



Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria

ST. MARY AND ST. MOSES COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

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REAL JOY AND FALSE JOY

By: the thrice blessed Pope Shenouda

The real joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The Bible says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace..." (Gal. 5:22)

It is a joy in the Lord, as the Apostle said. But there are many examples of false joy: Jonah's joy with the plant that gave shade for his head and Solomon's joy with all his toil under the sun. He finally realized that all is vanity and grasping for the wind. And he also said, "The heart of fools is in the house of mirth." (Eccl. 7:4)

Another example of the false joy is when the elder son said to his father, "You never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends." (Luke 15:29)

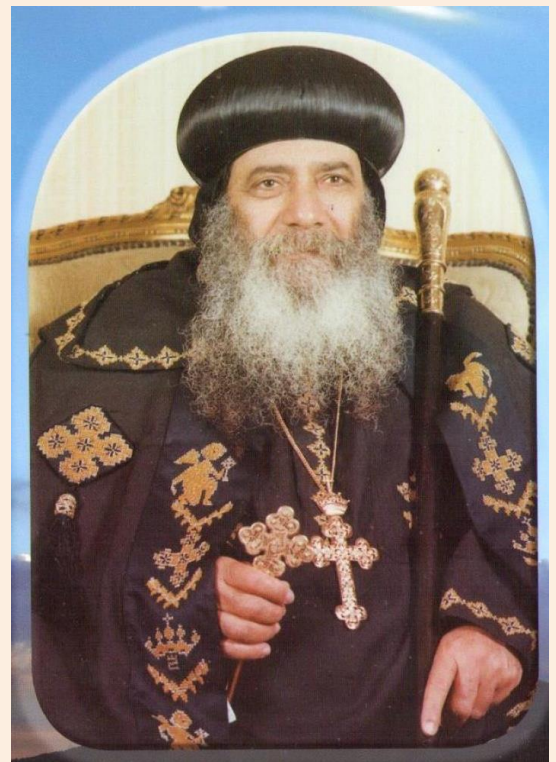
There is another type of joy which is considered a sin:

Solomon said, "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls." (Prov. 24:17) The Apostle, when talking about joy, said "Love does not rejoice in iniquity." (1 Cor. 13:6)

The Lord Jesus rebuked his disciples when they were joyful that the devils were subject to them. He said to them, "...do not rejoice in this... but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20)

The real joy then is the holy joy in the Lord...

It is also the joy of spiritual life with all the means of grace...



The Psalmist says, "I was glad when they said to me 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'" (Ps. 122: 1) He also says, "I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure" (Ps. 119:162) and also says, "I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." (Ps.63:4,5) Therefore, he sees his joy in whatever draws him to God. Man, also rejoices in repentance as it is reconciliation with God...

Heaven also shares in this joy with salvation, "there will be more joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance... " (Luke 15:7)

Hope is also another source of joy, "Rejoicing in hope." (Rom. 12:12)

Nevertheless, tribulations themselves, make the faithful rejoice, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials." (James 1:2)

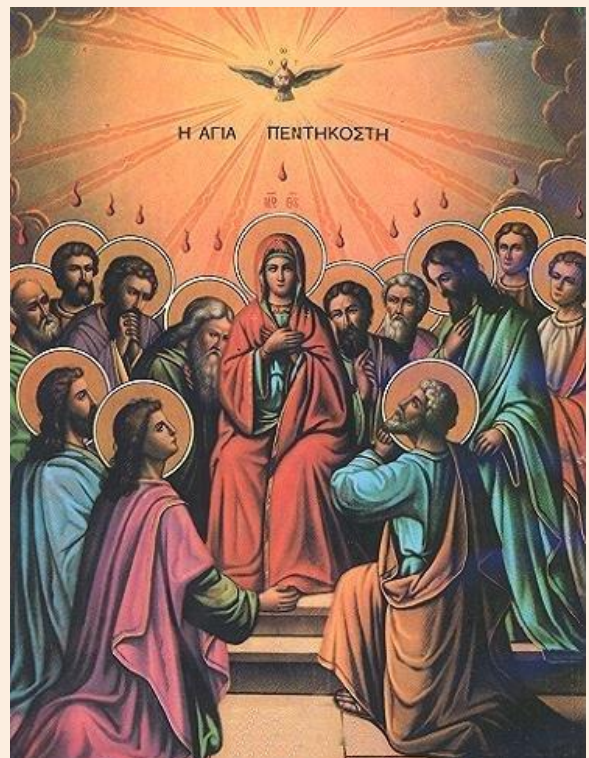
The greatest joy is meeting God in His Kingdom, when the Lord says to the faithful, "Enter into the joy of your Lord

