

A COMPANION TO THE COPTIC SYNAXARIUM

**PART ONE
THOUT - MESHIR**

**COMPILED AND EDITED BY
FATHER ATHANASIUS ISKANDER**

**SAINT MARY COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH
KITCHENER ONTARIO CANADA**

THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT THE FIRST DAY

- I. Feast of El-Nayrouz (Beginning of the Blessed Coptic Year).
2. The Martyrdom of St. Bartholomew, the Apostle.
3. The Departure of St. Melyos (Milius), the Third Pope of Alexandria.
4. Commemoration of the healing of Job the righteous

1. Today is the beginning of the blessed Coptic year. It is necessary to keep it a holy day with full purity and chastity. Let us start a new demeanor as St. Paul the Apostle says, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Cor. 5:17-18) And Isaiah the Prophet says, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Isaiah 61:1-2) And David the Prophet says, “Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drip with fatness.” (Psalms 65:11). We ask our God to keep us without sin and help us to act according to His will with the intercessions of the pure Saint Mary, all the Martyrs and Saints. Amen.

2. On this day also, the holy Apostle Bartholomew, one of the twelve disciples, was martyred. To this Apostle fell the lot to go to India and Armenia. Two ancient testimonies exist about the mission of Saint Bartholomew in India. These are of Eusebius of Caesarea (early 4th century) who mentions his mission to India where he left behind a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew. Saint Jerome (late 4th century) also speaks of this tradition. Both of these refer to this tradition while speaking of the reported visit of Pantaenus to India in the 2nd century, when he brought back with him the original copy of St. Matthew’s Gospel, which was kept in the Library of the school of Alexandria. The studies of Fr A.C. Perumalil SJ and Moraes hold that the Bombay region was the field of Saint Bartholomew's missionary activities.

Along with his fellow apostle Jude Thaddeus, Bartholomew is reputed to have brought Christianity to Armenia in the 1st century. Thus, both saints are considered the patron saints of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

He is said to have been martyred in Albanopolis in Armenia. According to one account, he was beheaded, but a more popular tradition holds that he was flayed alive and crucified, head downward. He is said to have converted Polymius, the king of Armenia, to Christianity. Astyages, Polymius' brother, consequently ordered Bartholomew's execution.

An Armenian monastery was constructed at the site of the martyrdom of Apostle Bartholomew in the Vaspurakan Province of Greater Armenia (now in southeastern Turkey).

It is said that his relics are kept at Lipari, a small island off the coast of Sicily, where they are kept in the Cathedral of St Bartholomew the Apostle, Lipari. The relics were translated to Benevento in 838, where they are still kept now in the Basilica of San Bartolomeo.

His blessings and prayers be with us all. Amen.

3. Also on this day in the year 98 A.D., St. Melyos (Milius), the third Pope of Alexandria after St. Mark, departed. This Saint was enthroned in the fifteenth year of the reign of Domitian, son of Vespasian, Emperor of Rome, and 55 years after the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. He pastured and guarded the flock of Christ well for 12 years and departed in peace.

His prayers be with us all. Amen.

4. On this day also we commemorate the healing of Job the righteous. *May his prayers be with us and glory be to God forever. Amen.*

THE SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Dasya the Soldier.

1. On this day, the forerunner and great prophet, St. John the Baptist, son of Zacharias the priest, was martyred by the order of King Herod. When St. John rebuked Herod because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Phillip whom he had taken as a wife, he said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." (Mark:6:18) Herod seized the Saint and cast him into prison; however, he feared John.

An opportune day came when Herod, on his birthday, gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers and the chief men of Galilee. And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced and pleased Herod. He promised her anything she might ask for, even as much as half of his kingdom. She went to her mother and asked her, "What shall I ask?" Her mother said, "Ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter." When Herod heard this, he was exceedingly sorry. But because of his promise and those who were sitting with him, he did not want to refuse her request. He therefore commanded his servants to cut off the head of Saint John and they gave it to the damsel and the damsel gave it to her mother. (Mark 6:20-28) There was great consternation that day, and their joy soon turned into sorrow.

It was said that when the holy head of St. John was cut off, it flew up off their hands into the air, and it cried out saying, "It is not right for you to take your brother's wife." It is also said that the head now is present at Homs in Syria.

As of the holy body, the disciples of St. John took it and laid it in a grave until the days of Pope Athanathius, when God Willed to uncover his body. *His blessings be with us all. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Dasya the soldier, who was a native of the city of Tanda, was martyred. Arianus, governor of Antinoe, inflicted great tortures on this Saint because of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, he cut off his head, thus St. Dasya received the crown of martyrdom. *His blessings be with us all and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. A Council held in the city of Alexandria.
2. Departure of St. Theodora of Alexandria

1. On this day of the year 243 A.D., a holy synod convened in the city of Alexandria in the second year of the Papacy of St. Dionysius, the fourteenth Pope of Alexandria. This council was convened because certain people in the Arabian countries believed that the spirit dies with the body, and that on the day of the resurrection, it shall be raised up with it. They composed articles on this belief and sent them to certain people in Alexandria.

When this reached Abba Dionysius he was exceedingly sorry, and he tried to return them from their erroneous opinion, but they would not hearken to him. Therefore, the council assembled, confronted them, and made manifest their perversion. They neither repented nor turned away from their false belief, the holy synod and the Pope excommunicated them.

He wrote an article for them and said in it, “The love of God for mankind is exceedingly great, and the spirit neither dies nor perishes, but abideth as the angels and the devil for it is spiritual, immutable, and incorruptible. When the spirit goes forth from the body it will return to God Who gave it. (Ecc. 12:7) Where it remains in the places of waiting according to its deservedness. And on the day of the resurrection, when the trumpet sounds, the dead bodies shall rise by the Word of God. The spirits reunite with the body it belongs, some to everlasting joy, and some to everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:2)

2. And on this day also Saint Theodora departed. This holy woman was a native of Alexandria, and she lived in the days of Zeno the emperor; a strange man forced her, and also took her handmaiden and defiled her. And straightway she sorrowed with a bitter sorrow, and wept bitter tears. And she put on male attire secretly, and went forth from the city of Alexandria in the guise of a man, and she called herself Theodore. Then she went to a monastery of monks, and arrayed herself in the garb of the monks, which is the garb of angels, and all those who saw her thought that she was a eunuch. And she devoted herself to the ascetic life, and fought a

most strenuous fight, and she endured thirst, and hunger, and the weariness of night vigil, and the standing up by day; and she continued to lead this life for many years.

Now a certain man committed fornication with a certain woman, and she conceived by him and brought forth a child; and her parents said unto her, “Who is it that hath defiled thy virginity?” And she uttered a lie against this holy woman Theodora, and said, “It is Theodore the monk who liveth in the monastery that hath defiled me, and I am with child by him.” And when her parents heard these words they were exceedingly sorry, and they took the child and carried him to the abbot of the monastery, and said unto him, “Take this child, for he is the son of Theodore the monk, thy son.”

And the abbot summoned this holy woman, and said unto him (sic), “Why hast thou done this abominable thing, and brought shame and disgrace upon the whole community of monks?” Now he did not know that it was a woman to whom he spoke. And the holy woman Theodora said unto him, “I have sinned. Have mercy upon me, O my father.” And straightway the abbot was wroth, and he gave her the child, and expelled her from the monastery; and she dwelt in the desert seven years, and the child was with her. And she endured many trials and tribulations caused by devils, and Satan tortured her cruelly.

After this she was received, and one brought her into the monastery again, where she lingered a few days and then died, and delivered her soul into the hand of God. And she received life everlasting with all the saints, and she finished a good fight.

May her holy prayers be with us and glory be to our God forever. Amen.



THE FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. Departure of Joshua son of Nun
2. Departure of St. Macarius, 69th Pope of Alexandria
2. Departure of st. Verena

1. On this day the great prophet Joshua, the son of Nun, the disciple of Moses, departed. This prophet was obedient, and humble, and perfect and lowly before Moses the prophet, and for this reason the spirit of Moses the prophet dwelt upon him, and he prophesied in the days of Moses the prophet.

When Moses the prophet died, Joshua received the people by the command of God, and God said unto him, "As I was with Moses My servant even so will I be with thee. Be strong and mighty, and keep the Law, which I commanded Moses My servant to keep. Go not far from it, and turn not aside from it, neither to the right hand nor the left. Let not thy mouth cease from reading the Book of the Law, but meditate therein by day and by night, so that thou mayest keep and hold fast to, and do everything which is written therein."

And the heart of Joshua was strong and he sent spies to Jericho, and they came and examined the land, and they hid with Rahab the harlot, and they made a covenant with her and with all the men of her house, that they would not kill her, and she sent them away. And Joshua divided the Jordan for them, and the children of Israel passed through it, and he made the river for them like a wall. And he opened (i.e. conquered) Jericho, going round the walls thereof seven times, and he slew all that were therein, both man and beast.

And he opened many cities, now they were two and thirty in number, and he slew two and thirty kings. And all the peoples feared the children of Israel, and because of the greatness of their fear of him (i.e. Joshua), the men of the city of Gibeon made a pretence to him. They dressed themselves in ragged raiment and they carried with them old sackcloth of hair, and old shoes, and dried and moldy bread. And they went to Joshua, and said unto him, "Behold, we have come from a far country, and we want you to give us a promise that thou wilt not kill us." And Joshua, and the Rabbis of the children of Israel, answered and said unto them, "Tell us truly whether ye dwell in this land." And they answered and said unto them, "Verily we have come from a far country"; and then they showed them their dried and moldy food, and their old garments, and Joshua believed them and swore to them that he would not kill them.

And when Joshua heard that those people lived nigh unto them, he said unto them, "Why did ye come with deceit?" and then he made them servants of the house of God. And when the five kings of the Amorites heard [this], they rose up against the men of Gibeon, and the [Israelites] helped the people of Gibeon, and made a great slaughter of them. And on those of them who fled God cast hailstones from heaven, and He blotted them out.

And when the sun was nigh to set Joshua said before the children of Israel. "O sun, stand still over the city of Gibeon, and thou moon also over the city of 'Abakon." And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed firm, until God was avenged on His enemies. And Joshua divided the land of their inheritance among the children of Israel, and he gave the priests cities to dwell in, and land for their beasts. And he set apart six cities of refuge wherein all those who had committed a murder unwittingly might dwell, according as God commanded him.

And when the days of Joshua were one hundred and ten years, and he had arrived at a good old age, he gathered together the children of Israel, and commanded them to keep the commandment of the Law of the Torah, and not to transgress it, and to be strong in the worship of God. And he told them, saying, "The Lord God is jealous, and if ye worship other [gods] He will blot you out quickly." And after this he died in peace and was buried in the grave, which Jacob bought from the children of Amer for a hundred sheep in the land of Nablos; and the children of Israel mourned for him with a great mourning for thirty days.

May his blessings be with us all. Amen

2. On this day also, Abba Macarius II, the sixty-ninth Pope of the great city of Alexandria, departed in the year 1122 A.D. This father was pious and ascetic since his young age, and longed for the monastic life. He went to the desert of Scete and became a monk in the monastery of St. Macarius. He devoted himself to worship and spiritual struggle. He instructed himself by reading the Holy Scriptures, their interpretation and by contemplating on its meaning. He grew in virtues and was ordained a priest.

When Abba Mikhail, the sixty-eighth, Pope departed and the papal throne became vacant, a group of bishops and priests went to the wilderness of Scete. They assembled in the church with the elders of Scete. They remained there for many days, searching and scouting for who would be best for this position. Finally they unanimously agreed to choose this father for what was known of his good character and excellent attributes. They took him and bound him against his will, and he cried out and begged them with excuses to release him saying, "I am not fit to be raised to the dignity of the Papacy."

They brought him bound to the city of Alexandria and ordained him Patriarch. The deed of his appointment was read in the Church of Mu'allakah (The Church of the Holy Virgin) in the Greek, Coptic, and Arabic languages.

During his papacy, he added to his worship and piety. He taught and preached the people daily. He gave alms and did works of mercy to the poor and needy. During his papacy he never asked for any of the Church's money, but rather, he used to give a large portion of the contributions which he received to be spent on different righteous deeds. He completed 27 years in the papacy and departed in peace.

His prayers be with us all and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

3. On this day also we commemorate the departure of St. Verena. St. Verena was the only daughter of a distinguished Theban family. She was entrusted to a bishop called Chaeremon for baptizing and guiding her religious education. After Chaeremon perished, she departed with some Christians to Lower Egypt where a large number of believers had already been recruited for military service under Diocletian (284-305) and Maximian (286-305). Among them was the Theban legion under the command of St. Maurice.

St. Verena, a sister of one of the legionnaires (probably St. Victor), joined them to Italy where she stayed in Milan for some years. In the meantime, the cohorts and battalions of the Theban legion were stationed along the military road from Milan across Switzerland and up to Germany.

When St. Verena heard about the Martyrdom of St. Victor and his Theban brethren, she crossed the Alps and made her way to Switzerland in search of the relics of her martyred Theban brethren. She soon retired to a very narrow cave leading a solitary life of ascetism and austerity, and torturing her body to save her soul. She lived upon her handwork, which an old Christian woman in the neighbourhood used to sell for her. In the name of the Lord, she could achieve many miracles; healing demoniacs and restoring eyesight to the blind. Accordingly a large number of the Alemannis were converted to Christianity.

The reputation of the highly venerated virgin spread out all over the region and she was regarded as the mother of maidens to whose genuine Christian breeding, pious virtuous immaculation, and last but not least, to whose proper hygienic conduct, she zealously devoted a great part of her life (she was a nurse by profession). And so it developed that St. Verena became a kind of abbess of a small community of women.

Naturally, the pagan governor Hirtacus was not pleased by the Saint's activity, and he had her imprisoned. One night St. Maurice appeared to St. Verena in her prison cell and comforted her, giving her courage to remain firm in her faith. That same night Hirtacus was struck by a violent fever which doctors were unable to relieve. Knowing St. Verena's reputation, he asked her to pray for him. Cured through the holy virgin's prayers, Hirtacus freed her to resume her pious activities.

Miracles repeatedly occurred, and therefore the Saint resolved to escape that worldly fame and depart from her cell by Solothurn. She proceeded downstream of the river Aar and finally came to a small island at the confluence of the Aar and the Rhine. She dwelt in a tiny hut there, miraculously freed the island from its countless serpents, nursed the sick and healed the blind and lame.

Hence she advanced to Zurzach where she found a church consecrated to the Mother of God. She dearly implored the Lord to let her spend the rest of her life there. She lived at the parson's vicarage, who soon entrusted her with the running of the household. Here she also

devoted her life to the Lord serving the poor whom she used to furnish with food, and nursing the neighbouring lepers whom she daily washed and anointed. This roused the envy of her mates who insidiously tried to discredit her by the parson and convince him that she had been unworthy of his confidence pilfering and wasting his stores.

She begged the parson to get her a small cell built where she could spend the rest of her days in seclusion. St. Verena spent eleven years in that cell, leading a life of severe austerity and healing the paralysed and blind who sought her help. She upheld that extremely strenuous course even in the last days in spite of her physical weakness. On the day of her departure the Mother of God appeared and talked to her bringing forth the blessed tidings of eternal rejoice and reward.

The Saint's body is enshrined in the crypt of the Church which was built on that spot and which has ever since been regarded as one of the most dearly cherished pilgrimage places of the region. *May her holy prayers be with us and glory be to our God forever. Amen.*



THE FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

The Martyrdom of Saint Sophia

On this day, St. Sophia, was martyred. She used to go to church with her Christian neighbours, so she became a believer in the Lord Christ. Longing to become Christian, she went to the Bishop of Manf. He baptized her in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Thereupon an accusation of becoming a Christian was brought against her before Claudianus, the Governor. The governor brought her, and questioned her. She confessed and did not deny her faith. He tortured her with many tortures. He whipped her, then burned her joints; however, she went on crying out, saying, "I am a Christian." The governor commanded to have her tongue cut off and then returned her to prison.

He sent his wife to her to dissuade her, and promise her with many rewards. When she would not be dissuaded, he commanded to have her head cut off. She prayed a long prayer and asked God to forgive the governor and his soldiers for what they had done to her. Then she bowed her head down and the executioner cut off her neck.

A Christian woman paid much money to the soldiers, took her pure body, and wrapped it with costly shrouds. She placed the body in her house and many signs were manifested through it. On her feast day, very bright lights and incense came out of her holy and pure body.

When the righteous Emperor Constantine heard the story of Saint Sophia, he carried her holy body to the city of Constantinople. He built a great cathedral and placed the body in it.
Her blessing and prayers be with us all, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Departure of Isaiah the Prophet.
2. The Martyrdom of Saint Basilissa.

1. On this day, the great Prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, was killed by the hand of Manasseh the King who sawed him with a wooden saw.

This prophet prophesied in the days of five kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh. He prophesied to Ahaz saying, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14) He also prophesied that, “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,” (Isaiah 9:6), and the Lord will have mercy upon the world by offering Himself a sacrifice for all mankind as, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed..., and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:5-6)

He prophesied to Hezekiah and encouraged him when Sennacherib, King of Assyria, besieged Jerusalem. He informed Hezekiah that God would perish Sennacherib because of his blasphemy against Him. And that night the angel of the Lord went out and killed in the camp of the Assyrian 185,000 men (Isaiah 37:36), and those who were spared fled from the camp.

And when Hezekiah the King was sick, Isaiah told him to set his house in order, for he was to die. And when Hezekiah prayed to God, He sent to him Isaiah the prophet who made known to him that God had added to his days 15 years. And God showed him a sign so that he might realize the validity of his prophesy. (Isaiah 38:8)

Isaiah prophesied about what would befall Israel from calamities because of the hardness of their hearts, love for sin and their forsaken of the worship of God, and only a few of them would be believers. Because of his prayers God sprung water when the people were thirsty. On another occasion, when Isaiah himself was thirsty, God sprung for him the spring of Siloam.

When he rebuked Manasseh because of his evil deeds and worshipping idols, Manasseh ordered to have him sawed. He prophesied for 70 years and he came 913 years before the advent of the Lord Christ. *His prayers be with us all. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Basilissa was martyred in the days of Diocletian the infidel. This saint was a pious Christian, and she was only nine years old. They seized her and bound her hands and feet and cast her in the fire, but she was not burned by the might of God. Through her prayers, God sprung water, she drank, then committed her soul in the hand of God. *Her prayers be with us all, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Departure of St. Dioscorus, 25th Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Martyrdom of Sts. Agathon, Peter, John, Amun and Amuna and Their Mother, Rebecca.
3. The Departure of St. Severianus, Bishop of Gabala.

1. On this day of the year 451 A.D., the blessed father and the great champion of Orthodoxy, Saint Dioscorus, 25th Pope of Alexandria, departed. His departure took place on the island of Gangra after he had fought the good fight defending the Orthodox faith.

When he was summoned to the Council of Chalcedon by the order of Emperor Marcianus, he saw a great assembly of 630 bishops. Saint Dioscorus asked, "In whom is the faith lacking that it was necessary to gather this great assembly?" They told him, "This assembly has been convened by the emperor's command." He replied, "If this assembly has been convened by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ I shall stay and speak with what God may give me to say; but if this assembly has been convened by the emperor's command, let the emperor manage his assembly as he pleases."

When he saw that Leo, Archbishop of Rome, was teaching that Christ has two natures and two wills after the Union, he took the charge to refute this new belief. He stated that our Lord Jesus Christ is one, He who was invited to the wedding as a man and changed the water into wine as a God, and that the two natures were not separated in all of His works.

Quoting Pope Cyril, he said, "The Hypostatic Union of the Word of God with the flesh is like the union of the soul with the body and like the union of fire and iron: even as they are of two different natures, by their union they became one. Likewise, our Lord Christ is one Messiah, one Lord, and one Nature." None of those who were gathered at that assembly dared to contradict him. Among them were some who had attended the Council of Ephesus, which had been convened against Nestorius.

Some informed the Emperor Marcianus and the Empress Pulcheria that no one disobeyed their commands concerning the faith except Dioscorus, Patriarch of the City of Alexandria. They brought St. Dioscorus, and the leading bishops of the Council who debated and discussed the matter till it was evening, but St. Dioscorus would not deviate from his Orthodox belief.

The emperor and empress were irritated at this, and the empress commanded to smite St. Dioscorus on his mouth, and to pluck out the hair of his beard. He took the hair and the teeth that were knocked out and sent them to Alexandria saying, "This is the fruit of Faith."

When the rest of the bishops saw what had happened to Dioscorus, they agreed with the emperor, being afraid of undergoing the same fate. They signed the document of the belief that Christ has two distinct and separate natures. When St. Dioscorus knew this, he sent for the document and pretended that he wanted to sign it too. But when he read the document, he wrote at its foot that he excommunicated everyone who had signed it, as well as everyone who deviated from the Orthodox Faith. The emperor was enraged and he commanded to banish St. Dioscorus to the island of Gagra, along with St. Macarius, the Bishop of Edko, and two others, and the Council of Chalcedon was resumed.

When they took St. Dioscorus to the island of Gangra, its bishop, because he was a Nestorian, met him with contempt and disdain. However, God performed at the hands of St. Dioscorus many great signs and wonders, so that all obeyed him, respected and revered him greatly, for God honours His chosen ones in every place. St. Dioscorus told St. Macarius, his companion in exile, "You shall receive the crown of martyrdom in Alexandria." He sent him with one of the believing merchants to Alexandria, where he received the crown of martyrdom.

St. Dioscorus, having ended his good fight, departed from this vain life and received the crown of eternal life. He departed on the island of Gangra where his body was laid.

His blessings and prayers be with us all. Amen.

