

preaching and saying: “Behold; The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1: 29). And when he was jailed, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus Christ asking: “Are You the Coming One, or do we wait for another?” (Lk 7:19), to confirm the arrival of the awaited Messiah.

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

MAY OUR SOULS REJOICE IN HIS COMING!

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

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

DON'T COME BEFORE GOD EMPTY HANDED!

The Divine Law commands the believer not to appear before God empty handed (Sir 35: 6; Exod 23: 15). Jesus Christ granted us the power to fulfill the commandment, for when we pray in our private dwellings, we ask on behalf of all mankind saying: “Our Father who art in heaven... forgive us our trespasses, and do not lead us into temptation” (Mt 6:9-13). As if the believer's secret prayer lifting up all the people on his hands, and presents them asking the Father of what is for their spiritual and holy nourishment.

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

THE HOLY FAST AND THE NATIVITY FEAST

No one can deny what the Gospels proclaimed of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, which was witnessed by two men of the Old Testament: Moses and Elijah (Mt 17: 1-7, Mk 9:2-13; Lk 9:28-36). The two prophets shared with Jesus Christ fasting for forty days, and forty nights, and as a result, they enjoyed what no other man in the Old Testament did. For they appeared during the

transfiguration, and entered into a dialogue with Christ likely around the upcoming events: His trial, passions, crucifixion, death, and burial, rising from the dead, and ascension into the heaven.

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

THE CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

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

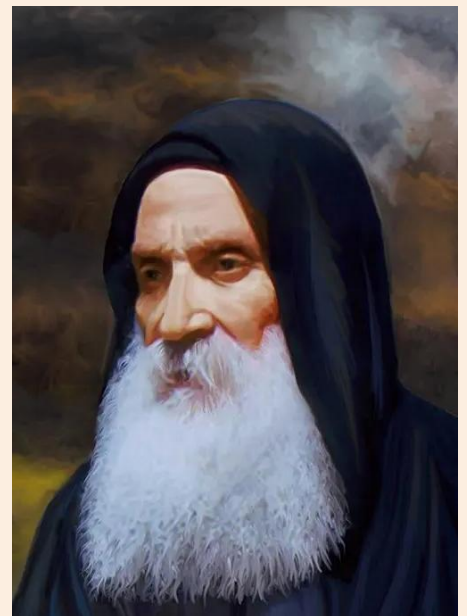
St. Jacob of Serugh said that the wise men carried presents of gold, frankincense and myrrh. While travelling from Babylon in the East to Jerusalem, led by the bright star, then to Bethlehem, they evangelized for Jesus Christ in the towns and villages they passed on their way to worship Him, and back when taking a different route. Many wondered about their great procession, but it had a wonderful purpose. They also preached to Herod the king, his priests, Pharisees and scribes who searched the Books for the "King of the Jews" (Mt 2: 7).

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

THE REACTION OF SAINT MARY TO THE ANNUNCIATION

Fr. Matta El-Mesken

The Virgin, the young girl of fourteen years old – according to tradition – was surprised by the appearance of the angel of great glory, who reassured her before he brought her the glad tidings: "Hail, highly favored one! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women" (Luke 1:28). The event was beyond her comprehension and the simplicity of her humility. But with the angel's words of peace, peace entered her troubled heart, and



with the announcement of grace, grace filled her and the Virgin received inner happiness. When she began to ponder what this peace and generous greeting might mean, the angel reassured her once again: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:30-33).

The angel did not give her anything of his own, but only informed her of what had already happened to her and in her. With the announcement of the good news, grace began its work immediately! And when she began to fear, the angel dispelled her fear: "Do not be afraid." With the words, the action took place. The angel's words, after the peace had entered the Virgin's heart and the grace had supported her, were like the sweet notes of a hymn in the bright morning. But she used her mind to ask: How can this be, for I do not know a man?

The Virgin had already betrothed herself to God before Joseph had betrothed her. How could she conceive when her body had been consecrated? And when the body is consecrated, it burns with the fire of the divine, like the burning bush. Here, the Virgin did not doubt the angel's message, but she defended her purity, which she had dedicated to God alone! If God had prepared her for Himself, she had also prepared herself for God. So how could she receive the fruit of the womb when her body had been consecrated to God? When she asked, "How can this be?" she was simply inviting the angel to reveal the secret!

