



Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria

ST. MARY AND ST. MOSES COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

Diocese of Mississauga and West of Canada



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Life of Virtue & Righteousness

By Pope Shenouda

Hindrances Not Preventives

Life of virtue and righteousness is not always easy, for there may be some hindrances on the way, facing even saints, as we know from their biographies. Why then does God permit such hindrances, what are their sources, causes, and benefits?

Causes and sources of hindrances:

Some are caused by the devil, for he walks about like a roaring lion, seeking a prey, and sowing tares everywhere, as he did to Eve our mother, giving her a destructive counsel. We ought to be on our guard, “for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor 2: 11). That is why St. Athanasius in his struggle against the Arians said, our first enemy is not Arianism, but the devil.

The crowns that may be received in case of overcoming such hindrances are an encouraging factor. Man’s love for God and insistence to walk in virtue and overcome hindrances entitles him to receive crowns of love, struggling, and triumph. Nobody should therefore take as an excuse the hindrances he may face at home, at work or around, for this is the nature of the spiritual way. The devils envy the righteous for their righteousness and their success in what they themselves failed, for their experiencing the life of holiness and purity and their attachment to God, for the grace accompanying them, for the work of the Holy Spirit in them, and even for their life with God. So, the devils wage wars against the righteous so that they may fail and join them in their kingdom.

If hindrances exist, this means that we are on the right way, for if we were in the way of the devil why would he fight us! He would rather make his way easy for us and encourage us. The fact that he or his assistants fight us is certain evidence that our way troubles the devil. That is why the Lord Christ says:

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.” (Jn 15: 19, 18) Such hatred is natural and ought to give us peace and be a trait for us. The Lord described the gate as narrow and the way as difficult (Mt 7: 14)

Actually, the adversary fights only the great work that deserves. He also fears a good beginning lest it grow and bear fruit, that is why beginnings are often difficult, for whenever a person starts a successful work, the devil and his supporters start an anti-action.

Even the apostles and great saints faced hindrances in their ministry and evangelism. Emperors, kings, governors, rulers, and judges rose against them, sent them to trials, and cast them into prisons and exiles. They faced oppression, persecutions, and resistance from old religions and philosophies. The Lord said it clearly, “You will be hated by all for My name’s sake.” (Mt 10: 22) “The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.” (Jn 16: 2) However, all these are hindrances, not preventives.

Many hindrances arose against evangelism, but such hindrances did not prevent them from evangelizing. Faith

spread, and churches extended, for the Scripture says, “Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” (Acts 8: 4) Even in the Old Testament, the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew (Ex 1: 12). As for the church it is written, “No weapon formed against you shall prosper” (Isa 54: 17) The whole world stood against Athanasius the Apostolic. He was exiled and deposed, yet he prevailed.

Love of the world, and the senses and their deviation are among the hindrances. The senses are the gates of thoughts leading to the heart and the emotions; and the world has its wars and puts hindrances in the way of the spirit. The same applies to the flesh and its hindrances.

Among the hindrances also are the false brothers, misleading guides, and evil company, as God said to Israel, “Those who lead you cause you to err,” (Isa 3: 12) The Lord likewise described the scribes and Pharisees as “blind guides” (Mt 23) and said, “And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” (Mt 15: 14) This applies to the wrong concepts that may spread among people, misleading them and hindering their way to God. Peter, with his wrong understanding of passions stood as an offense to the Lord, so the Lord rebuked him, saying, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me.” (Mt 16: 23) Misleading books and printed material then are hindrances.

Among the hindrances is one’s nature, whether inherited, acquired from the surroundings, or established by practice. A person has to overcome this nature, even though a person is quick to anger, irritable, rash ...etc. There are hindrances from the inner lusts and wrong goals, for the Scripture says, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man.” (1 Cor 10: 13) We therefore pray God to save us from all such hindrances whatever their sources may be, and in spite of all such hindrances and wars, I want you to have peace. Do not be afraid, be steadfast, and go on. You are not alone in your wars, for you have the divine support. The devil may hinder you, but the grace encourages and strengthens you. God may permit hindrances, this is half the fact, but the other half is that God at the same time gives you the strength by which you can struggle and overcome. He himself leads you in triumph in Christ (2 Cor 2: 14).

