

**Published by**

Saint Shenouda
the Archimandrite
Coptic Orthodox
Monastery
Sydney, Australia

Address

8419 Putty Rd,
PUTTY, NSW 2330

Phone/Facsimile

(+612) 65 79 7093

Email

pimonakhos
@copticmail.com

Website

Stshenouda
monastery.org.au

To receive this
Newsletter
Monthly by
email, send
your request
to the above
email or
download it
from the
above website



PI MONAKHOS THE MONK

ΠΙΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ

A monthly newsletter with monastic issues for today's youth

Vol: 3 Issue: 7

Abib 1725 / July 2009

Faith and Works

By: St Shenouda the Archimandrite



For as the Lord said. "Not everyone who says 'Lord, Lord, to me will go into the kingdom. but the one who will do the will of my Father who is in heaven.'" (Mat 7:21) Likewise, it is not the one who reads or says or hears Him who will enter life but those who will do the works of the word that they say or that they hear. "Faith is empty without works, as it is written knowledge or hearing is empty without good works and as the body dies without the spirit, also knowledge or hearing dies when absent of good works.(Jas 2:26)

Hearing the Lord saying "My Father works until now and I also work." What is the work that He does? Is it to make new heavens or new earth? Is it not to work for our salvation? What then are the works of our salvation? He for His part knows them and we for our part desire that we might know them. What does a physician do for the wounded man? Does he not first pierce him with the knife healing him afterwards? The Lord for his part then works for our salvation and the healing of our lawlessness through illness and pain, through poverty and every trouble that he seasonably brings upon us, in order to teach us, not with his wrath but with his love so that we might repent.

And after the troubles that He brings upon us He also sends us His blessing and mercy and every relief through His mercies so that we might worship Him in their midst. Now on the earth by praying, by fasting, by having mercy on the poor, by doing justice for the afflicted, by being lovers of strangers, by visiting the sick, by being especially concerned for those who are alone, by purifying ourselves from every evil, by struggling in every good work so that we might forever take our rest in the kingdom of heaven.

The fool is the one who curses the physician when he opens the wound with the knife. The wise man, however, not only thanks him but resolves to give him money or gold or other valuables. So also the fool is the one who curses God in the trouble of the tribulation that befalls him.



The wise man however not only thanks God when the Lord sends trouble upon him or when we are in sickness or trials but he like little child runs to his father.

The fool on the other hand, in the season of trouble, when their poverty or their sickness befalls them or some other trial they leave God behind them running to the feet of magicians or oracles or further they turn themselves to other works of deceit. As I myself saw the head of the snake bound to someone's hand, another with the crocodiles tooth bound to his arms, another with the paw of foxes tied to his feet

Why did the prophet Elijah rebuke Israel in that time saying. "How long will you limp on your two feet? If the Lord is God then follow Him, if Baal is the one who is, then follow him." So also with those who do these things or who are confident in them, until when will you limp on you two feet? If the oracles of the demons, magicians and enchanters and all the other things of that sort that work lawlessness suit you, then go to their feet so that you might receive a curse upon the earth and eternal chastisement on the day of judgment. If the house of God - the church - suits you, then go there.

(From: I am Amazed, Trans by: Michael E. Foat)



A Group of youth
From St Mary's
Church visiting
the monastery





The Bible in the Life of St Shenouda

By: Fr Anthony St Shenouda

“For my father Abba Shenouda of good memory whose feast we celebrate today is worthy to have his good works related, his asceticism, his way of life, his admirable virtues and the great and incredible signs, just like those of the holy prophets and the apostles of the Lord.”

The life of Abba Shenouda

This is an incredible way to start the life of a saint, as the writer Abba Wissa (*St Shenouda's disciple*) already framed him as one of Bible characters. What he is trying to say is that the saint loved and lived the Bible so much that when he saw his Abba he was seeing the Bible in action.

When we on the other hand read the group of writings of St Shenouda (*the canons and discourses*) some of which we read during pascha week, we realise that the above image is not a bios account of the saint's life. Reading these writings we discover that they consist of a great number of Bible references that could not be ignored. The words of the saint are so intertwined with those of the Bible that it is sometimes difficult to say where the saying of the saint ends and the Bible quote begins.

This characteristic in a saint's life is not exclusive to St Shenouda nor is it exclusive to saints of old times or monks but it is a characteristic of all true Christians of all ages, even today. In contrast when people are asked if they read the Bible, the answer is usually “a chapter a day if any”. What we often find out is that this has been their prayer rule for years as if it was the maximum one is allowed to do. Under some circumstances it can be reduced to nothing but it would be a grave sin to read a verse more!

Fr Bishoy Kamel expressed in one of his sermons, his dislike for this ‘chapter a day’ idea that we sometimes unquestionably tie ourselves to. He advises that “we should read the Bible until we are full, as if we were eating whether it takes a verse, a chapter or maybe a book to become full, since we do not usually leave the dinner table until our stomach is full.”

