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**ST MARY, ST PHILOPATEER, AND ST ABANOUB
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCHES**

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Contemplating Jonah's Fast and the Great Fast

Jonah was swallowed by a whale for three days then climbed out a new prophet. Our Lord was swallowed by the tomb for three days then stepped out a New Man. And we enter the wide, gaping mouth of the Great Fast trembling, hesitant, yet knowing that we shall step out again as new creatures. We must all look for a new beginning. The past is done; it is unchangeable; it is immovable. And yet, it is also powerless. Our former lives do not dictate who we are, but the near future shall determine who we will become. In this near future we have the gift of the Great Fast, the grace of Holy Pascha, and the glory of the Glorious Resurrection Feast.

Bishop Youssef

WORDS OF WISDOM

- Fasting is not a deprivation from certain kinds of food but a voluntary abstinence from them.
- It does not humiliate the flesh, but refreshes the spirit
- Fasting does not seek to repress the appetite and, in renunciation, elevates it to relish the love of God
- Fasting does not imply confinement or restriction, but aims at joy and magnanimity of heart.

You are troubled and anxious. Yet you cannot solve your problems and difficulties by yourself. Your own restless thoughts and aspirations are making you weak and incompetent. They clog the channel of your heart through which God wants His help to flow. Leave everything to God. Let all your restless thoughts, worrying and frenetic planning come to rest. Rest in God and in His sovereign rule in the knowledge that He will act. Then you will discover that 'in quietness and in trust shall be your strength'. So choose this course and you will experience help.

Isaiah 30:15 RSV

M Baselea Schlink

Just For Kids

“Salty” Christians

“This sure is a good breakfast, Grandma,” exclaimed Andy as he took another helping of ham and eggs. “Yeah,” agreed his sister Julie. “I wish we lived out here in the country. At home, there are so many things Mom and Dad won’t let us do with other kids. I’m glad I’m a Christian, but sometimes I wish Christians didn’t have to be so different. Why do they?”

“You may find the answer in that ham on your plate,” answered Grandpa. Andy and Julie looked puzzled. “You see,” Grandpa went on, “I cured this ham myself. One main ingredient in the curing process is salt. It helps keep the ham from going bad. Jesus said Christians are to be the salt of the earth. Do you know what that means?”

“Does it mean we’re supposed to keep other people from going bad?” asked Andy. “How could we ever do that?” “We’ll never change the whole world of sinners,” said Grandpa, “but we can witness wherever we are. We can set an example of right living, too. Then at least some of those around us may be saved from sin.”

“I sure would like to win Jeremy to Jesus,” Andy said. “He’s my best friend.” “Then be a ‘salty’ Christian, Andy,” said Grandpa. “Cheerfully obey God’s rules and those of your parents. Jesus said that if salt has lost its savor—its saltiness—it’s good for nothing. It becomes tasteless. In the same way, a believer who falls into sin loses his testimony, making the Christian life seem tasteless, or undesirable, to sinners.”

“Grandma, may I have some more milk?” asked Julie. “This ham makes me thirsty.” “And why do you suppose it does that?” asked Grandma. “Because of the salt,” answered Julie. “Hey, I think I get it! If we’re ‘salty’ Christians, we make others thirsty for Jesus!” Grandma nodded as she filled Julie’s glass.

Verse to memorize: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers.” 1 Timothy 4:12

Taken from *The One Year Book of*

One Major Cause of Marital Problems Selfishness in Relations

Sometimes husbands are selfish, ignoring the needs of their wives. They ask for their needs, and they usually get disappointed if they are not fulfilled. They ask their wives to be submissive and obedient, despite their aggressive behavior. Sometimes men refuse to make any sacrifice for their wives. Many husbands get as much as they can from their wives, neglecting the needs and the physical comfort of their wives, for the sake of their convenience. This selfishness in relation makes the marital life miserable and may lead to marriage dissolution.

Some husbands want to be the sole leaders of their homes to the extent that they don’t discuss any ideas or decisions with their wives. When they happen to share any idea with their wives, they insist to control the discussion and have the last word. They misinterpret the biblical verse, which says, “The husband is the head of the wife.” They insist that any dialogue must end according to their own expectation. There can be no true oneness when there is selfishness in the relation between husbands and wives.

