



# St. Mary & St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church Diocese of Sydney & Affiliated Regions

Monthly Newsletter: May 2020 Issue

Coptic Calendar: 23 Parmoute 1736 – 23 Pashons 1736

## Bible Readings

<b>3<sup>rd</sup> May</b>	<b>25 Parmoute</b>	Psalms 111:9-10 Divine Gospel John 6:35-45
<b>10<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>2 Pashons</b>	Psalms 115:12-13 Divine Gospel John 4:1-42
<b>17<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>9 Pashons</b>	Psalms 118:14-16 Divine Gospel John 12:35-50
<b>24<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>16 Pashons</b>	Psalms 136:1-2 Divine Gospel John 14:1-11
<b>31<sup>st</sup> May</b>	<b>23 Pashons</b>	Psalms 147:12, 18 Divine Gospel John 16:23-33

## Coptic Feast Days

- + May 1<sup>st</sup> (23 Parmoute): The Martyrdom of St. George Prince of the Martyrs.
- + May 5<sup>th</sup> (27 Parmoute): The Martyrdom of St. Boctor Ebn Romanus.
- + May 7<sup>th</sup> (29 Parmoute): The Commemoration of the Three Major Feasts of the Lord.
- + May 8<sup>th</sup> (30 Parmoute): The Martyrdom of the Great Saint Mark, the Apostle, the Evangelist of the Land of Egypt.
- + May 9<sup>th</sup> (1 Pashons): The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary the Mother of God.
- + May 13<sup>th</sup> (5 Pashons): The Martyrdom of Jeremiah the Prophet.
- + May 15<sup>th</sup> (7 Pashons): The Departure of St. Athanasius the Apostolic the 20<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria.
- + May 17<sup>th</sup> (9 Pashons): The Departure of St. Helena, the Queen.
- + May 21<sup>st</sup> (13 Pashons): The Departure of St. Arsenius, the Tutor of the Emperors' Children.
- + May 22<sup>nd</sup> (14 Pashons): The Departure of St. Pachomius, the Father of the Spiritual Communal Monastic life (Cenobitic life).

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## Your Joy No One Will Take From You (John 16:22)

**Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!**

The resurrection of Christ grants us everlasting joy, as our Lord Jesus Christ promised His disciples, "Therefore you now have sorrow, but I see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you." (John 16:22) The joy which our Beloved Christ grants us through His resurrection, is not a temporary or transient joy, but it is a permanent joy. All of the world's evil, injustice, and temptations cannot remove from our hearts the joy and peace of Christ.

When Christ was crucified, the disciples were sorrowful, because they did not comprehend the meaning of the crucifixion. Their fear of the Jews and the sorrow that filled their hearts, made them hide in the Upper Room, and they locked the doors. But when the Risen Christ appeared to them, their sorrow was changed to everlasting joy. St. John described it by saying, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When He said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." (John 20:19-20) Through His resurrection, Christ granted the disciples everlasting joy and peace. The joy of the resurrection strengthened the faith of the disciples and made them believe that Christ was always with them, and not only when they saw Him physically. Through the eyes of faith and not through the physical eyes, the disciples were always able to see Christ's presence with them. That is why their joy and peace were not affected by Christ's physical ascension.

By His Eminence Metropolitan Serapion



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## Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church

### The Holy Family in Egypt

#### Egypt in the Holy Bible

The Holy Bible concentrates on "Jerusalem" which means "land of peace," or "vision of peace" as the center of the promised land, where God declares His dwelling among people. And a holy temple was established in it in His Name, where people worshipped Him, offered Him sacrifices and offerings, and celebrated many feasts as a symbol of the heavenly joy. This is Jerusalem, the symbol of heaven, that is called "Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all" Gal. 4:26. On the other hand, we find Babel and Egypt; Babel represents disobedience to God, violence, vainglory (tower of Babel, Gen. 11), opposing God through His believers (the Babylonian captivity), adultery and abominations (Rev. 17:5). Egypt was well-known for its abundant crops, and its king (Pharaoh) to whom Israel and Jude used to refuge against Babylon. Therefore, Egypt was a symbol of loving the temporary things and the trust in human hands (2 Kings 18:21).