We can see from the life of St Shenouda that by reading the Bible continuously St Shenouda and consequently the monks of the monastery who follow suit, were absorbed into the words of the Bible and their whole monastic experience becomes a panoramic experience of the Bible. This is also attested to in the use of the proper English word for the life of a saint which is “Hagiography.” Like many other words, it comes from Greek roots, *hagios*, that is holy or saint and *graphe* that is writing. For some medieval writers they use the same word to mean the Bible or literally “Holy Writings.”

It is related by Abba Wissa that St Shenouda was once walking with Jeremiah the prophet. Jeremiah was weeping over a brother who was reciting the book of Jeremiah



without heartfelt devotion. Another time the saint was walking with the prophet Ezekiel, when the prophet stopped next to one of the brothers enjoying his fervor recitation. Abba Wissa also mentions another occasion when David the psalmist joined the brothers in singing the psalms.

In addition the language of these true Christians became verses of the Bible and when it comes to describe a person or an event, they liken it to a figure or an event of the Bible. If someone is clairvoyant and does miracles he is like one of the prophets, if someone keeps the true faith he is like the apostles, if he is a hypocrite, he is like the Pharisees, if someone happen to betray the faith he is like Judas etc.

To conclude, copies of the Bible are at our disposal and the story of the Bible is still playing now as it has been since the beginning of time, the question is which character will you play?

A group of youth from St Mary's Church Visiting the monastery





Abba Shenouda saves a Negligent Brother

There were two brothers lying sick in the monastery. One of them was zealous and watched over himself carefully; the other was very negligent, spending his days in vain pursuits. Now one day, it happened that our father abba Shenouda came to the place where they were sick to them. When he came to the negligent brother he said to him: 'Look at you! I see you suffering and near to death: what do you think of yourself?' The brother replied: 'Believe me, my father, I never ever performed a single one of your commands, and I do not know in what way I can justify myself'. Then he also went to the place where the righteous brother was, whose illness was not serious, and asked him: 'What do you think? If the Lord should visit you, are you confident now that you would find mercy?' The latter replied: 'Believe me, my holy father, I was zealous in keeping all your commands, but if God is not merciful, I do not know what will happen to me'. My father said to him: 'Good!'

After this, the zealous brother died and went to the Lord. The one who was negligent, however, recovered from his illness, but still persisted in his negligence, and our father abba Shenouda was saddened because of him. Now when the brothers were putting earth on the threshing floor where they spread out the bread, some of the brothers were carrying earth, and among them too was the negligent brother who had been restored from sickness. He was walking slowly with the basket of earth, idly cracking jokes and roaring with laughter.

Our father the old man arose in anger, seized him, and threw him to the ground. He piled on top of him his basket of earth and spoke to him like this: 'Is it not enough for you that for your sake I gave up the zealous brother? I had you sent back since I wanted you to repent! And look, you have still paid no heed to your shameful works!' The brother arose and fell down before our father, saying: 'Forgive me!' He went away and henceforth gave himself up to penance with great zeal and groaning and tears until the days of a month had passed by. At the end of the month he fell sick and was dying, and our holy father abba Shenouda went in to him to visit him, and stayed at his side until he died. Then our father said to the brothers: 'Behold! Today a brother went to the Lord; in his life there is no decrease'.

A group of Deacons from Arch-Angel Michael Church praying the Liturgy at the monastery





Daily Life in the White monastery

By: Rebecca Krawiec



The White monastery church

Despite the importance of work in the White Monastery, it has been argued that prayer, not labor, was the activity around which the day was structured. The monks slept two to a cell in the monastery. They rose about an hour and a half before light and immediately prayed; if they rose earlier, they were to pray longer. No monk was to go to work without praying first. They were also exhorted to pray ceaselessly, apparently throughout their workday. Praying was not just contemplative; it was a physical activity that required the monks to bend and rise several times in succession.

Monks also recited Scripture during their work, and St Shenouda was much like other monastic leaders in his esteem for the Bible. Also at the beginning of the day, apparently before the monks went to work, a worship service was held with the reading of Scripture and recitation of Psalms; the male monks read the Psalms without a break between them. Prayer was thus incorporated into nearly every aspect of a monk's day. But neither the activity of praying nor its primary role means that life in the White Monastery was contemplative and so inactive; rather, physical labor defined the monastic life, both in the act of praying and in daily life.

A long workday accompanied the monks' prayer life. Devotion to prayer was not an excuse to avoid labor, even for the superiors of the monastery. Apparently the monks did not eat before going to work, and the daily communal meal was held at three in the afternoon. For the men, there were various forms of work, but the women were apparently limited to the production of clothing. Nuns would have learned to weave before joining the monastery, since women of every class in antiquity acquired this skill. Likewise, many of the male monks had previous occupations; they were allowed to continue in the same line of work not by their own choice but only if St Shenouda appointed them to.

