

THIS GREAT LOVE

By Nazir Gayed [H.H. Pope Shenouda III]

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When God wanted to test Abraham He said to him: "Abraham, ... take your son, your only son Isaac whom you love and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering..." (Gen 22:2)

The Holy Bible never mentioned that Abraham protested or argued with God about that unusual order. While in another situation when God revealed to Abraham about His intention to destroy the city of Sodom, Abraham argued with Him saying: "Far be it from thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked! ... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25).

Moses the prophet went on with the story saying: "So Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac ... and went to the place which God had told him". When Abraham saw the place afar off, he said to his young men: "Stay here with the ass; I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." (Gen. 22:3-5) ... "When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there ... and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar ... then Abraham put forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son..." (Gen. 22: 9,10)

Abraham loved his son tremendously, yet, his love to God was greater. Although Jesus' time was far ahead of Abraham yet His words: "He who loves son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me."

(Matt. 10:37) were absolutely true for him, as he submitted to God's order and took his son to slay him.

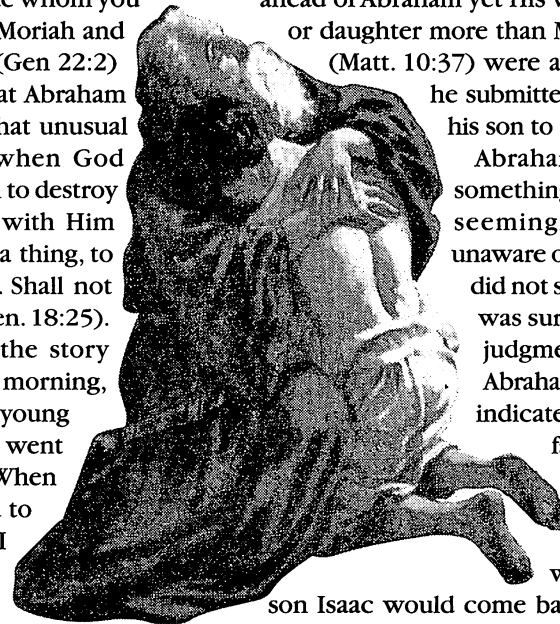
Abraham knew that there was something good coming out of that seemingly harsh order. Being unaware of God's wisdom behind it, did not seem to matter for him. He was sure of only one thing; God's judgment is fair and full of love.

Abraham words to his young men indicated that he had the utmost faith that God's promise:

"Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." (Heb. 11:18)

would be fulfilled, and his

son Isaac would come back alive. Our teacher St. Paul the Apostle commented on that saying: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, ... He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back." (Heb. 11:17,19)



NO GREATER LOVE THAN THIS

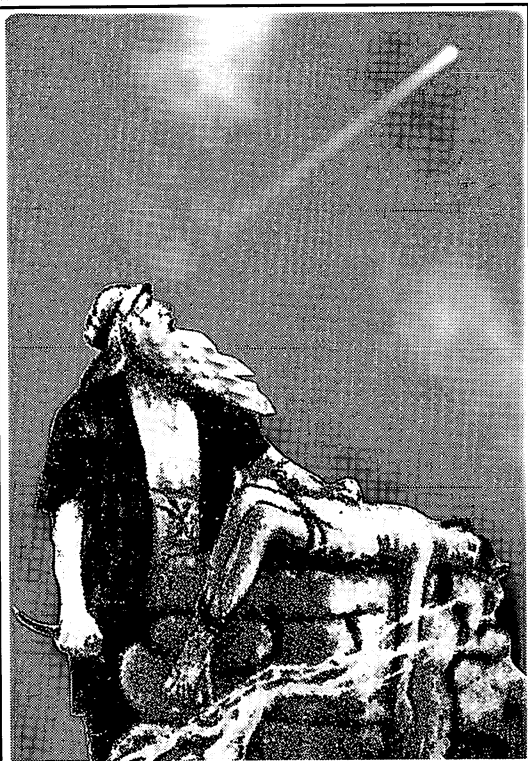
In the Old Testament, priests, seeking God's love and mercy, offered animals as sacrifices. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ became a priest and a sacrifice for our sake. As a priest, because of His abundant love, He did not offer animal sacrifices but He offered Himself. As a sacrifice, He was crucified on the cross to redeem all the human race. St. Paul the Apostle said: "But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come ... not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood ... having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:11-14). This reveals the real meaning of our Lord's saying: "... Greater love has no one than this, than to lay one's life for his friends." (John 15:13)



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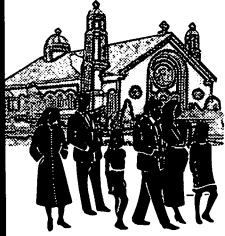
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"Abraham....laid his son on the altar....and took the knife to slay him."

