fire and not one from the other.

The Holy Spirit used to work in the Old Testament as well.

In the story of Samson we read that "the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan" (Judges 13:25). And we also read that after Saul was anointed as king that "the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied" (1 Samuel 10:10). This also happened when David was anointed by Prophet Samuel to be king "the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (1 Samuel 16:13). And the way the Holy Spirit came upon both Saul and David was through the Anointing Oil that the Lord ordered them to prepare in Exodus Book (Exodus 30:22-31). And Aaron was anointed as a high priest when Moses poured from this holy anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him (Leviticus 8:12), as we say in the psalm "It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments." (Psalms 133:2). And with this anointing oil the tent of meeting along with the altars and the utensils were anointed and became holy (Exodus 40, Lv 8). With this anointing oil also kings and prophets were anointed (1 Kings 19). And as a result to the anointing, the Holy Spirit comes upon them and so comes His gifts as well.

And we read in prophet Joel the Lord's saying: "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions." (Joel 2:28)

And this is what happened on the fiftieth day (the Day of Pentecost), as St Peter the Apostle explained this verse from Prophet Joel's Book (Acts 2:16, 17)

The Holy Spirit also could be transferred from one person to another.

This happened to the seventy elders on the days of Prophet Moses when the Lord said to him: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them" (Numbers 11:16, 17). And here the bible says: "Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied" (Numbers 11:25)

We notice that before Moses, when Joseph the Righteous interpreted the Pharaoh's dream, "Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" (Genesis 41:38). And here was the Holy Spirit's gift interpreting dreams, i.e., the Spirit of knowledge.

Also there is another work for God's Spirit in every art, so as to what the tent of meeting needed "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship." (Exodus 31:1- 5)

Here we see that the Holy Spirit works even in the talent of workmanship that is given to some even in jewelry and carving woods.

Among the most important characteristics of the Holy Spirit is that it is Who spoke in the prophets.

This is a statement in the content of the Faith Creed. This means that the Holy Spirit is the source of the divine response of the Holy books. the Holy Spirit was the source of all what the prophets and apostles said in the holy books.

In this St Peter the Apostle said in his second epistle "for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21)

Nowadays, In The New Testament, the Holy Spirit is given through three ways:

The Holy Anointing, Laying Priests' Hands and The Holy Breath.

As for **The Holy Breath**, it was written in St John's Gospel that our Lord Jesus, after His Resurrection, when He appeared to His disciples, the saints, in the upper room, He told them "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:21-23)

In the ordination of the bishop or the priest we breathe in his face and say "Accept the Holy Spirit", so he opens his mouth to accept the holy breath and says with the psalm "I opened my mouth and accepted myself a spirit".

As for **Laying Hands**, the Holy Spirit in the time of our fathers the apostles was given through the apostles laying hands. This was mentioned in giving the Holy Spirit to the People of Samaria. The Apostles Synod in Jerusalem sent them St Peter and St John "Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:14-17) And the same was done to the People of Ephesus "And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them" (Acts 19:7). Same applied to the Priesthood Sacrament, St Paul the Apostle said to his disciple Timothy "I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." (2 Timothy 1:6)



The Feast of Pentecost (Contd.)

The Holy Anointing was also known in the apostolic age. St John the Apostle says about that: "But you have an anointing from the Holy One..." (1 John 2:20) "... But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you." (1 John 2:27)

We, in anointing children after baptism: we anoint them with the Holy Chrism (Myron) and lay hands on them and breathe in their faces. And say to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit."

With the **Holy Anointing Sacrament**, we become temples for the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit dwells in us. St Paul the Apostle talks about that in his first epistle to Corinthians and says: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16), and "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Then every one of should remember that on the day he was anointed with the Holy Chrism (Myron) that he became a temple for the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit became dwelling in him.

The Holy Spirit works in priesthood and priesthood is granted through the Holy Spirit. It has the power of forgiving sins. But someone may say: How is that? And no one can forgive sins except God alone! We say: Yes, the Holy Spirit that is in the priest is one who forgives sins. As we say in the Holy Liturgy "be absolved by my mouth through the Holy Spirit," so it is the Holy Spirit that forgives sins. And this forgiveness comes from the priest's mouth. And the absolution that the priest gives through the absolution prayer in which he says: may God absolve you, may God pardon you, may God forgive you. And the Holy Spirit is present also in all the Church Sacraments. He also is present in all the Holy Synod decisions. In the first decision that came from the Synod in Jerusalem on the days of our fathers the apostles, they said: "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us." (Acts 15:28)

The Holy Spirit works in the Service too. The Church fathers, the apostles did not start the service until the Holy Spirit came upon them and the Lord's promise saying: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me" (Acts 1:8) was fulfilled in them. The Holy Spirit was the One choosing the servants, like when He said: "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2, 4). And it was Him who directed the servants in their paths and worked in them and using them.

Asking for the Holy Spirit is a point of our daily prayer of the Third Hour (Terce). We ask it to come upon us and purify us from all defilement of body and spirit. And we cry to God saying: Your Holy Spirit, O Lord, do not take away from us.

It is part of our freedom to accept the Holy Spirit, work with Him, and go into the "Holy Spirit Partaking". And we are also free to reject and quench the Spirit and fight the Spirit. And the most serious thing is to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, meaning to reject it completely all through the life. But how beautiful is the bible's saying: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (Romans 8:14)

Here I would like to warn those who are deceived and think that every spirit that leads them is God's Spirit!! The apostle says: "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1)

By His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