He permits trials, but “God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Cor 10: 13)

One may wonder why God permits trials and hindrances to befall us! This brings us to the reasons:

Testing:

God may permit hindrances to test our love, our will power, and our obedience. Everybody can offer good intentions and promises, as Peter did when he said to the Lord, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.” “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” (Mt 26: 33, 35) Yet at the time of action, at the time of fears and danger, all such words and good intentions were tested.

Some examples of hindrances for testing:

When a rich charitable person faces some hindrances like need or poverty, these will be a test to his virtue of charity. The virtue of the widow who gave out of her poverty deserved the Lord’s praise (Mk 12: 44). The widow of Zarephas of Sidon likewise gave Elijah in the days of the famine all she had of flour and oil kept for a last meal for her and her son before they die! (1 Kgs 17: 12)

Giving of the needs applies to one’s time, tithes, strength, and health. A person who pays the tithes when being poor with very little to cover his needs, overcoming the hindrance of poverty and obeying the commandment, certainly differs from a person who takes the need as an excuse to cover or justify his disobedience. Likewise, a minister who serves even when he has exams with no minute free, or the minister who serves in spite of his weakness, all those having overcome hindrances proved their love for God, for the others, and for good in general.

A person who bears with someone in spite of the offense or embarrassment caused by him reveals the prevalence of the virtue of longsuffering over all hindrances. The Lord says, “If you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you (Mt 5: 44- 47). He requires us to have love and peace with longsuffering. The person who suffers the betrayal of a friend and its results has the virtue of longsuffering.

A person who says a word of truth in spite of the results overcomes hindrances. It is easy to say a word of truth if it is safe, but to insist on saying it in spite of the persecution that may result is evidence of concern about testifying to the truth and of courage. John the Baptist is an example, for when he said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife,” (Mk 6: 18) he was beheaded in prison, and his head was brought on a platter (Mt 14: 11).

Another example is giving thanks in spite of the hindrances. Everybody can give thanks to God for health, comfort, wealth, or success, but to give thanks in case of poverty and need, or in case of prayers not responded, is evidence of the deep virtue of thanksgiving and love for God Himself, not for His good things. Hindrances reveal one's steadfastness in faith and in the relationship with God and the others.

The martyrs revealed deep faith in spite of the threats, the tortures, the jail, and the exile, and in spite of the many temptations. They proved stronger, overcame suffering and temptation, and received crowns.

“To be continued”

Fasting and the imitation of Christ

Fr. Matthew the Poor

The Church imitates Christ. All that Christ has done the Church also does; He becomes its life. Christ's call to Matthew (“Follow me”) was intended by Him to mean “Take my life for you.” The Church has adopted this call as a scheme of its own.



Fasting, in the life and works of Christ, ranks as the first response to the act of unction and of being filled with the Holy Spirit. It represents the first battle in which Christ did away with His adversary, the prince of this world. In His forty days' experience of absolute fasting, Christ laid down for us the basis of our dealings with our enemy—along with all his allurements and vain illusions. “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting” (Mk. 9:29). For when a person enters into prayerful

fasting, Satan departs from the flesh.

As the Son of God, Christ did not need fasting, nor did He need an open confrontation with Satan or baptism or filling with the Holy Spirit. Yet He fulfilled everything for our sake so His life and deeds would become ours. If we know that Christ was baptized to “be revealed to Israel” (Jn. 1:31), it follows that being filled with the Holy Spirit meant “being tempted by the devil.” This was so He could be revealed before the spirits of darkness, and openly enter into combat with the devil on behalf of our race. Fasting was to elevate the flesh to the level of war with the spirits of evil, those powers that hold sway over our weaker part, the flesh.

The reader may notice that baptism, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and fasting form a fundamental and inseparable series of acts in Christ's life that culminated in perfect victory over Satan in preparation for his total annihilation by the cross.

It is then extremely important to accept and to feel the power of each of these three acts in our depths and draw from Christ their action in us as they worked in Him, so that His same life may identify with ours. The ultimate aim of baptism, of being filled with the Holy Spirit, and of fasting is that Christ Himself may dwell in us: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Ga. 2:20).

In baptism the connection with our old Adam is cut off for us to receive our sonship to God in Christ. In being filled with the Holy Spirit, our connection with the devil and with the life of sin is cut off for us to receive the Spirit of life in Christ. And in fasting, the connection between instinct and Satan is cut off to give the flesh victory in its life according to the Spirit, in Christ.