Why is Pentecost a major feast in orthodox church?

By: Father Anthony Mourad

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; One God, Amen.

Why is Pentecost a major feast celebrated in the Coptic Orthodox Church? We can maybe say that it's an important historical moment in the lives of the apostles, but why celebrate it today in the liturgical life of the Church? Well, the truth is many of us may have difficulty in answering this question because we have yet to discover the significance of this extremely important moment in the life of the Church. To better understand it, let's begin by examining a few key things.



Firstly, the specific name of Pentecost. This word is borrowed from the Greek name of the Jewish festival Shavuot. Shavuot is a Hebrew word that simply means “weeks” and so it signifies the festival of weeks mentioned in the Old Testament. It is one of the three major Jewish pilgrimage festivals which holds two important meanings to the Jews: 1) It marks the wheat harvest in Israel as mentioned in Exodus 34:22, and 2) it commemorates the anniversary of the day when God gave the law and the commandments to Moses and the people of Israel. This Jewish feast is held 50 days after Passover of the Jews, and so it was called Pentecost by the Hellenic Greek community – simply meaning “fiftieth day”.

The Early Church held on to this tradition of calling it Pentecost because 50 days after the Great Christian Passover – the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ – we see that the Lord now grants humanity a new gift, different from that which was given to Moses. While in the Old Testament humanity receives the law written on tablets of stone, in the New Testament the apostles and humanity now receive the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Life-giver and Comforter which was promised to us by the Lord.

Part 2:

In the book of Acts, we hear about how the apostles of the Lord along with the Holy Virgin Mary gathered together in prayer 50 days after the Passover. St Luke describes to us the following event:

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...” (Acts 2:1-4)

Now, this descent of the Holy Spirit is of crucial importance for us to understand. Humanity had long been in a state of alienation from God. In Genesis chapter 2 we read of how God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed in him the breath of life, which the Church, and more specifically St Cyril of Alexandria, teaches us that this breath was God's very own Holy Spirit. Now after the fall, the Lord says in Genesis chapter 6 that His Spirit cannot dwell with man forever because of our current state... And so ever since the fall, we have lost the indwelling of the Holy Spirit because we have estranged ourselves from God. And while we still see the Spirit of God aiding the people, working alongside them, even visiting them, the human being can no longer be a temple of the Holy Spirit because of the fall! However, ever since the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ and God's perfect plan of salvation, we now have new hope.

In the feast of Theophany, we see the Lord Jesus Christ as a perfect man, be the first human being since the fall to receive the Holy Spirit. He makes way for us to now also receive God's Spirit within us. In His death and resurrection, He defeats the great enemy of mankind which is death and offers a new path to reconciliation and eternal life with God. And in His ascension, the Lord has reconciled the heavenly with the earthly as He takes what is ours and seats it at the right hand of the Father. Every step has been accounted for and now, for the first time since Adam and Eve, on the great day of Pentecost, we see humanity receiving the Holy Spirit who not only works alongside them but dwells within them! It is this moment in the life of the Church that then enables us today to baptize new believers in the name of the All-Holy Trinity and then through chrismation, impart to them the Holy Spirit to dwell within them for the rest of their lives. And so, every believer has participated in their very own death and resurrection with Christ in baptism and has also had their very own Pentecost in receiving the Holy Spirit in Chrismation.

