



Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria

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Abib / Mesra

| Issue 92 |

August 2023

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

The Virtues of the Holy Virgin Mary

By Pope Shenouda III

LIFE OF HUMILITY

Humility was a fundamental condition for her of whom the Lord of Glory will be born. It was indispensable that He would be born from a humble person, who could bear the glory of the divine Incarnation from her, the glory of the coming of the Holy Spirit in her, and the glory of the nativity of the Lord from her, and the glory of all the generations blessing her, and the humility of Elizabeth in front of her saying to her: “But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (**Luke 1:43**). Likewise, to bear the glory of all the apparitions of angels, and the worship of the Magi in front of her Son, and the many miracles which happened by her son in the land of Egypt, and the light of this Son in her bosom. That is why, “the fullness of the time” (**Gal. 4:4**) waited for this human being from whom the Son of God was born.



This humility was manifested in her life, as we shall see: The angel announced to her that she will become the mother of the Lord, but she said: “Behold the maid-servant of the Lord” (**Luke 1:38**), that is his slave and his maiden. The magnificent glory which was given to her, absolutely did not decrease by her humility. But rather it was because of this humility that the Lord granted her that glory. “For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant” and made great things for her (**Luke 1: 48, 49**).

The humility of the Virgin was also manifested in her going to Elizabeth in order to serve her, during the period of her pregnancy. As soon as she heard that she was pregnant, in her sixth month, she traveled to her in a tiring journey across the mountains. She remained with her for three months, till her days were complete to give birth (**Luke 1: 39-56**). She did so while she was pregnant with the Lord of glory. Her lack of talking about the glories of the divine Incarnation, is a sign of her humility.

LIFE OF ABANDON

She lived saintly and purely in the temple. Then came a time when they said to her to go out of the temple. She did not protest or object, such as many women do, when they are forbidden by the ecclesiastical laws, to enter the church in certain periods; and they protest and discuss much!

She wanted to live without marriage, but they ordered her to live under the guardianship of a man, according to the custom in her days. She did not protest then, and she accepted to live in the custody of a man, as she had accepted to go out of the temple. She lived the life of abandon, not protesting, not resisting, not objecting, but quietly abandoning to the will of God, without discussion.

She was determined to live the life of virginity, and did never think at any time of becoming a mother. And when God willed that she becomes a mother by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon her (**Luke 1:35**), she did not discuss, but replied with her immortal expression: “Behold the maid-servant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word” (**Luke 1:38**). For that, God granted her the motherhood, and kept her virginity too, and she became a mother, the thing in which she

had absolutely never thought. Through abandon, she became the mother of the Lord. rather the greatest in value of all mothers.

She was ordered to go to Egypt, and she went. And she was ordered to come back from Egypt, and she came back. She was ordered to move from Bethlehem and to reside in Nazareth, and she moved and resided. She was a calm human being, living the life of abandon, without discussion. That is why “He who is mighty has done great things” to her. “For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant”.

THE LIFE OF ENDURANCE

She became an orphan from her two parents, when she was eight years old, and she endured the life of orphanage. She lived in the temple while she was a child, and she endured the life of solitude there. She came out of the temple in order to live in the custody of a carpenter, and she endured the life of poverty. When she gave birth to her only Son, “there was no room for them in the inn”, then she “laid Him in a manger” (**Luke 2:7**). She supported that also. She endured the responsibility while she was in a tender age. She supported the magnificent glory which surrounded her, without being harassed by the thoughts of greatness.

It was not possible for her to declare that she has given birth while she was a virgin, so she kept silent and endured that. She suffered the tiring voyage to Egypt and back. She suffered to be expelled there from town to town, because the idols were falling down in front of the Christ (**Is. 19:1**). She suffered to be a poor foreigner. She suffered that a sword would pierce through her own soul also (**Luke 2:35**) because of that which her Son met, the persecutions, the insults, and lastly the suffering and the shame of the cross. The Virgin was not satisfied only to endure negatively, but she lived in the jubilation by the Lord as she said in her hymn: “my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour” (**Luke 1:47**).