2. On this day also, Sts. Agathon, Peter, John, Amun, and Amuna and their mother, Rebecca, were martyred. They were from Kemola of the district of Kus. Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to them and informed them of what would happen to them, and that they would receive the crown of martyrdom in the city of Shoubra which is near Alexandria, and that their bodies would be carried to the city of Nakraha in the province of El-Bhairah. The Saints rejoiced at this vision, and they rose up early and gave all their possessions to the poor.

Agathon, their eldest brother, was a man of high position in the city and was loved by everyone. Rebecca, their mother, strengthened and encouraged them to endure the torture in the name of the Lord Christ.

They came to the city of Kus and confessed their faith in Christ before Dionysius, the Governor. He tortured them severely, starting with their mother who bore the torture patiently

and with joy, and then he tortured her five children. When he was weary of torturing them, he was advised to send them to Alexandria so that they might not lead other people astray, for they were loved by everyone. Because of them, many confessed their belief in the Lord Christ and received the crown of martyrdom.

When they brought the saints before Armenius, the Governor of Alexandria, who was in a city called Shoubra, and learned about their case, he tortured them very severely. He hacked their bodies, cast them in a boiler, squeezed them with wheels, then crucified them head down. From all these tortures, the Lord Christ raised them whole until the governor and all his people were ashamed.

Finally, he ordered to have their heads cut off and to have their bodies drowned in the sea. They cut their heads off and placed their bodies in a boat to cast them in the sea. God sent forth His angel to a rich man from the city of Nakraha and commanded him to take the bodies of the saints and the man was exceedingly glad. He came to where the bodies were, gave the soldiers much silver and took the holy bodies. He laid them in the church, and he heard a voice saying, "This is the abode of the righteous." The bodies remained there till the end of the era of persecutions.

They then revealed the bodies and a big church was built for them. God made manifest from their relics, many signs and wonders. Then they transferred the bodies to the city of Sonbat, where there is now a church known as "The Five and Their Mother" or "El-Sitt Refka" (Lady Rebecca). Many visit this church every year to receive their blessings.

Their prayer be with us all. Amen.

3. On this day also, the righteous holy father, Abba Severianus, Bishop of Gabala in Syria, departed. We have little information about his early life. Gennadius tells us that he was learned in the Holy Scriptures and a wonderful preacher of homilies. On this account he was frequently summoned by the bishop John Chrysostom and the emperor Arcadius to preach a sermon at Constantinople. The empress Eudoxia became his friend.

Serapion the archdeacon of Constantinople was envious of him and he soured the relationship between him and St. John Chrysostom, so that he banished him from Constantinople, but the empress Eudoxia brought him back.

St. Severian was one of the bishops chosen by the empress Eudoxia to judge St. John Chrysostom in the synod of Oaks (403 AD) as was St. Theophilus the 23rd Patriarch of Alexandria. The synod banished St. John Chrysostom.

Particularly noted as a biblical exegete of the literal-historical school of Antioch, St. Severian composed significant commentaries on the letters of St. Paul and a series of homilies and sermons on the first six books of the Old Testament. Ironically, early editors attributed these

works to Chrysostom and included them in the patriarch's collected works. Later studies however, have positively identified these as Severian's writings.

He wrote many discourses and sermons which still exist in the church books till now. He waxed old reaching the age of 100 years. Ten days before his death, the angel of God appeared to him and informed him of the day of his departure from this world. He instructed his people and then departed in peace. His pure body was prepared as was meet and was placed in the tomb. His departure was two years before that of St. John Chrysostom (of the Golden Mouth).
His prayers be with us all, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Departure of Moses the Prophet.
2. The Martyrdom of Zacharias the Priest.
3. The Martyrdom of St. Dimides (Diomede).

1. On this day, the righteous Moses, the head of the prophets, departed. He laboured on behalf of the people of God till his death and delivered up himself for them. It was he who worked miracles and wonders in Egypt and in the Red Sea. When he became of age, refused to be called the son of the daughter of Pharaoh.

She brought him up when his parents left him on the banks of the river because they were afraid of Pharaoh who had commanded the slaughter of all male children of the Hebrews. When the daughter of Pharaoh found him by the river, she took him and reared him as her own son. When he had completed his 40 years, he saw an Egyptian slaying one of the Hebrews and straightaway he avenged the Hebrew and slew the Egyptian. The next day he saw two of the Hebrews fighting and he attempted to make peace between them. He, who was in the wrong, told him, "Do you want to slay me as you did slay the Egyptian yesterday?" Because of this, Moses fled to the land of Midian where he married and begot two sons. (Exodus 2)

When he was 80 years old, a fire appeared to him in a bush, but the bush was not consumed. When he moved close to behold this great sight, the Lord spoke to him from the bush and commanded him to bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.

God worked at his hands the ten plagues upon the Egyptians, the first was the river which turned into blood and the last was the slaughter of the first born of the Egyptians. (Exodus 7-12) He brought the people out, and he divided the Red Sea and made them pass through it, and then he brought back the water over their enemies. He brought down for them "Manna" in the desert for forty years, and he made the water flow from a rock, and in spite of that they grumbled against him and many times they wanted to stone him. But he was long suffering with

them, and he prayed to God for them, and because he loved them greatly, he said to God, “If You will not forgive this people their transgression, then blot out my name from Your book.” (Exodus 31:32)

The Book testified that he spoke with God five hundred and seventy times as a man talks with his friend, and he was called the mouthpiece of God. When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai, after being with God, with the two tables of testimony in his hands, his face was shining. The children of Israel were afraid to come near him, so he put a veil on his face when he came near to talk to them. (Ex. 34:29-35)

When he was 120 years old, God commanded him to commit the leadership of the people to Joshua, the son of Nun, his disciple. (Deuteronomy 34:9) Moses called him and commanded him with the commands of God and His Law, and informed Joshua that he was the one to bring the people into the promised land. After Moses had made the Tabernacle of Witness and everything which was in it as God had commanded him, he died in the mountain. He was buried there, and God hid his body so the children of Israel would not find it and worship it because the Book testifies there never rose up a prophet in Israel as Moses. When Satan wished to reveal the body, Michael the archangel rebuked him, and prevented him from doing so as St. Jude testifies in his epistle. (Verse 9) *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Zacharias, the priest, was martyred by the hand of Herod the King. When the angel Gabriel announced to him the birth of John his Son, he did not believe his word and the angel made him dumb, unable to speak until the child was born. (Luke 1: 18-22) When they named the child, he asked for a writing table and wrote that his name would be John. Then he spoke, and praised God. (Luke 1:63-79) The Holy Gospel gave testimony concerning him, that he and his wife were righteous, walking in the Law of God without blemish.

When our Lord Christ was born, and the wise men came to worship Him, Herod was troubled and feared for his kingdom. Therefore, he gave the order to slay all the children of Bethlehem, from two years old and under, so he would kill the Lord Christ among them. The angel of God appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, “Take the child and flee to Egypt.” St. Joseph took the child Jesus and St. Mary, His mother, and went to Egypt as the angel of the Lord had told him.

But John's mother took him and fled to the mountain where she dwelt, bringing him up for six years. After her departure to heaven, the child remained in the desert till the day of his appearance to Israel. (Luke 1: 80)

It was said that during the slaughter of the children, Herod thought that John was the Christ. He requested John from his father, Zacharias, who said, “I do not know where the child is.”

They threatened to kill him, but he did not heed. Herod ordered his soldiers to slay him.

It was also said that when Herod sought John to slay him, Zacharias escaped with him to the temple and put him on the altar and when they caught up with him, he told the soldiers, “From here I accepted him from the Lord,” and thereupon the angel of God snatched away the child, and took him to the desert Zifana. When they did not find the child, they slew Zacharias between the temple and the altar. (Matthew 23:35)

Zacharias the priest, son of Bar-a-chi-as, is not Zacharias the prophet, who was one of the twelve minor prophets. Zacharias the prophet was not martyred but died and his body was found without decay. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

3. On this day also, St. Diomedes (Dimides), was martyred. He was from Dershaba of the chair of Dantu. He loved the church, was kind to the poor and visited the sick. A luminous man appeared to him and commanded him to go to receive the crown of martyrdom and promised him heavenly rewards. He rejoiced greatly and left his parents and went forth from the city. He prayed to God to help him to endure the torture for His Name's sake.

He came to the city of Attribis and confessed the Lord Christ before the governor, who tortured him severely. Then they sent him to Lucianus, the governor of Alexandria. When he was on the boat, the Lord Christ appeared to him, comforted him, encouraged him and promised him everlasting happiness and his soul rejoiced. Lucianus tortured him with different kinds of tortures, then gave the order to cut off his head, thus he received the crown of martyrdom. The people of his city came and took away his body and paid a great honour to it. *His blessings and prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

The Martyrdom of St. Pisora the Bishop

On this day, the holy father, the Bishop Abba Pisora, was martyred. He was the bishop of the God-loving city of Masil. When Diocletian returned to worshipping the idols and started persecuting the Christians, this holy man longed to shed his blood for the name of Christ. He gathered the people before the altar and commanded them with the commandments of the Lord, and then informed them that he wished to receive the crown of martyrdom for the sake of the name of Christ. They all wept, the young and the old, saying, “To whom will you leave us, Our Father, as orphans?” They wanted to prevent him from doing so, but when they could not, they let him go after he committed them to the Lord Christ. He left them bidding him farewell with much tears.

Three bishops agreed to go with him; they were Pisikhos, Fanalikhos, and Theodore, and they all went together to the city of the governor and confessed the Lord Christ. He tortured them cruelly, especially when he knew that they were bishops and fathers to the Christians. The courageous bishops endured the tortures with patience and the Lord Christ strengthened them. Finally the governor ordered that the heads of the four be cut, and they received the crowns of life in the kingdom of God. The body of Saint Pisora was in the city of Nasheen El-Kanater, Gharbia governorate, and at present is in St. George's Church in Old Cairo. *Their prayers preserve and guard us all, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

- I. The Martyrdom of Saint Matruna.
2. The Commemoration of Sts. Basin and Her Children.

1. On this day St. Matruna, who was a maid-servant to a Jewish lady, was martyred. She was of Christian parents, and her mistress used to entice her to adopt the Hebrew religion, but she refused. Therefore her mistress used to humiliate her, ill treat her, and over-burden her with servitude.

One day she accompanied her mistress to the Jewish temple, then she went to the Christians church. And when her mistress asked her where she had been and why she did not enter their assembly, the Saint replied, "God had departed far from the synagogue that is yours, how shall I enter it? Whereas the place that should be entered is the church which the Lord Christ has bought with His blood." Her mistress became angry at this and beat her harshly, then imprisoned her in a dark place where she spent four days without food or drink. She then took her out and beat her painfully, then she returned her to her imprisonment where she died.

After her death, her mistress, because she feared that the authorities would hold her accountable for her blood, took St. Matruna to the top of her house and threw her down so that it would be said that she had fallen by accident. She was accursed by God, her feet slipped and she fell down, died and went to Hell. As for the Saint, she went to the eternal bliss. *Her prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of St. Basin and her three children. *Their prayers be with us, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Martyrdom of Saint Basilides (Wasilides)
2. The Martyrdom of three farmers from Esna

On this day, St. Basilides (Wasilides) who was a minister and counsellor for the Roman Empire, was martyred. He had many slaves and servants. Emperor Numerianus was the ruler, who was married to Basilides' sister, Patricia, and had a son called Yustus. Patricia was also the mother of Theodore El-Mishreke. Basilides had two sons: Awsabyos (Eusebyus) and Macarius.

When the Persians waged war against Rome, Emperor Numerianus sent to them his son Yustus and Eusebyus, Basilides' son. Then he went to fight another enemy and was killed in that war. His kingdom was thus left vacant without a ruler.

The people chose from among the soldiers a man called Agrippita, who was a shepherd, and they set him over the royal horses, stable. He was a mighty man in action, bold in his dealings. One of the emperor's daughters looked at him and took him as her husband. She made him emperor and called him, "Diocletian." Shortly after, he forsook the Lord God of Heaven and worshipped idols. When Wasilides heard this, he was sorrowful, and he did not return to the service of the new Emperor.

Meanwhile, Yustus, the son of Numerianus, and Awsabyos (Eusebius), the son of Basilides, returned from the war with triumphant victory. When they saw that the Emperor had renounced the faith, they were exceedingly sorry and drew their swords and wanted to slay Diocletian, the infidel Emperor, and to return the kingdom to its rightful owner Yustus, Numerianus' son. But Basilides prevented them from doing this. Then he gathered his army and slaves and informed them that he wished to lay down his life for the sake of Christ's Name. They all answered saying, "We also will die with you." They stood before Diocletian who feared them tremendously, for they were the rightful owners of the kingdom. So Romanus, Victor's father, advised him to banish them to Egypt to be tortured there. Diocletian sent them each to a different province: Abadir (Apatar) and Eraee (Herai) his sister, Awsabyos (Eusebius), Macarius, Claudius, and Victor. Theodore El-Mishreke was nailed to a tree.

He sent Basilides to Masrus, the governor of the Five Western Cities (Pentapolis). When Masrus saw him, he wondered why he had left his kingdom and his glory. Our Lord Christ sent His Angel and lifted Basilides up by the Holy Spirit to heaven, and showed him the spiritual dwellings, and his soul was comforted. As for his slaves, some were set free and some were martyred with him.

St. Basilides endured severe tortures, on a squeezing machine (Hinbazeen) at times and at others his body was combed with iron combs. He was lifted onto a spiral device with a saw then thrust him on a red hot iron bed. Masrus, the governor, did not leave out any means of

torturing him. When he saw that Basilides remained steadfast in his faith, Masrus ordered to cut off Basilides holy head, thus he received the crown of martyrdom in the kingdom of heaven in return for the earthly kingdom which he had forsaken.

His prayers be with us, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

2. On this day also the three farmers of Esna were martyred. After Arianus' soldiers killed all the Christians of Esna, the soldiers met three men who were crying, "We are Christians." The soldiers told them, "Our swords are dull from much use." So the men told the soldiers, "Here are our axes." The soldiers took their axes and the men put their heads on a stone beside the western gate of the city. The soldiers beheaded them and the men received the crown of martyrdom. Their relics are placed in a church built in their honour in Esna. *May their prayers be with us and glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWELFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Assembly of the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus to Judge Nestorius, Archbishop of Constantinople.
2. The Translocation of the Relics of Sts. Clemus (Aklimos) and His Companions.
3. Commemoration of Archangel Michael.

1. On this day of the year 431 A.D., the Holy Council at Ephesus which was attended by 200 bishops, was convened. It was the third of the Ecumenical Councils. That was in the twentieth year of the reign of Theodosius II, son of Arcadius, son of Theodosius the Great.

They assembled because of the heresy of Nestorius who was Archbishop of Constantinople. He believed that St. Mary did not give birth to the incarnated God, but only to a human being, and that afterwards the Son of God dwelt in him, not the dwelling of unity but just the dwelling of will, and therefore, Christ because of that reason, had two natures and two wills.

So these fathers convened, debated with Nestorius, and proved to him that He, who was born of the Virgin, was the incarnated God, as the angel said, "The Lord is with you; that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:28-32) And according to the saying of Isaiah, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel," (Isaiah 7:14) and also, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father." (Isaiah 9:6)

St. Cyril, 24th Pope of Alexandria, explained to Nestorius that, "Natures cannot be separated after they have become one by their union. Therefore we say that the Incarnated Word of God has only One Nature." Nestorius would not turn from his teaching nor change his opinion. St. Cyril along with the whole Council rebuked him and threatened that they would

excommunicate him, but he was adamant. Therefore, they excommunicated him and banished him from his chair.

They confirmed that the Virgin St. Mary had given birth to the Incarnate God the Word, (Theotokos) or “The Mother of God”. They drew up the Canons and laid down the Laws. These are the laws of the faithful till this day.

The prayers of the two hundred assembled at Ephesus be with us all. Amen.

2. On this day also we celebrate the translocation of the relics of the martyrs St. Clemus (Aklimos) and his companions to the city of Alexandria. *Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

3. On this day is commemorated the glorious angel Michael the archangel. *May his holy intercession guard us all and glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Departure of Pope Mattheos II, 90th Patriarch of the See of St. Mark.
2. The Commemoration of the Miracle performed by St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea.

1. On this day of the year 1182 of martyrs, the honored father Abba Mattheos (Matthias) the Second, 90th Pope of the See of St. Mark, departed. He was a monk in El-Muharraq monastery. He was chosen and enthroned in the year 1169 A.M. He sat on the throne of St. Mark for 13 years and then departed in peace. *The blessings of his prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the great miracle performed by St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, Cappadocia.

A young man, who loved his master's daughter, Satan, his enemy and the enemy of the human race, deceived him. Satan made him resort to a magician who made him write a covenant to deny the faith and to surrender completely to Satan, so that Satan might grant him his wish. Satan kindled lust in the heart of the girl, and she loved the young man exceedingly. She asked her father insistingly not to object to her marriage to that young man. Eager for his honor and fearing for her life, he married her to him.

When she had spent with him a long period of time, she noticed that he did not enter the church or partake of the Holy Sacraments, or make the sign of the Holy Cross over himself. She revealed to him her doubt about his faith and his love of God. He told her what had happened to him, and how he had written to Satan a covenant of obedience till death.

She cried much and rebuked him for his deed. She took him to St. Basilus, Bishop of Caesarea. He listened to the confession of the young man and saw his grief and desire to go back to the life of worship, fellowship, and righteousness. St. Basilus comforted him and asked him to stay with him for a while in seclusion, fasting and praying. He shut him up in a nearby room for three days. On the third day St. Basilus visited him and the young man told him that the evil spirits had not ceased disturbing and fighting him in many ways. He strengthened him, calmed him down, gave him food and prayed for him. St. Basilus asked him to remain in seclusion, praying and fasting. After a few days, he came back to visit him again. The young man told St. Basilus that he did not see the devils any more, but he still heard their cries and threats. St. Basilus fed him again and prayed for him and left him to the life of seclusion to fight and pray, and the bishop went to pray on his behalf also. And this went on until 40 days were completed. When the Saint came to him and asked him about his state, he told the Saint that he saw him (the Saint) fighting against Satan on his behalf, and he vanquished him and finally was victorious.

The Bishop gathered all the priests and the monks and prayed for the young man all that night. On the following morning he led him into the church while everyone was crying, “Lord have mercy on us,” and they continued to cry out until that writing, which the young man had written as a covenant to deny the faith and to surrender to Satan, fell down in the midst of all the people.

The Bishop, the young man and his wife, and all the people rejoiced exceedingly. The Bishop blessed that man and administered to him the Holy Sacraments. The man and his wife departed to their house full of joy for the peace and repentance they received. They praised God and thanked St. Basilus by whose prayers they were saved.

The blessings of his prayers be with us all, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Departure of St. Agathon the Stylite.
2. The martyrdom of saints Felix, Regula and Exuperantius

On this day St. Agathon the Stylite, departed. He was from the city of Tenis. The name of his father was Matra and his mother's name was Mariam. They were righteous and feared God. They loved to give alms and be merciful to the poor and needy.

The thought of monasticism was always on his mind. When he was 35 years old, he was ordained priest, and he devoted himself to serve the holy church. He asked the Lord Christ by day and night to facilitate for him the parting from this world to go to the desert. The Lord

Christ answered his request and he went out from the city and came to Ternot (Mareot) and from there went to the desert. The angel of God appeared to him in the form of a monk who journeyed with him and brought him to the monastery of St. Macarius in Scete.

He came to the holy old men Abba Abraham and Abba Gawargah, became their disciple and remained with them for three years. Then, they took him before the altar and in the presence of the Hegumen Abba Yoanis and for three days they prayed over the monastic garb. They then ordained him a monk and dressed him with the holy Eskeem. From that hour he exerted himself with many worships, in continuous fasting and prayer and fought a great fight. He slept on the ground until his skin cleaved to his bones. He read continually the biography of Abba Simon the Stylite, and he thought of leading a solitary life. He took counsel with the holy fathers concerning that, and they approved his wish and they prayed for him.

He left and came near the city of Sakha, province of Gharbia, where he dwelt in a small church. The believers built a place for him on a pillar and he went up on it.

During his days, a man appeared in whom dwelt an obstinate devil, who led many people astray. He sat in the middle of the church surrounded by people listening to him, carrying tree branches. Abba Agathon sent for the possessed and had him brought to him. He prayed over him and cast out the devil who led the people astray.

Similarly, a woman claimed that St. Mina conversed with her and she commanded the people of her city to dig a well in the name of St. Mina to heal everyone who bathed in it. St. Agatho prayed over that woman until he cast out from her that unclean spirit and he commanded the people to fill up that well with earth.

At the hands of this holy man, St. Agathon, God worked many miracles, of healing sick people and casting out devils. The devils appeared to him in the form of angels, singing sweet songs and imparting blessings unto him, but by the might of the Lord Christ he knew their guile, he made the sign of the Cross over them, and they fled away defeated.

When God wished to repose him from the labors of this world, he fell sick for a short while and delivered up his soul into the hand of God. The people who had benefitted from his sermons and teachings gathered around him and wept bitterly.

This holy father lived for 100 years, of which he spent 40 years in the world and 10 years in the desert and 50 years in solitude upon that pillar.

His prayers guard us against all our enemies, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

2. On this day also we commemorate the martyrdom of saints Felix, Regula and Exuperantius. Felix and Regula were siblings and members of the Theban Legion in Aguanum along with their servant Exuperantius. On the advice of the commander of the legion, St. Maurice they fled to Zurich, where they pitched their tents and served God day and night.

The Emperor Maximian diligently looked for them . As the three saints just did their prayers, they were surprised by the imperial soldiers. When they asked them whether they knew members of the Theban Legion, Exuperius, Candidus and Victor, they revealed their true identity. Despite torture, they could not force them to sacrifice to the Roman gods Mercury and Jupiter. On the orders of the commander of the captors, Decius, they were beheaded. Afterwards the bodies of the beheaded saints, carrying their heads in their arms, walked 40 cubits uphill, knelt down and prayed then they died. A cathedral was built on the site where their relics were kept. They were mainly responsible for the conversion of the inhabitants of Zurich who saw the miracle. The coat of arms of the city of Zurich still depicts the three saints carrying their heads. *May their holy blessing be with us and glory be to God. Amen.*



THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. Translocation of the Body of St. Stephen the Archdeacon
2. Departure of Abba Athanasius bishop of Qus.