We can never sever these three acts from each other; baptism grants spiritual fullness, and spiritual fullness grants (by fasting) victory for the flesh to walk in the Spirit. By the three together we live in Christ, and Christ lives in us.

The dimension of time in these three acts does not weaken their merging together, nor does it separate one from the other. Baptism in childhood, the spirit's fullness in mental and psychic maturity, and fasting, which concludes these three acts, could not be seen separately in the spiritual vision. Although they occur separately in time, out of human necessity, they are one act spiritually. They spring forth to us from Christ who is "One Act," "One Word." In all three acts, Christ dwells in us personally to give us His fullness, image, and life, so that we might live Him as One Act and One Word, and no longer live our own selves in our torn and disrupted image.

The point to understand is that fasting is a divine act of life, which we receive from Christ complementary to baptism and fullness. Since its beginning the Church has been occupied with infusing into its own body the acts of Christ's life so they would become life-giving acts to all its members. If the Church imitates Christ in its life discipline, it is because it has been given grace and authority by God to possess Christ Himself as a life of its own. The Church, which is one with Christ, is a lively and efficacious image of the life of Christ. The Gospel describes it as the "bride of Christ" united with her Bridegroom. Though the Gospel declares that the Church has become one with Christ, it still reiterates that Christ will remain a Bridegroom on His own, no matter how much He offers Himself. Neither does Christ become a Church, nor the Church become a Christ. This confirms to us that we, as members of the body of Christ, always need to strive to acquire Christ to become more like Him and to be a bride "without spot," a betrothed "pure bride" in a perpetual state of betrothal like the Virgin who conceived and bore the Logos. Virginity here is "to keep oneself unstained from the world" (Jm. 1:27). Being stained is the ungodly union between Satan and "the lust of the flesh," "the lust of the eyes," and the "pride of life" (1 Jn. 2:16). These three bonds were united and shattered by Christ during His fast on the Mount of Temptation. He gave us the shattered bonds as an inheritance to live out and carry into effect by fasting in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and in the sacrament of baptism.

Fasting in this sense is one of the fundamental phases that Christ underwent. We have never been able to claim that we live in the full maturity of Christ, or that Christ abides in us in His full measure, particularly if we overlook fasting. If baptism is one phase and crucifixion another, fasting is an extremely important stage between baptism and crucifixion. Fullness with the Holy Spirit, which Christ consummated by baptism, elevated the flesh to the level of extraordinary fasting, i.e., total deprivation of food and drink, utter seclusion and prayer. He thus raised the flesh to the stage of the cross.

It is impossible for us to carry our cross well and get through the temptation of the devil, the ordeal of the world, and the oppression of evil without fasting on the Mount of Temptation. If being filled with the Holy Spirit does not qualify us for fasting, we inevitably will be unable to beat the tribulation of the cross.

Here the Church's imitation of Christ's work is a necessary course of life for us, in which we may discover our salvation, strength, security, and victory. It was not for Himself that Christ was baptized, nor was it for Himself that He was crucified, and, consequently, it was not for Himself that He fasted forty days. The works of Christ—themselves a mighty and omnipotent power—have 'become sources of our salvation and life. Their power, however, is not imparted to us unless we experience and practice it. Those who are baptized put on Christ, those who are filled with the Holy

Spirit live by means of Christ's life, and those who fast win Christ's victory over the prince of this world.

These liberating deeds of Christ and the extent to which they and His life influence us were most clearly declared by Christ Himself: "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (Jn. 8:36). But how can the Son set us free from the world, the devil, and our ego except by dwelling in us and offering us His life, His works, and His victory? He reiterates often, "Abide in Me, and I in you." This in fact is the mutual action. We perform His deeds and live according to His example, and thereupon He imparts to us the power of His deeds, His life, and His example. Time and again He calls our attention: "Learn from me." Here He reveals that He has placed Himself as a model of life and works, as our "Forerunner," as the "first fruits," that in everything we would be "like Him." He became like us so we would become like Him.

After fulfilling the course of our salvation with all these works, Christ stands there, face pale and wounds in His hands, feet, and side, and asks, "Do you believe in Me? Do you believe in the works I have done? Do you really accept Me as a Bridegroom?" He does not wait to hear us say "Yes" (only as a slothful bride); He invites us to a total communion with Him in suffering and glory alike. We thus have to prove our communion with Him in faith by having communion with Him in His works; only works testify to the genuineness of our faith. Yet He, as a true Bridegroom, did not leave us to invent works for ourselves but laid down the course of our works and life: "I am the way;" "He who follows me will not walk in darkness." Following Him is not so much an intellectual theory as it is tracking Him, imitating His works, and sharing communion in love and suffering.