FAITH AND NOT GRUMBLING

She did not grumble at all in all that she suffered. When Herod menaced to kill her Son, in the flight to Egypt, and in the persecutions from the Jews, she did not say, where is the announcement

that He will sit to reign on the throne of his father David and there will be no end to his kingdom (**Luke 1: 32-33**)! But she was rather patient; and as Elizabeth said about her “And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord” (**Luke 1:45**).

She believed that she will give birth while remaining a virgin, and that was realized for her. She believed that the “Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” (**Luke 1:35**), in spite of his birth in a manger. What she believed in, was realized for her, by way of the visions and the angels whom she saw, and the miracles which were accomplished by Him. She believed in all that, in spite of the persecutions to which He was exposed. She believed while He was on the cross, then she saw Him after His resurrection from the dead (**Matt. 28**).

SILENCE, PRAYER, AND MEDITATION

It was God who arranged that she became an orphan and lived in the temple. In the temple, she learned the life of solitude and silence, and to become preoccupied with prayer and meditation. Having lost the love and tenderness of her parents, she became preoccupied with the love of God alone. She lived a life of seclusion with prayers, hymns, reading of the Holy Bible, study and recall from memory of many of its verses, and of the psalms. Certainly, her hymn in the house of Elizabeth is a proof of that, because the majority of its verses are taken from the psalms and the verses of the Holy Bible. Silence became one of the characteristics of her spirituality.

Although she was in the events of the Nativity: having seen wonderful things which probably exceed the endurance of her age as a small girl, and miracles that surrounded her, and having heard the words of angels, shepherds, and wise men from the East. she did not speak proudly about the events of the Nativity, but “kept all these things and pondered them in her heart” (**Luke 2**”19).

The silent meditating Virgin is a lesson for us. May we be like her: meditating much, and speaking a little. Nevertheless I see, that when time came for her to speak, she became a source for the ecclesiastical tradition, in some of the news which the apostles and the evangelists learned

from her: the miracles and the events during the flight to Egypt, and the conversation of the Christ among the masters in the temple while He was young (**Luke 3: 46-47**).

OTHER VIRTUES

The Lord has chosen this poor orphan girl, to become the foremost woman in existence. She possessed in her virtues what is more than riches. Also, among her virtues, there are her personal sanctity, her purity and her virginity, her spiritual knowledge, her service to others, and her spiritual motherhood to the fathers' apostles. Time would lack if we were to speak about all her virtues.

THE EXERCISE OF THE ARROW PRAYER

By **H.G. Bishop Mousa**

The Concept Behind this Exercise

These prayers are called “arrow-like prayers” by the Church for they are, in a manner of speaking, spiritual arrows that penetrate the thick veil that can exist between man and God, rises to the pinnacle of heaven and enters the sanctuary of the Lord and is most effective.

When you repeat this prayer with concentration, you will experience the following:

1. You will feel that the Lord is opening you eyes while you talk to Him. 2. You will realize your sins and weaknesses, and lay them in His Hands. 3. You will humble your heart as you ask for mercy and the forgiveness of the many sins you commit against the Lord, against others, and against yourself. 4. Your heart rejoices when you feel the consolations of God's Spirit who comes near you and comforts you. You then feel that the Lord Jesus Christ enters into your feelings and emotions.

Practical Application



1. You should choose an appropriate time to carry out this exercise. You can, for example, repeat this prayer several tens of times in a few minutes before the morning prayers (Prime), before the evening prayers (Vespers), when you lie down for a nap at noon, or when you go to bed at night. On all these occasions, you either get ready for prayer or you protect your heart and mind from being immersed in thoughts or images of evil.
2. You will initially feel somewhat bored and that it is a monotonous routine. This feeling, however, will disappear if you concentrate on what you are saying and if you visualize the Lord Jesus Christ before you.
3. At the beginning, the words will be uttered by your mouth; then your mind will pay attention to them and you will feel that you are engaged in a humble dialogue with the Lord because of your sins. Next, your feelings are stirred and the prayer is entrenched in your heart in joy and the awareness of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is joyful is that this “storing up” in your heart will be very important for your daily life. You will discover that this prayer will leap from your heart to your lips unawares and you will find yourself saying: “My Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me.....”. This will alert you to the presence of the Lord and to the possibility of repeating it several times. If you are in a sinful situation, you will correct it quickly, and if you are upset for any reason, you will quickly be comforted by the Lord.