We celebrate on this day the translocation of the body of St. Stephen the Archdeacon and first Christian martyr. That was more than three hundred years after his martyrdom, the reign of Emperor Constantine and the spread of the noble worship.

St. Stephen, the striver and martyr, appeared several times to a man called Lucianus. He was from a village where the honored body was buried, known as the “Village of Gamaliel,” near Jerusalem. He told him his name and where his body was buried.

That man went to the bishop of Jerusalem and informed him of what he had seen in his sleep. The bishop rose up, took with him two bishops and the people of the church and went to the place where the body was. They dug the ground, and a mighty earthquake took place. The coffin wherein the holy body was lying was revealed. Sweet and precious aromas came out from it. They heard voices of angels praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.” This praise was repeated and the bishops bowed down

before the coffin. They carried it away with songs, hymns and candles until they came to Jerusalem. Later on, a man whose name was Alexander, and who was from Constantinople, built a church for St. Stephen in Jerusalem and placed the holy body in it.

Five years later, Alexander departed, and his wife buried him by the side of the coffin of the Saint. Eight years later, Alexander's wife decided to go to Constantinople and wished to take her husband's body with her. She came to the church, and she took the coffin wherein the body of St. Stephen had been laid thinking that it was the coffin wherein was her husband's body. She carried it away to Ascalon, and from there she embarked with it in a ship to Constantinople. In the middle of the sea she heard singing and many praises coming from the coffin, and she marvelled. She rose up and examined the coffin and she realised that it was the coffin wherein was the body of St. Stephen, and this was the Will of God. She gave thanks to the Lord and went on her way until she arrived in Constantinople.

She went to the Emperor and informed him about what had happened. The Emperor, the Archbishop, priests and the people of the city went forth to the ship, and carried the coffin on their shoulders to the royal palace.

God made manifest many signs both on the ship and in the royal palace. They laid the holy body on a litter carried by two mules, and when they came to a place called Constantinious, the two mules stopped. When they beat the mules, they did not move but they heard the voice of one of them saying, "It is meet to place the Saint here." All those who saw and heard this, marvelled and they knew that He who had made the donkey of Balaam speak was He who had made this animal carrying the body of the Saint to speak. The Emperor ordered that a church be built for the Saint in that place. They laid in it the pure gem, the holy body of St. Stephen, the apostle and the martyr. *His prayers be with us all, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

2. On this day we also commemorate the departure of Abba Athanasius bishop of Qus. He was raised in a pious family and became a monk in the Monastery of St. Victor in Negada. He was ordained bishop by Pope John the 10th, 85th Patriarch of Alexandria in 1365 A.D. He wrote many useful books. He was a shining light in his generation and he departed on the 15th of Thoout in Qus. *May his holy blessings and prayers be with us and glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Commemoration of the Consecration of the Sanctuaries of the church of Resurrection in Jerusalem.
2. The Translocation of the Relics of St. John Chrysostom (of the Golden Mouth).

1. Today we celebrate the consecration of the sanctuaries of the church of Resurrection in Jerusalem in the year 326 A.D. In the twentieth year of the reign of Emperor Constantine and after the meeting of the Holy Council at Nicea, the saint Queen Helena told her son Constantine that she had vowed to go to Jerusalem to receive the blessings of the holy places and to search for the wood of the life-giving Cross. He rejoiced at this, gave her much money, and sent her in the company of a large number of soldiers.

When she arrived there and received the blessings of the holy places, she searched for the wood of the Cross and found it after much toil. She praised it with great veneration and paid to it much reverence and honor. She commanded the building of the sanctuaries of the Resurrection, the Golgotha, Bethlehem and the manger, the upper room of Zion, Gethsemane and other sanctuaries, and that they be inlaid with pearl and covered with gold and silver.

There was in Jerusalem a saintly bishop who advised her not to do that, saying, “After a while foreign people will come and seize this place and destroy it and take the precious stones and the silver and the gold. But it is preferable to construct the buildings well and give the remainder of the money to the poor and the needy.” She accepted his advice, gave him the money and set him in charge of the work.

When she returned to her son and told him what she had done, he rejoiced, and sent large sums of money and commanded to pay the workers their wages in full so they would not complain.

When the building of the holy places was finished in the thirtieth year of the reign of Emperor Constantine, he sent vessels and precious vestments for the altars. He sent word to the Archbishop of Constantinople and to St. Athanasius, Pope of Alexandria, to take their bishops and to go to Jerusalem where they would meet the Archbishop of Antioch and the Bishop of Jerusalem, to consecrate these sanctuaries.

They tarried there until the sixteenth of the month of Thoout, when they consecrated all the altars that had been built. On the seventeenth day they marched with the Honourable Cross around all the holy places where they worshipped God, offered the offerings, and venerated the Cross and honored it. Then they returned to their chairs.

Their prayers be with us to the last breath. Amen.

2. On this day also the church commemorates the transfer of the relics of St. John Chrysostom (of the Golden Mouth) from the city of Komanah, where he departed in exile, to Constantinople, 30 years after his departure. That was in the year 437 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II. *His prayers be with us, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Feast of the Consecration of the Church of the Honorable Cross.
2. The Departure of St. Theognosta.

1. On this day the church celebrates the consecration of the church of the Honourable Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross was uncovered by the lover of God, Queen Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine, from under the pile of Golgotha, after she ordered its removal.

As for the reason of how this great pile of dirt came into being: the Jewish leaders, when they saw all the signs and wonders which were manifested from the sepulchre of the Savior, such as raising the dead and healing the sick, became angry, and they sent forth throughout Judea and Jerusalem ordering all the people to cast the sweepings of their houses and the dirt over the sepulchre of Jesus of Nazareth. They continued to do so for more than 200 years, until it became a very great heap.

When St. Helena came to Jerusalem, and asked the Jews about the whereabouts of the Cross, they did not inform her. Finally, some of them told her about an old Jew called Judas who knew the place. She called him, and he denied it at first, but when she urged him, he told her about that pile. She ordered its removal and the Holy Cross was found. She built a church for it, consecrated it and celebrated for the Honorable Cross on the seventeenth day of the month of Thoout. Christians make pilgrimages to that place every year as they do on the feast of the Resurrection.

A certain Samaritan called Isaac, as he was travelling with his family among the people going to Jerusalem, reproved the people for taking such trouble in going to Jerusalem to worship a piece of wood. Among the people was a priest whose name was Okhidus. While travelling along the road, they became thirsty. They found no water and they came to a well where the water was foul and bitter. The people became dismayed. Isaac the Samaritan started mocking them, saying, "If I witness a power by the name of the Cross, I will become a believer of Christ." The priest Okhidus was moved with divine zeal and prayed over that foul water and made the sign of the Cross on it, and it became sweet. All the people and their animals drank, but when Isaac drank, the water was bitter and wormy. He regretted and cried and came to the

saint, Father Okhidus, bowed down at his feet and believed in the Lord Christ. Then he drank from the water, and he found it sweet. The water of that well possessed the power of becoming sweet for the believers and bitter for the others. A cross of light appeared in the well and a church was built there. When Isaac the Samaritan arrived in Jerusalem, he went to its bishop who baptized him and his family.

Because the feast of the appearance of the Honorable Cross, which is on the tenth of Baramhat, always comes during fasting, it was substituted by the fathers for the Seventeenth of Thout which is the day of consecration of its church.

Glory and worship be to Jesus Christ our Lord forever and ever. Amen.

2. On this day also, the blessed Theognosta, departed. She was contemporary of the righteous Emperors Honorius and Arcadius. One day an envoy came with gifts from the King of India to the two emperors. On their way back, they found this Virgin Theognosta holding in her hand a book that she was reading. They seized her and took her back with them to their country. She became the head of the King's attendants and his wives.

One day, the son of the King fell sick with a grievous sickness. She held him in her arms and made over him the sign of the Cross, and he recovered immediately. This report spread throughout that land, and since that day she was set free.

Once the King went to war, there came upon him thick clouds and fog. Knowing of the sign of the Cross that St. Theognosta used to make, the King made the sign of the Cross over the fog and it cleared up. With the sign of the Cross he also vanquished his enemies.

When the King returned from war, he bowed down at the feet of the Saint, and asked her for the holy baptism for him and for the people of his city. She told them that it was not for her to baptize. They sent to Emperor Honorius to inform him of their acceptance of the faith and asked him to send a priest to baptize them. He sent to them a priest who was a saintly anchorite, and he baptized them all and he gave them the Holy Body and Blood of our Lord Christ. The virgin rejoiced for his coming and they blessed each other. She built a convent for herself and for the many virgins who desired the monastic life.

When the priest returned to the Emperor and related to him how the people of the city entered into the faith of our Lord Christ, he rejoiced exceedingly. The Emperor agreed with the Archbishop to ordain the priest a bishop and to send him back to them, and they rejoiced greatly.

There they built a big church and they needed pillars. There was a large temple for idols which had pillars so they took them to build this church. The rest of the people of this city joined the faith of the Lord Christ.

The virgin St. Theognosta rejoiced for all that had happened. Later on she departed in that convent and was surrounded by the virgins.

Her prayers be with us, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Martyrdom of St. Prophorius (Porphyrius).
2. The Commemoration of Stephen the Priest, and St. Niceta (Niketa) the Martyr.

1. On this day, St. Prophorius, was martyred. He was a comedian and jester and was non-Christian. When Constance, the son of Constantine departed, Julian the Infidel, who was killed by St. Marcurius, reigned after him. This infidel and heretic was the nephew of Emperor Constantine, and he incited idol worshipping. Many of the believers were martyred on his hands.

On his birthday, he gathered jesters, comedians, and people of the circus; Prophorius was one of them. The infidel emperor ordered him to imitate the Christians. When he came to the ritual of the holy baptism and made the sign of the Cross over the water in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Lord enlightened his mind and he perceived a divine grace coming down on the water and light shone from it. He immersed into the water three times, then went up and put on his clothes. He confessed that he became Christian.

The emperor rebuked and threatened him. Then the emperor promised to give him many gifts. In spite of that, the Saint went on saying, "I am Christian. I am Christian." Finally, the emperor ordered his neck to be cut off and he received the crown of martyrdom.

His prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also is the commemoration of Stephen the Priest, and St. Niceta (Niketa) the Martyr. *Their prayers be with us, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE NINETEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

The Commemoration of St. Gregory, Patriarch of the Armenians

On this day we commemorate St. Gregory, Patriarch of the Armenians, who became a martyr without bloodshed. He made himself a slave in the country of Armenia in the days of King Tiridates about the year 270 A.D. This king was not Christian. When he came into the temple to offer up incense to the idols, he summoned the saint to offer up incense with him, but the saint refused. The king inflicted upon him severe tortures and finally cast him in an empty pit. The Saint lived there for 15 years.

Near the pit lived an old widow, and she saw in a vision someone telling her, “Make bread and cast it into this pit,” and she continued to do this for 15 years.

It happened that the king ordered the killing of the virgins Arbsima and Agatha, and their friends. After the killing he became exceedingly sad, because he wanted to marry St. Arbsima. He suffered a serious illness from which he did not recover until his sister saw in a dream someone telling her, “Unless you bring up Gregory out of the pit, your brother will not be cured.”

They brought the saint out of the pit, and he prayed over the king, and he was cured from his sickness. *His blessings be with us, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Departure of pope Athanasius the Second, the Twenty-Eighth Patriarch of the See of St. Mark.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Melitina the Virgin.
3. The Departure of St. Theopista.

1. On this day of the year 512 A.D., the righteous father St. Athanasius II, 28th patriarch of the See of St. Mark, departed. This father was the steward of the churches of Alexandria. When the holy father Abba Peter III departed, the bishops, elders and people agreed to ordain him patriarch for what was known of his Orthodox faith and knowledge.

He was a pious man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith. When he became patriarch, he shepherded the flock of the Lord Christ exceedingly well, and he protected them from the snatching wolves with his teachings and prayers. He sat on the episcopal throne for three years and nine months, then departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the martyrdom of St. Melitina the Virgin.
Her prayers be with us. Amen.

3. Also today we commemorate the departure of St. Theopista. She was married and had a son. Her husband died while she was still young. She took it upon herself to become a nun. She started to practice the spiritual life. She persisted in fasting and continual prayers and worshipping day and night.

She went to the holy father Abba Macarius, bishop of Nekios. She bowed to him, took his blessings, then she asked him to pray on her and put on her the garb of monasticism. The bishop advised her to try for a year and he promised her that he would put on her the garb of monasticism after that year.

She went to her house and shut herself in a small room. She closed its door, and made a small opening in it. Her son, who was then 12 years old, was taking care of her needs. She embarked in strenuous worships with asceticism and devotion. The year elapsed, and the bishop had forgotten that he had promised this saint that he would put on her the garb of monasticism.

He saw her in his sleep in a shining figure, telling him, “My father, how did you forget me till now, and I am passing away tonight?” The father the bishop saw that as if he was awake, he prayed on her the prayer for ordaining monks, and put on her the garb of monasticism. When he did not find a Kalansowa (cover for the head), he took off his own and put it on her head. Then he put on her the holy Eskeem. He asked his disciple for another Kalansowa and put it on. She had a silver cross in her hand which she gave to him saying, “Accept this from your disciple.” And it was said that when he awakened, he found the cross in his hand and he looked attentively at the cross which was beautifully made. He was amazed and glorified God.

Early in the morning he went with his disciple to the house of this blessed woman. Her son received him crying with tears. When he asked him why he was crying, he replied saying, “My mother called me in the middle of the night and bid me farewell and told me whatever the bishop tells you, do and do not break it. I will depart this night to go to the Lord Christ. She prayed over me and advised me, saying, 'Keep all that I commanded you and do not disobey our father, the bishop, and here now I am in your hands.'”

The bishop came to where the saint was lying and knocked on the door, but she did not answer. He said, “This blessed saint had departed indeed,” and he ordered his disciple to open the door. When the bishop entered, he found that she had given up her soul. She had on the Eskeem that he had put on her in his vision and also the Kalansowa that he had on.

His eyes were filled with tears. He praised and glorified God who works out the satisfaction of His saints. The bishop shrouded her as was the habit of the monks and called the priests who carried her to the holy church and prayed over her with great honour.

There was in the city a paralytic infidel man, suffering from evil spirits. When he heard the chanting of the priests, he asked his people to carry him and take him where the body of the saint was. When they brought him to the church, he drew near to the holy body with faith and he was cured instantly. The devil came out of him, and he became well. He and his people believed in the Lord Christ and the bishop baptized them.

And everyone who had a disease or a deformity would come to the church and touch the holy body and would be healed immediately. When the governor heard about these wonders, he and most of the city believed in the Lord Christ. He came to the church, carried the body and buried it with honour. *Her holy blessings be with us and glory be to our God. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Commemoration of the Virgin St. Mary, the Theotokos.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Cyprian and St. Justina.

1. The church celebrates on this day the commemoration of the pure Lady, the Virgin St. Mary, the Theotokos, through whom was the salvation of Adam and his posterity.
Her intercession be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also in the year 257 A.D. the honourable St. Cyprian and St. Justina, were martyred. Cyprian was an infidel and a magician. He learned magic in the countries of northwest Africa until he excelled over his fellows. His excessive impudence and his arrogance made him go to Antioch to challenge the magicians there and to pride himself over them of his knowledge.

When he arrived there, his fame spread. A young man, the son of one of the nobles of the city, heard about him. This young man lusted for a Christian virgin who was called Justina. He saw her going to church and his heart became inflamed with her love. He was unable to obtain what he desired of her either by money, threat, or magic.

He sought Cyprian and complained to him about his condition, that he might make him gain favor with Justina's heart and fulfill his desire of her. Cyprian promised him the fulfillment of his desire. He used all the trickery of his sorcery but failed. Every time he sent her a host of demons, they found her praying, so they came back defeated.

When Cyprian failed, he called the demons and told them, "If you do not bring Justina to me, I shall adopt Christianity." The chief of the demons thought out a device to deceive him. He ordered one of his soldiers to disguise himself and to take the form of Justina and then go to

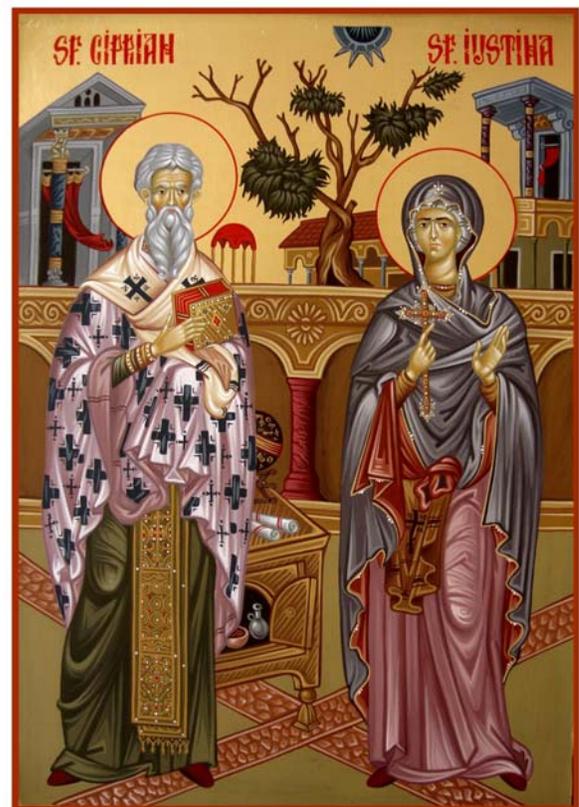
Cyprian. He hastened and made it known to Cyprian her coming, so he rejoiced and waited for her. Then Satan, disguised as Justina, came to him, and Cyprian rejoiced, and rose up to embrace her. Because of his great joy in her, he told her, “Welcome, Queen of Women, Justina.” Upon the mere mention of her name, Satan, disguised as her, melted away and disappeared like smoke, and an unpleasant smell spread out of him. Cyprian knew that this was a deceitful trick of Satan who could not stand before the mentioning of her name.

Immediately Cyprian rose up and burnt his books of magic. He was baptized by the patriarch of Antioch who put on him the monastic garb. After a while he ordained him a deacon, then a priest. Later on, after he had grown in virtues and in the doctrine of the church, they ordained him bishop of Antioch in the year 351 A.D. He took St. Justina and made her the head of a convent there.

Seeing the strict life of St. Cyprian, his concern for the faith of Christ and for the salvation of human souls, the devil ground his teeth against him And inspired the pagans to slander him before the governor of the eastern region, saying that he had put the gods to shame, had converted many people away from them, and was glorifying Christ, Who was hostile to their gods. And so, many impious ones came to the governor Eutolmius, who was then governing those regions, and made slanders against Cyprian and Justina, accusing them ,of being hostile to their gods and to the emperor and to all authorities, saying that they were disturbing the people, deceiving them, and leading them in their footsteps, disposing them to worship the crucified Christ. At the same time they asked the governor to give Cyprian and Justina over to death for this. Having heard their request, Eutolmius commanded that Cyprian and Justina be seized and placed in prison. Then, setting out for Damascus, he took them with him in order to make judgment upon them. The governor condemned them to be beheaded with the sword.

Thus they gave over their souls into the hands of God; their bodies, however, lay for six days unburied. Certain of the strangers who were there secretly took them and brought them to Rome, where they buried them with honour. At their graves many healings occurred for those who came to them with faith.

May their holy blessings be with us all and glory be to our God. Amen.



THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Martyrdom of Saints Cotylas (Kobtlas) and Axoua, his Sister, and Tatas, his Friend.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Julius of Aqfahs, the Writer of the Biography of Martyrs.

1. On this day, Saints Cotylas (Kobtlas) and his sister Axoua, the children of Sapor, King of Persia, and Cotylas' friend, Tatas, were martyred. Sapor worshipped fire and the sun. He inflicted many tortures on the believers, and no man throughout the country dared to mention the Name of Christ. His son, Cotylas, had a friend named Tatas who was a ruler over the country of Maydasayeen.

Certain people laid an accusation against Tatas before the king that he was a Christian. The king sent to him a governor named Tumakher to verify the validity of what was said and if it was true, to torture him. When Cotylas, the son of the king, heard that, he also went to that country, to his friend Tatas. When the governor arrived and found that he was Christian, he ordered his men to cast him in a furnace. St. Tatas made the sign of the Cross over the fire and the fire died out. Cotylas marvelled and asked him, "How did you learn this magic, O my brother?" He replied, "This is not magic but it is through faith in the Lord Christ." Cotylas asked, "If I believed, would I be able to do the same?" Tatas answered that with faith you can do more than this. Cotylas, the son of the king, believed in Christ, then he drew near the fire and made the sign of the Cross over it, the fire backed a distance of 12 cubits.

The governor sent to the king to inform him what had happened, and the king had them brought to him. He ordered to cut off the head of Tatas who thus received the crown of martyrdom. However, he tortured his son, Cotylas, with different kinds of tortures. He cast him in prison and sent for his sister Axoua, so she might persuade him to return to his father's belief. St. Cotylas preached her and turned her heart to the belief in the Lord Christ. He sent her to a priest who baptized her secretly.

She returned to her father saying, "I wish that you had what my brother and I have, for there is no God but Jesus Christ." The king became angry and commanded to torture her, until she yielded up her soul in the hand of the Lord Christ.