On the other hand, wives should discover the needs of their husbands and try to meet these needs, thus becoming voluntarily unselfish. The wives must not try to say or to do anything that embarrasses their husbands, or make them lose confidence in themselves. Selfish wives are not concerned about the welfare of their husbands, pulling them down instead of building them up.

Selfish wives must understand the meaning of femininity and they must know that aggression is not appreciated by the husbands. St. Peter encourages wives to develop an inner beauty that reflects femininity, love, and gentleness. They should listen to their husbands kindly and patiently, and practice control of their tongues. They should know that they have no authority over their own bodies, but their husbands have. Selfish wives try to control their husbands, by abstaining from marital relations, and use that as a weapon.

Selfishness destroys love between couples because love does not parade itself and does not seek its own. Christians should give rather than take. Oneness, which is one of the goals of marriage, is completely destroyed, when one of the spouses is selfish. This would lead to dissolution of the marriage. Couples must do nothing through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind. Each of the spouses must look out not only for his or her own interests, but also for the interests of the other (Phil 2: 3-4).

by Hegomen Gawargious Kolta

Just For Teenagers and Youth

How can we sanctify our desires? This is by allowing what is holy to enter through one's senses, because they are the pathways to ones spirit and soul. Hence, one has to guard his senses and allow only the passage of what is holy; this will make all the desires to be holy. Sometimes one does not value him appropriately. But we are the Temple of God. The Holy Bible says, "*You are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you*" (1 Corinthians 3:16). As an example, if you want to go to the White House, how many security guards do you have to go through? How many times will they search you? But as a pedestrian in the public, you can walk anywhere without any restrictions. Anyone can throw away his garbage.

Sometimes we treat our souls as the street, or even worse than the street. We allow others to throw their garbage in our hearts, our souls and our senses. We allow the TV and all other media to enter into our hearts. If we value ourselves, we need to search every thought, every word and every sense before we allow it to enter into our heart. So if you really believe that you are the Temple of God, you should not allow any garbage to enter into your heart. How many times do we listen to irreverent music? How many times do we listen to immoral songs? How many times do we allow our eyes to watch disgraceful movies, disgusting talk shows or surf bad web sites on the Internet? How many times do we allow our eyes to read material not conducive to our spiritual life? Then we question, why are we tempted? It is because we have all these ungodly desires. How do we acquire these ungodly desires? It is because we allow the "garbage in".

So where does the way to victory start?

First, you need to stop allowing any more garbage to enter into your heart and into your senses. Only allow the Godly things to enter through your senses. The Holy Book of Song of Songs in the Old Testament says, "*A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed*" (Song of Songs 4:12). This means that no one comes in unless he is first searched. Similarly you should not allow any thought any scene or any word to enter your heart unless it is first scrutinized. Now is our heart like an open dwelling place, where we allow anyone to throw their garbage in, or do we have our gates closed to scrutinize what goes in?

The Martyrdom of Saint Mina the Monk

On the seventeenth day of the blessed month of Amshir, we commemorate the martyrdom of St. Mina the Monk. He was born in Ekhmeem, Egypt to Christian parents who were farmers.

Since his youth, he was inclined to renounce the world and he became a monk in one of the monasteries in Ekhmeem. He used to fast two days at a time and he was modest in his food and drink. He then moved to Ashmouneen and dwelt in a monastery there for 16 continuous years.

When the Arabs ruled Egypt, he heard that they denied the deity of Christ. He took permission from the abbot of the Monastery and went to the City of Ashmouneen. He went to the Arab commander of the soldiers and asked him, "Is it true that you say that God had no Son from His nature and essence?" The commander replied, "Yes."

The saint told the Arab commander, "We should reject this belief if it was through parental procreation, but our belief is that the Lord Jesus is God of God and Light of Light." The commander replied, "In our faith, this is blasphemy." The saint told him, "The Bible says, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36)

The commander became enraged and ordered the soldiers to cut the saint in pieces to be thrown into the sea. The soldiers did as they were told. The believers gathered the pieces of his body, shrouded, and buried his body. They arranged a commemoration of St. Mina the Monk on this day.

May his prayers be with us.