"To be continued"

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE RITES OF THE HOLY LITURGY IN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

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The word "rites" in Arabic is pronounced "tuks" which is derived from the Greek word 'taxis', meaning 'a system'. In the church this refers to the system of the Holy Service, that is, the recitation of verbal prayers and the performing of the holy symbolical movements. Such symbols include the shape of the church, the utensils, the ranks of the priests and the garments they wear. Every motion and/or action during the worship, every action in and out of the Apostolic Orthodox Church carries with it high spiritual meaning, some of which may not be instantly apparent to everyone. Each rite carries within itself a profound spiritual and doctrinal meaning for the faithful to taste and experience during their public worship.



GOD ENDORSES THE RITES OF THE CHURCH

God has set an order for everything, especially in the worship offered to Him by man, as seen in the quotation, "***For God is not the author of confusion but of peace***" (1Cor.14:33)

and also, "***Let all things be done decently and in order***" (1Cor.14:40).

The use of rites during worship has been a practice since long ago. We read that Noah, after the Flood, built an altar for the Lord and took from every clean animal and every clean bird and offered Burnt Offerings on it... "***And so, the Lord smelled a soothing aroma***" (Gen.8:20-21).

We may also read about the altar in the life of Abraham, the beloved of the Lord, who built an altar for the Lord wherever he went, calling on the Name of the Lord and presenting Him with Burnt Offerings (Gen.12:7-8;13:18).

When the Lord asked him to offer his son as a sacrifice, he went to the appointed place, built an altar, and placed wood on it. He then bound Isaac his son and laid him upon the wood on the altar, according to the rites of offering an animal sacrifice at the time (Gen.22:9). There are stories about ritualistic worship and the building of altars in the life of Jacob, who, after coming back from Haran, lived in Saccoth where he built an altar, calling it *'El Elohe Israel'* (Gen.33:20).

He also built another altar in Luz, that is, Bethel (Gen.35:6). In the days of Moses, God Himself established the rites of worship. A great portion of The Book of Exodus and all of the Book of Leviticus is dedicated to the explanation of rites; God explained to Moses and Aaron all such details relating to the rites of worship. His command was very strict and whoever disobeyed it would not escape the heavenly

punishment, which was exactly what happened to the sons of Aaron - Nadab and Abihu - who disobeyed the rites, and instead offered profane fire in the censer. The Lord sent fire down from heaven to consume them and they died before the Lord (Lev.10). There is also the story of Uzziah the king.

"When he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense" (2Chr.26:16).

The priests therefore went in after him saying,

"It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the Sanctuary" (2Chr.26:18).

When Uzziah became furious and refused to get out, leprosy broke out on his forehead, *"so they thrust him out of that place ... King Uzziah remained a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord"* (2Chr.26:20-21).

In the days of David, a man called Uzza put out his hand to hold the Ark of the Covenant. No one was allowed to touch the Ark of the Covenant except the priests, who carried it on poles. The anger of the Lord was therefore aroused against Uzza and he died there before God. This incident convinced David to go back to the original rite, which the Lord Himself instituted, in carrying the Ark of the Covenant. Three months later, when David wanted to transfer the Ark of the Covenant to the city of David, he gave orders saying,

"No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the Lord has chosen them to carry the Ark of God and to minister before Him forever" (1Chr.15:2).

He then said to the chiefs of the Levites, *"You are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the Ark of the Lord God of Israel to the place I have prepared for it. For because you did not do it the first time, the Lord our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order.*

"So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord of Israel. And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders" (1Chr.15:12-15).

Solomon also strictly followed the rites when he moved the Ark of the Covenant from the tabernacle to the most holy place in the Sanctuary, which he had built (2Chr.6). It is written in the Bible that the Lord spoke in detail about such places of deliverance and their specifications, even more than He did about the creation in the Book of Genesis, which was only briefly mentioned. He exhibited great care in detailing

the acceptable types of sacrifices, the ways of offering them, and when they were to be offered. He also dedicated Aaron and his sons as priests through whom the Leviticus priesthood descended. The rest of

the tribe of Levites, many as they were, were devoted to minister to the tabernacle and the rites of worship in it.