Egypt was a refuge to many people, especially in famines. Abraham visited Egypt (Gen. 12:10), so did Joseph who became the second man after Pharaoh, offering crops to all the neighboring countries. Jacob and his sons came to Egypt where they lived as a family and grew as a nation. It was the birth-place or the nursery of the people of God. Their first leader, Moses, the great prophet and his brother Aaron the first chief-priest appeared in Egypt to grant them freedom. St. Stephen says, "And Moses was taught in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" Acts 7:22.

Among the prophets who visited Egypt was Jeremiah who implored people not to flee to Egypt, but in vain, for they forced him to accompany them in their journey to Egypt (Jer. 41:1; 43:7). He uttered his last prophecies in Tahpanhes of Egypt (Jer. 43:8-44:30).

Thus, Egypt became a representative of the Gentiles to whom Christ came to establish His Church and to form His new people.

#### Blessed by Egypt, My People

Hosea, the Prophet, foresaw the Son of God going out of Bethlehem and fleeing to Egypt, where He found a welcome in the hearts of Gentiles. Through Hosea, God the Father uttered this prophecy, "I called my son out of Egypt" Hos. 11:1.

Isaiah the Prophet gave us more details, saying: "Behold, the burden of Egypt, the Lord rides upon a swift cloud, He shall come to Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence. In that day there shall be an altar to the lord in the midst of the land of Egypt" Isa. 19:1. St. Cyril the Great interpreted this prophecy saying: [The glittering cloud which carried the child Jesus to Egypt was His mother, St. Mary, who surpassed the cloud in purity. The altar which was established in the midst of the land of Egypt is the Christian church which had replaced the temples of paganism as the idols collapsed and the temples were deserted in the presence of the Lord Jesus.]

*By Fr. Tadros Y Malaty, Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church.*



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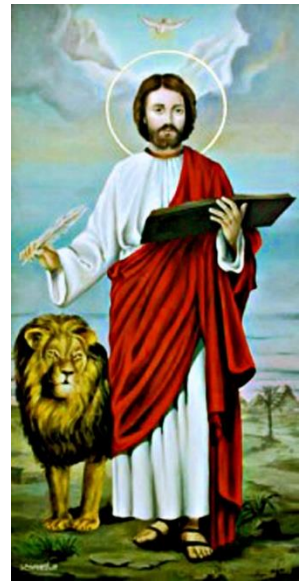
## St. Mark The Apostle, Evangelist

### Preacher of the Christian Faith in Africa

He was Jewish in faith of the tribe of Levi. His name was John, whose surname (Roman name) was Mark. He was born in Cyrene one of the five western cities, Pentapolis, in Libya. His father's name was Aristopolus a cousin of St. Peter's wife., his mother's name was Mary. She was one of the Mary's who followed the Lord Christ. She was the sister of St. Barnabas. St. Mark was also related to St. Thomas the apostle.

The barbarian tribes in North Africa attacked the properties of his family in his native land in Libya and plunder it. The family was forced to immigrate to Palestine his house was the first Christian church, where the Lord met with His disciples. St. Mark was the man who was carrying pitcher of water, where the Lord Christ prepared and made ready for the Passover in the upper room of his house. After the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, He appeared to His disciples and St. Thomas in its upper room where also the Holy Spirit came upon them. St. Peter came to his house after the angel of the Lord had delivered him from prison.

The first one St. Mark attracted to the faith was his father Aristopolus. Once they were walking near the Jordan River, they encountered a raving lion. When the father wanted to save his son by escaping, Mark told him; "Christ, in whose hands our lives are committed, will not let it harm us." Saying this, he prayed, made the sign of the cross and immediately the lion fell dead and split open. His father marveled and believed in the Lord Christ at the hands of his son who baptized him. The symbol of St. Mark the lion because of this miracle and because the beginning of his Gospel; "The voice of one crying in the wilderness."



