



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

Monthly Newsletter: *January 2020 Issue*

Coptic Calendar: 22 Koiahk 1736 – 22 Tobe 1736

Bible Readings

5th January	26 Koiahk	Psalms 80:1-3 Divine Gospel Luke 1:57-80
12th January	3 Tobe	Psalms 98:2-3 Divine Gospel Matthew 2:13-23
19th January	10 Tobe	Psalms 45:2 Divine Gospel Luke 3:1-18
26th January	17 Tobe	Psalms 66:12, 8 Divine Gospel John 3:22-36

Coptic Feast Days

- + Jan. 1st (22 Koiahk): The Commemoration of the Honorable Archangel Gabriel, the Announcer.
- + Jan. 2nd (23 Koiahk): The Departure of David, the Prophet and King.
- + Jan. 8th (29 Koiahk): The Feast of the Glorified Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Christmas).
- + Jan. 10th (1 Tobe): The Martyrdom of St. Stephen the Archdeacon.
- + Jan. 13th (4 Tobe): The Departure of St. John the Evangelist.
- + Jan. 15th (6 Tobe): The Honorable Feast of Circumcision.
- + Jan. 15th (6 Tobe): The Departure of St. Basil the Great, the Archbishop of Caesarea, Cappadocia.
- + Jan. 17th (8 Tobe): The Return of the Head of St. Mark the Apostle.
- + Jan. 20th (11 Tobe): The Theophany Feast of Our Lord, Epiphany (Baptism of the Lord Christ).
- + Jan. 22nd (13 Tobe): The Feast of the Wedding at Cana of Galilee.
- + Jan. 22nd (13 Tobe): The Martyrdom of St. Dimiana.
- + Jan. 31st (22 Tobe): The Departure of the Great Saint Anba Antony (Antonius) the Father of all Monks.

Issued by: St. Mary & St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church.

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The Glorious Feast of the Nativity (Christmas)

We rejoice in the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, Who has manifested to us the mystery of God's humility, love, and He constantly seeks our salvation. St. Paul the Apostle explained that the Word, the Son of God, "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phi. 2: 6-8). This explains to us the amazing divine love, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

When we joyfully come to worship the Babe of Bethlehem, let us remember that we are worshipping our Lord, Who emptied Himself and accepted to take our human nature. He came to our world, and lived amongst us, so He can save us, for "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). We, who were sitting in the darkness and the shadow of death, He shined upon us with His light, as it is written, "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned" (Matt. 4:16).

The mystery of the Incarnation is the mystery of God's wondrous humility. As Satan enticed man to fall through pride and disobedience, Christ saved us through His humility and obedience unto death on the cross.

By His Eminence Metropolitan Serapion



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Meditations upon the Glorious Feast of the Epiphany

The month of January brings to us several feasts: the beginning of the new year, the Nativity, the Circumcision, the Epiphany. While we celebrate the glorious feast of the Epiphany, we are glad to stop sometime for meditation:

- 1. The feast of Epiphany is the feast of Baptism. This feast is also called the feast of the divine manifestation (the Theophania).** Because the Holy Trinity appeared in it: The Son is baptized, The Father says from heaven: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”, and The Holy Spirit appears “like of a dove” (Matt. 3: 16-17). Hence the baptism of the Lord Christ shows the creed of the Holy Trinity.
- 2. Thus the baptism is always in the Name of the Holy Trinity.** According to the word of the Lord to His disciples before His Ascension: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). He did not say in the names, because the three are one, as it was mentioned in (1 John 5:7): “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one”.
- 3. It is well that the Church has called this feast: “Eed El Ghetass”, or the feast of the Immersion, (in Arabic: Eed means feast, and “ElGhetass” means immersion).** Because in it, the Church reminds the people that the Lord Christ was baptized by being immersed, as it was said that after being baptized, “When He has been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water” (Matt. 3:16). The Church also reminds the people that the faithful in the New Testament are being baptized by being immersed. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized in this manner, at the beginning of the apostolic era, at the hands of St. Philip: “Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away” (Acts 8:39). Also because Baptism is a tincture, (Baptisma in Latin), and tinting is accomplished through immersion; and because Baptism is a burial with Christ (Col. 2:12), and burial is accomplished through placing inside the tomb (immersion), and cannot be represented by sprinkling with water.
- 4. Likewise, in all the ancient vestiges, we see that baptism was accomplished inside a recipient that was called the baptistery.** That proves that baptizing was accomplished through immersion, and not by sprinkling water. We remember, during this feast, many spiritual and doctrinal meanings, whether as regards the baptism of the Lord Christ at the hands of John the Baptist, or as regards the importance of Baptism in the Church.
- 5. We remember also that the Lord came to the baptism of John, while He was not in need of it.** But that was in order “to fulfill all righteousness”, so that He would be without blame before men, even while He is not in need. That also establishes before us the principle of obedience and the principle of loyalty, without asking what profit it is to us?
- 6. He entered the baptism of John also in order to be our representative, or to take our place, just as He fasted instead of us, and just as He was crucified instead of us.** Many of His actions were for the others and not for Himself. He took our place to present to God the Father an image of the perfect man, who satisfies the Father by His life, as well He satisfies Him by His redemption of the human kind. In His baptism, we remember his humility.
- 7. We remember His love and His fidelity, and His tenderness in His conversation with John, when He says: “Permit it to be so now”.** The baptism of Christ also reminds us of our baptism, and of the care of the Church for Baptism.
- 8. Therefore, the day of baptism is a feast as regards the child and his family.** In that day, the Church gives the child three sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist also; and makes the child ready to participate in the life of the Church. He becomes a member in it, and takes the first ecclesiastical certificate in his/her life.