Part 3:

Now the feast of Pentecost that we celebrate is so important that we often refer to it as the birthday of the Church – when the Church of God Almighty was now ready, born of God to enter into the world and preach the gospel of salvation. Born of God now because our time of maturity had finally arrived because we were granted to give the Holy Spirit once again. And the world would have been incapable of hearing the message of God from us unless we had the Spirit of God dwelling within us and guiding our every step.

In the creed, we recite and say that the Lord Jesus Christ did all things “for us and for our salvation...” And indeed, even this sending of the Spirit is for the Salvation of the world and has made His kingdom accessible to all. Now that we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, and the Lord having granted His Holy Spirit to dwell within us, we are now that much closer to the kingdom of God. My beloved, It is truly a marvelous thing for us as Christians to believe that the Heavenly King, the comforter, the Spirit of truth, the life-giver, He is both present within us and fills all things. You carry Him within you every moment of your life because of this great feast. And so, you now have access to Kingdom of Heaven both here and now! Notice how the Church recites the hymn “Let us Praise (also known as *Asomen*)” after the feast of Pentecost! It is chanted all throughout the entire Apostles fast as a reminder of the joy that we carry within us. In this hymn, we say the words

“He made the two into one, that is the heaven and the earth.

***He ascended into the heavens and sent to us the Paraclete,
The Spirit of truth, the Comforter. Amen Alleluia.”***

There is no more ceiling between me and the kingdom of God, it is truly at hand – ready for the taking. The Spirit of God dwells in me, I am a temple of the Holy Spirit, and so life with God begins now – not later!! St Cyril of Jerusalem speaks of the

incredible moment of Pentecost that the apostles have lived. He says that the Lord wanted to ensure that what happened that day would serve as a witness to the fact that these people now have the living God working with them. He says the following:

“And lest people should be ignorant of the greatness of the mighty gift coming down to [the apostles], there sounded as it were a heavenly trumpet. For suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, signifying the presence of Him who was to grant power to people to seize with violence the kingdom of God, that both their eyes might see the fiery tongues and their ears hear the sound. And it filled all the house where they were sitting; for the house became the vessel of the spiritual water; as the disciples sat within, the whole house was filled.” [St Cyril of Jerusalem: CATECHETICAL LECTURE 17.15]

while we celebrate Pentecost as a historical event in the life of the Church, we also celebrate it as a daily reminder of the Holy Spirit that we have living and working within us. God within us my beloved! A bold claim indeed. No one else would dare make such a claim. But to the Christian, the celebration of Pentecost is one where we declare that we have faith that God now works with us, through us, and dwells within us!

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

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

Father Abba Isaac, the priest of El-Qalali

The holy father Abba Isaac, the priest of El-Qalali (Cells) was born in an Egyptian village from poor parents, but he was rich in his righteous works. He took the opportunity of the presence of the elders of the monks in the village to sell the works of their hands, and followed them to the wilderness. He served them under the yoke of obedience. When he became a monk, he excelled in

asceticism and worship to the point that he never possessed two garments at the same time. They asked him once: "Why don't you possess two garments?" He answered: "Because when I was in the world before being a monk, I did not have two garments at the same time." He wept very often during his prayers, and he mixed his bread with the ashes of the censer and ate it. Once he became sick of a grievous sickness, and some of the brethren brought him food, but he did not eat it. One of the brethren described to him the benefits of food and urged him again to eat some of it. He insisted on not eating anything of it, and said to him: "Believe me my brother that I desire to remain sick for thirty years." When he became seasoned and everyone heard about his virtues, the fathers by consensus decided to ordain him a priest. He fled and disappeared among the fields. When they were looking for him, they passed by the field, where he was hiding in and sat to rest. They had with them a donkey, which went into the field and stood where the father was. When they went after the donkey to catch it, they found him, and they wanted to bind him so that he could not escape again. He said to them: "I will not escape now, for I know that this is the will of God." He went with them, and they ordained him a priest, and he increased in obedience to the elders and in teaching the beginners the virtues. When the time of his departure drew near, they asked him: "What can we do after you leave us?" He told them: "Do exactly as you have seen me do, if you wish to steadfast in the wilderness", then he departed in peace.