The Lord also spoke in great detail about the Tabernacle and the Sanctuary. The Lord deliberately repeated such details to ensure that no single detail would be neglected. This indicates how highly regarded by the Lord the rites are, as they reflect the glory of worship and the sentiment of reverence for the House of God and the Holy Sacraments.

Such rites refresh the spirit of the worshipper and simplify the facts surrounding religion and theology so that even the laity may appreciate them. Without such rites, worship would be dry and boring.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

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

Saint Minas the Wonder

St. Mina who is called the blessed faithful, was martyred. His father, Eudoxius, was a native of the city of Nakiyos (Nikiu) and was its Governor. His brother was envious of him and he brought charges against him before the emperor. The emperor transferred him to Africa and appointed him Governor over it. The people were pleased with him because he was merciful and God-fearing. His mother Euphemia had no children. One day she went to church on the feast of our Lady, the Virgin, the mother of God, at Atribes. She saw the children in the church wearing their beautiful clothes with their parents. She heaved a sigh and wept before the icon of Our Lady St. Mary, entreating her to intercede for her before her beloved Son, in order that He would give her a son. A voice came from the icon saying, "Amen." She rejoiced in what she had heard and realized that the Lord had heard her prayers. When she returned to her home and told her husband about it, he replied, "May God's Will be done." The Lord gave them this saint and they called him Mina, according to the voice that his mother heard. When he grew, his parents taught him reading and writing and they reared him in a Christian manner. When he was eleven years old, his father departed at a good old age. Then his mother departed three years later. St. Mina devoted his life to fasting, praying and to living a Christian life. Because of everyone's love towards him and his father, they placed him in his father's position. In spite of that, he did not forsake his worshipping. When Diocletian had reneged Christianity and issued his orders to worship idols, many were martyred for the Name of the Lord Christ. St. Mina left his position and went to the desert, where he stayed many days worshipping God with all his heart.



One day he saw the heavens open and the martyrs crowned with beautiful crowns. He heard a voice saying, "He who toils for the Name of the Lord Christ shall receive these crowns." He returned to the city over which he was Governor and confessed the Name of the Lord Christ. Knowing that he belonged to a noble family, they tried to dissuade him from his faith and promised him honors and precious gifts. When he did not change his mind, they threatened him and the Governor ordered him to be tortured. When the Governor failed to turn him away from his faith in the Lord Christ, he sent him to his brother so that he might influence him but he failed also. Finally, he ordered his head to be cut off with the sword, his body to be cast in the fire and his ashes to be scattered in the wind. The body remained in the fire for three days and three nights, but it was not harmed.

His sister came and gave the soldiers a lot of money and they let her take the body. She put it in a sack made of fronds and decided to go to Alexandria, as her brother had previously advised her. She embarked with her brother's body on one of the ships to Alexandria. During their trip, sea beasts came out of the water and attacked the passengers aboard the ship. They were frightened and screamed with fear. The

Saint's sister prayed to the Lord and asked for the intercession of her brother. While the passengers were in fear, fire went forth from her brother's body and burned the faces of the beasts. They dived immediately into the water and as they reappeared, the fire burned them again. They finally dived and did not reappear. When the ship arrived at the city of Alexandria, most of the people went out with the father, the Patriarch. They carried the holy body with reverence and honor and entered the city with a venerable celebration and placed it in the church, after they shrouded it in expensive shrouds. When the time of persecution ended, the angel of the Lord appeared to the honorable Patriarch, Anba Athanasius, the Apostolic. The angel informed him of the Lord's command which was to place the body of St. Mina on a camel and to take it out of the city without letting anyone lead it, but to follow it from a distance until it stopped at a place that the Lord had designated. They walked behind the camel until they arrived at a place called Lake Bayad, in the district of Marriot. There they heard a voice saying, "This is the place where the Lord wishes the body of his beloved Mina to be placed." They lowered the body and placed it in a coffin, then they situated it in a beautiful garden and many miracles happened through the body.

