



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

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

THANKSGIVING

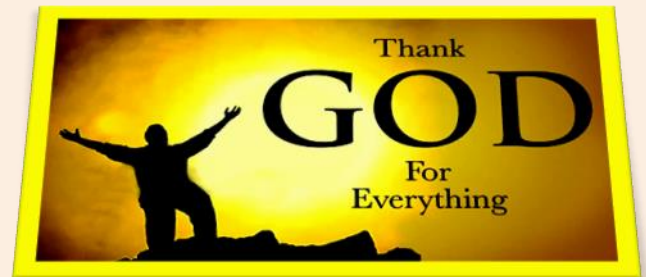
**From the book of life of thanksgiving
by H.H. Pope Shenouda III**

Thanksgiving For All Things

The church begins with the prayer of thanksgiving even at funerals. The apostle says "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God" (Col 3:17)

We thank you on every occasion, in every condition and for all things. So, it is not only giving thanks always but also for all things, because God continually makes good to us. The Apostle said: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God" (Rom 8:28) , either in the apparent good or in matters that seem not for good, but in fact it is good and we do not know!

For this we call God the "Beneficent". He does not do except good, and the person who believes in this, gladly accepts everything which comes from Him and says in faith "... All things work together for good", and gives thanks to God. But some might ask and say: we believe - without doubt - that whatever comes from God is good, but what about that which comes from people and might not all be good?! We say to them: if the attitudes of people



towards us were good, it will reach us good, but if it were not, God will change it, and it will reach us good at the end. The brothers of the righteous Joseph sold him as a slave; their action was in itself evil, treachery, lack of love, cruelty and

envy. But God changed that evil into good and Joseph *"was made a father to Pharaoh, and Lord of his people"*. He was the second in the Kingdom and his stay in Egypt was to preserve life. He told his brothers, *"You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, ... to save many people alive"*. (Gens. 50:20)

The children of God are always joyful; they thank Him for all things. And when they thank Him, not merely in compliance to the commandment "Give thanks" as an imposed order!! No because this is not the true thanksgiving. To give thanks is not just words to be said without conviction, as if performing a duty.

But they thank God from all the heart and with all confidence. They are completely confident that God will not allow anything bad to happen to them, and being Almighty, He watches all matters occurring to them, and takes a stand in their favour. For this reason, the life of thanksgiving is bound up in the life of faith, as will be seen when we talk about the virtues relating to thanksgiving.

Man could thank God by words, and could offer a sacrifice of praise, peace offerings or vows and as the Prophet David said, *"I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all people"* (Psalm 116:13-14).

Levels Of Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving in the life of the children of God is in levels: The least is giving thanks for the miracles, gifts, great pleasures and the plentiful good things, which no one doubts its goodness and benefit. Perhaps, other than this, some do not give thanks! (Simple).

Pleasures might pass over them, and other good things they might see as natural and normal and needs no thanks!

There is a higher level of thanksgiving; to give thanks over little: It might be a normal level in the life of thanksgiving to give thanks

over the recover from a serious illness like cancer. But, if a person gave thanks for the recovery from a flu or cold, it indicates that in his life he is used to give thanks over many or little things.

If we gave thanks over a few things, God will make us rulers over many things. Perhaps, among the advantages of thanksgiving are the continuity of the blessings and its increase, as one of the Fathers said, "Not a gift without increase, except that without thanksgiving".

There is also thanksgiving over what is hidden, over what is unseen. Thanksgiving for the wars and troubles which were possible to come to us but did not because of God's keeping and care.

Thanksgiving for the work of God in looking after us, although we cannot see that, but we completely believe in it. Undoubtedly, Satan is doing his utmost to harm us and to make us fall. If we are now well, it is because God has stopped the harm which we do not know and we thank God over the tribulations from which He saved us, but there are difficulties that He stopped on the way before it come to us. We do not know it, but we thank Him for protecting us. Our thanksgiving for saving us, this is something we can see. But, thanksgiving for protecting us is for something which we cannot see.

Believe me, if God disclose the calamities we were exposed to and He cast away from us if He uncover this, our whole life will not be enough to thank Him.

We give thanks on the hidden matters - which are in God's knowledge, and which we might know later, in time, or might never know.

In all this, thanksgiving is mixed with love. Another level is giving thanks always for all things, in which the whole life of man is to give thanks for whatever condition he lives in, and we have explained this matter. Constant thanksgiving does not need a specific reason but it is enough to that we are in God's care, and we are His children, and such feeling is connected with the life of submission. Our thanks do not absolutely depend on the specific condition in which we are.