Priests and deacons who joined the monastery were also still authorized to perform the Eucharist, though only at the request of someone called "the father of these congregations, most likely the head of the monastery. Other men performed more physical labor: reaping rushes, plucking palm-leaves, filling up the vessel used for pounding soaked reeds, gathering date-palm fibers, grinding grain, and baking.



Certainly one aspect of the White Monastery was economic support for its members and the surrounding villages. The monks' labor contributed to the monastery's ability to provide economic assistance both to themselves and those seeking hospitality and charity from them. Another form of work in the monastery was service to other monks. Monks worked in the infirmary, the kitchen, or some other part of the monastery that performed the services necessary for a community of people. Thus the varied tasks necessary to furnish material support (especially clothing) and the jobs necessary to run the monastery as an institution were all forms of work required of the monks, male and female.

(From: Shenoute & the Women of the White Monastery)

Abba Shenouda Speaks to the Holy Apostles



St Shenouda's Cave

It happened one time that our father abba Shenouda was in the cell in the desert, and he delayed his return to the monastery because he was praying in those days for the river to flood. He gave us a command, saying: 'Let none come into the desert'. So when something was needed for the monastery, we were afraid to send to him. Now there was a second in command set under our father, and the second called abba Joseph, our father's secretary, and said to him: 'Go up and tell our father of the matter and ask him what we should do'. He obeyed him and went up to our father to the cell in the desert. When he drew near the cell, it

sounded to him as if our father was speaking to some people, and he was afraid to approach him. After a short time, our father called out and said: 'Come in, Joseph! Do not stay outside'. So he went in and received his blessing. My father said to him: 'Why did you come into the desert and not open the door of the cell and come in?' He replied humbly: 'I thought that the rulers of the city had come up here to you and were talking with you. That was why I did not come in, my father'. Our father abba Shenouda replied to him and said: "Joseph, Shenouda does not speak with men in the desert; it is the angels I speak with, or the prophets, or apostles, or martyrs. Nevertheless, Joseph, you lost a great blessing today, for the twelve apostles had come to visit me here and they just now arose and withdrew. Believe me, it was they who were speaking with me just now."

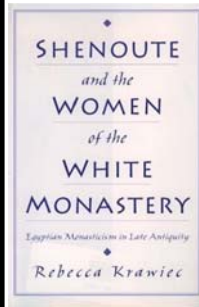


St Shenouda Feast Celebration

Saturday 18/7/2009		Feast of St. Shenouda (14/7/09).
9:00 am	12:00 pm	The Holy Liturgy. (Giving of Presents).
12:00pm	1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm	2:00 pm	Procession around the Monastery
5:00 pm	6:30 pm	Vesper Prayers.
11:00pm	3:00 am (Sun)	Vigils, Hymns, Midnight Praises.
Sunday 19/7/2009		Feast of St. Shenouda cont.
3:00 am	6:00 am	The first Holy Liturgy.
10:00am	12:00pm	The second Holy Liturgy. (Giving of Presents).
12:00pm	1:00 pm	Lunch
5:00 pm	5:30 pm	Sunset prayers

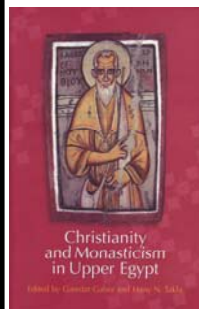
The celebration of St. Shenouda's Feast , will be on Saturday(18/7/09) instead of Tuesday (*The Actual feast day*) So we can give better opportunity for many to attend. Bishop Daniel apologises for not attending the feast this year as he will be attending the celebration of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 55th anniversary as a monk

Further Readings



Rebecca Krawiec, *Shenoute and the women of the White Monastery*

This book depicts the lives of female monks within a monastery located in Upper Egypt in the period 385-464 CE. During this period, the monastery was headed by a monk named Shenoute; thirteen of his letters to the women under his care survive. These writings are fragmentary, only partially translated, little studied, and written in difficult to decipher Coptic. Despite these problems, Krawiec has used the letters to reconstruct a series of quarrels and events in the life of the White Monastery and to discern some of the key patterns in the participants' relationships to one another within the world as they perceived it.



Gawdat Gabra & Hany Takla, *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt.*

The contributors to this volume, international specialists in Coptology from around the world, examine various aspects of Coptic civilization in the Upper Egyptian governorate of Sohag over the past seventeen hundred years. Many of the studies center on the person and legacy of the great Coptic saint, Shenoute the Archimandrite (AD 348-466), looking at his preserved writings, his life, his place in Pachomian monasticism, his relations with the patriarchs in Alexandria, and the life in his monastic system.