



Group of youth having lunch  
18th July



Group of youth from St Mark's Church doing work at the monastery



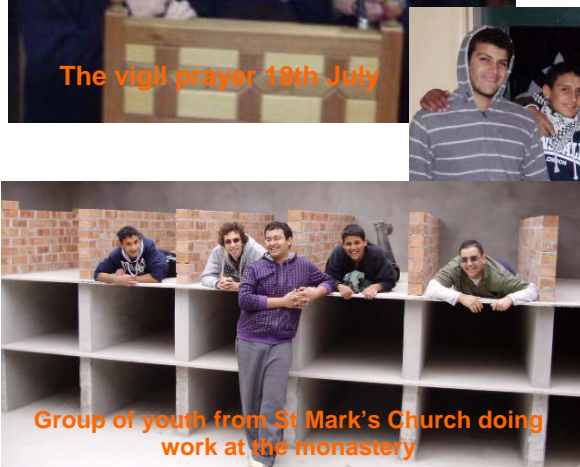
Group of youth from St Anthony's Church 18th July



The vigil prayer 18th July



Group of youth from St Mark's Church 18th July



Group of youth from St Mark's Church doing work at the monastery



Group of youth from St Archangel Michael's Church spending retreat at the monastery



Published by  
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### *Tell Me, O Whom I Love, Where You Feed Your Flock*

*Tell me, O you whom I love, Where you feed your flock, Where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself By the flocks of your companions? If you do not know, O fairest among women, Follow in the footsteps of the flock, And feed your little goats Beside the shepherds' tents*

*(Song of Songs 1:7-9)*



Countless people have been seeking the Lord. They would ask the Lord to reveal Himself to them. They want to see Him and enjoy His presence. They want to live with Him, Tell me, O whom I Love, Where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon. How can I find You, O Lord? Will I find You in fasting, in prayers, in praising and singing? Or will I find you in the Holy Liturgy, in Communion, in the Church, in the monastery, or during a quiet retreat of seclusion with You? *Tell me, O whom I love, Where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon.*

St. Augustine had no relationship with God. However, he employed all means possible to find Him. He used logic, philosophy and a number of other means. He wanted to see the Lord and have a relationship with Him. He desired His companionship and longed to enjoy His fellowship. Finally, he found God "within" him. He exclaimed, You were with me, but, because of the abundance of my resistance, I was not with You (Confessions, 10:38). You were there all along, but I did not feel Your presence. I was wondering, *Where you feed your flock, Where you make it rest, while You were resting inside of me, in my heart.*

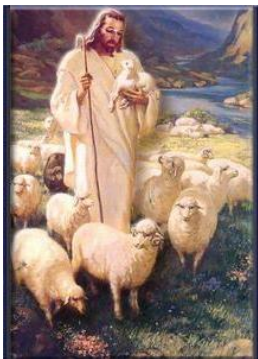
Many people who ask the Lord, *Tell me, O whom I love, Where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon*, are unaware that the Lord is with them, amongst them and in their midst.

The man born blind also provides us with another example. When Jesus found him again, He said to him, *Do you believe in the Son of God?* The man answered and said, *Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in*



Him? To which Jesus responded, *you have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you*, (John 9:35-37). You are with Him, but you do not see Him. *Tell me, O whom I love, Where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon*. This is a call for the Lord, an earnest appeal to see the Lord and a sincere, solemn request to know Him and enjoy His companionship. It is a reflection of an overwhelming desire to join the few followers of the Shepherd in the wilderness, *Where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon*.

At a time in which the heat is most severe and spiritual warfare is most intense, a time in which everyone is seeking shelter from the oppressive heat and trying to find comfort for their hearts and their souls, my sole concern and my one desire is to find shelter underneath Your shade. I am seeking You at noon, a time of labour and hard work, toiling under the scorching sun that has beleaguered and stressed me with its excessive heat. Exhausted and worn out I seek You, *Where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon*.



What a worthy request! What a beautiful call. A great number of people seek the Lord and reiterate the same request. *Tell me, O whom I love, Where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon*.

I love You, O Lord, from the depths of my heart and with all my being. I long to do whatever is pleasing for You. Sometimes, however, I do not know what to do. I would like to live with You and enjoy Your fellowship, but I do not know how. There are many different paths that lie ahead of me, so which one shall I choose? I would like to know Your holy blessed will and plan for my life. Tell me, O Lord, about Your Divine plan for my life. Tell

me, O whom I love, Where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon. Let me know what You want me to do.

People often at times ask the Lord to make known His plans for their lives. They ask what kind of life the Lord wants them to lead. Is it a life of service or one of seclusion? Is it in matrimony or in celibacy? Is it a life of meditation or one of work? Where do You want me, Lord? Is it in speech or in silence? In utter devotion and consecration or is it something else? *Tell me, O whom I love, Where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon*.