The angel then re-examined his words and explained the mystery: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The matter was settled: "The Lord is with you!" At that moment, the Virgin understood, and together with understanding, she felt the reality of what the angel had said. For the word of God is action! And then the Virgin spoke her word, and it was as God had willed: "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), meaning: May God do as He wills; here, the coming of the Holy Spirit is the first known act of God planting the divine seed of life in the womb of a woman!

And immediately, the angel revealed what had happened: The one to be born of her is "the Holy One of God," "Therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Here, "the Holy One of God" is not merely a title, but a divine essence: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). For although the Son came from the Father's bosom, He left and the Father's bosom still contains Him: "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18), "No one has ascended to heaven except He who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven" (John 3:13). Just as the coming of the Son into the incarnation carried with it the mystery of union with the Father, His return to the Father, and our union with Him, gives us that same union: "I am in My Father, and you in Me" (John 14:20).

For once He united with our flesh, we received the inevitable counterpart: we became united with Him. What He accomplished through His humility and His self-emptying from the glory He had to unite with our humanity, He offered freely to all humans—anyone who believes—since no one can prevent anyone from claiming what belongs to them in God: "He who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). The Virgin believed this, saying, "Behold, the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), and so it was.

Great is the Virgin, daughter of Abraham; for just as Abraham "believed the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6), so the Virgin believed with the same faith, and in her womb, that which would bless all the nations of the earth and justify them came to rest. The Virgin completed Abraham's faith, and the promise was fulfilled! It is as if, through the dialogue between the Virgin and the angel, the story of Abraham was completed, and the promise was fulfilled.

And the angel thought it right to give her a tangible sign to confirm the truth of the matter, responding to her question, "How can this be?" He informed her of the state of her relative Elizabeth, who, although barren, was now six months pregnant in her old age. If this had become possible with God, then nothing is impossible with God. It was as if the angel hinted that she should visit her relative, to see and believe the promise of God. And Mary, full of grace, believed with certainty in the impossible, and so it was! "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord" (Luke 1:45).

Thus, humanity was deeply opened to God. Had humanity not produced such a Virgin, God would not have humbled Himself to find a resting place on earth. Now, humanity bears the Son of God, having borne Him through the Virgin. It was essential that the Virgin be sanctified so that the heavenly Child could dwell in her; but when she gave birth to Him, humanity itself became sanctified forever. For while the Virgin hosted Him for nine months, humanity has now taken permanent residence in Him. He is our Son according to the prophecy: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6).

And the heavens will never again take Him back from us, except that we are in Him. Just as the mystery of the divine seed was sown in the Virgin's womb, so the mystery of His death on the cross was sown in His body, and we were made one with Him. Just as we received His body when He was born, we also received His body when He rose from the dead. And just as "God was manifested in the flesh," humanity appeared and was revealed before God in the same flesh.

This is a majestic event, a celestial one, its echoes extend to the heavens and beyond, reverberating throughout eternity. It rules over us, and of His kingdom, there shall be no end, and we shall reign with Him and inherit all of God's inheritance! Had our ears not been dulled, we would hear more of this, and we will hear it!

Rites:

THE FIVE MINOR LITANIES

by H.G. Bishop Mettaous

3. The Third Absolution:

The priest prays this absolution while facing the West and bowing his head: “

O Lord Jesus Christ the Only Begotten Son...”, as the Lord Jesus said about Himself, “He is the Only Begotten Son in the Bosom of the Father” (John 1:18). “

And the Word of God, the Logos...”, as St. John saw Him,

“clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His Name is called the Word of God” (Revelation 19:14).“

...Who rid us from the bondage of sin through His death on the cross. You breathed into the face of Your holy and honoured disciples and saintly Apostles saying, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you will remit, they are remitted to them, and those which you will retain, they shall be retained’...”, as mentioned in John (20:21-23), which says,

“Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me; I also send you’. And when He said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’” “

Now also, O our Master, through Your holy Apostles, as You gave grace to those who laboured in the priesthood in Your holy church to forgive sins upon the earth, and to bind and to lose every bond of iniquity, we also ask and entreat Your goodness, O lover of mankind, to remember Your servants... (Here the priest makes the sign of the cross on the congregation twice, saying,) ...my fathers and brethren...(then on himself, saying,)...and my weakness. Those who bow their heads before Your Holy glory, grant unto us Your mercy and loose every bond of our sins. If we have committed any sin against You, whether knowingly or unknowingly or through anguish of heart, O Master Who knows the weakness of men, grant us the forgiveness of our sins, You great and merciful God.”