St. Mark arrived to Alexandria about the year 60 or 61 A.D. and when he entered the city, his sandal was torn because of the long distance that he had to walk. He went to a cobbler called Anianus to repair it. While he was repairing it the awl pierced his finger. Anianus shouted in Greek saying "EIS THEOS" which means "O, ONE GOD". When St. Mark heard these words his heart rejoiced exceedingly. He found it suitably to talk to him about the One God. The apostle took some clay, spat on it and applied it to Anianus' figure, saying in the name of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the wound healed immediately, and the wound healed immediately, as if nothing had happened to it. Anianus was exceedingly amazed from this miracle that happened in the Name of Jesus Christ. St. Mark started explaining to him about the Lord Christ, the salvation the He fulfilled on the cross, and His life giving Resurrection. Anianus and his entire household believed and St. Mark baptized them.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> day of Parmoute, year 68 A.D. the pagans dragged St. Mark through the streets of Alexandria. Finally, St. Mark delivered up his pure soul and received the crown of martyrdom. The believers came and took his pure body. St. Anianus, the clergy and people prayed over him, then buried him in the church with great veneration.

The blessing of St. Mark's prayers be with us all.



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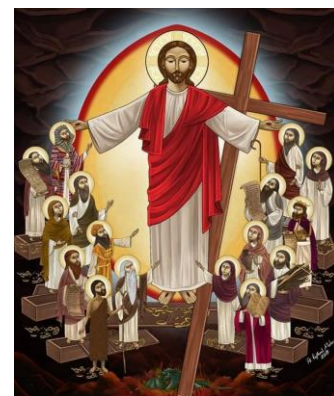
## The Resurrection and Its Spiritual Depth

### *The Resurrection is a Wonderful Meeting*

1. **The resurrection is a wonderful meeting between two united friends** who have lived together their whole life since their birth and even before it, during pregnancy in their mothers' wombs. They never separated even for one moment; They are: the body and the spirit. Each of them has a special nature; the body is earthly and the spirit is celestial. They have united in one nature-the human nature. You cannot separate one from the other and say "This is the body and that is the spirit." They have lived together in an admirable unity. The body expresses all the sensations and feelings of the spirit. If the spirit becomes glad the body will smile and rejoice. If it becomes sad, sorrow will appear in the eyes. After a long life they will separate from one another because of death but in the end they will meet each other in the resurrection. After a long separation they will unite again. **I wonder!! How will the sensations of the spirit be when it meets the body? The life long partner after hundreds and may be thousands of years as Adam, Noah and Abraham had done before!**

The spirit meets the body after seeing the body change into a handful of dust. Then returns more radiant than before, without any blemish. Even the faults, stuck to the body in the past, disappear. Yes, it is raised without defects because wrong and evil deeds do not agree with eternal paradise. The body returns more friendly. It never disagrees with the spirit in the other world for it is raised a spiritual body.

2. **The second wonderful meeting in the resurrection is a meeting of nations and races of the whole history.** It will be a general resurrection since the days of Adam. All nations and races that lived through generations and centuries, with their different languages, features and lineaments, with all their heroes and leaders will meet together and try to be acquainted and understand each other. Undoubtedly, they will do so because there will be one language the language of the spirit or that of the angels. How wonderful this meeting will be!! It will be the greatest of all stories and the strangest narrative of long epochs. The best of all will be the procession of the triumphant and victorious people who struggled during their life on earth, then conquered and supported truth and morals. They will meet together and everyone has a story related by generations... then the world will become once more one nation as it had been before parting and dispersion. I wonder!! How will the meeting of the nations which had fought with each other be? Will the causes that forced them to wage wars against each other seem insignificant?



3. **The third marvelous meeting is that of the human beings with the angels** who are made of a nature more eminent than ours. Meeting with them will be one of eternity's happy enjoyment.

