



**Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria**

**ST. MARY AND ST. MOSES COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**Diocese of Mississauga and West of Canada**



1334 Benjamin Avenue. Windsor, Ontario Canada. N8X 4M9

Tel: (519) 252 – 7366

Fax: (519)252 - 5936

[www.windsorcopts.com](http://www.windsorcopts.com)

**Hatour / Kiahk**

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*Under the auspices and guidance of H.G. Bishop Mina bishop of Mississauga, Vancouver and west of Canada*

## **The Nativity Fast**

**Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty**

**What Is the Purpose of The Nativity Fast (Advent Fast)?**

Why is the Coptic Church concerned with the Nativity Fast, in which her members fast for more than forty days? Undoubtedly, the Incarnation of the Word of God was the intention of God preceding the fall of Adam and Eve in sin. Upon their fall, the Divine Covenant was proclaimed when God spoke to the serpent, saying: "He shall crush your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3: 15). Adam and his sons awaited the coming of the Messiah and the Deliverer for centuries.



It was difficult for the heavenly and earthly creatures to comprehend the Incarnation of the Word of God, His bearing the cross, and availing the faith of the new covenant to all humanity of all nations. The disciple states: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (1 Timothy 3:16). "Even the mystery which has been hid from ages and generations, now is made manifest to His saints." (Col 1: 26). He adds, "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of

the mystery which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3: 9-11).

Our Lord talked with parables and symbols to reveal the Messiah, His work of salvation, in order for us to believe in Him, and rejoice in His deliverance. St. John the Baptist prepared the way by preaching and saying: "Behold; The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29). And when he was jailed, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus Christ asking: "Are You the Coming One, or do we wait for another?" (Lk 7:19), to confirm the arrival of the awaited Messiah.

For thousands of years and in various ways God prepared mankind to partake in Him, as Jesus Christ dwelt among them (John 1: 14), to lift them to His heavens, and share in His Divine Nature (2 Pt 1: 4). What is our role in welcoming Him, abiding in Him, and He in us (Jn 15: 5), and rejoicing in His coming?

### **MAY OUR SOULS REJOICE IN HIS COMING!**

The main goal of the fast is for our souls to delight in His coming to our world, and His dwelling in our hearts. For when we abide in Him, we entreat Him for ourselves, our families, all the believers and the entire world to taste the sweetness of companionship with Him who became Man to allow us all who believe in Him to become the children of God. The disciple said, "He (Jesus) made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Philip 2: 7-8).

The following words of the Lord Himself to the Father were fulfilled: "And for their sakes, I sanctify Myself that they also may be sanctified by the truth... that they all may be one" (Jn 17: 19, 21).

### **DON'T COME BEFORE GOD EMPTY HANDED!**

The Divine Law commands the believer not to appear before God empty handed (Sir 35: 6; Exod 23: 15). Jesus Christ granted us the power to fulfill the commandment, for when we pray in our private dwellings, we ask on behalf of all mankind saying: "Our Father who art in heaven... forgive us our trespasses, and do not lead us into temptation" (Mt 6:9-13). As if the believer' secret

prayer lifting up all the people on his hands, and presents them asking the Father of what is for their spiritual and holy nourishment.

There is not a better offering and more delightful to the Lord than a believer's heart that is deep enough to contain all people including those who resist him, and presents them to God lifted up by his spiritual hands.

### **THE HOLY FAST AND THE NATIVITY FEAST**

No one can deny what the Gospels proclaimed of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, which was witnessed by two men of the Old Testament: Moses and Elijah (Mt 17: 1-7, Mk 9:2-13; Lk 9:28-36). The two prophets shared with Jesus Christ fasting for forty days, and forty nights, and as a result, they enjoyed what no other man in the Old Testament did. For they appeared during the transfiguration, and entered into a dialogue with Christ likely around the upcoming events: His trial, passions, crucifixion, death, and burial, rising from the dead, and ascension into the heaven.