The priest makes a sign of the cross on Himself, on the deacons, and then on the congregation saying, “Bless us, purify us, absolve us and absolve all Your people. Fill us with Your fear and help us to live according to Your Holy good will, for You are our God to Whom be glory, honor and dominion, now and forevermore, Amen.”

In this absolution we gain forgiveness for the sins for which we have actually repented. We should note that this

absolution covers all sins; those which we know about, and those we do not, whether a sin by word of mouth, or by

deed.

As each person here is bowing in reverence they should pray silently a secret prayer, such as, “I ask You Lord to forgive my sins, because You are not pleased with the death of a sinner, but to

return and live. Forgive my sins, O Lord, and whiten my clothes in the Blood of Your Beloved Son, Who became a sacrifice for my sins. Let me be a partner to those who repented, grant me tears to weep for my iniquities, grant me grace to abide in my repentance, and never go back to sin.” They should also silently pray Psalm 50, which begins, “Be merciful to me O Lord according to the multitude of Your tender mercies...”, ending with The Lord’s Prayer. At the end of the absolution, the congregation proceeds towards the priest to kiss the cross, the Bible, and the priest’s hand.

AUDIO SERMONS

TRUST IN GOD

Fr Cyril Gorgy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1qcto6E3tk>



SAINT OF THE MONTH:

“Whose faiths follow, considering the outcome of their conversation?”

Heb 13:7

ST. SARABAMON, BISHOP OF NIKU (NAKIYOS)

St. Sarabamon, Bishop of Niku (Nakiyos). He was born in Jerusalem. His father's name was Abraham, the son of Levi, the son of Joseph, Simon's brother and uncle of Stephen, the Archdeacon and the first martyr. He was from the tribe of Judah. At birth, he was called Simon after his grandfather. When his father died, Simon longed to become a Christian. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and commanded him to go to Abba John, Bishop of Jerusalem, who taught him the mystery of the incarnation of the Lord Christ. However, he did not dare to baptize him in Jerusalem, for his fear of Jews, and he was pondering what he



should do. The Virgin St. Mary, appeared to Simon and told him to go to the city of Alexandria, to St. Theonas, 16th Pope of Alexandria. He departed and the angel of the Lord, in the form of a man, accompanied him on his journey to the city of Alexandria. He went to Pope Theonas, who rejoiced on seeing him, preached to him and baptized him. He then became a monk in El-Zogag monastery, (the monastery of Abba Severus, outside Alexandria). When Pope Theonas departed and Abba Peter, the seal of the martyrs, succeeded him, Abba Peter summoned Simon so that he could assist him in the works of the patriarchate.

When the chair of the city of Niku (Nakiyos) became vacant, Abba Peter ordained Simon Bishop over it. His flock rejoiced greatly in him and the Lord performed many signs and wonders at his hands. There were pagan temples close to his city, and he pleaded to the Lord Christ until they were destroyed and were covered with water and Paganism was eradicated from his diocese. The heresy of Sabilius of Upper Egypt, who taught that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one person, was also eradicated. When Diocletian denied Christ, they told him that Sarabamon the Bishop had hindered the worship of idols with his teachings. Diocletian ordered Anba Sarabamon to be brought to him. When Anba Sarabamon arrived in Alexandria with the messengers, he spent the night in prison. Pope Peter, accompanied by some clergy, came to see him. When they embraced him, they saw his face as though it was that of an angel. When Anba Sarabamon came before the Emperor, he tortured him with all kinds of torture, but the Lord Christ raised him up every time without suffering. When the Emperor saw that many people believed because of him, he sent him to Arianus, Governor of Ansena, who tortured him and threatened to cut off his head if he did not change his mind. It happened that Arianus was in Alexandria, so he took St. Sarabamon with him in the ship. When the ship reached Niku (Nakiyos), his home town, the ship stopped and no one was able to move it. They took the saint off the ship and led him to the northern part of the city, where they cut off his head and he received the crown of martyrdom. The people of his diocese carried his body to the church with great honor.

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

Sayings of the Fathers:

- ❖ The Nativity Fast (advent) is an opportunity to prepare the heart to be a manger where Christ dwells, not only through physical fasting, but also through purity and love.

.....*Pope Cyril VI*

- ❖ Fasting is not merely abstaining from food, but also turning away from sin. He who fasts from meat but does not fast from anger, his fast is in vain.

.....*St. John Chrysostom*

- ❖ Christ is born, glorify Him. Christ is from heaven, receive Him. Christ is on earth, rise up with Him.