The Purpose of the Exercise

The significance of any spiritual exercise resides its purpose. Is the aim of the exercise to become a spiritual hero who does exercises that other young people do not do, or is the aim simply to unite with the Lord Jesus Christ because of your pressing need for Him, to forgive your sins, sanctify your life, comfort your spirit as you travel in the vale of tears? This is the objective, the need of a weak man for a loving God, for a spiritual breath of fresh air or a dose that energizes your feelings for the Lord Jesus Christ who did not begrudge you His divine blood.

The validity of the objective, therefore, is basic and the guidance of your spiritual father guarantees the clarity of the purpose and the soundness of the way. A Gospel Exercise This exercise has its roots in the gospel because it is taken from the prayer of the tax collector who

stood afar off and would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast saying: “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Lk. 18: 13), and who went down to his house justified. Its roots are also in the Old Testament, for David, the prophet, said: “O, how I love Your Name; it is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97), and “I remember Your Name in the night, O Lord” (Psa. 119: 55).

Has not St. Peter said: “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk..... Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 3: 6, 4: 12)?

Did not Isaiah the prophet say: “The desire of our soul is for Your Name” (Isa. 26: 8)? It is the name of salvation: “and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Mat. 1: 21). A Coptic Patristic Exercise It was an exercise which St. Augustine advised his disciples to do asking them to repeat always: ” My Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me; my Lord Jesus Christ, help me; I praise You, My Lord Jesus Christ.” The Psalmody gives us the same feeling when we repeat continuously: “My Lord Jesus Christ, my good Savior.” What is important is that the call to the Lord Jesus Christ be repeated, if only in various short requests as the need arises, and any number of times in a flexibility that aims at bringing us into the presence of God. The idea is not to follow fixed way or repeat it an exact number of times, but to say it in spiritual freedom. When we feel we want to speak differently with the Lord, we leave this prayer and talk to Him about what we want. It is only a “key” that enables us to enter to the Lord. A State of Tranquility The fathers say that this exercise puts you in a state of “tranquility of the heart”, or spiritual, intellectual, psychological, and nervous peace which we need urgently in our era which is full of causes for worry. What is most wonderful about this exercise is that it goes with you everywhere: when you are among people, on the bus or waiting for the bus, before going to bed and on getting up. It is an exercise for every time and every place.

Let us repeat together, my dear brother: “My Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me; my Lord Jesus Christ, help me; I praise you my Lord Jesus Christ.”

May the Lord be with you.



SAINT OF THE MONTH:

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

St. Abakragoun

St. Abakragoun, was formerly a thief. Two young men plotted with him to steal. They went to the cell of a monk, and they found him keeping a vigil, praying. They waited until he had finished his prayer and had lain down. Nevertheless, he remained standing praying until they became weary and troubled. At dawn, the old monk went out to the thieves, and when they saw him, they bowed down before him, and cast down their swords. He preached to them, taught them, and they became monks under his direction.



St. Abakragoun fought a very great fight, and devoted himself to the ascetic life. The old monk prophesied to him that he would receive the crown of martyrdom for the Name of Christ, and his saying was fulfilled later on. Six years later the devil incited persecution against the church, St. Abakragoun bid his spiritual father farewell and took his blessings. He went to Niku, and confessed the Name of the Lord Christ before the governor, who was appointed by Maximianus Caesar. The governor tortured him much and then took him to Alexandria. Then he was tortured by hanging him on the mast of the ship five times, and each time the ropes broke. Then they placed him in a sack made of hide, and threw him into the sea.