This is an example of a human soul that is confronted with many paths. It asks the Lord for help in finding His way among the many paths that lie ahead. The Lord assures you that whatever path you choose; He will walk alongside with you. The important thing for God is your adoring, loving heart. The Lord is not concerned with the "path" you choose. Rather, His main concern is the "way" you choose to lead your life. What kind of life you opt to lead is the important thing for the Lord.

(From: *Have you seen the one I Love*, By: H.H. Pope Shenouda)



words, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Mt 9:12), Abba Poemen reminded his listeners, "If you do a little good to the good brother, do twice as much for the other. For he is sick." Another elder affirmed the need to sometimes go beyond what was expected in dealing with another. He cited a text from Matthew to indicate the lengths to which one should go in loving: "When someone asks something of you, even if you must do violence to yourself in giving it to him, your thought must take pleasure in the gift according to that which is written, 'If someone asks you to go a mile, go two miles with him' (Mt 5:41). That is, if someone asks something of you, give it to him with your whole heart and spirit."

The elders did not make such declarations glibly, nor did they imagine it was a simple matter to put such sayings into practice. They knew how difficult it was to engage in even the smallest act of love, much less to allow the power of love to transform one. The Sayings is full of questions of how to overcome the legion of dark impulses within oneself which prevented one from loving. "A brother asked Abba Joseph, saying, 'What should I do, for I do not have the strength to bear evil, nor to work for charity's sake?' The old man said, 'If you cannot do any of these things, at least guard your conscience from all evil with regard to your neighbor and you will be saved.'" "This is an honest and revealing response. The elder recognized how inevitable it was that through weakness one would sometimes fail to rise to the demands of love. Yet, one could still "guard the conscience," that is, learn to pay careful attention to the twisted patterns of one's thought and behavior which made love so difficult. In so doing, one could begin to break down the barriers to love and realize it in some way within oneself.

There was good reason why fulfilling the commandment to love was so difficult the roots of those inner forces, or "passions," which worked against love ran deep and strong. One could easily misjudge the extent to which such passions had been rooted out. We see this in the case of a certain monk who had fasted rigorously for some fifty years and who declared that he had finally managed to destroy the passion of vain-glory within himself. Abba Abraham was surprised to hear him say this and when he next encountered him, put this question to him:

*"Suppose you learn that of two brothers one loves you while the other hates you, and speaks evil of you; if they come to see you, will you receive them both with the same love?" "No," he replied, "But I should struggle against my thoughts so as to be as kind towards the one who hates me as towards the one who loves me." Abba Abraham said to him, "So, then, the passions continue to live; it is simply that they are controlled by the saints."*

This was a sobering reminder to the monks of the intensity of the passions which lived within them. It was possible to learn how to love, to become, as Amma Theodora put it, "a lover of souls. 'But let no one underestimate the cost involved. It would require a lifetime of struggle against one's own worst tendencies, especially anger, judgment, and unwillingness to forgive others, to become tender enough to love.

(From: *"The Word in the Desert"*, By: Douglas Burton-Christie)



## The Cost of Love

By: Douglas Burton-Christie

The elders were keenly aware, from their own personal experience, of the high cost of fulfilling the commandment to love. Their reading of Scripture served to confirm this sense and to encourage them to risk loving even under extreme circumstances. It is startling, as we listen to the monks talk about the requirements of love, how literally they took the words of Scripture. Poemen's interpretation of one Gospel text illustrates well the particular kind of demands love made upon the monks in their life in the desert, and how their reading of Scripture helped them to respond to these demands. Abba Poemen saw the text, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13) as referring to just such a situation: "If someone hears an evil saying, that is, one which harms him, and in his turn, he wants to repeat it, he must fight in order not to say it. Or if someone is taken advantage of and he bears it, without retaliating at all, there he is giving his life for his neighbour."



Fulfilling the commandment, then, entailed having the courage to love in circumstances where one's natural response would lead one in precisely the opposite direction. Abba Or took these extreme demands of love seriously. For him, "loving one's enemies" was not a saying which the monk could afford to relegate to the status of a remote, abstract aphorism. Nearly every one of them did have enemies, as the numerous petty and not so petty disputes which we encounter in the Sayings reveal. Therefore, when Or asked the brothers one day how well they had "kept all the commandments," he pressed them especially on the question of love: "Have you," he

asked, "loved your enemies (Mt 5:44) and been kind to them in their misfortunes?" "Love of this kind required a certain freedom from fear, fear that one would look foolish; fear that one would be consumed by another; fear of losing all that one had known. Such freedom is hinted at in a remarkable saying of Abba Agathon, which expresses the depth of self-giving he understood to be involved in fulfilling the commandment. He recalls a saying from the First Letter of John, "Perfect love casts out fear," and states what, for him, would be an expression of such love: "If I could meet a leper, give him my body, and take his, I should be very happy. That indeed is perfect charity (1 Jn 4:18)." This sense of the need for compassion toward the vulnerable is echoed elsewhere in the Sayings. Abba Epiphanius defined righteousness in terms of a willingness to extend an act of kindness toward someone in need: "God sells righteousness at a very low price to those who wish to buy it: a little piece of bread, a cloak of no value, a cup of cold water (Mt 10:42)." Life in the desert provided no end of opportunities to practice this kind of love.