.....*St. Gregory of Nazianzus*

Question and Answer:

By: H. H. Pope Shenouda III

Question

What did the Lord mean in the gospel by His words: "*Love your enemies?*" (Matt. 5:44). How can that be done ?

Answer

Loving one's friend is something ordinary and found even among pagans and unbelievers. Loving one's enemy however is the highest and noblest moral virtue which the Lord desires of us. He wants us to hate evil, but not those who do it. We are to hate the sin, but not the sinner. Sinners are only the victims of misunderstanding, or of the Devil. We must love them and pray for them, so that they will stop acting like that.

How we are to do that is by following these points:

1. Not bearing hatred in our hearts towards anyone, however much wrong he has done us. For no hatred can dwell in the heart which houses love.
2. Not rejoicing at all, at any misfortune that should strike one who has done us harm, for the Bible itself tells us that: "Love does not rejoice in iniquity..." (1 Cor. 13:6). We should rather feel sorry that some harm has befallen our enemy.

3. We should counter evil with love and goodness, and by doing so, change the feelings of the one who wants to do us wrong. As St. John Chrysostom said: "There is a way of being rid of your enemy, and that is to turn him into a friend."
4. Confronting hostility with hostility only serves to inflame it, while keeping silent in the face of hostility, will simply cause it to stay as it is. But confronting hostility with love, heals it and makes it disappear.
5. Therefore, do not speak evil against your enemy, in case the hostility of his heart increases. But instead, do the opposite. If you find in him anything good, praise him for it, for this will help to change his feelings towards you.
6. If your enemy falls into difficulties, go to help him, for the Bible says: "*If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; "* (Rom. 12:20).
7. The Bible also says: "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. "* (Rom. 12:21). If you confront hostility with hostility, evil will have overcome you... Whereas if you confront it with love, then you will have overcome evil with good

A whisper in your ear

- ❖ Remember that those moments of distress are part of your spiritual journey.
- ❖ Reflecting on death helps us live a more conscious and appreciative life.
- ❖ No matter the circumstances, there are always things to be grateful for.
- ❖ Amid the busyness of life, it's important to make time for reflection or quiet contemplation.

VERSE OF THE MONTH

let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matt 5:16

THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES THIS MONTH “SYNAXARIUM

- ❖ Martyrdom of Saints Cosmas, Damian, Their Brothers and Their Mother (22 Hatour)1 December
- ❖ Consecration of the Church of St. Marina (23 Hatour) 2 December
- ❖ Commemoration of the Twenty-Four incorporeal Priests (24 Hatour)3 December
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Mercurius known as the Saint with Two Swords (25 Hatour) 4 December
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. James the Mangled the Persian (Sawn) (27 Hatour) 6 December
- ❖ Commemoration of the Three Great Feasts of the Lord (29 Hatour) 8 December
- ❖ The First Day of the Blessed Month of Kiahk, start of Kiahk praises (1 Kiahk)10 December
- ❖ **Departure of Saint Abba Hor, the Monk (2 Kiahk) 11 December**
- ❖ Entrance of Saint Mary into the Temple in Jerusalem in the age of 3 years (3 Kiahk) 12 December
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Andrew the Apostle, the brother of St. Peter (4 Kiahk) 13 December
- ❖ Consecration of the church of Saint Abaskhiroun El Kellini (7 Kiahk)16 December
- ❖ Martyrdom of the Saints: Barbara and Juliana (8 Kiahk)17 December
- ❖ Departure of Saint Abba Pijimi (11 Kiahk)20 December
- ❖ Departure of Saint Abba Pijimi the anchorite (11 Kiahk)20 December
- ❖ Commemoration of the honorable Angel Michael, the Archangel (12 Kiahk)...21 December
- ❖ Departure of Saint Christodoulos (14 Kiahk).....23 December
- ❖ Commemoration of the Departure of St. Luke the Stylite and the Relocation of His Sacred Relics (17 Kiahk)26 December
- ❖ Departure of St. John, Bishop of El-Borollos Who Gathered the Biographies of the Saints (19 Kiahk)28 December
- ❖ Commemoration of the Virgin St. Mary, the mother of God (21 Kiahk) 30 December

❖ **CHURCH SERVICES SCHEDULE:**

Please check church website in the first page

YOUTUBE SERVICE STREAMING ADDRESS:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_MI2B3NKLi1Q8P3nQR5Amw/video