The angel of the Lord brought him out of the water, and commanded him to go to Samanoud. On his way he passed by the city of El-Benwan, and its people recognized him. They brought to him everyone who had an infirmity and they were healed by his prayers.

When he arrived at Samanoud, God wrought on his hands many signs. He raised, by his prayers, the daughter of Justus the Vizier from the dead. Justus, his wife, and all his soldiers, believed, and they all received the crown of martyrdom, and they were numbered, nine hundred thirty-five men. As for St. Abakragoun, they sent him back to Alexandria. After they tortured him with different kinds of tortures, they cut off his head, and he received the crown of martyrdom. The angel of the Lord appeared to a priest from the city of Menuf, told him about the place of the body of the saint, and the priest went and took it. After the end of the time of persecution, they built a church in his name in the city of El-Batanoon, and placed his body in it.

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

Question and Answer:

Question

The Holy Bible mentions that ear piercing is a sign of a slave who has devoted himself permanently to his master. The question is:

who is your master? St. Paul says, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (1 Cor 6:19).

Question

Our body is a temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it belongs to God and we have no right to damage it in any way through piercing, tattooing, smoking, drinking etc. Our duty is to keep it pure and holy as our Lord wants us to be.

In Holy Book of Leviticus 21:5, we read, "

They shall not make tonsures upon their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuttings in their flesh."

It is enough that you have your ears pierced which is more customary than biblical; you do not need to pierce other parts of your body because of fashion. What is the message you would be sending to those around you? As soon as this fashion disappears, you will not feel at ease having your nose pierced. I hope you keep the words of the Holy Spirit in your heart and be in the image of Christ a role model to those around you "*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*" (Rom 12:2).

VERSE OF THE MONTH:

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory
that far outweighs them all. 2 cor 4:17

Sayings of the Fathers:

- ❖ Prayer is the source and foundation of innumerable blessings. It is very powerful. Prayer is an introduction to bring joy..... Saint John Chrysostom
- ❖ Do you want to acquire permanent prayer? Strive hard in prayer, and when the Lord sees your zeal, determination, and quest in prayer, He will give it to you..... Abba Makarios the Great

- ❖ The few minutes we stand before prayer have an impact on the spirit of prayer, and we must not neglect them.....Father John Kronstadt

THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES THIS MONTH “SYNAXARIUM”

- ❖ Departure of St. Palamon the father of monks (25 Abib)1 August
- ❖ Departure of the upright St. Joseph the carpenter (26 Abib)2 August
- ❖ Departure of St. Mary the Magda (28 Abib)4 August
- ❖ Departure of St. Paesa (Athanasia) (2 Misra)8 August
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Julietta (6 Misra)12 August
- ❖ Annunciation of St. Joachim with the birth of Virgin Mary (7 Misra) 13 August
- ❖ Confession of St. Peter the Apostle that Christ is the son of God (8 Misra)14 August
- ❖ Departure of St. Moisis Bishop of Ouseem (11 Misra).....17 August
- ❖ Commemoration of honorable archangel Michael (12 Misra)18 August
- ❖ Feast of Transfiguration of our Lord on Mount tabor (13 Misra)19 August
- ❖ Commemoration of the departure of sr. Mary known as the Ascetic (15 Misra)21 August
- ❖ Ascension of the body of the pure Virgin Mary (16 Misra)22 August
- ❖ Translocation of the body of St. Macarius to Monastery in Scetis (19 Misra)25 August
- ❖ Commemoration of the pure and holy virgin Mary (21 Misra)27 August

CHURCH SERVICES SCHEDULE:

PLEASE, CHECK CHURCH WEBSITE IN THE FIRST PAGE.

YOUTUBE SERVICE STREAMING ADDRESS:

www.youtube.com/channel/UC_MI2B3NKLi1Y8P3nQR5Amw/live