Source: <https://stmarkla.org/feasts/meditations-upon-the-glorious-feast-of-the-epiphany>



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Photos of December 2019





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HG Bishop Daniel Message at the start of the New Year 2020¹

My Dear and beloved children, the Reverend fathers the Priests, Monks, Deacons, Servants, Nuns, Consecrated Sisters, and all the Congregation of the Lord loving Diocese of Sydney, grace, blessings, peace, love and mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, to whom is due glory, honour, dominion, power and worship.

I would like to congratulate you on the start of the new year 2020, praying to Our Lord Jesus Christ to support us with His heavenly help for this to be a year full of the fruit of the Holy Spirit for everyone of us. The title of this year's message is "**How do we witness for Christ in the new year and all our days?**"

19 years have passed of the 21st Century and this year, 2020, is the 20th year of this century, by which one fifth of this century would pass. Days after days and years follow years, time flies and a wise person would redeem the time, for the days are evil.

In the past 19 years, many events took place, the most significant of which is the persecutions faced by our Mother Church during the past 19 years, which were a source of blessing for her. At the beginning of this century, we saw the martyrs of the service in Samalout in 2004, only four years after the start of the 21st Century. Persecutions surfaced again in 2010 at Nagaa Hammadi, Omraneya, the Church of the Saints (El Kidiseen) in Sidi Bishr, Alexandria. In 2011 at Mansheyet Nasser and Maspairo. In 2012 in the villages of Touh, and Faroufiah in Samlaout – ElMenia. And again in 2013 at the village of Delga, Der Mouas Province in ElMenia, and the village of Badraman, Der Mouas Porvince, again in ElMenia, and in El Warraq. In 2015, there were our brave heroes the Martyrs in Lybia, at the Botroseya Church in 2016 and in Tanta, Alexandria, Anba Samuel Monastery and Helwan in 2017. After 2017, persecutions have stopped for a while, and today, in the beginning of 2020, The Lord permits that I share with you an important topic we all have to practice this year, and all the days of our lives, which the Lord grants us. **How does our life witness for Christ?** Just as our fathers the Martyrs of this Century have witnessed for Him.

Our Church has taught us that our complete love for God is the first lesson, by which we witness to Jesus Christ our Lord. As St. Anthony the Great, father of all Monks and the star of the wilderness has said, "if God is yours, you, then, own everything, even though you might be deprived of all things." Complete love for God means, that our love for God conquers our love for the world and our bodies. Ones complete love for God hopes that one has a place with God in His Kingdom. Our fathers the Martyrs, in their complete love for God, were only seeking the better heavenly home. For, my beloved, our true home is in heaven, just as our teacher Paul the Apostle said "for our citizenship is in heaven". Hence, in this year, increase your love for God, and develop it with prayer, fasting, reading God's Word, and taking part in the Holy Mysteries, and don't let anyone or anything, whatsoever, to separate you from the Love of God.

Our Church had also taught us a second very important lesson, by which we can witness for Christ, which is

¹ *Contemporary Martyrs Panorama*, Hegumen Isiah Mikhael 2008, pp 145-147



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ascetism, which is a product of our complete love for God. My beloved, we all have to understand that “all is vanity and grasping for the wind” (Ecclesiastes 1:14) What would man benefit from the wind? Ascetism in everything is the source of leaving all things for the sake of God. And here, our teacher St. Peter the Apostle said, “we have left all and followed You” (Luke 18:28), to which Christ answered “everyone who has left for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:29). Christianity is an ascetic religion, and should not be comprehended otherwise, and an ascetic person never fears persecution. Thus we have to hold on to what’s above and not cling to anything in this world, no matter what.

Here comes the third lesson, by which we witness for Christ in the start of the new year, which represents the end of the first one fifth of the 21st Century, this is bravery and daring. We should never be ashamed to declare our faith of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus, and witness to the Godly and biblical truth all the days of our life. Bravery demands rock solid faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as having the virtue of patience. Our teacher Tertullian² said “**by the strength of this patience, the patience of the soul and the patience of the body, Isiah the prophet was sowed in two, yet he never stopped speaking about the Lord**”. Our righteous hero martyrs of Lybia witnessed for the Lord Jesus, through their strong faith, and patience, they were brave, and didn’t fear death by the sword. Yes, they were beheaded, but with their complete love for God, and their asceticism in this world, as well as their bravery, they became great martyrs who witnessed to Christ in the whole world during this Century.

I wish you all, a happy New Year 2020, full of grace, that enable us, to have the new life in Christ, not only in 2020, but also during our entire life, through the intercessions of the Ever-Virgin the All-Holy Theotokos Saint Mary together with all the choirs of the saints, and through the prayers of the Father of Fathers, His Holiness Pope Tawadros the Second, the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark, we ask the Lord to keep his life for us for many years and peaceful times.

May the Lord keep you all in His Love, may He keep and protect you in His name to the last breath.

I wish all of you a Happy New Year

May you always be true witnesses of Christ and may the Grace of God be with all of us.

Keep me in your prayers.

The Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ

Bishop Daniel

With the Grace of God,

Bishop of Coptic Orthodox Church - Diocese of Sydney and its Affiliated Regions in Australia

² *Chosen scripts of the writings of our teacher Tertullian, A monk from Anba Anthony’s Monastery, 2014, ch. 4 p. 67*