They tied Cotylas to the tails of horses and dragged him over the mountains until he yielded up his spirit. Then they cut his body into pieces and they cast it out for the birds to consume it. When the soldiers departed, the Lord commanded saintly priests and deacons who went secretly at night and took the holy body which was shining as snow. They hid it in a place until the end of the days of persecution. *Their prayer be with us all. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Julius of Aqfahs (El-Akfehasi), the writer of the biography of martyrs, was martyred. The Lord Christ appointed him to care for the bodies of the holy martyrs, to shroud them and to send them to their hometown. The Lord brought blindness into the hearts

of the governors, and no one objected to him. They also never forced him to worship idols. The Lord kept him to care for the martyrs. He used 300 young men for this purpose. They wrote the biography of the holy martyrs and sent it to their hometown. But he used to minister to the holy martyrs by himself and dress their wounds. The martyrs blessed him, saying, “You must shed your blood in the Name of our Lord Christ, so you can be counted among the martyrs.”

When the reign of Diocletian the Infidel came to an end, Constantine the Righteous reigned. The Lord Christ wished to fulfill what the saints had prophesied to St. Julius; to be counted among the martyrs. The Lord commanded him to go to Arkanius, governor of Samanoud, and to confess the Lord Christ. St. Julius went there, and the governor tortured him with many tortures, but the Lord strengthened him. The governor ordered to bring him to worship the idols. This saint prayed and the earth opened and swallowed up the 70 idols and the 140 priests who were serving them. When the governor beheld the destruction of his idols and their priests, he believed in the Lord Christ.

The governor went with the Saint to the governor of Athribis who tortured Saint Julius with great severity, but the Lord Christ strengthened him.

Once there was a feast for the idols and they decorated the temple with ornaments, lamps, statues and with palm branches. They closed the gates till the following day to start celebrating the feast. The saint asked the Lord to blot out their idols. The Lord sent his angel who cut the heads of the idols, blackened their faces with ashes, burnt up all the palms, and all the idols in the temple. On the following morning when the people came dressed to celebrate the feast and saw what had happened to their gods, they recognized their weakness. The governor of Athribis⁵ and a large number of people believed in the Lord Christ.

The Saint then went to the city of Towa along with the governor of Samanoud and the governor of Athribis, and they met Iskandros its governor. First he refrained from torturing them, but later on he ordered his men to cut off their heads. Julius and his two sons, Tadros and Yunias; his slaves; and the governors of Samanoud and Athribis and many people were martyred. They numbered 1500. They took his body with the bodies of his sons to Alexandria for it was their hometown. *His prayer be with us, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Martyrdom of Sts. Eunapios (Onanius) and Andrew.
2. The Commemoration of the Martyrdom of St. Thecla.

1. On this day, the righteous Sts. Eunapios (Onanius) and Andrew, his brother, were martyred. These saints were the sons of one of the nobles of the city of Lydd. They agreed together since their young age to become monks. They went to one of the monasteries of Syria and became monks there. Later on, they went to the honorable saint Abba Macarius. They became his disciples and dwelt with him for three years. During which they lived with love and humility, fasted and prayed continually. Their asceticism became well known. They chose Eunapios (Onanius), bishop, and Andrew, priest. They shepherded the flock of Christ with the best care. They overcame their souls and bodies.

Julian, the infidel emperor, heard about them, and he had them brought to him. He commanded them to deny their faith in the Lord Christ, and to adopt paganism. When they refused his commands, he tortured them severely until they yielded up their spirits in the hand of the Lord Christ, to Him is the glory. Each received three crowns: one for monasticism, asceticism, and worship; one for the priesthood and guarding the flock against the devilish wolves; and a third one for martyrdom and shedding their blood for the Christian faith. *Their prayers and their blessings be upon us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the holy martyr, St. Thecla (Takla), the bride of Christ. *Her prayers be with us. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Departure of St. Gregory the Ascetic.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Quadratus, One of the Seventy Disciples.
3. Departure of St. Gregory the Theologian.

1. On this day, St. Gregory the monk, departed. He was the son of pious, Christian and exceedingly rich parents from one of the cities of Upper Egypt. They cared greatly to teach their son the art of speaking, medicine and also taught him the Church subjects. Next, they took him to the father Abba Isaac, bishop of their city who ordained him a psalter to serve the altar. When they wanted him to get married, he refused. Later on, the bishop promoted him to a reader. Gregory was devoted to praying and he was inclined to seclusion since his young age.

He used to pay many visits to Abba Pachomius (Pakhom). He took much money from his parents and brought it to St. Pachomius, beseeching him to spend it on building monasteries. The saint accepted his alms and spent it on building the monasteries of the holy Cenobitism.

Later on, he went to Abba Pachomius, where he became a monk. He struggled practicing all kinds of virtues to the point that just from his look and appearance the lustful person would learn purity. He dwelt there for 13 years.

When Saint Macarius came to visit St. Pachomius, Gregory asked St. Pachomius to permit him to go back with St. Macarius. He dwelt with St. Macarius for two years, then he asked him if he could live alone and St. Macarius allowed him. He dug out a small cave for himself in the mountain where he dwelt for seven years. He used to visit St. Macarius twice a year, on Christmas and on Easter, to consult him in his spiritual fight.

When he completed 22 years of strife, God wished to repose him. God sent to him an angel who informed him that after three days he would depart from the world. St. Gregory called the elders of the desert, bade them farewell and asked them to remember him in their prayers. Three days later, he departed in peace.

His prayers be with us to keep us from every evil. Amen.

2. On this day also was the martyrdom of St. Quadratus, one of the seventy apostles who were chosen by the Lord. He was born in the city of Athens, and was one of its wealthy and learned nobles. He believed in the Lord Christ and served him. Having received the grace of the Comforter on the day of Pentecost, he preached the life-giving Gospel in many countries.

He entered the city of Magnesia and preached there. The people of the city believed; he baptized them and taught them the life-giving Commandments. Then a mob fell upon the saint to pelt him with stones. Preserved by God, St Quadratus remained alive, and they threw him into prison, where he died of starvation. His holy body was buried in Magnesia.

His prayers be with us. Amen.

3. We also commemorate St. Gregory the Theologian. He was born in 329 in Arianzus, a village of Cappadocia, not far from Nazianzus. His father, who later became Bishop of Nazianzus, was named Gregory.

At first he studied in Caesarea of Palestine, then in Alexandria, and finally in Athens. As he was sailing from Alexandria to Athens, a violent sea storm put in peril not only his life but also his salvation, since he had not yet been baptized. With tears and fervour he besought God to spare him, vowing to dedicate his whole self to Him, and the tempest gave way to calm.

At Athens St. Gregory was later joined by St. Basil the Great, whom he already knew, but now their acquaintanceship grew into a lifelong brotherly love. Another fellow student of theirs in

Athens was the young Prince Julian, who later as emperor was called the Apostate because he denied Christ and did all in his power to restore paganism.

After their studies at Athens, Gregory became Basil's fellow ascetic, living the monastic life together with him for a time in the hermitages of Pontus. His father ordained him presbyter of the Church of Nazianzus, and St. Basil consecrated him Bishop of Sasima (or Zansima), which was in the archdiocese of Caesarea. This consecration was a source of great sorrow to Gregory and a cause of misunderstanding between him and Basil, but his love for Basil remained unchanged, as can be plainly seen from his Funeral Oration on Saint Basil.

About the year 379, St. Gregory came to the assistance of the Church of Constantinople, which had already been troubled for forty years by the Arians; by his supremely wise words and many labors he freed it from the corruption of heresy. He was elected archbishop of that city but the Egyptian delegation to the Second Ecumenical Council, which assembled there in 381, objected on grounds of him being bishop of Sasima. St. Gregory asked to be allowed to retire. He returned to Nazianzus, where he lived to the end of his life. He reposed in the Lord in 391, having lived some sixty-two years.

May his blessings be with us all and glory be to our God. Amen.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

1. The Departure of Jonah, the Great Prophet.
2. Martyrdom of Saint Maurice of the Theban Legion.

On this day, the great prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai, departed. It was said that he was the son of the widow of Zar-e-phath whom Elijah the Prophet had raised from the dead. Jonah followed Elijah, served him and received the grace of prophesying. God inspired him to go to the city of Nineveh to admonish its people and to warn them that after three days the city shall be overthrown. Jonah pondered in his heart saying, "If God wished to destroy them He would not forewarn them. I fear that if I go to them and convey to them this warning, they might repent and God would not destroy them. I would be a liar and no one will listen to me and probably may be get killed because I conveyed to them a false message from God. So I will arise and flee."

What did this prophet think of? How could anyone flee from the face of God? By escaping, he wanted to get away from the city of Nineveh. He did not want to admonish them knowing that God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and repentant of the evil. He thought that by staying away from Nineveh the Lord would send another prophet to preach to this city.

The escape of Jonah the Prophet, and his having been cast into the sea are to make manifest the miracle of his remaining in the belly of the whale for three days and then coming out safely. This was a symbol of, and evidence for, the resurrection of our Savior from the sepulcher, unchanged, after three days.

Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord and went down to Joppa; he found a ship going to Tarshish and sailed on it. The Lord sent out a great wind and there was a mighty tempest in the sea and the ship was about to break. The people were all afraid, and cried every man to his god. They said everyone to his fellow, "Come and let us cast lots, that we may know because of whom this evil has befallen us." And when they had cast lots, it fell upon Jonah. They said to him, "What have you done that brought such an affliction on us?" He replied, "Cast me in the sea and you shall be saved." They begged the Lord's pardon, then they cast him into the sea, and a great whale swallowed him. He remained in its belly for three days and three nights and then he was cast out on the seashore.

He rose up straightaway and came into Nineveh. He preached to its people and they all repented: The King, the nobles, and the poor, the old and the young. They all cried to God with fasting and everyone turned from his way and the Lord accepted their repentance and had mercy upon them.

Jonah returned to the land of Israel and died there. He was more than 900 years before the advent of the Lord Christ. He prophesied in the days of Amos and his son Hosea. He lived nearly 100 years, out of which he prophesied more than 70 years.

His prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also in the year 303 AD. St. Maurice, captain of the Theban Legion was martyred. The Legion numbered 6,600 men was taken from Thebes Egypt to Gaul to assist Maximian to defeat a revolt by the Bagaudae. They were ordered to offer sacrifices to the pagan gods but He and his men refused to worship Roman gods. Maximian had every tenth soldier killed, a military punishment known as decimation. They were ordered to comply and worship idols, the men refused as encouraged by St. Maurice, and a second decimation was ordered. Maximian ordered all the remaining members of the 6,600 unit to be executed.

Saint Maurice together with 520 soldiers were martyred at Aganum. Others were posted along a military highway linking Switzerland with Germany and Italy. These were progressively and methodically martyred wherever they were found.

Some of the most celebrated saints who were martyred in Switzerland include the following names: Maurice, Exuperius, Candid, Innocent and Vitalis with the rest of their cohort, were martyred at Aganum.

Saints Ursus, Victor and 66 companions were found at Solothurn, (Feast day 3rd of Babehe) Saints Felix, Regula and Exuperantius at Zurich, (Feast day 14th of Thoout) and Saint Verena at Zurzach (Feast day 4th of Thoout)

During their martyrdom, numerous miracles happened, which undoubtedly largely contributed to the massive conversion of the inhabitants of these regions to Christianity.

On September 28, 1986, the late Pope Shenouda II received part of the relics of St. Maurice. *May their holy blessings be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

Annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias the priest.

On this day it was announced to Zacharias, the priest, the birth of John the Baptist. Zacharias was well advanced in years and his wife, Elizabeth, was barren and her time for begetting children had passed.

Zacharias was praying and beseeching God persistently to give him a child because the children of Israel reviled anyone without a son and treated him with ignominy. They would say about him that he was without the blessing that God had told Adam in these words: "Be fruitful and multiply."

The Lord had compassion on him and He hearkened to his petition. He sent him Gabriel the Angel to announce to him the birth of John. The angel came to him while he was in the sanctuary, as it is mentioned in the Holy Gospel (Luke 1:11), and announced to him the birth of the great prophet John, and that he should precede the Christ as it was said by the prophets, "He shall go before Him." He asked the angel, "Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well advanced in years." The angel told him that he was sent from God to announce that to him and it is not seemly for him to doubt. He then told him that he shall be dumb till the birth of the child.

On the day of John's circumcision, they asked him about the child's name. He asked for a tablet and wrote on it John and straightaway his mouth opened. Then he spoke and praised God and prophesied concerning his son John and the Lord Christ. He prophesied about his son that he would be a prophet and he should go before the face of the Lord. *The prayers of Zacharias the priest and John the Baptist be with us, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

The Martyrdom of St. Eustathius and His Two Sons

On this day, St. Eustathius and his two sons were martyred. He was one of the ministers of the Roman Empire. Early in his life, he did not know God, but he used to give alms and charity in abundance, and the Lord did not wish that his toil should be in vain. While he was in the desert hunting wild animals, a figure of a cross, appeared to him between the horns of a stag, and it reached up to heaven. He chased the stag in the mountains to hunt it. The Lord spoke to him and told him about his new name which is Eustathius, for he was called, Ephlokidus, before. The Lord ordered him to be baptized in the Name of the Lord Christ and told him that poverty should come upon him speedily.

When he heard that, he descended from the mountain and went to the bishop of the city who baptized him, his wife and his sons, and he changed his name to Eustathius as the Lord had ordered him. Right after that, he lost all what he had from slaves, cattle and money.

Then he took his wife and his sons, and went forth from the city of Rome and embarked on a ship. And as he could not pay the fare, they took his wife instead. He took his two sons and came to a river. He crossed over to the other side with one of them and returned to get the other, but he did not find him because a lion had taken him. He went back to get the first but he did not find him either because a wolf had snatched him. He felt deep sorrow because of the loss of his wife and his two sons.

St. Eustathius worked, for a period of time, as a guard in a garden until the Emperor of Rome died and another reigned instead who sent messengers to search for that saint. One of the messengers happened to enter the garden which the saint guarded. The two men recognized each other and St. Eustathius was taken back to the Emperor. The Emperor honored him and reinstated him to his former position.

It happened in that time that a war broke out and they recruited two men from every city to the army. The two sons of the saint were saved by the Divine Will from the lion and the wolf and were brought up in the same city. They remained for a long time not knowing each other. Then the Divine Will arranged that both would be recruited from that city. One day while they were walking, they reached a garden and sat there talking together, and they discovered that they were brothers.

As for their mother, the owner of the ship who had kept her in payment of the fare was a barbarian, but God protected her from him. He kept her in a garden which by the Divine Will was the same garden, where her two sons had gathered in, and she was close by her sons while they were talking and she recognized them. The two sons were assigned to guard the treasury of their father who did not recognize them.

When the Lord willed to gather this blessed family together, the wife entered the place where her husband was, and they recognized each other and rejoiced for reuniting unexpectedly. Then she told him that she had met their sons in the garden. While she was telling him so, the two sons joined them and she cried joyfully, "There are our two sons!" They embraced each other in tears of joy, and they praised God who fulfilled what he had promised and they lived in joy and peace.

Later on, the Emperor died and another reigned who worshipped idols. He summoned St. Eustathius and his wife and his sons. He ordered them to worship the idols but they refused. So he ordered his men to torture them with fire, but they were not harmed. Then he commanded to cast them into a brazen cauldron and set fire under it. Thus they delivered their souls into the hands of the Lord, and received the crowns of martyrdom from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Their prayers be with us, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

The Martyrdom of Saints Abadir (Apater) and Eraee (Herai), His Sister

On this day, Sts. Abadir (Apater) and Eraee (Herai), his sister, the children of Wasilides, the minister of Antioch, were martyred. Abadir was appointed Esfeh-selar (a high ranking governmental position) in his father's position. He had a room wherein he prayed and the Lord Christ appeared to him in the middle of the night and told him: "Rise up and take your sister Eraee, and go to Egypt to receive the crown of martyrdom and I will instruct a man whose name is Samuel to take care of your bodies and prepare them for burial." He bid him peace then went up into heaven. This vision was seen by his sister also, in which she was told, "Hearken to your brother and do not transgress his command." When she woke up, she trembled, and she went to her brother and told him about the vision, declaring that she would not disobey him. They vowed to each other to go and shed their blood in the Name of the Lord Christ.

When his mother knew that, she and her handmaidens rent their garments, and came to St. Abadir. His mother pleaded with him not to become a martyr. He promised her that he would not go forward to Diocletian seeking martyrdom. Her heart was soothed, not knowing his intention of going somewhere else to become a martyr.

Every night he used to change his apparel and go disguised to give water to the prisoners and minister to them all night, and he asked the door-keeper not to tell anyone.

Later on, he saw a vision to remind him of travelling. He took his sister and went to Alexandria, then they came to Cairo. They met St. Abekragon who recognized them and blessed them. From there they came to Tomwah where they entered the church and prayed in it. Then, they went to El-Ashmunin where they met with Samuel the deacon. The following day Samuel went with them to Ansenia, and they confessed our Lord Christ before Arianus the governor, who tortured them severely. Meanwhile, Saint Abadir prayed and entreated God to strengthen his faith and the faith of his sister Eraee. The Lord took their souls and carried them up to the heavenly Jerusalem and they saw the eminent ranks and the luminous habitations of the righteous; then he brought them back to their bodies.

The governor wrote their decree and then adjured Abadir by his God to tell him his name and who he was. The saint replied, "Swear to me that you shall not change what you have decreed," and when the governor swore to him, he said, "I am Abadir El-Esfeh-selar." The governor cried out, saying, "Woe to me, O my Lord why did you not let me know that you are my Lord and let me go so far as to condemn you to all these severe tortures?" The saint replied, "Fear not, for you are about to receive the crown of martyrdom. The emperor will seek me and will not find me, and he will hear that you have killed me. Then he will call you, torture you and you will die in the Name of our Lord Christ. And now hasten to finish us." Straightaway the governor ordered that their

heads be cut off. The believers wrapped up their bodies in fine apparels and Samuel the deacon took them to his house until the days of persecution were ended and a great church was built for them. *Their prayers be with us, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen*

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

The Martyrdom of St. Arbsima (Repsima) the Virgin and Her Sisters the Virgins

On this day, the holy virgins Arbsima (Repsima) and Agatha (Ghana) and their sisters, were martyred during the reign of Emperor Diocletian.

This infidel sought out the most beautiful damsel to marry. He sent artists to every country and ordered them to paint a portrait of the most beautiful damsel that their sights fell on and to give him an accurate description of her. When they arrived nearby Rome, they entered a convent for virgins and found Saint Arbsima and none was like her in beauty. They painted a portrait of her and sent it to the Emperor who rejoiced when he saw it. He sent to the kings and governors to invite them to the wedding celebrations.

When Arbsima and the virgins knew that, they wept, and left the convent fleeing, entreating the Lord Christ to help them and to keep their virginity. They fled to the country of Armenia, and entered the province over which Tridates was king. There they dwelt in a winery in a deserted garden. They had great trouble in getting their food, so one of them made glass, sold it, and with the money they bought their food.

When Diocletian sought for Arbsima, he did not find her. Later on, he heard that she was in the country of Armenia so he sent to Tridates the governor to look for her. When the virgins heard that, they left their shelter and hid themselves in the city. But someone informed about them. Tridates then commanded to bring Arbsima to him and when she refused, they abducted her and brought her to him.

When he saw her beauty, he wanted to have her for himself, but she did not let him. He brought her mother to persuade her but instead she besought her to endure patiently. She comforted her, told her that she must not forsake her true Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that she must not defile her virginity. When he knew what her mother had done, he commanded to break her teeth.

God gave St. Arbsima power to overcome the governor; she pushed him forcefully and he fell on his back. She left him lying on the floor although he was well known by his might and bravery in war. Ashamed of having been vanquished by a virgin damsel, he ordered to cut off her head. The soldiers came and tied her, tore out her tongue, plucked out her eyes, and then cut her into pieces.

When the governor rose up from his fall and regained his senses, he was sorry for killing the saint. He ordered to slay the rest of the virgins. The soldiers pierced the soles of their feet, flayed them, cut them into pieces, and then cast them out. One of them was sick and was lying on a bed, and she cried out to the soldiers so she might join her sisters. So, they cut off her head also and thus, all the virgins received the crown of martyrdom. The soldiers also slew all who had come with them from Rome.

After their departure, the governor became mad and the physicians could not help him until Saint Gregory, Bishop of Armenia, came to him and prayed over him. By this he was healed of his affliction and believed in the Lord Christ. He took the bodies of the holy and pure virgins and laid them in a holy place.

Their prayer be with us, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE THIRTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF THOOUT

The Commemoration of the Miracle that God Performed for St. Athanasius the Apostolic

On this day the Lord Christ performed a great miracle for the honorable Saint Abba Athanasius, 20th Pope of Alexandria. When Emperor Constantius, the son of the righteous Emperor Constantine, adopted the teachings of Arius who said that the Son was, after not being, and therefore not equal to the Father, he sent a man, whose name was Gawargios, to Alexandria. He also sent along with him 500 horsemen and letters appointing Gawargios patriarch of Alexandria instead of Abba Athanasius the Apostolic. He ordered Gawargios to support the faith of Arius and slay all who would not be obedient to him.

When this man arrived to the city, he preached the teachings of Arius but only a few people of the city accepted his teachings. Therefore, he killed a large number of people, and St. Athanasius hid himself for a period of six years. After which he went to the city of Constantinople, and asked Emperor Constantius either to restore him to his See or to slay him so he would receive the crown of martyrdom. But the Emperor ordered his men to place him in a small boat and to leave him in the sea without food or water or a guide. The Emperor thought that he would die of hunger or thirst or get drowned. In this way he hoped to get rid of the saint and his admonition to him for his heresy, and they did with the saint as the Emperor had ordered them.