The fast in its essence is a practical proclamation of our desire for the Deliverer to transfigure within our hearts, and cleave to Him to enter into a joyous conversation about mankind's deliverance. Those who have fasted for years, refraining from certain food, and practicing rituals without allowing God to influence their minds, hearts, feelings and emotions, may have turned the fast into a rather painful punishment. They may desire now to prepare themselves to enjoy the eternal peace, and advance their knowledge of the Divine Secrets in this fast.

### **THE CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS**

The world is occupied with glittering Christmas decorations, and many compete in presenting the most magnificent decors using lights and so on in churches, public places, and homes. What pleases the Lord more is the believer who stands before Him as if in his private room, even among large congregation, lifting up in love those who are sick, sad, needy, fallen, and cast away before the King of kings, asking the Deliverer of the world to exalt them as shining stars illuminating the world among a crooked generation. (Phil 2: 7).

St. Jacob of Serugh said that the wise men carried presents of gold, frankincense and myrrh. While travelling from Babylon in the East to Jerusalem, led by the bright star, then to Bethlehem, they evangelized for Jesus Christ in the towns and villages they passed on their way to worship Him, and back when taking a different route. Many wondered about their great

procession, but it had a wonderful purpose. They also preached to Herod the king, his priests, Pharisees and scribes who searched the Books for the "King of the Jews" (Mt 2: 7).

**Let this Fast be an inspiration for many to welcome Jesus Christ.**

## **Not losing sight of God**

*Bishop Angaelos of London-UK (continued)*

There are times when we feel that we have nothing, and we can't do anything but then we realized that God really does fill the void in our lives, and He compensates us. He will never ever remain indebted if we have given anything, He will return a hundredfold. The stewards when they came back to Him said here are your five talents, here your two talents, well done, well done you've been faithful in this little bit. Enter into what is even greater, what is even more majestic what is even more beautiful. God has everything, God is everything, God can give us everything and whatever we give, He'll give us more not just to reward us, but He says you know what you're really good I gave you these five talents you've invested them about five more well you know what the true God that I am who loves you and loves the rest of my children, I now know if I give you ten talents, you use them for ten more. If I give you a hundred, I give you a thousand you will continue to use them. So, do you see how a mind of God works? This isn't brownie points this is you've given me five I'll give you ten great with what a good deal come to business again. This is us working and growing, this is us giving. I've given you this much talent you've used it here's more so you can use it for more, because I now know that you get it, you understand. I said to you that if you do it for the least of these you do it for me and you did it and you get it. You understand that it's about you loving me but it's also about you loving your neighbor as I love your neighbor because that is the kind of God I am, and this is how you start to become perfect without even realizing it. But Lord I'm not working on perfection! No, you're working on being like me and I am perfection. "Lord": you still sin", and you will continue to sin, But as you continue to become like me more and more you will sin less. What's the reaction? What's the relationship Lord? Simple, because if you love

me you won't want to grieve me. if you love your brethren you won't want to grieve them or grieve me by grieving them and so the more generous the more giving the more sacrificial the more loving the more, we are like him for him and for his humanity at the same time.

Gospel of St. Luke chapter 22 verse 27 asks a question "For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves." So, you walk into a scene where there is a table and there are people serving who's greater who's more important? of course the people sitting down the people in the prime seats, that's okay that's fine great let's go with that one. where are you now? we're sitting down. where am I? you're serving us. so, where is the greater what is the greater what's the understanding of the greater. in this world the understanding of the greater is the one who has more power more influence or more authority and who sits and is sat. Who's really the greater? the one who is like his or her master the one who serves faithfully. The one who gives of him or herself in that very selfless way. Now of course that makes us vulnerable, of course it does have that privilege or have been abused absolutely of course it has. It's happened with me several times and I've done it several times. You know you get people to help you, you abuse the privilege. You come to help people you're abused in that privilege it happens because of our humanity. Does it make us stop? Of course not, what it will do is make me realize I shouldn't abuse the love and the generosity of people, but if my love and generosity are abused, I need to forgive. Sometimes I need to deal with it differently, sometimes I need to give it a different way sometimes I might need to even readjust this relationship, but to cut out completely giving just because I've been hurt?