Later on, the people of Pentapolis (the five cities) rose against the cities around Alexandria. The people were getting ready to face the Berbers, and the Governor decided to take the body of St. Mina with him to be his deliverer and his strong protector. He took the body secretly and through the blessings of this saint, he overcame the Berbers and returned victorious. The Governor decided not to return the body of the Saint to its original place and wanted to take it to Alexandria. On the way back, they passed by Lake Bayad, St. Mina's original place. The camel carrying the body knelt down and would not move in spite of frequent beatings. They moved the body over another camel, but again this second camel did not move from its place. The Governor finally realized that this was the Lord's command. He made a coffin from decay-resistant wood and placed the silver coffin in it. He then returned it to its place and invoked St. Mina's blessings, then returned to his city.

When the Lord wanted to disclose the location of St. Mina's holy body, He did it in this manner. There was a shepherd in the desert. One day a sheep with mange slipped down into the water of a well near the place of the saint's body. The sheep then came out of the water and rolled over in the sand of that place, and instantly the sheep was healed. When the shepherd saw this miracle, he was amazed. He took some of the sand and mixed it with water and smeared it over every sheep with mange, as well as on those with other infirmities, and immediately they were healed. The news of these miracles spread in all the countries until the Emperor of Constantinople heard of them. He had an only daughter and she was leprous. Her father sent her to the place where the saint's body was and she inquired from the shepherd how these miracles were happening. She took some of the sand, moistened it with water, smeared it on her body and slept the night in that place. In her sleep she saw St. Mina saying to her, "Arise early and dig in this place, and you will find my body." When she woke up, she found herself cured. She began digging as she was told and she found the holy body. She sent word to her father, informing him of the news. The emperor rejoiced exceedingly, thanked the Lord and glorified His Name. He then sent men and money and built a church in that place and it was consecrated on the fifteenth day of the Month of Baounah. When Arcadius and Honorius reigned, they ordered a city to be built there. Multitudes of people came to that church asking for the intercession of the blessed St. Mina. The Lord had honored him with many signs and wonders that appeared from his pure body. When the Arabs came to Egypt, some of them attacked the city and the church was destroyed, only ruins remained. When His Grace, the late Pope Abba Kyrillos the Sixth was ordained Patriarch over the See of St. Mark, he took interest in building a large monastery in this area (Marriot) in the name of St. Mina. He spent a great deal of money in establishing it. There are now many churches in the monastery, visited by many Orthodox worshippers who go there to receive blessings and to pray. He also bought one hundred acres of land and built a fence around it. He ordained a number of monks who had a high degree of scientific and religious education.

May The intercession of Mari-Mina be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen

Question and Answer:

Question

I wasn't able to pay any tithes at all last year, because of the pressure of economic burdens on me and my financial needs. What should I Do? Can I be excused from paying the tithes?

Question

By H. H. Pope Shenouda:

You are supposed to pay tithes irrespective of your financial situation.

Here I would like to put before you some important observations which are:

1. Whoever pays his tithes when he himself is in need, will have a greater reward from God. Because by doing so he is putting others before himself, unlike the person who pays but is comfortably off and can well afford it, who does not feel that he is forgoing any of his necessities in order to supply the needs of another.

We observe that the Lord Jesus Christ praised the poor widow who paid the two small copper coins, and said that she had put more than all the others into the temple treasury because: *"for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."*(Luke 21:4) *"she.... put in all that she had "* (Mark 12:44).

You too should become accustomed to giving, even though you are in need, whether you give of your money, time or health. The second remark I would like to make is:

2. When you give, even though you are in need yourself, God blesses whatever you have.

How often the needy person says: 'If all my money and all my salary aren't enough for me, whatever would happen if I also paid a tithe, a tenth of my income?! would the nine tenths be enough for me?!' But at this point I would like to say to you:

The nine-tenths with a blessing, is more than the whole lot without blessing!

Whenever you give, God blesses the little which remains, and makes it much more than all the money without the blessing of the tithes. He compensates you with more; and what else? The effectiveness of that money will be blessed. This comes in contrast to the many people who have wealth in abundance and yet feel as if they do not have enough because their wealth has no blessing.

The third observation which I would like to make is that:

3. God does not need our tithes, but He trains us and blesses us through them.

He trains us to give, and to love others, and to renounce money. He also trains us to have faith: faith in God's blessing of the small portion...

God is able to cater for all the needs of the entire world, without our paying anything. He is the One who satisfies all, from out of His good gifts, but He wants us to share in the act of charity, so that we may partake of the blessing of this act.