Thanksgiving Over Tribulation

The highest level of thanksgiving is to give thanks over tribulations.

We thank God over the tribulations from which He saved us, and this is the least. But what is greater than this is also thank Him over the prevailing tribulations which we bear and live in. And with faith we believe it is for our good. 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 over the tribulation, to thank with joy and not as mere duty. Believe me, if we thank over the gifts only, then our love is for the gifts not for God its Giver! But if we give thanks to God over the tribulation, we prove that we love God Himself and not His gift i.e., 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, either 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 rejoice 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 rejoice has its effects on others. And therefore, when they see our thanks over the tribulation, our calmness and rejoice, they are comforted. Assuredly, when they see our peace of heart, they will be consoled by the spiritual principles presented by the Bible yet to be an example to them with our life and behavior. It is said that the fruits of the Spirit are "Love, Joy, Peace...". He who possess such fruits, he gives thanks to God. Also, tribulations need thanksgiving because it strengthens the spiritualities. It gives man depth in prayer and depth in the relation with God, depth in fasting and faith. It reunites and lifts the hearts of its children to God. Perhaps a severe tribulation leads man to the life of repentance, better than a hundred sermons and reading many spiritual books.

In tribulations, we see the hand of the Lord works. 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 over tribulation

and considers it a blessing. Of course, he who thanks over tribulation shall give thanks for all other things.

So, he lives the constant life of thanksgiving and never murmurs.

Halloween

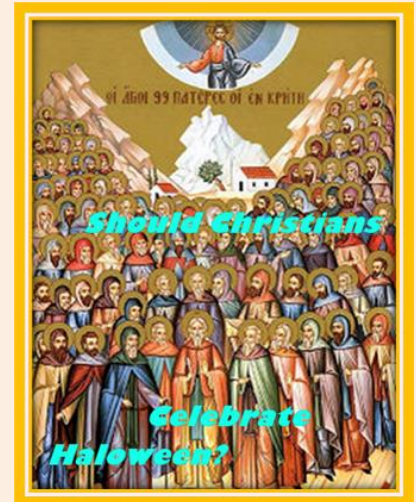
H.G. Bishop Suriel - California

The subject of Halloween is something that has caught my attention over the last few weeks. Some might ask Why?

As this is a natural part of life in America, they may add that: "this is the second important occasion on our yearly calendar after Christmas. Its a fun time for us and our children, who dress up in scary clothes and go around trick or treating and having lots of fun"

Fun? I am not so sure about that? Can we call dressing up our children as vampires, ghosts, devils and witches as fun? As I passed through some stories, I was somewhat surprised by how much impact Halloween played in people lives. It was everywhere, in shopping centers, banks, hospitals, households, everywhere you could see signs of people preparing for this "fun" celebration. I was even asked by one person in a retail store where I had obtained my black gown, because this was exactly what she was looking for, for a Halloween party! When I replied "from Egypt", she became so sad, perhaps because she expected me to tell her which costume shop, I had bought it from!

We also need to realize that Halloween is a big business in America. The Christian Broadcasting Network states that, "Merchants also look forward to October 31. The sale of candy, costumes, decorations, and party goods make Halloween one of the major retail seasons of the year." In a book called "Halloween and Satanism" it states, "Did you know that Halloween is a day witches



celebrate above all other days? ... Even the Internal Revenue Services has given tax exempt status to the church of Wicca (the official church of witchcraft), which means your gift to witchcraft is a tax deductible, charitable donation of a religious nature, the same as if you were tithing to the (Christian) Church.”

So how did Halloween begin? Many centuries before the birth of Christ, the Celts and priests, inhabitants of Britain and Ireland, observed the festival of Samhain on October 31 (Samhain is their god, lord of the dead), this marked the eve of the Celtic New Year, which began on November 1. It was at this time that full harvest was complete and winter was creeping in. The Celts believed that the power of the Sun was fading and for the next few months, darkness would prevail. They also believed that during the Samhain, the evil separating the living and the dead was at its thinnest. They believed that on the evening of October 31, evil spirits and souls of the dead passed through the barrier and entered the world of the living. Departed family members would revisit their earthly homes. The thought was frightening and exciting!

The Celts believed that these spirits and dead souls could torment the living. Crops might be destroyed, babies stolen, farm animals killed. But this was also an opportunity to commune with the spirits, and divine the future. The Devil, the lord of darkness, was ordinarily feared, but during Samhain, his power would be called on to foretell the future.