I'm no avid athlete as you might imagine, so I can imagine that if I try to run really fast from here to relatively very close, I could develop a stitch and if you've had a stitch, if you develop a stitch what happens? When you breathe it hurts. Question is, do you stop breathing? Well since we're all here the answer is probably no you don't stop breathing. It hurts but you work with it, you take a little bit of time, you breathe it a little bit slower you breathe differently, you put up with the pain a bit until it goes away, but you continue

to breathe. If we are doing the will of God, it's going to hurt sometimes. Don't leave it behind, don't stop it. It is as essential as breathing, to be God-like, to be Christ-like is as essential as breathing, because it brings us closest to where we are supposed to be and who we are supposed to be. And to give as, we see Him giving us. And so, the fact that we're not alone anymore as humanity, that He's created us for each other, provides all of these wonderful opportunities for us to serve each other but also and the system does work, to be served by each other. Do you think I do stuff for X Y or Z all the time and they never do anything for me. Ok they may not be X, Y or Z, but A, B or C will have done something for you, it's a net result.

When I do something for one person, I shouldn't expect anything from that person, but I know that God will give me from another source, from another direction. The fact that I give is unrelated to me receiving. I know that God is faithful, loving, generous and I know that He is a God of promises. So, he will give me and that's my reassurance. Is it going to hurt sometimes? Yeah, so when you have your last 20 pounds in your pocket and you want to do something with it, hurts a bit more when you pull it out right? When you have the last a little bit of energy you have in your body the last bit of attention you have in your mind the last bit of patience you have it hurts more to pull it out, but you do, and you give it and then you receive the wonderful rewards.

So, our creation is about God making us like himself, because unless we are like him, we will not enter his kingdom. why would we? Why we want to and how would we survive? The kingdom of God is about God, so unless we are like God, we're not going to want to enter the kingdom because I need to be like him to survive in it. And to be like Him is to be giving and loving. But sometimes we hurt, sometimes to be crucified, but it is in that giving that we receive, and it is sometimes in that pain, in that crucifixion that we come back invigorated and risen.

Glory be to God forever

## SAINT OF THE MONTH:

*“Whose faiths follow, considering the outcome of their conversation?” Heb 13:7*

### St. Barnabas the apostle's

St. Barnabas, one of the seventy apostles, was martyred. He was from the tribe of Levi. His ancestors left Judea long before he was born and moved to the island of Cyprus. His name was Josses. Our Lord, to Whom is the glory, gave him the name "Barnabas", which means son of "encouragement" or "consolation", when He called him to become an apostle. He received the gift of the Holy Spirit in the upper room with the disciples. He preached the gospel with them and witnessed to the Name of Christ. He had a field which he sold and brought the price and placed it at the feet of the apostles. (Acts 4:36-37) The apostles honored him for his many virtues and for his honesty. When St. Paul believed in the Lord Christ, St. Barnabas presented him to the rest of the disciples in Jerusalem, three years after his conversion. St. Barnabas told the apostles how the Lord appeared to St. Paul near Damascus and attested to his zeal before them. The apostles accepted St. Paul in their fellowship. The Holy Spirit said to the disciples, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:2) St. Paul and St. Barnabas travelled together to many countries preaching the Name of the Lord Christ. When they entered Lystra and St. Paul healed the man who was crippled from his mother's womb (Acts 14:8-18), the people of Lystra thought that they were gods, and they brought oxen and garlands to the gates intending to sacrifice them at the feet of the apostles. St. Paul and St. Barnabas forbade them and rejected the glory of men. They tore their clothes saying that they were men with the same nature as they. After they travelled together to many cities, they were separated from each other. St. Barnabas took with him St. Mark and went to Cyprus. They preached there and converted many people to the faith of the Lord Christ and baptized them. The Jews resented them. So they falsely accused them before the governor. They seized St. Barnabas and brutally beat him, then they stoned him and finally burnt his body with fire. Thus, his strife was completed and he received the



crown of martyrdom. After the people had left, St. Mark came and carried the body, wrapped it, and placed it in a cave in Cyprus. St. Mark then went to Alexandria to preach there.