The boat sailed along smoothly and in peace with the Lord's will and His care. St. Athanasius was surrounded and cared for by the Angels until he arrived in Alexandria three days later. When the believers heard that their shepherd had arrived, they rejoiced and went out to him and received him with candles and songs of praise. Then they brought him into the church and expelled Gawargios and his followers. St. Athanasius dedicated that day as a great feast to the Lord. *May his prayers be with us and to our God is the glory and honour forever. Amen.*

THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI THE FIRST DAY

The Martyrdom of Saint Anastasia

On this day, St. Anastasia was martyred. This fighter was a native of Rome, and the daughter of Christian parents. They raised her well and taught her the Christian manners. When she grew up, her parents wanted her to get married, but she did not agree with them for she had forsaken the vanities of the world and its lusts.

She instead chose to lead a spiritual life and longed for the heavenly glories since her young age. She entered one of the convents of the virgins in Rome and put on the monastic garb. She subdued her body with devoutness and asceticism. She did not eat except once every two days. During the holy Lent she ate only on Saturdays and Sundays after the prayer of the sixth hour of the day. Her food during all the days of her monastic life was dry bread and salt.

It came to pass that some of the convents of virgins, nearby the convent where this saint was staying, were celebrating a feast. The abbess took St. Anastasia, with some of the virgins, and went to join in celebrating that feast. On their way, St. Anastasia saw the soldiers of Emperor Decius the Infidel torturing some Christians and dragging them. Her heart became inflamed with divine love and she shouted at them saying, "O you hard-hearted men is that what you do to those whom God created in His own form and image and for whom He gave Himself up?" One of the soldiers seized her and brought her to the Governor who asked her saying, "Is it true that you are a Christian, worshipping Him who was crucified?" She confessed the truth and did not deny it. He inflicted her with severe tortures, then he crucified her and lit a fire under her, but it did not harm her. When she did not give up her faith because of these pains, he commanded that her head be cut off. She said a long prayer, then she bowed her head and the swordsman cut off her neck and she received the crown of martyrdom.

Her prayer be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Coming of Saint Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, to Egypt

On this day St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, came to Egypt in the days of Eustinos the Emperor. This Emperor opposed the Orthodox belief, following that of the council of Chalcedon. However Queen Theodora, his wife, was an Orthodox and she loved St. Severus because of his Christian virtues and his true faith.

The Emperor called him one day and many discussions took place regarding the faith, but the Emperor would not turn away from his wrong belief. The Emperor issued his orders to slay St. Severus. The Queen besought the saint to escape to save himself but he refused saying, "I am ready to die holding the Orthodox faith." However, as the Queen and the God loving brethren insisted, he and some brethren left to Egypt.

When the Emperor sought St. Severus and did not find him, he sent soldiers after him. But God hid St. Severus from the soldiers and they did not see him although he was close to them. When he came to Egypt, he went disguised from place to place and from monastery to monastery, and God made many signs and wonders by his hands.

One day, he went to the desert of Scete, at Wadi-El Natroun, and he entered the church in a uniform of a stranger monk and a great miracle took place at that time. It came to pass, that after the priest had placed the bread (Kourban) on the altar and gone around the church offering the incenses, and after the reading of the Epistles and the Gospel, he lifted off the Ebrospharin (altar covering), and did not find the Kourban in the paten; so, the priest was disturbed and wept. He turned towards the worshippers saying, "O my brethren, I did not find El-Kourban in the paten, and I know not whether this thing has happened because of my sin or because of your sin." The people wept; and straightaway, the angel of the Lord appeared to the priest and told him, "This has happened not because of your sin or because of the sin of the worshippers but because you offered El-Kourban in the presence of the Patriarch. The priest replied, "And where is he, O my Lord?" The angel pointed towards St. Severus. St. Severus was standing in a corner of the church and the priest recognized him by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The priest came to Abba Severus, who commanded him to continue the liturgy after they brought him to the altar with great honor. When the priest had gone up to the altar he found the offering on the paten as before. They all praised God and glorified His Holy Name.

St. Severus went forth from that place and came to the city of Sakha where he dwelt with a noble, and righteous man named Dorotheus, and he remained there until his departure.
His prayers be with us all and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Departure of St. Simon II, 51st Pope of the See of St. Mark.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Ursus and Victor of the Theban Legion
3. The Martyrdom of St. John the Soldier.
4. The repose of St. Theodora the Empress

1. On this day of the year 822 A.D., the pure father Abba Simon II, 51st Pope of the See of St. Mark, departed. This saint was the son of Orthodox Christian parents of the nobles of Alexandria. He nursed the milk of the faith from his childhood and he learned the doctrines of the church. He chose for himself the monastic life, so he went to the desert of Scete. He became a monk in the cell of his predecessor Abba Jacob, the Patriarch. He dwelt with Abba Jacob for many years during which he exhausted his body by strenuous ascetic life, and many worships.

When Abba Marcus II became a Patriarch, he requested St. Simon from his spiritual father Abba Jacob for what was known of his good reputation and his sound judgement. He stayed with Abba Marcus until his departure. When Abba Jacob, his spiritual father, became patriarch, he kept Abba Simon with him and he benefitted from him often. When Abba Jacob departed, the bishops, priests, and elders unanimously agreed with a spiritual unity to bring forward this father for what they had seen of him (as to righteousness and Orthodox Faith) during his stay with the two Patriarchs who proceeded him. They seized him, bound him and ordained him a Patriarch. He perused an angelic life, which was well- pleasing to the Lord. And, as God wished to repose him, he did not stay on the throne but for five and a half months and departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also St. Ursus and St. Victor and 66 soldiers belonging to the Theban Legion were martyred in the Swiss city of Solothurn.



Cathedral of St. Ursus and Victor



Reliquary of St. Victor

After many cruel torments suffered for their constancy in refusing to sacrifice to the idols, they were all beheaded c. 286 under the Emperor Maximian and the Governor Hyrtacus. Christians buried them.

Both saints were already being venerated in Solothurn in the early 5th century. Between the years 473 and 500 the body of St. Victor was brought to Geneva by the Burgundian Queen Theudesinde; it is probably that about the same time a church was built over the remains of St. Ursus. In 1519 the old coffin was found and the event was commemorated at Solothurn and Bern. The Roman urn containing the relics bears the inscription:

(Buried in this tomb is the holy Ursus the Theban.) *Their blessings be with us. Amen*

3. On this day also was the martyrdom of St. John the soldier, who was from the city of Ashroba. *The blessing of his prayers be with us. Amen.*

4. On this day also the Empress Theodora departed. She was married to the Emperor Justinian. She remained orthodox in spite of her husband being a Chalcedonian. She helped St. Theodosius the 33rd Patriarch of Alexandria during his long exile in Constantinople. She also helped St. Severus Patriarch of Antioch to flee to Egypt when her husband wanted to kill him. The churches enjoyed peace during her life. She departed in Peace 547 AD.

May her blessings be with us all, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Martyrdom of St. Bacchus, the Friend of St. Sergius

On this day, St. Bacchus, the friend of St. Sergius, was martyred. When Emperor Maximianus seized these saints, he tortured them severely. After having stripped them of their military ranks, he sent them to Antiochus, King of Syria, who imprisoned St. Sergius. However, he ordered St. Bacchus to be killed, his body made heavier by attaching stones to him, then cast into the River Euphrates.

The Lord protected the body and the waves brought it to the shore near two ascetic holy men who were brothers. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and commanded them to go and carry away the body of the Saint. When they came to where the body was, they found an eagle and a lion protecting it. The beasts spent a whole day and a night guarding it without harming it, although they were beasts of prey, for they had been commanded by divine providence to protect the body.

The two holy men took the body with great honor, singing hymns until they came to their cave where they buried it. *His prayers be with us and glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Martyrdom of St. Paul, Patriarch of Constantinople

On this day, St. Paul, Patriarch of Constantinople, was martyred. He was a disciple of Abba Alexandros, Patriarch of Constantinople. He was appointed to the patriarchy after the departure of Abba Alexandros. When he sat on the patriarchal throne, he expelled the followers of the Arian sect from Constantinople and its surroundings.

When Emperor Constantine, the Great, departed, his three sons reigned after him. Constantine II reigned over Constantinople, Constans reigned over Rome and Constantius reigned over France.

Constantine II held the same belief as Arius. He was sorry for what Abba Paul had done to the Arians. He asked him to stop excommunicating them, but the Patriarch did not listen to him. The Emperor became angry and exiled him from Constantinople as he had also exiled Abba Athanasius the Apostolic from Alexandria.

The two Patriarchs met in Rome, and went to stand before Emperor Constans to inform him of their concern. He wrote a letter to his brother on their behalf, ordering him to accept them and threatened him if he did not receive them - there would be no peace but war between them. When the two saints came to Constantinople, they gave the letter to Emperor Constantine, who accepted his brother's letter and returned them to their Chairs.

However, after the slaying of his brother, Emperor Constans, in Rome, Constantine II exiled St. Paul again to the country of Armenia. A few days later, he sent to one of the followers of Arius commanding him to catch up with St. Paul there and slay him. He went to him at night and strangled him, thus he received the crown of martyrdom. He stayed four years in office. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Departure of the Righteous Hannah, the Prophetess Mother of Samuel, the Prophet

On this day, the righteous Hannah, the prophetess, and mother of Samuel the Prophet, departed. This just woman was of the tribe of Levi. Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, married her. He also had another wife whose name was Peninnah.

Hannah had no children because she was barren. Peninnah was always reviling her because she had no children. Hannah wept and did not eat. Elkanah, her husband, comforted her saying, “Why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?” (1Samuel 1: 8)

She did not accept his comfort and went up to the house of the Lord during the days of Eli the priest. She prayed and wept before the Lord. Then she made a vow, and said, “O Lord of hosts if you will give Your maid-servant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life.” (1 Samuel 1: 11) Eli the priest was watching her as she stood silently, for she was praying in her heart.

Eli thought that she was drunk and he rebuked her but she told him, “No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my spirit before the Lord.” He answered her saying, “Go in peace and the God of Israel grant your petition.” (I Samuel 1:17) She believed his word, and went home.

Then she conceived and brought forth a son, and she called him Samuel, which is interpreted as “being asked for”, because she said, “I have asked him of the Lord.” When she weaned him, she took him to the house of the Lord, as she had vowed. She brought the child to Eli the priest, and she said, “ ... I am the woman who stood by you here praying to the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord.” (I Samuel 1:26-28) Then she praised God in that well-known praise attributed to her. She lived after this a life well-pleasing to God, and departed in peace.

Her prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Departure of St. Paul of Tamouh

On this day, Abba Paul (Paula) who was from Tamouh (El-Tamouhi) (Thmoui), departed. Since he was inclined since his young age to solitary life, he went to Ansena Mountain. There he lived with his disciple Ezekiel, who was the witness of his virtues.

For his exceeding love to the Lord Christ, to Whom is the glory, he exhausted his body with asceticism, forsaking earthly things, with fasting and many prayers in a way that exceeds human endurance. For this, he deserved that the Lord Christ appear to him and bless him for his conduct in this life, for such is the behavior of those who are perfect and who fight against the flesh, the world and the devil till they overcome them. St. Paul said to the Lord, "All that is due to Your care, O You creator and redeemer of the human race, by Your death on our behalf, we the undeserving sinners." The Lord Christ comforted and strengthened him.

When our father St. Bishoy went to Mount Ansena, he was joined by the saint Abba Paula. The Lord Christ told Abba Paul (Paula), "Your body will be buried with that of My chosen Bishoy." When Abba Paula departed, his body was placed with the body of St. Bishoy.

When they wanted to move the body of St. Bishoy to the wilderness of St. Macarius in Scete, they carried it onto a boat and left St. Paul's body behind; however, the boat would not move, until they brought the body of St. Paul and placed it beside St. Bishoy's body. Then they brought them to the wilderness of Sheheat (Scete).

Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Martyrdom of St. Matra.
2. The Martyrdom of the Saints Abba Hor, Tosia (Susanna) and Her Children, and Abba Agathon, the Hermit.

1. On this day, St. Matra the elder, was martyred. He was a native of Alexandria, a believing Christian. When Decius reigned, he established the worship of idols. He afflicted the Christian people in every place. When his edict reached Alexandria, its people began also to be persecuted.

Some brought accusations against this saint. The Governor brought St. Matra to question him about his faith. St. Matra confessed that the Lord Christ is a true God of true God. The Governor commanded him to worship the idols and promised him much money. When he

refused, he threatened to punish him, but he did not give up his faith. He shouted at the governor, "I do not worship but the Lord Christ, the creator of heaven and earth." The Governor became angry with him, and ordered him beaten. He was severely beaten and then hanged up by his arms. They then imprisoned him and slit his face and his temples with a red hot rod. Finally, because he insisted on not giving up his faith, they cut off his head outside the city. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of St. Abba Hor, the commemoration of St. Tosia and her children, the martyrs at Tamouh; and Saint Agathon, the hermit. *Their prayers be with us all and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Departure of St. Eumenius, the Seventh Pope of the See of St. Mark.
2. The Commemoration of St. Simon (Simeon) the Bishop.

1. On this day of the year 146 A.D., Saint Eumenius the seventh Pope of the See of St. Mark, departed. Pope Abremius, the fifth Pope, ordained him a deacon and he served 10 years in this position. When St. Yustus, the sixth Pope, was appointed, he saw how Eumenius excelled in knowledge and faith, so he ordained him a priest. He entrusted to him the teaching of the believers of the church of Alexandria, and asked him to look after them and to instruct them in the principles of the Orthodox faith.

When Pope Yustus departed, this father was chosen Patriarch. He handed down the care of the churches and the teaching of the believers to Father Marcianus who later became his successor. He continually restored the strayed sinners, explaining to the pagans plainly the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and His being one in His divine essence. He stayed on the chair for 13 years and departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of Saint Simon the Bishop. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE TENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Martyrdom of St. Sergius, the Friend of St. Bacchus

On this day, St. Sergius, the friend of St. Bacchus, was martyred. He was a high ranking soldier, advanced in the court of Emperor Maximianus, who showed him great favor. Because this Emperor was pagan and these two saints were people of faith, he sent them to Antiochus, King of Syria, to torture them and slay them if they did not forsake their faith.

Antiochus inflicted St. Bacchus with severe tortures and, when he did not dissuade him from his Christianity, he ordered his men to slay him. They killed him and cast his body into the River Euphrates. The waves brought him to the bank near two holy men. The Lord sent an eagle to guard the pure body and inspired the two saints to take it. They took the body with reverence and buried it. St. Sergius was sad for his friend Bacchus until he saw him in his sleep in a beautiful palace, shining brightly; so his soul was exceedingly comforted.

Later on, the Governor commanded to drive nails into St. Sergius' feet, and to send him to El-Rusafa tied to the tails of the horses; his blood flowed down on the ground.

On their way, they met a virgin damsel, who gave them water to drink. When she saw the condition the saint was in, she felt sad for him and she pitied his youth and his fine form. The saint told her, "Come, follow me to the city of El-Rusafa to take my body," and she followed him.

The Governor of El-Rusafa was a friend of St. Sergius, and it was through St. Sergius, that the Governor had this position. The Governor tried to convince him to change his mind to save his life. When St. Sergius did not accept his advice, he ordered his head cut off. That virgin came and received the blood which flowed from his holy neck and kept it in a clip of wool.

However, the holy body was kept until the end of the days of persecution when they built a church for him at El-Rusafa. The church was consecrated by 15 bishops. They laid his holy body in a coffin made of marble. Those who were present witnessed that a fragrant oil flew from his body and it healed the sick.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Departure of St. James, Patriarch of Antioch.
2. The Departure of St. Pelagia.

1. On this day, the holy father Abba James, Patriarch of Antioch, departed. Great tribulations befell him, and he was exiled for the sake of guarding the Orthodox faith. After he remained in exile for a period of time, the people of the city gathered and brought him back. Then the Arians exiled him again and he stayed in exile for seven more years, then departed in peace. *His prayer be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Pelagia, departed. This righteous woman was born in the city of Antioch to pagan parents. Besides a corrupt faith, she had a corrupt manner of life also.

She met a holy bishop, whose name was Paul, who preached to her. She believed in the Lord Christ through him, and confessed to him everything she had done. He encouraged her and taught her not to despair but to repent with a true determination. Then he baptized her in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and she was illuminated by the grace of baptism. She led a penitent life with a firm heart and a pure determination. she exhausted her body with strenuous worship.

She dressed herself in the garb of men and went to Jerusalem where she worshipped in its sanctuaries. She met Abba Alexandros, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who sent her to one of the convents nearby Jerusalem. She dwelt there for 40 years and departed in peace. *Her prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE TWELFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Departure of Abba Demetrius I, 12th Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Matthew the Evangelist.
3. The Commemoration of the Archangel Michael.

1. On this day of the year 224 A.D., the pure and celibate father, the fighter of lusts, and the vanquisher of nature, Abba Demetrius I, 12th Pope of Alexandria, departed. This saint was an illiterate farmer, and was married. He lived with his wife 47 years until he was chosen a Patriarch.

They did not know one another as married people, but remained throughout that period in their virginity and chastity, a fact which no one knew.

When the departure of St. Yulianus, 11th Pope, drew near, the angel of the Lord appeared to St. Yulianus in a vision and told him about this saint and that he was to be the Patriarch after him. He gave him a sign saying, "Tomorrow a man shall come to you having a cluster of grapes, seize him and pray over him." Then he woke from his sleep, he told the bishops and the priests who were with him about this vision.

So it happened on the next day that St. Demetrius found a cluster of grapes that was out of season. He carried it to St. Yulianus, to receive his blessing. The father, the Patriarch, took him by the hand and told those who were present, "This is your Patriarch who will be after me." Then he prayed over him; they held him and kept him until the departure of Abba Yulianus, whereupon they finished the prayers of ordination over him and he was filled with heavenly grace. The Lord enlightened his mind and he learned reading and writing. He studied the church books and their interpretations. Words of grace flew from his mouth when he preached.

He established the reckoning of the Epacts, by which the dates of fasting were determined on a fixed basis. Christians used to fast the holy 40 days, Lent, right after the feast of Epiphany, as the Lord Christ fasted after His baptism. Then they fasted the Passion week separately, celebrating the Christian Passover on the Sunday that followed the Jewish Passover.

Some of the Christians used to celebrate Easter on the fourteenth of Neesan (April) and that meant they celebrated with the Jews, not recognizing that the Christian Passover was to be in memory of the Resurrection of the Lord Christ which was after the Mosaic Passover. For that reason, Pope Demetrius took interest in establishing a fixed bases for fasts and Christian holy days. He appended the Holy Fast to the Passion Week.

Pope Demetrius wrote in this respect to Agabius, Bishop of Jerusalem; to Maximus, Patriarch of Antioch; to the Patriarch of Rome and to others. All approved of it and continued to follow his rules up until the present. The Church of Rome deviated from that and followed, since the 16th century, the Gregorian Calendar. To the Popes of the Coptic Church was the prime credit in determining Easter Day; and they thus sent their Easter messages all over the world, so that the Christians would celebrate Easter on the same day forming a universal joy.

God was with Abba Demetrius because of his purity. God granted him a gift that after he finished the Liturgy and the people came forward to partake of the Holy Mysteries, he used to see the Lord Christ pushing forward with His Hand those who were worthy. But if one came forward who was not worthy of partaking of the Holy Communion, the Lord would reveal to the Pope his sins and the Pope would not allow him to partake of it until he confessed his sins. The Pope would admonish him for them and would say to him, "Turn away from your sin and repent, after that come and partake of the Holy Mysteries."

Because he rebuked the sinners much, and urged them on repentance and purity, some of

them murmured and said, "This man is married, how can he rebuke us?" The Lord Almighty wished to reveal to them his virtues, so the angel of the Lord came to him at night and told him, "O Demetrius, do not seek your salvation and let others be destroyed with their doubt." The father asked him to clarify his statement and the angel told him, "You must reveal the mystery which is between yourself and your wife to the people that you might remove the doubt from them." On the following morning, after he had celebrated the Divine Liturgy, he ordered the people not to leave the church. He took red-hot coal and placed it in his wife's shawl and his pallium, then they went around in the church and their clothes did not burn. The people were amazed at this miracle. He told them that he and his wife did not know each other as married people. The doubt was removed from the people and they realized the purity of this father and his virginity. During his time, some opposing men appeared whose names were Aklemos, Origen, and Orianus who wrote forbidden books, so he excommunicated them.

During the days of his papacy, he did not stop teaching and confirming the believers in the Orthodox Faith. When he had grown old and became weak, they carried him on a litter to the church to teach the people. He was 105 years old, having spent 15 years unmarried, 47 years until he became Patriarch and 43 years in office, then departed in peace.

The blessings of his prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also, St. Matthew the Evangelist, was martyred. He was one of the Twelve Disciples and his name was Levi. He was the one sitting at the receipt of custom outside the city of Capernaum, when the Lord Christ said to him, "Follow Me." He left all, rose up, and followed Him. He made for the Lord Christ a great feast in his own house. That made the Pharisees murmur against Him saying to His disciples, "Why do your teacher eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:27-32)

He preached in the land of Palestine and Tyre and Sidon. Then he went to Ethiopia. Some say that he also preached in Persia and the kingdom of the Parthians, Macedonia, and Syria.

After he had preached in other countries, he went back to Jerusalem. Some of the Jews which had been preached to, and had believed and been baptized by him, asked him to write down what he had preached to them. He wrote the Gospel attributed to him in the Hebrew language.

His martyrdom was consummated by stoning by the hands of Justus the Governor, and his body was buried in Caesarea by some believers. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

3. On the twelfth day of each Coptic month we celebrate, commemorating the honorable Michael the Archangel, the head of the Heavenly Hosts, who stands at all times before the throne of the Divine Majesty on behalf of the human race.

His intercession be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Departure of Saint Zacharias, the Monk

On this day, St. Zacharias the monk, departed. His father's name was Karyos. He was married, but he longed for the monastic life. He told his wife about what was on his mind and she agreed to it. Karyos had a son, called Zacharias and a daughter. He left them with their mother and went to the desert of Scete and became a monk at the hands of a holy old man.