Trick or Treat

The Druids were responsible for appeasing the goblins and preventing harm to the people. Huge Samhain bonfires were lit to guide the way of the spirits. Various sacrifices, including human, were performed to assure a good year. Like many pagan cultures around the world, the Celts left out food for the spirits, hoping that a “treat” would prevent an evil “trick”

Centuries later, descendants of the Celts continued to observe the Samhain festival by dressing as evil spirits. They roamed from house-to-house demanding food in exchange for the “spirits” leaving the home unharmed. They craved demon faces in hollowed-out turnips and lighted them with candles. This is what is called “Jack-O-Lantern”. The story says that an Irish drunkard named Jack made a deal with the devil and devil agreed to spare his soul for ten years. But a year later, Jack died and was turned back from the gates of heaven. So he went to the gates of hell and was rejected by the devil also. So as Jack was walking to find a place, he was eating a turnip so the devil threw him a live coal out of the fires of the hell. So Jack put the coal in the turnip to help him see. It is believed that since that time Jack is roaming the face of the earth with the Jack-O-Lantern seeking a place of rest. I hope such a story that is rooted in devil worship will make people think carefully before they put a Jack-O-Lantern in their house!

Just as people once offered gifts of food to the spirits, people today offer treats to the children who represent them. In reality, the lighted Jack-O-Lanterns, the children carry, are really a symbol of the fires and torches of former Halloweens and of the ancient Samhain. This was the beginning of the trick or treat!

All Hallows' Eve

In the seventh century the Roman Catholic Church set aside a day in May in memory of the early Christians who died for their faith. It was called All Saints' Day. By the year 900 the date was changed to November 1st. Another name for All Saints' Day was All Hallows. October 31st. was known as All Hallows' Eve, which was later shortened to Halloween. The reason for the change of the date was an attempt to encourage people to replace this evil celebration with a holy feast.

Halloween in America

Halloween with all its customs arrived in America in the mid-1800's with the Irish immigrants. The costumes of the Children going "trick or treating" has become an established American tradition. Only in recent years have parents hesitated to send their children into streets because of the increased danger of accidents, poisoned food, and menacing strangers.

People today might be innocently imitating the ancient Celtic customs, but in an indirect way they are participating and celebrating something sinister and evil. The Christian Broadcasting Network states that, "Witches and Satanists still consider Halloween to be one of the strongest times during the year to cast a spell. On Halloween most witchcraft practitioners participate in ritual called "drawing down the moon". In this, the chief witch of the coven (group of witches) becomes, they believe, a channel for the moon goddess. During this ritual, the participants both male and female, are 'sky-clad' that is, naked ... Evidence persists that some Satanist and voodoo groups offer sacrifices – usually animals but possibly human babies".

The Biblical Response to Halloween

People celebrating Halloween today are naturally not thinking about the darkness and evil that underlies most Halloween practices. They are just thinking of it as a fun time. Some might say, "surely, you cannot deny children or adults the fun of the Halloween just because of its past hideous history. Can there be anything wrong with lighthearted raging?"

Let us see what the Bible says:

In the book of Deuteronomy God gives clear instructions to His people concerning associating with such practices. "When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. These shall not be found among you anymore who makes his son or his daughter

pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead". (Deuteronomy 18:9 – 11)

In the second book of Kings it says, "And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger." (2Kings 17:17) So, all of these practices God saw as evil, and angered Him.

Saint Paul mentioned witchcraft amongst the works of the flesh which are the manifest in Galatians 5:19-21. Also, Saint John in his Revelation mentions that sorcerers "shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8)

In the book of Micah, the prophet also, God speaks out strongly against those who practice witchcraft and the like by saying, "I will cut off sorcerers from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers. Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst; you shall no more worship the work of your hands; I will pluck your wooden images from your midst; thus, I will destroy your cities. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard." (Micah 5:12-15)

I hope that it is clear to the beloved readers, the background behind Halloween and that it is not something which is fun and nice. It does have evil connotations to it that we must be aware of. What does it mean as a Christian to dress your child as a witch or devil? Is this what our Lord has asked us to teach our children? Some might say that, "this helps us to teach our children not to be afraid of anything." Is this the way to teach our children not to fear, or is it through the words of Christ that fear is cast out and peace and comfort prevail? I am sure the answer is clear!