4. **But the most wonderful meeting with the Lord will surpass any other meeting in its eminence.** Our meeting with God, blessed is His name, will be the eternal paradise for there will be no paradisiacal life without Him. Now my pen stops in silent submissiveness because I am before a scene which words fail to describe or interpret. It is above the standard of any language to express or any intelligence to imagine. Thus, the resurrection is a strange and wonderful meeting .... and what else? **The Resurrection is a Miraculous Transition:**

i) **It is a transition from the limited to the unlimited.** It is an interchange from a life measured with days and years to an infinite one which has no connection with time. I wonder! Is there another earth which revolves around itself and round the sun; and interprets its revolutions into days and years? Or shall we rise over time and enter a new world? Measures of time will come to an end... One moment in eternity is longer and deeper than the whole life of earth.



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- ii) **The resurrection is also a transition from the visible to the invisible.** It is an entrance to what is written in the Holy Bible “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Cor. 2:9) It is an entrance to the spiritual world and a way to the meeting with the angels, the invisible spirits where joys never known on earth will take place. Here, the resurrection surpasses all the grades attained by senses and rises to the realms where the spirit alone can realize everything.
- iii) **Thus, the resurrection means transition from the world of sensation to the world of spirits.** In the resurrection we acquire spiritual senses which differ from earthly material ones. The new senses see the spirits and spiritualities and are dazzled by them. Now, I myself keep silent once more. **Here is a kind of the revelation of human nature** when it becomes conscious of what it could not perceive in the past and acquire spiritual characteristics not practiced before. In the resurrection the spirit can see the invisible or some of it or advance gradually in sight moving from spiritual satiety to more and more fullness in the life of revelation.
- iv) **The resurrection is transition from the world of falsehood to the life of truth.** From the world of evanescence to the world of immortality. From a world in which everything will be abolished after a time to an everlasting world in which there is no falsehood but well-fixed truth. It is a world free from sin where men live with each other in association very pure, clear and everlasting. What else about the resurrection?

### The Resurrection is a Multi-Faceted Miracle:

Here appears the miraculous power of God. How will the bodies be gathered once more after they changed into dust!? Isn't it He who created and formed them from dust; from nothingness? Dust had been a nonentity before it existed. He who looks attentively at the resurrection from this side can consider the limitless power of God, our creator. It is enough for Him to wish and everything will be accomplished according to His will, even without an utterance. It is His will which is in root and essence an effective order, capable of doing everything. We consider the resurrection a miracle not owing to its difficulty but because our mind is unable to perceive how it takes place!! But though the mind fails to comprehend that matter, yet faith can easily understand it. **Thus, the resurrection is the creed of the believers.**

He who has faith in God and His power can believe in the resurrection. He who has faith in God as a creator believes also that He has raised the dead. But the apostates' intelligence cannot reach that standard. They do not believe in the resurrection. They have no faith in the spirit and its immortality. Moreover, they do not believe in God Himself. **It is also a necessary one for justice, serenity and evenness of mind.** It is necessary for justice to judge everyone according to his deeds done during his life on earth-whether good or bad. If they are good he will be rewarded; if they are evil and bad deeds he will be punished. If there had been no resurrection men would have coveted greedily on worldly pleasures with their corruption and immorality without any care for what will happen to them in future life. But believing in the resurrection and the following final judgement – reward or punishment – is a restraint to men because they will perceive that justice must prevail in the future life.

**This final judgment will take place after the resurrection and the unity of the spirits with their bodies.** For it is unjust for the spirit to be judged alone leaving the body without retribution according to its obedience or disobedience to the spirit. Thus, the body must rise and the spirit must unite with it. And before God the two stand together because they were partners responsible for everything they did on earth.

**The resurrection is also necessary for equality.** On earth there is no equality among human beings. There are the rich and the poor; the happy and the miserable, the one who lives in ease and comfort and that who suffers torture. If there is no equality on earth, it will be appropriate to find it in heaven; and he who does not get his rights on earth can afterwards get them in heaven and the Lord will compensate him for what he had lost on earth if his deeds were satisfactory in the eyes of God.

*By His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Contemplations on the Resurrection.*