Life took toll in different ways on those who came to the desert, and learning to love meant being sensitive to the particular needs of each person. Love could sometimes require one to summon up from within the capacity to extend oneself unexpectedly in response to the particular emotional condition of another. Calling to mind Jesus'



## How Do I Know My Calling?

By: Fr Anthony St Shenouda

It is an important question that most young people ask themselves, "How do I know if monastic life is for me? As it seems too hard, lifelong commitment, fasting, asceticism, obedience. Many young people think that something miraculous has to happen to them to know what is God's will for me, especially when people read in the *desert fathers* that a voice came to St Arsanius and told him "Arsanius flee from men and you will be saved." But when we look deeper into the *sayings* we see that these were only exceptions and not the rule. St Anthony of Egypt had his calling in church during the reading of the Gospel during a liturgy. Many people were at church at the time but he felt it was speaking to him personally. St Pachomius the founder of communal life found his calling when he was well treated by good Christian families. St Moses the black after being baptised he asked to become a monk because of the good example of monks that he lived with. St Basil the great found his calling after being reprimanded by his older sister, Macrina.

We can see that all the above examples of callings are not extraordinary events but they are events that take place in all of our lives today. How many times did we go to church and hear the Gospel being read, or how many times were we reprimanded by a family member or a priest and we decided to take offence rather than listen to God's call?

The Monastic calling is simply a choice you make just like a high school student making up his mind on what course he should get into. For someone who is into science and biology, will not last very long in an English literature course. If you give this person a simple essay or a poem to read, it would be the most agonizing experience. On the other hand if you show him a very complicated scientific experiment he will sit up straight and may spend days, trying to understand it, even though he is not familiar with half the scientific terms used, since he does not have the knowledge or the experience. What initiates his love to science are some simple experiments that he enjoyed at school or a good teacher who made him love this subject.

Likewise the monastic calling, it starts with enjoying simple spiritual practices like going to masses, spending 2-3 day retreat in a monastery, regularly praying the Agbia. Whenever this person is confronted with a harsh ascetical practice in '*The Paradise of the Holy Fathers*,' he is not set back because he can't match these practices but rather sees them as a challenge that enflames his heart for such a great spiritual life. These simple spiritual practices when they are placed in the right environment (*monastery*) it thrives and gives fruit. As one of our holy bishops once said "people look from outside at monasticism as being a hard path, which is true, but what they miss is that it is a path full of blessings and rewards."

So to hear God's voice clearly in this matter one must do two things. Regularly visit the monastery and participate in the life of the monks. When you are not in the monas-



tery, you can still have a taste of the monastic life at home. Once you place yourself in this environment you can test yourself whether you are spiritually thriving or not. The other task that you must do is read and reread monastic literature. There is sufficient monastic literature in English translation to keep one reading for years.

For a very practical advice I will turn to one of Pope Kyrillos's letter to a young man on how to live the monastic life at home.

*"Start your day by worshipping God in prostration twenty or thirty times ... do not stay too late outside; it is better not to be out after eight o'clock if possible, so that you can find time to read a little and to pray..."*



The Deacons and congregation at the feast day 18th July

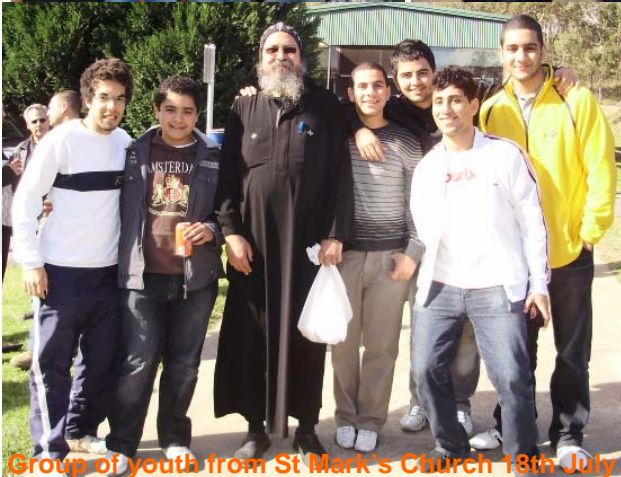
Fr Bishoy praying the Liturgy 14th July



Group of youth from St Anthony's Church 18th July



Group of youth at the procession 18th July



Group of youth from St Mark's Church 18th July



Group of youth at the procession 18th July



The Fathers serving lunch 18th July



Fr Gergorios praying the Liturgy 14th July



Group of youth at the procession 18th July



The vigil prayer 18th July



The procession of the relics of saints 18th July



Congregation at the bookshop

Group of youth from St Mark's Church 18th July