Let us rethink how we spend this day. Let us educate our young people about the facts of Halloween and perhaps arrange for a spiritual meeting to replace the Halloween parties that young people attend. During this time perhaps a lecture or discussion can be organized around this topic. It should be also a time of fervent prayer, so that our Lord Jesus Christ will protect us from all the powers of the Enemy. As we say in the Prayers of Thanksgiving. "All envy, all temptation, all works of Satan, all intrigues of the wicked, rising up of enemies, visible and invisible do cast away from us and all your people."

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

"Whose faiths follow, considering the outcome of their conversation?" Heb 13:7

SAINT Philip the seventh Deacon

St. Philip, one of the Seven Deacons, departed. He was from Caesarea, Palestine. When the Lord Christ, to Him is the glory, went through this area, this saint heard Him teaching and followed Him immediately. When the Lord chose the 70 Disciples and sent them forth to preach and heal the sick, this disciple was one of them. The Twelve Apostles chose him as one of the Seven Deacons appointed to serve. This Apostle preached in the cities of Samaria and baptized its people. He also baptized Simon the magician who perished when he tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. One day the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." He rose and went and behold a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury and had come to Jerusalem to worship. As he was returning and sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the spirit said to Philip, "Go near and join this chariot." So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"



And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the scripture which he read was this, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb before its shearer is silent. So He opened not his mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away. And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth." So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water; What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, if you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea. (Acts 8:26-40) He went around the countries of Asia and preached the living Gospel there. He had four daughters who preached the word of God with him. He brought many of the Jews, the Samaritans and others to the faith, and departed in peace.

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

Question and Answer:

Question

I have a boyfriend whom I like to talk to on the phone. We do not have bad conversation we're just friends. Is this sinful or bad behaviour?

Answer

I want you to ask yourself what do you mean, "We're just friends"? What does this friendship give you that no other same sex friendship can give?

As a Christian, when you are about to make friends with someone, you should ask yourself, is Jesus Christ the center of this relationship? Would He bless it? Am I growing in grace and faith?

In a relationship involving the opposite gender, what starts out as just innocent conversation that seems harmless, after a while turns

by nature into intimacy and seclusion from others, private talks and discussion of secrets, and sharing things that you would not normally share with anyone else. These are the steps when opposite gender friendship loses the true meaning of friendship and is taken to a different level that cannot any longer be recognized as simple friendship.

The danger of having such a relationship is that by the very nature of sin itself, one can easily be tempted knowingly and unknowingly. Within opposite gender relationships one could readily find themselves in a position of submitting to this temptation, finding it hard to resist the desires and the lusts of our weak.

VERSE OF THE MONTH:

*Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
Matt 5:16*

Sayings of the Fathers:

- ❖ For to confess one's own sins, this is to give thanks with confessions unto God: a kind of thing which implies one to be guilty of numberless offenses, yet not to have the due penalty exacted. This man most of all is the giver of thanks..... *St John Chrysostom*
- ❖ Ask with tears, seek with obedience, knock with patience. For thus he who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him that knocked it shall be opened..... *St. John Climacus*
- ❖ The proof of love is in the works. Where love exists, it works great things. But when it ceases to act, it ceases to exist.*Pope Gregory*

THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES THIS MONTH “SYNAXARIUM”

- ❖ Commemoration of the virgin Mary the mother of God (21 Tout)1 October
- ❖ Departure of Jonah the prophet (25 Tout)5 October
- ❖ The angel Annunciation of John the baptism (26 Tout)..... 6 October
- ❖ Commemoration of annunciation, nativity and resurrection (29 Tout)9 October
- ❖ Commemoration of miracle that God performed to St. Athanasius the Apostolic (30 Tout).....10 October
- ❖ The coming of Saint Severus the Patriarch of Antioch (2 Babah)12 October
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Paul Patriarch of Constantinople (5 Babah)15 October
- ❖ Departure Of Saints Paula El-Tamouhi (7 Babah) 17 October
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Sergius, the companion of St. Bacchus (10 Babah)20 October
- ❖ Commemoration of the honorable Archangel Michael (12 Babah)22 October
- ❖ Departure of St. Aghathon, the thirty-nine Pope Of Alexandria (16 Babah)26 October
- ❖ Departure of the Great Saint abba John the short (20 Babah).....30 October
- ❖ Commemoration of the virgin Mary the mother of God (21 Babah)31 October

CHURCH SERVICES SCHEDULE:

PLEASE, CHECK CHURCH WEBSITE IN THE FIRST PAGE.

YOUTUBE SERVICE STREAMING ADDRESS:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_MI2B3NKLi1Y8P3nQR5Amw/live