(Gen. 22:9-10)

CHURCH NEWS



On Wednesday, February 5th, the church welcomed 35 of the neighbors who came to get acquainted with us and with the glorious history of our Coptic church.



On Saturday, February 15th., our youths went to Wisconsin on a skiing trip. They left after an early morning Liturgy service and came back on Sunday evening, February 16th.

Church Calendar

Saturday Evenings

- † Coptic Hymns for adults: 5:45 to 6:45 p.m.
- † Coptic Hymns for children: 6:00 to 6:45 p.m.
- † Vespers (Evening Prayers): 7:00 to 7:40 p.m.
- † Bible Study: 7:45 to 8:45 p.m.

Congratulations

To:

- † **Murad and Basma Rufael** for becoming one in Christ. May the Lord bless their marriage and make it blameless and honorable.
- † **Allison Baines** on the blessed occasion of her baptism. May the Lord crown all her endeavors with success.
- † **Maged and Fatinah Latif** for the baptism of their son **Antwan**.
- † **Medbat and Sabar Zakber** for the birth of their daughter **Eustina**.
May the Lord bless those children to grow in grace and stature before God and men.

*Blessed are those who have mercy,
who give to the poor, and fast and pray*
(A great lent hymn)



Making a Difference

One of the most enlightening, real life stories I have ever read:

The old woman stood before the judge, accused of stealing a loaf of bread. On that freezing New York night in 1935, the bitter cold outside was as unforgiving as the woman's accuser inside the courtroom.

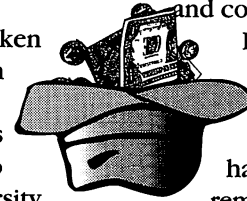
The man from whose shop the bread was taken told the judge: "She's got to be punished to teach people around here a lesson."

Times were tough, but in 1935, the citizens of New York City were blessed with a mayor who consistently inspired them to rise above adversity. That night, in that courtroom, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia had dismissed the night court judge and taken the bench himself. La Guardia was well known for riding fire trucks, accompanying the police on raids and taking children in orphanages to ball games. He cared enough to make a difference.

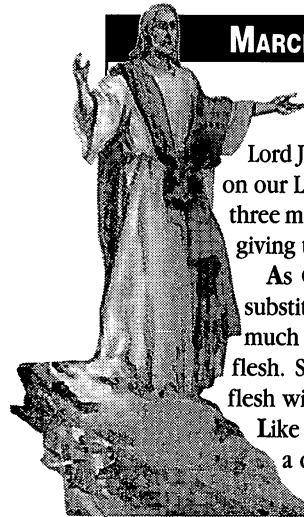
La Guardia sighed after hearing the evidence against

the poor old woman. He asked the woman why she had taken the bread. She explained that her grandchildren were starving. Her daughter, the children's mother, had been deserted by her husband and could not work because of her failing health.

La Guardia announced: "I've got to punish you. The law makes no exception - \$10 or 10 days in jail." Then he reached into his own pocket, pulled out a \$10 bill and dropped it into his hat. He said: "Here's the \$10 fine which I now remit, and further more I'm going to fine everyone in this courtroom 50 cents for living in a town where a person has to steal bread so that her grandchildren can eat. Mr. Bailiff, collect the fines and give them to the defendant." The Bailiff turned over \$47.50 to the old woman.... all those who were present in the courtroom willingly paid the fine - and gave La Guardia a standing ovation.



MARCH 3RD MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE GREAT LENT



Sunday March 2nd is the pre-Lent Sunday. Sunday eve is the eve of the preparation week that precedes the 40 days of lent which our Lord Jesus Christ had fasted for us. Preparation begins by contemplating on our Lord's Sermon on the mountain (Matt. 6: 1-18). This part deals with three major issues which should be adhered to by all the believers, namely; giving the needy, praying to the heavenly Father and fasting.

As Christians, fasting is not just abstaining from food and drink, or substituting one kind of food for another, but rather it is a means to a much deeper concept which is to subdue the desires and lusts of the flesh. St. Paul the apostle says: "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Gal. 5:24)

Like the mayor of New York City, La Guardia, you are called on to make a difference, that is, through fasting you can change your life to the better and make your relation with God stronger and deeper.

Condolences to:

- † **Magda Salib**,
for the death of her father the late **Albert Athanasios**
- † **Youssef Tabib**,
for the death of his mother the late **Laila Tabib**.

May the Lord repose the souls of the deceased and console their grieving families.