May The prayers of these two apostles be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

*May his prayers and blessings be with us all, and Glory be to God forever. Amen.*

## **Question and Answer:**

*“This question was asked by saint John Chrysostom, and he answered it:”*

**Question**

**How is it declared that Christ is from the posterity of David? since he was not born of a man but from a woman only; and the posterity of the Virgin was not counted?..... and what is the objective in that the evangelist mentioned Joseph who was not a cause for the Nativity of Christ?**

**Answer**

How is it declared that Christ is from the posterity of David? since he was not born of a man but from a woman only; and the posterity of the Virgin was not counted?..... and what is the objective in that the evangelist mentioned Joseph who was not a cause for the Nativity of Christ?

It was mentioned in the gospel that "the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1: 26-27). According to the law, it was not permitted that one could marry from a tribe which is not his own tribe (Num. 36: 7-9).

Since Joseph is from the house of David and from his relatives, it was not possible for him to take Mary as a wife from another tribe than his tribe, and from another ethnic group than his.

If you say: "What is it if he had disobeyed the law in that matter? I reply to you that the gospel testified to him that he was "a just man" (Matt. 1:19).

***If you say: Why is it according to the genealogy from Joseph and not from the Virgin?***

We say: "It was not a custom among the Jews, to count the genealogy from women. Therefore, he was silent about the mention



of her grandfathers, and he counted the genealogy of Joseph. If he had counted the genealogy from a virgin, he would have invented an innovation. And if he had been silent about the genealogy of Joseph, we would not have known the grandfathers of the Holy Virgin.....

Also, it was because he did not want to manifest before the time, to the Jews, that Christ was born of a Virgin.....since in that, there is a deliverance of the Virgin from a malignant accusation..... lest the Jews would have lapidated the Virgin with stones.

Since after numerous miracles, they called Him the son of Joseph (Matt. 13:55), how would they have believed before His miracles, that He is the son of a virgin?

### **VERSE OF THE MONTH:**

**She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Matt 1:21**

### **Sayings of the Fathers:**

- ❖ Fast your hand, eye, and ear from every unsightly thing, then your fast will be clean.  
**Saint Yusab**
- ❖ He who lives in tranquility with fasting, prayer and vigil overpowers the will of the body.  
**Saint Anba Poemen**
- ❖ If a man wants God to hear his prayer quickly, then before he prays for anything else, even his own soul, when he stands and stretches out his hands towards God, he must pray with all his heart for his enemies. Through this action God will hear everything that he asks.  
**Abba Zeno**

### **THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES THIS MONTH “SYNAXARIUM”**

- ❖ *Martyrdom of St. Kosmas, Demian, their brothers and their mother (22 Hatour) .....1 December*

- ❖ Consecration of St. Marina Church (23 Hatour) ..... 4 December
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Mercurious known as with two  
Swards (23 Hatour) ..... 4 December
- ❖ Commemoration of annunciation, nativity and  
resurrection (29 Hatour) .....8 December
- ❖ Departure of Saint Abba Hour the monk  
and St. Hermina (2Kiahk).....11 December
- ❖ Entrance of St. Mary into the temple in Jerusalem  
(3 Kiahk) .....12 December
- ❖ Departure of St. Poemen the confessor (9 Kiahk).....14 November
- ❖ Departure of St. Nicholas “known as Santa-Claus”  
the bishop of Mora (10 Kiahk) .....19 December
- ❖ Commemoration of the honorable Archangel  
Michael (12 Kiahk) .....21 December
- ❖ Henna was conceived by the virgin Mary (13  
Kiahk).....22 December
- ❖ Departure of St. Gregory the Patriarch of Armenians  
(15 Kiahk)..... 24 December
- ❖ Commemoration of the virgin Mary the mother  
God (21 Kiahk) .....30 December
- ❖ Commemoration of the honorable Archangel  
Gabriel (22 Kiahk) .....30 December

**CHURCH SERVICES SCHEDULE:**

PLEASE, CHECK CHURCH WEBSITE IN THE FIRST PAGE.

**YOUTUBE SERVICE STREAMING ADDRESS:**

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_MI2B3NKLi1Y8P3nQR5Amw/live](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_MI2B3NKLi1Y8P3nQR5Amw/live)

**May God grant that we all spend the salvific days  
of the nativity Fast in such a way to be a great  
benefit to our souls**