Shortly after, there was a great famine in the country and the wife took the two children and came to the desert where their father Karyos was. She complained to him about the tribulation which had come upon her through the famine and handed him the children. But Karyos told her, "God has divided the two children between us. You take the girl and leave the boy with me." She took her daughter and departed. Karyos took his son Zacharias and brought him to the elders who prayed over him and they prophesied that he would become a perfect monk.

Zacharias was brought up well in the desert, and advanced in every virtue. Because he was exceedingly handsome and his fair look, there were many murmurs in the desert because of him and they said, "How is it, a boy like that dwells in the desert among the monks?" When St. Zacharias heard that, he went to lake El-Natroun (which was very salty) without telling anyone. He took off his apparel, plunged his body into the lake, and remained in it for many hours. The color of his body became black and he looked like a leper. Then he went forth from the water, put on his apparel and came to his father who did not recognize him until he had stared at him closely. When he asked him about what had changed his appearance, he told him what he had done.

When it was Sunday, he went with his father to the church to partake of the Holy Mysteries. The Lord revealed to St. Isidore, the priest of Scete, what St. Zacharias had done. He marvelled and said to the monks, "Zacharias received the offering last Sunday as a man, but now he has become an angel."

This saint possessed many virtues, especially the virtue of humility in which he had reached such a degree of perfection that his father said about him, "I have labored greatly in the fight, but I have never attained the extent of my son Zacharias."

St. Zacharias lived a strenuous life and strove exceedingly hard for 45 years. When he came to the desert, he was seven years old and all the days of his life numbered 52 years, then he departed in peace. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen*

THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF BABAH

The Departure of St. Philip, One of the Seven Deacons

On this day, St. Philip, one of the Seven Deacons, departed. He was from Caesarea, Palestine. When the Lord Christ, to Him is the glory, went through this area, this saint heard Him teaching and followed Him immediately. When the Lord chose the 70 Disciples and sent them forth to preach and heal the sick, this disciple was one of them. The Twelve Apostles chose him as one of the Seven Deacons appointed to serve.

This Apostle preached in the cities of Samaria and baptized its people. He also baptized Simon the magician who perished when he tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money.

One day the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” He rose and went and behold a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury and had come to Jerusalem to worship. As he was returning and sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the spirit said to Philip, “Go near and join this chariot.” So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the scripture which he read was this, “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb before its shearer is silent. So He opened not his mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away. And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.”

So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water; What hinders me from being baptized?” Then Philip said, if you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea. (Acts 8:26-40). He went around the countries of Asia and preached the living Gospel there. He had four daughters who preached the word of God with him. He brought many of the Jews, the Samaritans and others to the faith, and departed in peace. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Martyrdom of Saint Panteleimon, the Physician

On this day of the year 405 A.D., St. Panteleimon, who was from the city of Nicomedia, was martyred. His father worshipped idols but his mother was a Christian. They educated him well and taught him the profession of medicine. He met a priest whose name was Hermolaus who taught him the facts of the faith of the Lord Christ and baptized him.

He reached a high standard of virtuous life. God wrought great wonders through him. Once, a blind man came to him to be treated by his medicine. He made the sign of the Cross over his eyes in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and his eyes were healed and he regained his vision completely.

When the Emperor heard the news of his healing this blind man, he had the blind man brought to him and asked him about how his eyes were healed. He told him St. Panteleimon healed them by laying his hand on them and by saying, "In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." He confessed before the Emperor that he was a Christian, so the Emperor immediately had his neck cut off.

The Emperor ordered that St. Panteleimon be brought to him and asked him about his belief. He confessed that he was a Christian. He tried to persuade him by all means and promised him many things, but he would not change his confession. Then he shouted out to him and threatened to inflict upon him different kinds of tortures. But he did not move. The Emperor inflicted upon him severe tortures on different days, sometimes beating and suspending him and often times casting him into the sea or into the fire. The Lord Christ appeared to him in the form of Hermolaus, the priest who baptized him and taught him the facts of faith, to strengthen him, and walked with him as if He was sharing with him every punishment which befell him.

Later on, the Emperor ordered to behead him. When St. Panteleimon went to the place of execution, he prayed to the Lord Christ and supplicated Him. He heard a voice from heaven announcing to him what had been prepared for him from heavenly joy. The soldiers also heard that voice and immediately believed. They went forth to the Emperor and confessed their faith in the Lord Christ. The Emperor ordered his men to cut off their necks, too, and they all received the crown of martyrdom.

Their prayer be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Departure of St. Agathon, 39th Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Commemoration of the Sts. Carpus, Apollos (Papyrus) and Peter.

1. On this day of the year 673 A.D., the holy father, the Patriarch Abba Agathon, 39th Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was a disciple to the holy father Abba Benjamin, 38th Pope. Abba Benjamin disappeared for a period of time from the face of his Chalcedonian persecutors and left Agathon to preach to the believers and establish them in the Orthodox faith. Agathon went around the streets and markets in the daytime wearing a carpenter's apparel, and during the night wearing a priest's uniform. He went around the houses also preaching and instructing the believers. He kept doing this till the Arab conquest of Egypt and the return of the father the Patriarch Abba Benjamin to his chair.

When Pope Benjamin departed, this saint was chosen to the honorable rank of Patriarch. He faced great tribulations for the sake of keeping the Orthodox faith. For example, a man whose name was Theodosius, a Malachite, went to the city of Damascus and came before Yazeed-Eben- Moawia, the Arab Governor of Damascus. He gave him much money and took from him an order to appoint him the Governor of Alexandria, Behira and Marriot. When he became in charge of this position, he afflicted our father the Patriarch and levied great taxes on him. Because of the excessive evil of the Governor, and what he did to the father the Patriarch, the people hated and avoided him. He put forth an order that any man who might find the Patriarch on his way should slay him. The Patriarch remained in his cell until God destroyed that evil Governor.

In the days of this father, the building of St. Macarius' church in his monastery at Wadi-El Natroun was completed.

One night the angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him about a holy monk from the monastery of St. Macarius whose name was John and who lived in Fayyum. The angel ordered him to bring him to help in preaching and teaching the people. The angel told him that he would be Patriarch after him. Abba Agathon sent and brought him and delivered to him the work of the churches, their organization, teaching the believers and preaching to them.

Abba Agathon remained in the papacy for 19 years and departed in peace.
His prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the saints Carpus, Apollos (Papyrus) and Peter the disciple of Abba Isaiah the Anchorite.
Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Departure of St. Dioscorus II 31st Pope of Alexandria

On this day of the year 511 A.D., the holy father Abba Dioscorus II, 31st Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was chosen Patriarch by the guidance of the Holy Spirit after the departure of his predecessor, St. John. This father was gentle in disposition, his work and knowledge were outstanding, and he was perfect all his days; no one was like him in his generation.

His first work after his enthronement to the See of St. Mark was writing an epistle to the holy father Abba Severus, Patriarch of Antioch. This epistle contained the faith in the Holy Trinity as equal in essence and divinity, and an explanation of the Incarnation. He said that the Word of God was incarnated in a human body perfect in everything, and united with it and became one Son, one Christ, one God, in inseparable unity and that the Trinity is one before and after this unity and no addition was effected to Him by the Incarnation.

When this epistle reached Abba Severus, he read it and rejoiced and made it known to the people of Antioch. He felt optimistic with it and wrote to St. Dioscorus a reply to the epistle congratulating him on his Christian presidency and on the Orthodox faith. He commanded him not to turn aside from it, neither to the right nor to the left, and to depend in all his sayings and works on the Orthodox faith which was established by the Three Hundred and Eighteen Fathers in Nicea and according to what they commanded in the Canon and the Law. When the message reached Abba Dioscorus, he joyfully received it and commanded that it be read from the pulpit to be heard by all the people.

This father read and taught continually, and urged and commanded the priests in every city to shepherd and guard their flocks. Having ended his course, he departed in peace.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Departure of the Honorable Father Saint Theophilus 23rd Pope of Alexandria

On this day of the year 404 A.D., the holy father Abba Theophilus, 23rd Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was a disciple of St. Athanasius the Apostolic. He was brought up by him and learned all the spiritual doctrine from him.

When Pope Timothy I departed, this father was chosen to take his place. Abba Theophilus was knowledgeable, well read in the church books with full understanding of their interpretation. He wrote many discourses and works of exhortation urging on the works of charity and mercy, and warnings to the people about receiving the Divine Mysteries without being prepared, and concerning the Resurrection and the punishment which is prepared for sinners and many other useful teachings.

The holy father Abba Kyrillos⁹ was his nephew and Abba Theophilus took care of his education by sending him to Abba Serapion in the desert of Scete. There Kyrillos studied the books of the church and all its subjects and stayed there five years, then went back to his uncle.

When Abba Theophilus was with Abba Athanasius the Apostolic, he heard him one day saying while looking at the hills before his cell, "If I find time, I will clear away these hills and build a church in their place for St. John the Baptist and Elisha the prophet."

When Abba Theophilus became Patriarch, he remembered that saying and he talked about it often. In the city of Rome, the husband of a rich woman died and left her with two sons. She took them and much money and an icon of the Archangel Raphael and came to Alexandria. When she heard about the interest of the father the Patriarch in removing those hills, she went to him with true zeal and gave him enough money to fulfill his desire. After the work was done, a treasure appeared under the hills and was covered with a slab of stone engraved in Coptic, with three characters of theta, 0. When Abba Theophilus saw them, he knew, guided by the Holy Spirit, the secret of these three letters and said, "Behold the time has come for this treasure to be uncovered because these three thetas were gathered together at the same time and they are: Thoes, that of God; and Theodosius the Emperor, son of Arcadius, son of Theodosius the Great; and Theophilus the Patriarch - meaning himself. He found that this treasure dated to the Era of Alexander, the son of Philip the Macedonian which was 700 years before.

The Patriarch sent to the Emperor to inform him about the treasure and asked him to come. The Emperor came and saw the treasure, and gave a large sum of money to Abba Theophilus. He built many churches. He began by building a church in the name of St. John the Baptist and Elisha the Prophet, and he transferred their relics that church. That church was known at that time by the Demas. Then he built a church by the name of our Lady the Virgin Mary, then a

church in the name of the Archangel Raphael at El-Gizira and seven other churches.

As for the two sons of the woman who came from Rome, he ordained them bishops. When the Emperor saw the love of the Abba the Patriarch for building churches, he gave him all the houses of idols and Abba Theophilus changed them to churches and lodging houses for strangers, and endowed them with land.

Having fulfilled his days in a life pleasing to God, he departed from this world in peace.
His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE NINETEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Assembly of the Council of Antioch against Paul of Samosata.
2. The Martyrdom of Sts. Theophilus and His Wife in Fayyum.

1. On this day of the year 280 A.D. a Holy Council assembled in an Antiochian church to judge Paul of Samosata. He was a native of Samosata, and he was chosen a Patriarch of Antioch.

Satan sowed in his mind the belief that the Lord Christ was a simple, ordinary man whom God had created and chosen to redeem the human beings; and that Christ was entirely Mary's offspring and that Divinity did not unite with Jesus but joined Him by the will only and that God is one person, so he did not believe in the Son or the Holy Spirit.

Because of him, a council assembled in the city of Antioch during the reign of Emperor Valerian and the papacy of Abba Dionysius, 14th Pope of Alexandria, which was 45 years before the Council of Nicea. Because Abba Dionysius was old, he was not able to convene with them, so he wrote a letter stating the belief that the Lord Christ is the Word of God, and His Son, and is equal to Him in essence, in divinity and in being eternal. The Holy Trinity is Three Persons by character, in one God-head. One Person of the Trinity is the Son incarnated and became in Hypostatic Union, a complete man. Abba Dionysius testified concerning these things using many testimonies from the Old and the New Testaments and he sent this letter with two priests of the church scholars.

Thirteen bishops and the two priests assembled in that council. They brought that Paul and asked him about the heresy that he was teaching. He declared it to them and did not deny anything. They debated the matter with him and read to him the letter of Abba Dionysius and made him listen to what the Apostles said about the Lord Christ the Word of God that He is, "The brightness of His glory. And the express image of His person." (Hebrews 1:3) But he did not accept their words, and he would not turn from his infidel opinion. They excommunicated him, and all those who believed his words, and they exiled him. The fathers put forth the

Canons, which are still in the hands of the believers who follow them to this day.
The blessings of their prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also, St. Theophilus and his wife in Fayyum, was martyred, in the days of Emperor Diocletian the infidel.

Some brought accusation against them before the Governor of being Christians. The Governor brought them and questioned them. They confessed our Lord Christ, to Him is the glory, before him. He commanded that a deep pit be dug for them, that they be cast into it, and covered by stones. They did so and St. Theophilus and his wife received the crown of martyrdom.

Their prayer be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE TWENTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Departure of the Great St. John Colobos (the Short)

On this day, the great light and saint, the hegumen Abba John (Yoannis) Colobos (the Short), departed. He was a native of Betsa in upper Egypt and he had one brother. His parents were righteous and God-fearing people, rich in faith and good deeds.

When he was 8 years old, his heart turned away from the futility of this world, its lusts and its glory, and he desired the monastic life. The grace of God moved him to go to the desert of Scete and there he came upon a tried and holy man whose name was Abba Pambo from El-Bahnasa.

John asked Abba Pambo to allow him to stay with him. The old man answered, trying him, “My son, you cannot stay with us for this is a very hard desert and those who dwell in it eat from the work of their hands, besides observing many fasts, prayers, and sleeping on the floor and many other forms of asceticism. Go back to the world and live in the fear of God.” Abba John told him, “Do not send me away, for God's sake, because I came to be in your obedience and prayers. If you accept me, I believe that God will make your heart well-pleased with me.”

Abba Pambo was in the habit of not doing anything hastily. He asked the Lord Christ to reveal to him the matter of this young man. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, “Accept him, for he shall become a chosen vessel.” Abba Pambo brought him and he shaved the hair of his head. He laid out the garb of the monk, and he prayed over it for three days and three nights and when he put the garb on him, he saw an angel making the sign of the Cross over it.

Saint John started his monastic life with great asceticism and splendid works. One day Abba Pambo wanted to test him, so he expelled him from his cell saying, "I cannot live with you." Abba John stayed out by the door of his cell for seven days. Every day Abba Pambo went out and smote him with a palm branch and Abba John bowed down before him saying, "I have sinned." On the seventh day, the old man went out to go to the church and he saw seven angels with seven crowns placing them on the head of Abba John. Since that day, he was held by him in honour and reverence.

One day Abba Pambo found a piece of dry wood and gave it to Abba John and said to him, "Take this wood, plant and water it." St. John obeyed and went on watering it twice a day even though the water was about 12 miles from where they lived. After three years, that piece of wood sprouted and grew into a fruitful tree. Abba Pambo took some of that fruit and went around to all the elder monks saying, "Take, eat from the fruit of obedience." This tree still exists in its place in his monastery.

Abba Pambo fell sick for 12 years and Abba John ministered unto him all this time during which he never heard from his teacher that he fell short in his service. Abba Pambo was an experienced old man who had been tried much, and sickness had emaciated him until he became like a piece of dry wood, so that he would be a chosen offering.

When Abba Pambo was about to die, he gathered together the elder monks and he held the hand of Abba John and gave him to them saying, "Take him and keep him, for he is an angel, not a man." He commanded Abba John to stay in the place where he had planted the tree. After that Abba John's older brother came to the monastery and was ordained a monk with him. He also became an honorable monk.

It happened when the father the Patriarch Abba Theophilus was ordaining Abba John hegumen and abbot over his church, and as he placed his hand over his head, a voice from heaven was heard by the people present saying, "Axios, Axios, Axios (That is to say he is worthy)." When this saint consecrated the offering, he was able to know those who were worthy to partake of it and those who were not worthy.

Abba Theophilus the Patriarch built a church for the Three Young Men in Alexandria, and he wished to bring their bodies and place them in it. He brought Abba John and asked him to travel to Babylon, and to bring the holy bodies. After much forebearing, Abba John accepted to go on this mission. When he left the Patriarch, a cloud carried him away to Babylon. He entered the city and saw its monuments, rivers, and palaces and found the bodies of the saints. When he started moving them from their place, a voice came out from the holy bodies and said to him, "This is the Will of God that we do not leave this place until the day of the Resurrection. Nevertheless, because of the love of Abba Theophilus the Patriarch, and your labour, too, you should inform the Patriarch to gather the people in the church and to put oil in the lamps without lighting them and we will appear in the church and a sign will be made

manifest to you.”

Then Abba John left and went back to Alexandria and told the Patriarch what the saints had said. It happened when the Patriarch and the people were in the church, the lamps were lit up suddenly and they all glorified the Lord.

One day, a monk came into the cell of Abba John. He found him lying down with angels waving their wings over him.

Later on, the Berbers attacked the desert of Scete and he left it. When he was asked why he left, he replied that he did not leave because he was afraid of death, but because he feared a Berber would slay him and go to hell, for though he is against his worship, he is his brother in form. Then he went to the mountain of Abba Anthony on the Red Sea. There he dwelt by the side of a village and God sent him a believer who served him.

When the Lord wished to grant him rest and to end his strife in this world, He sent him His two righteous saints Abba Macarius and Abba Anthony to comfort him and to inform him about his departure. On the eve of Sunday, he fell sick and sent his attendant to bring him something from the village. The angels and the host of saints came and received his pure soul and took it up to heaven.

At that time, his servant came back and saw the soul of the saint surrounded by the host of saints and angels singing before them. Before them all, there was one shining like the sun and singing. The servant marvelled at this magnificent sight. An angel came to him and told him the name of each one of the saints. Then the servant asked the angel, “Who is this one in front of them all, who is shining like the sun?” The angel replied, “This is Abba Anthony, the father of all the monks.”

When the servant went into the cell, he found the body of the saint kneeling to the ground, as he had given up his soul while kneeling. The attendant wept sorrowfully over him and went in a hurry to the people of the village and told them what had happened. They came and carried his holy body with great honor. When they brought him into the village, great wonders and miracles were performed through his body.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Commemoration of the Theotokos.
2. The Commemoration of the Relocation of the Body of Lazarus.
3. The Departure of Joel the Prophet.
4. The Departure of St. Freig (Abba Tegi, Abba Roweiss).

1. On this day we celebrate the commemoration of our holy lady, the Mother of Light, the Virgin St. Mary. Salutation to you O Mary, the Mother of God, the eternal Word, because through you was the salvation of the human race. *Her intercession be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also we celebrate the commemoration of the relocation of the body of Lazarus, whom our Lord raised from the dead. It was relocated by one of the Christian Emperors to Constantinople. When he heard that the body was on the island of Cyprus, he sent some of the trusted bishops to the island where they found the holy body laid in a sarcophagus buried under ground.

The inscription on the coffin read, “This is the body of Lazarus, the friend of the Lord Christ, whom He raised from the dead, after he had been buried for four days.” They rejoiced at it and carried it to the city of Constantinople. The priests went out and received the body with great honor and veneration, and with prayers and incense. They laid it in a sanctuary until they built a church for it and then relocated the body to the church where they celebrated a holy day for him. *His prayer be with us. Amen.*

3. Today also, the great Prophet Joel, the son of Phaniel, from the tribe of Reuben, departed. He prophesied in the days of Abya the son of Jeroboam the son of Solomon the King. He taught the people and admonished them and prophesied concerning the dwelling of God in Zion, His passion, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the comforter upon the holy Apostles on the day of Pentecost. He prophesied that their sons and daughters will prophesy and their young men will see visions and their old men will dream dreams.

This prophet prophesied also concerning the going forth of the law of the Gospel from Zion when he said, “A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord and water the valley of Acacias.” (Joel 3:18) And he revealed that wars will break out on the earth after the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke also concerning the day of Resurrection more than a thousand years before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He said, “The sun and the moon will grow dark and the stars will diminish their brightness.” (Joel 3:15) He pleased God and departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

4. On this day also in the year 1405 A.D. (1121 of martyrs) St. Freig, who is known as Abba Roweiss, departed. This saint was from a village called Miniet-Yamin (about 130 kilometers north of Cairo). His father's name was Isaac and his mother's name was Sarah. When he was

born, they called him Freig. He worked with his father in farming and he had a small camel on which he carried salt and sold it. He called the camel "Roweiss" (i.e. small head). The camel used to put his head against his cheek as if he was kissing him. Because of his humility, he called himself after his camel.

Persecutions befell the Christians, so he came to Cairo and not having a house or shelter, he went from one place to another. He spent most of his nights in prayers and wailing. He did not own a coat or any clothes or a cover for his head. He was naked except for that with which he covered his loins, and his head was uncovered. He looked like the hermits of the desert; his eyes were red because of much weeping and he never cut the hair of his head. He was a man of few words - once an evil man smote him severely but he did not open his mouth. St. Marcus El-Antoni was present at that time and he rebuked the evil man.

During the later part of his life, he used to say, "O Virgin, take me because my burden is heavy." He meant the burden of carrying the sin of the people for which he often rebuked them though they did not listen to him.

He lived in the days of the holy father Pope Mattheos, 87th Patriarch, and St. Marcus El-Antoni, in the days of El-Sultan El-Zaher Barkuk.

He shut himself up in a small storeroom at the place of his disciple Michael the builder, in Meniet Syreg. He stayed in that place for 9 years until his departure on the twenty-first of Babah of the year 1121 of the martyrs. He was buried in the church of the Virgin, in Deir El-Khandaq. He performed many wonders such as healing the sick, prophesying and saving many from their troubles. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Martyrdom of Saint Luke the Evangelist

On this day, St. Luke the Evangelist and physician, was martyred. He was one of the 70 disciples mentioned in the tenth chapter of his gospel. He accompanied the Apostles Peter and Paul and wrote their account.