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

Question and Answer:

Question

Is it a sin to prostrate during the holy fifty days? I know it is forbidden, but will a person go to hell for prostrating? Does a person need to confess this or not?

Answer

On Saturdays and Sundays and during the holy fifty days and other joyful days, we refrain only from the prostrations of repentance. On these days, we can worship the Lord as we pray in the conclusion of every hour in the Agpeya, have mercy on us, O God, and Have mercy on us, **who at all times and in every hour, in heaven and on earth, is worshiped and glorified."**

Worship in Arabic and Coptic is literally prostration; so we say at all times and in every hour in heaven and on earth we prostrate to Him and glorify Him. Also, on Sundays, we prostrate several times during the liturgy. We bow down our heads and we get on our knees before the Lord. The only thing that is not allowed is the prostrations of repentance.

It is not a sin to prostrate during the holy fifty days, and there is no reason to confess about it as if it is a sin if you do, but you should share this information with your spiritual father so that the purpose and your intentions are clear and your spiritual father is in agreement with your spiritual practices. In general, you stand to gain more by living within the seasons of the Church, rather than on the margins. In the wisdom of the Church fathers, there are distinguished times for fasting, asceticism, service, and rejoicing, in which the Church worships via the same means.

When Christ was asked regarding why the disciples of St. John the Baptist were fasting, but not His, He replied that the guests of the

bridegroom cannot fast while the bridegroom is amongst them (Matthew 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33). Thus, during these joyous fifty days, Christ is amongst us just as He was with His disciples and apostles after His glorious resurrection. We relive those days not just as a memory or reflection, but in reality. If you train yourself, with the guidance of your spiritual father, to live each day according to the life of the Church, you will enjoy and benefit from every season.

VERSE OF THE MONTH:

*The words I have spoken to you, they are full of the Spirit and life.
John 6:63*

Sayings of the Fathers:

- ❖ Just as we cannot separate fire from the act of heating, nor light from the act of lighting; Thus, we cannot separate the act of sanctification, renewal of life, reform and correction from the Holy Spirit. St. Basil the Great
- ❖ The Holy Spirit is in relation to the body of Christ, that is, His Church, as the soul is in relation to the human body. What the soul does in all the members of the body, the Holy Spirit does through the Church..... St. Augustine
- ❖ As fire burns thorns, so the Holy Spirit erases sins..... St John Chrysostom

THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES THIS MONTH “SYNAXARIUM”

- ❖ Martyrdom of St. George prince of martyrs (23 Baramoudah)1 May
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Sarah and her two sons (25 Baramoudah)3 May

- ❖ Martyrdom of great St. Mark the apostle the evangelist of
The land of Egypt (30 Baramoudah)8 May
- ❖ Nativity of the blessed virgin Mary (1 Bashans) 9 May
- ❖ Departure of St. Macarius of Alexandria (6 Bashans)14 May
- ❖ Departure of St. Athanasius the 20th Pope of Egypt (7 Bashans) 15 May
- ❖ Departure of St. Helena, the empress (7 Bashans) 17 May
- ❖ Commemoration of honorable archangel (12 Bashans)20 May
- ❖ Departure of St. Arsanius, the tutor of Emperor's children
(13 Bashans) 21 May
- ❖ Departure of St. Pachomius (Pakhom), the father of the spiritual
communal Monastic life (14 Bashas)22 May
- ❖ Commemoration of St. John the Evangelist (16 Bashans)
.....24 May
- ❖ Commemoration of the feast of Pentecost (18 Bashans).....26 May
- ❖ Commemoration of the pure and holy virgin Mary (21 Bashans)29 May

CHURCH SERVICES SCHEDULE:

PLEASE, CHECK CHURCH WEBSITE IN THE FIRST PAGE.

YOUTUBE SERVICE STREAMING ADDRESS:

www.youtube.com/channel/UC_MI2B3NKLi1Y8P3nQR5Amw/live