4. I know your financial circumstances. But put God to the test.

The general rule is: *"You shall not tempt the Lord your God. "* (Matt. 4:7), But the tithes are the one exception, and about this our Sovereign Lord said: *"Bring all the tithes... Prove Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts ' If I will not open for you*

the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:10).

Thus, test and see how God will bless your property, and see how you will not go needy, but on the contrary God will provide you with more and more.

Do not, however, pay the tithes merely with the objective of getting more and more...

For this is not the right spiritual attitude for giving. Just pay them even if you are going through a time of increased need yourself. For when God sees the sincerity of your heart when it comes to giving, along with your love for others, then He will open the floodgates of heaven as He has promised.

Hence, pay them and say: 'Who am I, Lord, that You allow me to share in the needs of Your children! ' *"Everything comes from You... it comes from Your hand, and all of it belongs to You."* (1 Chr. 29:14-19) 'So bless what little is left, Lord, and let us want for nothing.'

Another point I would like to raise is:

5. The tithes which you do not pay are considered to be your wrongful possession.

It is money which is wrongfully yours because you have wronged its rightful owners - the poor who deserve it. It is not **your** money for you to keep. It is the Lord's property, and you have stolen from Him, thus God considers it as unlawful possession.

See what the Divine Inspiration says in the Book of the prophet Malachi: *"says the Lord of hosts... Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings."* (Mal. 3:7-8). Thus, the Lord says:

"Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon. (Luke 16:9).

What does this phrase mean then? it means:

6. With the money of the tithes which you have kept back for yourselves which has become an unlawful possession since you wronged the poor by not giving it to them... with this money make friends for yourselves who will pray for you, and to whose prayers God will respond. Just as you saved them from their money problems when you paid the tithes, God will also rescue you from your financial problems...

A final word remains which I would like to say to you which is:

7. The tithes which you did not pay last year you still owe!

You are supposed to pay them, even if it is by instalment.

VERSE OF THE MONTH:

*The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people
with peace. Psalm 29:11*

Sayings of the Fathers:

- ❖ As a handful of sand thrown into the ocean, so are the sins of all flesh as compared with the mind of God..... St. Isaac the Syrian
- ❖ Whenever we cover our brother's sin, God will cover ours; whenever we tell people about our brother's guilt, God will do the same about ours..... Abba Poemen
- ❖ Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.
..... Saint Augustine

THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES THIS MONTH “SYNAXARIUM”

- ❖ Commemoration of the mother of God (21 Babah)1 November
- ❖ Departure of St. Freig “Rewis” (21 Babah)1 November
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Luke the Evangelist (21 Babah) 2 November
- ❖ Commemoration of the consecration of the church of
St. Julius El-Akfehas (25 Babah) 5 November
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Timon the Apostle (26 Babah)6 November
- ❖ Commemoration of Annunciation, Christmas and resurrection
Feasts (29 Babah) 9 November
- ❖ Commemoration of the of the holy body of St. Mark (30 Babah)10 November
- ❖ The appearance of the head of St. Longinus the soldier who pierced
the side of Jesus with a lance (5 Hatour)15 November
- ❖ Consecration of the Virgin’s mary Church in EL-Mouharaque
Monastery Kusesquam Mountain (6 Hatour).....16 November
- ❖ Commemoration of the four incorporeal Beasts (8 Hatour.....18 November
- ❖ Assembly of 318 Bishop in the first council at Nicaea to judge Arius
where Pope Alexandros accompanied archdeacon Athanasius (9 Hatour)19 November
- ❖ Departure of St. Hannah the mother of Virgin Mary (11 Hatour)21 November
- ❖ Festival of the honored Archangel Michael (12 Hatour)22 November
- ❖ Martyrdom Of St. Mina the wonder worker (15 Hatour)25 November
- ❖ Beginning of the Advent fast (16 Hatour)26 November
- ❖ Departure of St. John Chrysostom (17 Hatour)27 November
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Philip the Apostle (18 Hatour) 28 November
- ❖ Consecration of churches of St. Theodore the son of St. John and
prince Theodore El- Mishreke (20 Hatour) 30 November

CHURCH SERVICES SCHEDULE:

PLEASE, CHECK CHURCH WEBSITE IN THE FIRST PAGE.

YOUTUBE SERVICE STREAMING ADDRESS:

www.youtube.com/channel/UC_MI2B3NKLi1Y8P3nQR5Amw/live