After the martyrdom of these two Apostles, he went through Rome preaching. Those who worshipped idols and the Jews in Rome agreed among themselves and went to Nero the Emperor accusing St. Luke of attracting many men to his teaching with his sorcery. Nero commanded that St. Luke be brought before him. When St. Luke knew that, he gave all the books he had to a fisherman and told him, "Take these and keep them for they will be useful to you and will show you God's way."

When St. Luke came before Nero the Emperor, the Emperor asked him, "How long will you lead the people astray?" St. Luke replied, "I am not a magician, but I am an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God." The Emperor commanded his men to cut off his right hand saying, "Cut off this hand which wrote the books." The saint replied to him, "We do not fear death, nor the departure from this world, and to realize the power of my Master." He took up his severed hand and made it reattach to its proper place, then he separated it. Those who were present marvelled and the head of the Emperor's cabinet and his wife believed as well as many others and it was said that they numbered 276. The Emperor wrote their decree and ordered that their heads be cut off together with that of the Apostle St. Luke; thus their martyrdom was completed.

They placed the body of the saint in a hair sack and cast it in the sea. By God's will, the waves of the sea brought it to an island. A believer found it, took it and buried it with great honor.

This saint wrote the Gospel bearing his name and the "Acts of the Apostles" addressing his words to his disciple Theophilus who was a gentile.

His blessings be upon us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Departure of St. Yousab, 52nd Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth.

1. On this day of the year 841 A.D., the holy father Abba Yousab (Joseph), 52nd Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was the son of one of the rich nobles of Menuf. When his parents departed and left him, certain believers raised him. When he grew up he gave most of his money as alms, then went to the desert of St. Macarius and became monk with a holy old man.

When Abba Marcus II became the 49th Pope of Alexandria and heard about Yousab's conduct, he called him. When Yousab wished to go back to the desert, Abba Marcus ordained him a priest and sent him back. He stayed in the desert for a period of time till the departure of Abba Simon II, 51st Pope.

The papal throne remained unoccupied until some of the bishops agreed with some of the laymen of Alexandria to choose a married man who had bribed them. When the rest of the bishops knew that, they detested their action and prayed to God to guide them to whom He choose. The Lord guided them to Abba Yousab and they remembered his good conduct and management while he was with the father Abba Marcus.

They sent some of the bishops to bring him. They prayed to God saying, "We beseech Thee, O Lord, if Thou have chosen this father for this honor, let the sign be that we find his door open upon our arrival." When they arrived they found his door open, for he was bidding farewell to some visiting monks. When he was about to close his door, he saw them coming, so he received them with joy and welcomed them to his cell. When they entered, they seized him and told him, "Axios" (i.e He is worthy). He cried out and wept. He started to reveal to them his shortcomings and sins. But they did not accept his excuses and they took him to Alexandria and placed their hands over him.

When he sat upon the throne of St. Mark, he greatly cared for the churches. He bought, with what remained of his own income, properties and bestowed them on the churches. He continually taught the people and did not neglect any of them.

However, Satan became envious and brought much sorrow upon him. The bishops of Tanes and Miser (Cairo), angered the people of their parishes (because of the matter of dues). Abba Yousab condemned their actions and asked them often to be merciful to their flocks, but they would not accept his behest. Their flocks cried out to him saying, "If you force us to obey them, we shall turn to another denomination." He exerted a great effort to reconcile between them, but it was in vain. He called the bishops from their parishes and told them about these two bishops and repudiated their works. The bishops excommunicated them.

When they were excommunicated, they went to the Governor in Cairo and brought a false accusation against this father. The Governor sent his brother, the Prince, with some soldiers to bring the Patriarch to him. When they came to the Patriarch, the Governor's brother drew his sword to kill him. But the Lord thrust aside his hand and the sword struck a pillar and was broken. The Prince became furiously angry, so he drew his dagger and drove it with all his might into the side of this father. The dagger did not do any harm to him other than cutting his apparel, and it did not reach his flesh.

The Prince realized that the Patriarch had divine grace, and heavenly protection guarded him from being slain. He respected him and brought him to his brother and told him about what had happened. The Governor also respected and feared him. The Governor asked the Patriarch about the accusation that was made against him. The Patriarch proved to him the falsehoods of these accusations and informed him about the matter of the two bishops. The Governor was convinced and honored the Patriarch and ordered that no one should disobey him in any ordination or removal of any bishops or in any other work concerning the church.

He continually preached to the sinners and admonished the disobedient, establishing the people in the Orthodox faith which he had received from his fathers. He interpreted to them what was hard for them to understand, guarding them with his teachings and prayers. God made manifest great signs and wonders through this holy father.

Having finished this pleasing life to God, he departed in peace after having sat on the throne of St. Mark 19 years and having been a monk for 39 years, before which he had lived about 20 years. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the martyrdom of St. Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, who became a martyr in the days of Diocletian and Maximianus. He endured many severe tortures for the sake of his faith in Jesus, to Whom is the Glory, until finally they cut off his neck, and he received the crown of eternal glory.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Departure of the Righteous Father Abba Hilarion.
2. The Martyrdom of the Sts. Paul, Longinus and Deenah (Zena).

1. On this day in the year 472 A.D. the righteous father, Saint Hilarion, the Anchorite, departed. He was a native of Gaza, the son of pagan parents. They taught him the Greek literature and culture. He excelled and surpassed his peers, but he wished still to master it. Since there was no one in his city who could help him to fulfill his desire, he went to the city of Alexandria and joined its school. There he acquired many kinds of knowledge.

The divine zeal moved him to learn also the Christian doctrines and books. He asked for the books of the church and read them, and Abba Alexandros explained to him what was difficult for him to understand. In a short time Abba Hilarion believed in the Lord Christ, to Whom is the Glory, and the father, the Patriarch, baptized him and he received the Divine Grace.

Abba Hilarion stayed with Abba Alexandros for a short time, then went to the great St. Anthony. When Abba Hilarion saw St. Anthony, he marvelled at his profound reverence and his fair appearance that was shining with the grace of the Holy Spirit. His heart was deeply moved and he desired to join the monastic life. He took off his worldly clothes and put on the monastic garb. He started practicing the monastic works with a diligent devotion, following the footsteps of his teacher.

Shortly after, he learned that his parents had died, so he went back to his city and took whatever they had left and gave it to the poor and needy. Then he joined one of the monasteries of Syria and followed the path of asceticism with great devotion. He fasted for the whole week, eating grass and legumes. God enlightened his mind, gave him the gift of prophecy, and of working signs.

Later on, St. Epiphanius became a monk in the same monastery, and the abbot handed him to St. Hilarion. St. Hilarion taught him the ways of the monastic life and the doctrines of the church and prophesied that St. Epiphanius would become the bishop of Cyprus.

The days of this father were 80 years: 10 years were spent in the house of his father, 7 years in the city of Alexandria and 63 years in worship. He pleased God and departed at a good old age. St. John Chrysostom (of the Golden Mouth) praised him in some of his articles and St. Basil mentioned him in some of his homilies. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the martyrdom of Sts. Paul, Longinus and Deenah (Zena). *Their prayer be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Departure of the Saints Apollo and Abib.
2. The Consecration of the Church of Saint Julius El-Akfahsee (Aqfahs).

1. On this day, the righteous saints Abba Apollo, who was like the angels, and Abba Abib, the pious worshipper, departed.

Abba Apollo was born in the city of Akhmim. His father's name was Amani (Hama) and his mother's name was Eyse (Isa). They were righteous before God, walking in His way, and loving to the strangers and saints.

They did not have a son. One night Abba Apollo's mother saw in a dream a shining man, who had a tree with him. He planted it in her house and it grew and bore fruit. He told her, "Whosoever shall eat of this fruit shall live forever." She ate from it and found it sweet and she said, "I wonder if I would have a fruit?" When she awoke from her sleep, she told her husband about what she had seen. He told her that he had seen the same vision, and they glorified the Lord. They added to their works of righteousness and to their striving. They fasted for two days on only bread and salt. After a while she conceived, and she prayed fervently until the child was born. They called him Apollo and they advanced in their piety.

When the boy had grown up and studied theology, he longed for the monastic life. This longing grew when he met a friend called Abib. They went together to one of the monasteries and became monks there. They practiced many ascetic works. They lived a good life that was pleasing to God.

The saint Abba Abib departed on the 25th of Babah.

Thereupon St. Apollo went to Ablug Mount and many gathered around him. He taught them the fear of God and the acceptable worship. On the 25th of Babah they celebrated the commemoration of the saint Abba Abib to fulfill the saying of the Holy Bible, "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." (Psalm 112:6) Abba Apollo lived for many years after that and he had monasteries and many brethren.

He was a contemporary of St. Macarius the Great who, when heard about St. Apollo, rejoiced. St. Macarius wrote him a letter to comfort him and the brothers and to confirm them in their obedience to the Lord. Abba Apollo knew by the spirit that St. Macarius was writing them a letter. There were many around him speaking the Word of God. He said to them "Listen my brethren, behold the great Abba Macarius is writing to us a letter full of comforting and spiritual teachings." When the brother arrived with the letter, they received him with joy then read it and their hearts were consoled.

St. Apollo was the one who went to St. Ammonius and saw the holy woman who stood in the middle of the fire but did not burn.

When the Lord Christ wished to relieve him from the labor of this world, he departed in peace.
His prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also was the consecration of the church of St. Julius El-Akfahsee (Aqfahs). This saint was martyred in the city of Tewa.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Martyrdom of Saint Timon the Apostle.
2. The Commemoration of the Seven Martyrs on the Mount of St. Antonius.

1. On this day, St. Timon the Apostle, was martyred. He was one of the 70 Apostles, who were chosen and distinguished by the Lord. This saint had the gifts and the ability to heal the sick and to cast out devils. He followed the Lord until His Ascension into heaven and after that, he continued to minister unto the disciples till the grace of the Holy Spirit came upon them all. The Disciples elected him one of the Seven Deacons who were appointed to serve tables. The Bible testified that they were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. (Acts 6:2-6)

After he had remained in the diaconate for a period of time, they laid the hands on him, a bishop of the city of western Besra, in Greece. He preached the Lord Christ to them and baptized many of the Greeks and the Jews. The Governor seized him, and inflicted on him many tortures. He finally burned him and he received the crown of martyrdom.

May his prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the Seven Martyrs. They were martyred by the hand of the Barbers on the mount of the great Saint Abba Antonius, the father of all monks.
Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

The Martyrdom of the Righteous Father Saint Macarius Bishop of Edkow (Tkoou)

On this day, the blessed father St. Macarius, Bishop of Edkow, was martyred. In this holy man, the words of David the Prophet were fulfilled saying, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law he meditates day and night.” (Psalms 1:1-2)

Every time he went up on the pulpit to preach to the people, he wept. When one of his disciples asked him the reason for his weeping, he answered that he saw the sins of the people and their ungodly works. On another occasion he saw our Lord Christ at the altar, and the angels bringing unto Him the works of the people, one after the other. Abba Macarius heard a voice saying, “Why, bishop, are you slack in preaching to your people?” He replied, “My Lord, they do not accept my words.” So the Lord said to him, “It is meet for the bishop to preach to the people and if they do not accept his words, their blood be upon their own heads.”

He was invited to go to the council of Chalcedon with Abba Dioscorus. On arriving at the royal palace, the guards prevented him from entering because of his modest clothes, until Abba Dioscorus told them that he was the bishop of Edkow. When he had gone in and heard what the infidels were saying about the Lord Christ, he excommunicated the Emperor in the council. He was ready to deliver himself to death for the sake of keeping the Orthodox faith. They exiled him with Abba Dioscorus to the island of Gagra. From there Abba Dioscorus sent him with a believing merchant to Alexandria saying to him, “There you have a crown of martyrdom awaiting you.”

Shortly after, he arrived in the city of Alexandria, the messenger of the Emperor arrived with the new Chalcedonian creed which stated the two natures of Christ. The Emperor had commanded him saying that, “He who writes his name first on this creed will be the Patriarch of the city.” In the city, the head of the priests was Brotarios. He took the paper to write his name first but St. Macarius the Bishop reminded him of what Abba Dioscorus had told him before he went to the council saying, “You shall possess my church after me.” Brotarios remembered that and refrained from writing.

When the Emperor's messenger knew that the Bishop disagreed with the creed of the Emperor and did not write his name also, he jumped over the Bishop and kicked him. St. Macarius died on the spot and thus received the crown of martyrdom. The believers took his holy body and buried it with the bodies of St. John the Baptist and Elisha the Prophet. That fulfilled what these two saints had told this father, the Bishop, in a vision, that his body would be with their bodies. He departed to the Lord Christ winning the crown of glory.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

Martyrdom of the Sts. Marcian (Marcianus) and Mercurius

On this day of the year 351 A.D., the great saints Marcianus and Mercurius became martyrs. They were disciples of St. Paul the Martyr, Patriarch of Constantinople. When Emperor Constantine II, the son of Constantine the Great, adopted the belief of Arius, Abba Paul the Patriarch opposed him - so he exiled him to Armenia, where he was killed by strangulation.

These two saints cried over St. Paul on the day he was exiled. They characterized the Emperor, saying that he was a follower of the belief of Arius the Infidel. A certain Arian man made an

accusation against them to the Emperor when he was on one of the plantations. He had them brought to him and ordered them slain with the sword. They were killed and buried, and their bodies remained there until the time of St. John Chrysostom (of the Golden Mouth). When he heard their history, he sent and brought their honorable bodies to the city of Constantinople. He built a church for them and transferred their bodies to it and celebrated a feast for them. *Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Martyrdom of St. Demetrius of Thessalonica
2. Departure of Abba Gabriel the seventh, the ninety fifth Patriarch of Alexandria.

On this day, the great St. Demetrius, was martyred, in the days of Maximianus the Emperor. He was a pious Christian young man from the city of Thessalonica. He learned various subjects, and most of all, those of the Orthodox Church. He taught and preached diligently in the Name of the Lord Christ. He converted many to the faith.

Some made accusations against him to Emperor Maximianus who ordered that he be brought to him. It happened that when he came before the Emperor, a wrestler whose body was strong and huge, and who surpassed the people of his time in strength, was present. The Emperor loved this man and was proud of him to the point that he specified a large sum of money for whoever could vanquish him. A Christian man whose name was Nostor came from among the people who were present at that time and asked St. Demetrius to pray for him and to make the sign of the Cross with his holy hand over his body. The saint prayed and made over him the sign of the Holy Cross which makes those who believed therein invincible.

Nostor went and asked to fight that fighter about whom the Emperor was boasting. Nostor fought him and vanquished him. The Emperor was very sorry and ashamed. The Emperor wondered how Nostor conquered him. He asked the soldiers for the secret behind that. They told him that a man called Demetrius prayed over him and made the sign of the Cross over his face.

The Emperor became angry with the saint and ordered that he be beaten until he offered incense to his idols and worshipped them. When St. Demetrius disobeyed them the Emperor ordered his men to thrust spears at him until his body would be torn to pieces and he would die. They told the saint that to frighten him and make him turn away from his faith in the Lord Christ and worship the idols. He told them, "Do whatever you please, for I will neither worship nor offer incense except to my Lord Christ the True God." The soldiers drove the spears into him until he delivered his pure soul.

When they threw away his holy body, some Christians took it and laid it in a coffin made out of marbles. The body remained hidden until the end of the days of persecution, when the one who had hidden it revealed it. A great church was built for him in Thessalonica, and they laid his body therein.

Many great signs were made by his name. Each day, sweet oil was distilled from his body which cured those who used it with faith, especially on the day of his feast. On his feast day, the oil flowed in a larger quantity than on any other day, and it dripped from the walls of the church and the pillars. Though the gathering was huge, they all received their share, from what they took off the walls and put in their containers. Those of the righteous priests who had seen this told and testified to that. *His prayer be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also in the year 1568 AD., the great saint Abba Gabriel the seventh, the ninety fifth Patriarch of Alexandria departed. He was born in Mansheya near the Muharraq monastery of pious parents, who raised him up in the faith. As a youth he chose to become a monk in the "Syrian" monastery in the wilderness of Shihete.

When Pope John the thirteenth departed, he was ordained Patriarch on Sunday fourth OF Paopi 1525 AD. He worked very hard at renovating the monasteries of Saint Antony and Saint Paul in the Eastern desert after being desolate for a long time. He also ordained Abba Yousab the third as a Metropolitan for Ethiopia, thus renewing the ties with the Ethiopian church after a period of estrangement.

On the way to visit the monastery of Saint Antony, he took a boat to cross to the eastern shore of the Nile, when he departed in peace in the boat. He was buried in the church of Saint Mercurius in Old Cairo after sitting on the throne of Saint Marc for forty three years and twenty five days. *May the blessings of his prayers be with us and glory be to our God. Amen.*

THE THIRTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF PAOPI

1. The Commemoration of the Consecration of the Church of St. Mark the Evangelist and the Appearance of His Holy Head.
2. The Departure of St. Ibrahim (Ibrahim) the Hermit.

1. On this day is the commemoration of the consecration of the church of the pure St. Mark the Evangelist, the founder of the church in Egypt, and the appearance of his holy head in the city of Alexandria. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, the great saint, the worshipper and fighter St. Ibrahim, the hermit, departed. This father was from the city of Menuf, a son of rich, Christian parents. When he grew up he longed for the monastic life. He went to Akhmeem and from there he came to St. Pachomius, who put the monastic garb on him. St. Ibrahim exhausted his body with ascetic practices and worship. He stayed with St. Pachomius for 23 years, then he wished for the solitary life in some of the caves. St. Pachomius allowed him to do so.

He made nets to catch fish. One of the laymen used to come, take the work of his hands to sell it, buy beans for him, and give the rest of the money as alms on his behalf. He led this life for 13th years; his food each evening was a handful of salted beans soaked in water. Because the apparel that he went forth with from the monastery was worn out, he covered himself with a piece of sackcloth (Khaish). He went to the monastery every two or three years to partake of the Holy Communion.

The devil fought with him much at the beginning of his dwelling in that cave. They disturbed him with strange voices and terrified him with fearful images. But with the grace of God he used to overcome them and drive them away.

When his departure drew near, he sent the lay brother who used to serve him to the monastery to bring Abba Tadros, the disciple of St. Pachomius. When Abba Tadros came to him, he bowed down and asked him to remember him in his prayers. Then St. Ibrahim rose up and prayed with St. Tadros. He laid down facing the east and gave up his soul. When St. Tadros sent the news to the monastery the monks came and carried him. Then they all prayed over him, were blessed by him and laid him with the bodies of the saints.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR
THE FIRST DAY

1. The Martyrdom of the Saints Maximus, Numitius, Victor, and Philip.
2. The Commemoration of Saint Cleopas the Apostle and His Companion.

1. On this day, the striver Saints Maximus, Numitius, Victor (Boctor), and Philip (Philopus) were martyred. They lived in the days of Decius the Emperor. These four saints were from Africa, and they were brethren in spiritual love. The desire for Christ gathered them together. When Emperor Decius was torturing the Christians, they agreed together to declare their faith.

They went before the Prefect and confessed that they were Christians and only worshipped and bowed to Christ. He ordered them beaten, and they were many times, with whips and sticks. Their backs were burned with red-hot rods. Their bodies then were rubbed with rags made of hair steeped in vinegar and salt.

In spite of all this severe torture they remained steadfast in the faith. Some of the people present believed in the Lord Christ when they saw their patience and endurance. Finally, the Prefect ordered the heads of some of the saints to be cut off and the sword to be used on the others. Thus they all received the crown of martyrdom. *Their prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of St. Cleopas the Apostle and his companion who were travelling to a village called Emmaus. Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection and said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” Later, as He sat at the table with them, He took bread, blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Then, their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished from their sight. (Luke 24:13-31)

These two Apostles were among the 72 Apostles.

Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen

THE SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

The Departure of St. Peter the Third 27th Pope of Alexandria

On this day in the year 481 A.D., the Great Saint Abba Peter III, 27th Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was chosen patriarch after the departure of St. Timothy, 26th Pope.

Shortly after his enthronement upon the apostolic throne, he received a letter from St. Acacius, Patriarch of Constantinople, confessing in it the one nature of Christ, according to the faith of St. Cyril and St. Dioscorus. He also stated clearly that it is not right to recognize two separate natures for Christ after the union, otherwise, the usefulness of the union would be futile.

Abba Peter replied by a letter declaring his acceptance of Abba Acacius into the Orthodox Faith. He sent it with three learned bishops to Abba Acacius, who received them with respect and asked them to join him in the prayers of the Divine Liturgy.

Abba Acacius read the letter to his particulars and to those who followed him. He then wrote another Catholic epistle to Abba Peter. When Abba Peter received it, he gathered the bishops and the fathers and read the letter to them. They rejoiced exceedingly and they admired the words and the explanations therein. They then recognized Abba Acacius' fellowship with them in the Orthodox Faith.

This father suffered many tribulations from those who opposed his religion and opinion. Abba Peter was exiled from his chair once, but was restored later. In his exile he continually taught the flock. He preached to them by means of written messages and, whenever he was present, by his spoken words. He stayed on the See of St. Mark for eight years then departed in peace. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Departure of St. Cyriacus.
2. The Departure of St. Athanasius and His Sister, Irene.

1. On this day, the holy father, St. Cyriacus, departed. This striver was brought up in the city of Corinth in Greece. He was the son of Orthodox Christian parents, who taught him the church subjects. They brought him to Abba Peter, Bishop of Corinth, who was his cousin, and he ordained him a reader. Cyriacus read continually and searched in the interpretations of the Holy Scriptures until he surpassed many in it. Abba Peter appointed him to read to the people in the church and to him in his cell, and he was pleased with him.

When he was 18 years old, his parents asked him if he wished to marry, but he refused. He asked them for permission to visit one of the monasteries in order to be blessed by the saints therein. He continued to visit the monastery from time to time and he longed for the monastic garb.

He went to the Holy city, Jerusalem, and met its bishop, Abba Cyril. He presented to him his wish to become a monk. Abba Cyril approved his wish and prophesied of him saying that he would become a great father, would have many accomplishments, and many souls would be enlightened by his teachings. He blessed him and sent him to the great father Euthymius (Otimus), the father of the monks of Palestine.

Father Euthymius accepted him with joy and put the garb of the monk on him. He handed him to one of the elders of the monastery who taught him the ways of worship and revealed to him the artifices of Satan. Abba Cyriacus lived a virtuous life with much asceticism besides humility, godliness and devoutness. God bestowed upon him the gift of healing. He healed all those who came to the monastery with all kinds of sicknesses or infirmities. His virtues and his holiness spread everywhere.

This holy man accompanied Abba Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, to the Ecumenical council of the hundred and fifty that gathered at Constantinople because of Macedonius, the enemy of the Holy Spirit. Abba Cyriacus opposed his arguments and vanquished him by evidences and proofs.

He departed at a good old age. The Lord made manifest from his body after his departure, many signs and miracles. His body still rests in one of the monasteries of the city of Jerusalem, without any change or corruption, to the extent that anyone who sees him today would think that he just died only a short time ago. More than 700 years have passed from the time of his departure till the writing of his biography. He lived at the time of Theodosius the Great in the later part of the fourth Christian century. *His prayer be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Athanasius and his sister, Irene, departed. They suffered many tortures at the hands of Maximianus. When he failed to turn them away from their faith in Christ, he ordered to cast them into an empty pit, and to shut over them, wherein they departed. *Their prayer be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Martyrdom of Saints John and James, Bishops of Persia.
2. The Martyrdom of Saints Epimachus and Adrianus (Azarianus).

1. On this day, Sts. John and James, Bishops of Persia, were martyred by the hands of Shapur, the son of Hormuzd (Hermez), King of Persia.

When the King demanded them to worship the sun and fire, and to offer sacrifices to them, they did not obey him. Instead, they continued teaching and confirming the people in the faith of the Lord Christ, to Whom is the glory. Therefore, the King ordered them be tortured severely. When they would not turn from the faith, and would not cease from teaching the people and strengthening them, in spite of their torture, he ordered them be cast into the fire. They gave up their souls into the hand of the Lord Christ, thus received the crown of glory with all the saints. *Their prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, Sts. Epimachus and Adrianus (Azarianus), who were from the city of Rome, were martyred. Some people accused them of being Christians to the Governor, who was appointed by Maximianus the Emperor.

He brought them and questioned them about their belief. They confessed that they were Christians. Then they reproved him for having forsaken the worship of God, who created the Heaven, the Earth, and all that is therein. They also admonished him for worshipping man-made idols which could neither see nor hear and wherein dwelt Satan, who led men astray by worshipping these idols. The Governor marvelled at their audacity and commanded their necks to be cut off. Thus they received the crown of martyrdom.

Their prayer be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Martyrdom of St. Timothy and St. Maura his wife.
2. The Appearance of the Head of St. Longinus, the Soldier.
3. The Relocation of the Body of St. Theodore, the Prince, to Shotb.

1. On this day we celebrate the Martyrdom of St. Timothy and St. Maura his wife. Saints Timothy and Maura suffered for the faith during the persecution under the emperor Diocletian (284-305).

St Timothy came from the village of Perapa, near Antinou (Egyptian Thebaid), and was the son of a priest named Pikolpossos, who brought up his son in Christian piety. Timothy from his first years as a youth served during his father's term in the rank of reader and the keeper of liturgical books. St. Timothy read sacred books daily at home. But he read them with special inspiration in church assemblies on Saturdays and Sundays. For his distinct, intelligent and reverent reading during the divine services St. Timothy was respected by Christians.

Another obligation of his rank as reader, was the writing of sacred books. For Timothy, the writing of sacred books was not only an obligation but also was a hobby. He called the copied books his children, his expensive treasure that he also shared with the Christians of his church community.

St. Timothy married a 17 year old maiden named Maura, a devout Christian woman from a very pious and prosperous family. She respected the calling of her husband and she empathized with him, inspiring him with what he read in the sacred books in the church.

After only 20 days of marriage, a terrible trial came to them: the persecution of Christians had arrived. Diocletian made a decree that required the confiscation of sacred books from Christians in order to burn them. Timothy was summoned to the pagan governor Arianos, to be brought to trial for his Christian teaching and missionary work.

At first, he was asked to surrender all of his sacred books in order for them to be destroyed. Timothy refused, for he knew their value and power. "If a father who loves his children," he said, "and who obeys the natural law does not deliver up to death his fleshly children, how can I give over my spiritual children, the sacred books, into your polluted hands?"

Arianos subjected the saint to horrible tortures for his refusal to obey the command. They shoved two red-hot iron rods into his ears, from which the sufferer lost his eyesight and became blind. St Timothy bravely endured the pain and he gave thanks to God, for granting him to suffer for Him.

About this time they informed Arian that Timothy had a young wife named Maura, whom he had married only twenty days before. Arian ordered Maura to be brought, hoping that with her present, they could break St Timothy's will. She was asked to use her "womanly gifts" to persuade her husband to deny Christ. St Timothy urged his wife not to fear the tortures, but to follow his path. St Maura answered, "I am prepared to die with you," and she boldly confessed herself a Christian.

Arianos commanded that the hair be torn from her head, and to cut the fingers off her hands. St. Maura underwent her tortures with joy and even thanked the Governor for the pain which she endured so that her sins might be forgiven. During all of these tortures, the saints both saw visions of angels which comforted them.

As they were both led to their death by crucifixion, they both kissed their crosses on which they were to be martyred. Nailed to their crosses facing each other, each comforted the other for nine days as they hung. The torturers gave them water to drink daily in order that their torture be prolonged.

During the 9 days of suffering on the cross they courageously preached Christ, talked about the Lord and eternal life. After nine days of hanging on their crosses, these newlyweds gave up their souls and entered eternal life. They beheld a vision of angels pointing to thrones in heaven next to Jesus Christ waiting for them. *May their holy blessings be with us all. Amen.*

2. On this day also was the appearance of the head of St. Longinus the Soldier who pierced the side of our Savior, when He was on the Cross. Emperor Tiberius Caesar sent a soldier to Cappadocia to cut off the head of this saint, as it is written in the 23rd day of the month of Abib. The soldier fulfilled the order and brought the head to Jerusalem, and handed it to Pontius Pilate. Pilate showed the head to the Jews, who rejoiced at his deed. Pilate commanded that the head be buried in some of the piles of dirt outside Jerusalem.

There was a woman who had believed at the hands of St. Longinus when he preached in Cappadocia. During his execution, she stood, weeping, and witnessed his martyrdom. Later on she became blind. So, she took her son and departed to Jerusalem to be blessed by the holy places, and the holy sepulchre, hoping that she might regain her sight. When she arrived in Jerusalem, her son died. She became very sad and grieved because of her condition and there was no one to take her back to her own country.

During her sleep she saw St. Longinus, and with him, was her son who had died. He directed her to whereabout his head was buried and ordered her to remove it. When she woke up, she looked for the place until she found it. She dug in the ground and a sweet aroma of incense came out.

When she reached the head of the saint, a great light shone from it and straightaway her eyes were opened and she was able to see. She glorified the Lord Christ, kissed the head, perfumed it, and placed it with the body of her son. Then she returned to her own country glorifying the Lord Christ Who performed wonders through His saints.
The prayers of this saint be with us. Amen.

3. On this day also is the commemoration the relocation of the body of St. Theodore the Prince, to the city of Shotb, in the province of Assiut (His martyrdom is on the 20th of the Coptic month of Epip). *His blessings be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Consecration of the church of the Virgin in the Mouharaque Monastery in Quosquam Mount.
2. The Departure of St. Felix, Pope of Rome.

1. On this day was the consecration of the church of the Holy Virgin, in the Mouharaque Monastery, in Quosquam Mount. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ blessed this church with His presence along with His disciples, during the time of its consecration, as was testified to by the Saints Philotheos and Kyrillos, Popes of Alexandria.

Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our Lord forever. Amen.

2. On this day also is the departure of St. Felix 26th Pope of Rome. He was Roman by birth, chosen 26th pope in 269, after the departure of Pope Dionysius of Rome. Soon after his ordination, a letter came to him about the heresy of Paul of Samosata who taught that Christ was a mere man. He wrote a letter to the council defending the divinity of our Lord, that was quoted by St. Cyril the Great.

St. Felix suffered through the persecutions of Aurelian, working personally to bring non-Christians to the faith. He held the Church together during these hard times. He reposed in the Lord after finishing his course.

May his holy blessings be with us and glory be to God forever. Amen.

THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Martyrdom of St. George of Alexandria.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Nehroua.
3. The Departure of St. Mina, Bishop of Tamai (Thmoui).
4. The Consecration of the Church of St. George of Cappadocia.

1. On this day, St. George (Gawargios) of Alexandria, was martyred. His father was a merchant in the city of Alexandria and had no son. It happened that he travelled to the city of Lydd and attended the feast of the consecration of the Church of St. George the martyr. He prayed to God, interceding with His great saint that he might have a son. God answered his prayers, and gave him a son, and he named him George. His mother was the sister of Armenius, the Governor of Alexandria.

His parents died when he was 25 years old. George was merciful, loving and kind to the poor and loved the church. He stayed with his uncle who had only one daughter. One day she went

with some of her friends for an outing. While they were walking nearby a monastery outside the city, she heard its monks singing sweet hymns. She was touched by what she had heard and asked her cousin George about it. He replied that those monks had forsaken the world to worship and he guided her to believe in the Lord Christ. He told her about the share of the sinners of the final punishment and the share of the righteous of felicity.

When she returned to her father, she told him that she was a believer of Christ. He tried to reason with her, to dissuade her, and to lure her with great promises. Then he threatened her. When she did not hearken to his words, he ordered that her head be cut off, thus she received the crown of martyrdom.

Later on, the Governor knew that George was responsible for her conversion. He seized him and tortured him severely. Then he sent him to Ansena where they also tortured him and finally they cut off his holy head, thus he received the crown of martyrdom. A deacon whose name was Samuel, took his holy body and carried it to the city of Manf, El-Giza province.

When the wife of his uncle Armenius knew about it, she sent for the body and placed it with the body of her martyred daughter in Alexandria. *Their prayer be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Nehroua, was martyred. He was from the district of Fayyum and he feared God. When he heard the accounts of the martyrs, he went to Alexandria to die for the Name of the Lord Christ.

He was told in a vision that he must go to Antioch. There he confessed the Lord Christ. Diocletian offered him much money and many prizes to turn him away from his faith, but Nehroua refused. Then Diocletian threatened him, but could not frighten him. Therefore the Emperor ordered that he be tortured in many different ways. Finally, they cut off his holy head with a sword and he received the crown of martyrdom. *His blessings be with us. Amen.*

3. Today also, St. Mina, bishop of the city of Tmai (Thmoui), departed. His father was from the city of Samannoud. He was the only son of God-fearing parents. They practised the works of the monks such as fasting, prayers and asceticism until their report was heard throughout the country.

They made their son marry against his will. But he agreed with his wife on keeping their virginity. They remained so, doing many worships as practised by monks, wearing sackcloth and spending most of their nights in prayer and reading the word of God. This saint longed to be a monk and he discussed it with his wife saying, "It is improper for us to practice the monastic works while we are in the world."

She agreed with him, and he went to the monastery of Abba Antonius, to be far away from his parents. They looked for St. Mina to return him back to his wife and they knew not where he

was. From there he went with Abba Mikhail, who became later on the 46th Pope of Alexandria, to the monastery of St. Macarius, where they became monks. That was during the time of the two bright stars Abba Abraam and Abba Gawargah. Father Mina became their disciple, he learned from them, followed the way of their worship and increased in his angelic works until he surpassed in his worship many of the fathers.

Later on, he was called for the rank of episcopate. When the messengers of the Patriarch came to him and he knew the reason for their visit, he wept and was sorrowful to leave the desert. The fathers convinced him that this was the will of God. He obeyed and went with the messengers to the Patriarch who ordained him Bishop of the city of Tmai (Thmoui).

The Lord granted him the gift of healing the sick, the gift of knowing the hidden things and he knew what was in the minds of people. The bishops of the surrounding districts used to come to him for counselling. People from everywhere came to listen to his teachings. He was the father of four Patriarchs and he laid his hand upon them when they were ordained. They were: Abba Alexandros II, Abba Cosma, Abba Theodore, and Abba Mikhail I.

When the Lord Christ wished him to depart from this transient world, He informed him. Abba Mina called the people of his diocese and commanded them to be strong in the Orthodox faith and to keep the divine commandments. Then he committed them to their true shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ and departed from this transitory world and came to Christ, Whom he loved. The people wept and mourned the loss of their shepherd and their father after the Lord, who cared for their souls. They buried him in a fitting manner and laid him in the place, as he had directed beforehand. *His prayers be with us all. Amen.*

4. Also on this day, is the commemoration of the consecration of the Church of the honorable saint and great martyr St. George in the city of Lydd. We also commemorate the great wonders and signs, the Lord has done therein which became known throughout the land and sea.

When Emperor Diocletian heard the reports of this church, he sent Eukheius, the head of his army, with soldiers to destroy it. Eukheius came with arrogance to where the icon of St. George was and he began to scoff at the Christians and at the Saint. He had a staff in his hand with which he struck the lamp, which was burning before the icon of St. George and he broke it. A fragment of the lamp fell on his head. Fear and great trembling came upon him and he fell prostrate on the ground. The soldiers carried him, to take him back to his country, for they knew that this had happened to him because of his mockery towards this great martyr. Eukheius died on the way back with disgrace, and they cast him into the sea.

When Diocletian heard this, he became angry and decided to go himself to this church and destroy it. The Lord bore no longer with him to do what he had determined to do and He smote him with blindness and the men of his kingdom rose up against him. The Lord took the kingdom away from him and placed Constantine, a righteous Emperor, in his place. Emperor

Constantine closed pagan temples and opened the churches. The churches and the universe rejoiced, especially the church of the great martyr, the star of the morning, St. George. *His prayer be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Commemoration of the Four Incorporeal Beasts
2. Departure of St. Pierius dean of the Catechetical school at Alexandria.

1. On this day is the commemoration of the four Incorporeal Beasts who carry the throne of God. As it is mentioned by St. John who witnessed this in his Revelation saying, “Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardine stone in appearance: and there was a rainbow around the throne in appearance like an emerald: ... and in the midst of the throne and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty who was, and is, and is to come.'” (Revelation 4:2-8)

Isaiah the Prophet said: “I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim: each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.’” (Isaiah 6:1-3)

Ezekiel the Prophet said: “Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the North, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself, and brightness was all around it, and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man... and each one had four wings. Their legs were straight; and the soles of their feet were like the soles of calves' feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze...” (Ezekiel 1:4-7)

St. John the Evangelist said: “After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, belong to the Lord our God,' ... and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sat on the throne, saying, 'Amen, Alleluia... for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give Him glory.....’” (Revelation 19:1-7)

The Lord set them near His throne in order for them to make supplications on behalf of all the creation. The beast with the man's face makes supplications on behalf of the human race, the one with the lion's face makes supplications on behalf of the beasts, the one with the bull's face makes supplications on behalf of the cattle, and the one with the eagle's face makes supplications on behalf of the birds. The teachers of the church built churches in their names and commemorated them on this *day. Their intercession be with us. Amen*

2. On this day also we commemorate the departure of St. Pierius who served as dean of the Catechetical school at Alexandria during the papacy of Pope Theonas 16th Patriarch of Alexandria. Eusebius mentions that he was presbyter of Alexandria, and speaks of him as greatly renowned for his voluntary poverty, his philosophical erudition and his skill in the exposition of Scripture and in discoursing to the public assemblies of the Church. St. Jerome says that he was called “Origen junior” In his manner of life he was an ascetic. After the persecution under Galerius or Maximus he lived at Rome.

He appears to have devoted himself largely to sacred criticism and the study of the text of Scripture; and among several treatises written by him, and extant in the time of Photius, we find mention made of one on the prophet Hosea. And, in addition to the Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Photius notices twelve books of his, and praises both their composition and their matter. He departed in peace in Rome. *May his holy blessings be with us all, and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Departure of the Holy Father Abba Isaac, 41st Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Assembly of the Ecumenical Council at Nicea.

1. On this day, of the year 679 A.D., the great holy father Abba Isaac, 41st Pope of Alexandria, departed. This father was born in El-Borolos from rich, God-fearing parents. They begot him long after their marriage. When they took him for baptism, the bishop who baptized him saw a cross of light over his head. The bishop laid the boy's hand over his head and prophesied concerning him saying, “The church of God will be entrusted to him.” Then he told his parents, “Take care of him, for he is a chosen vessel of God.”

When he grew they taught him writing, the Christian doctrine and church subjects. He read extensively in the biography of saints and he was filled with their pure life. He longed for the monastic life, so he left his parents and went to the desert of St. Macarius. He became a monk and disciple of Abba Zacharias, the Hegumen. The angel of the Lord had informed the elder father beforehand of his coming and the father received him with joy.

One day, one of the holy elders saw him in the church and prophesied about him saying, “The church of Christ will be entrusted to him.”

Pope John, the Patriarch of that time, asked for a monk to be his scribe and private secretary. The people who were present recommended this honorable father Isaac. The Pope had father Isaac brought to him. He gave him a book to scribe. Abba Isaac made mistakes in his writing deliberately, hoping that the Pope might send him back, for he had forsaken the glory of men. When the father knew his intention he said to him, “You have written well, do not leave this place.”

When Fr. Isaac realized that the Patriarch would not let him return, he used all his knowledge and writing ability and his virtues became known. The Patriarch rejoiced in him exceedingly. Nevertheless, because Fr. Isaac was still longing for solitary life, the Patriarch allowed him to return to the desert.

When the departure of Pope John drew near, he asked the Lord Christ to let it be known to him who would be his successor. In a vision, he was told that his disciple Isaac would sit on the chair after him. The Pope commanded the people that, with a divine revelation and by the order of the Lord, Isaac would sit on the chair after him.

When this father was enthroned to the See of St. Mark, the church was illumined. He restored many churches, especially the church of St. Mark the Evangelist, and the patriarchal cell. He suffered many tribulations and sat upon the throne for three and a half years, then departed in peace. His prayers be with us. Amen.

2. Also on this day, of the year 325 A.D., 318 fathers assembled in the city of Nicea, in the days of Emperor Constantine, the righteous Emperor. Among them were the heads of the four Sees and they were: Abba Alexandros, the 19th Pope of Alexandria, who was accompanied by Athanasius, his Archdeacon and private secretary; Estasius, archbishop of Antioch; Macarius, Archbishop of Jerusalem. Sylvestros, archbishop of Rome, because of his old age did not attend and sent two priests in his place.

The reason for their assembly was to judge Arius who was a priest in Alexandria. He blasphemed against the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ by saying that he was not equal in essence to God, His Father, and there was a time when the Son did not exist.

Among those who attended this council were holy fathers, who were, in the rank of the Apostles, able to raise the dead, heal the sick and work great wonders. Among them also were those who were tortured for the sake of their faith, lost their eyes, or had their hands or feet cut off, or had their teeth smashed or their nails pulled out or their ribs broken. One of them was the fighter St. Bephtotius, the confessor, one of the bishops of upper Egypt who was tortured much during the days of Diocletian. They plucked out his right eye, burnt the flesh

of his left leg, bound him in chains and took him to cut marble in a stone quarry. He was called the martyr among priests. He was a holy old man, loved by God and the people. The Lord worked many wonders through his supplications and prayers.

When the fathers convened, they sat on the chairs prepared for them. Then the righteous Emperor Constantine came and greeted them, starting with St. Bepnhotius, the Bishop, whom he respected much. The Emperor kissed with honor the scars of his wounds. Then he placed his royal scepter and his sword before them saying: "Behold, this day, you have the power of the priesthood and the Kingdom, to loosen and to bind as the Lord said, 'Whosoever you wish to exile or to keep, that will be in your authority.'"

The Holy Spirit enlightened the minds of those present and they were counted and there were found to be 319 but when they counted the visible chairs, they counted 318! This fulfilled the saying of the Lord Christ, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

They had Arius brought before them and asked him to state his faith. He blasphemed saying, "The Father was when the Son was not." When they explained to him his error and he did not change his opinion, they excommunicated him and all those who shared his opinion and belief. Then they wrote the Canon of the Christian faith which is known as the "Nicene Creed". It states:

1. We believe in one God, God the Father, the Pantocrator, Who created heaven and earth, and all things, seen and unseen.
2. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light; True God of True God; Begotten not created, of One Essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made.
3. Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary and became Man.
4. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; suffered and was buried.
5. And the third day He arose from the dead, according to the Scriptures.
6. Ascended into the heavens; He sits at the right hand of His Father.
7. And He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end.

Later on, when the council of one hundred and fifty assembled in the city of Constantinople to judge Macedonius, the enemy of the Holy Spirit, they formulated the remainder of that creed saying:

8. Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father; Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified; Who spoke by the prophets.
9. And in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.
10. We confess one Baptism for the remission of sins.

11. We look for the resurrection of the dead.
12. And the life of the coming age. Amen.

They forbade to add to or take away from the Creed and commanded all the believers, priests, laity, old and young, men and women, to recite it and to have it said during the Holy Liturgy and in all prayers.

After the fathers of the council of Nicea had excommunicated Arius and established the Creed, they issued other decisions as follows:

I. With regards to Melitus, Bishop of Assuit, who had resisted his superior St. Peter the martyr, the Alexandrian Pope, the council confirmed the authority of the Pope of Alexandria over his subjects in the ordinances 5, 6, and 7.

II. They settled the controversy between the bishops of Africa and Asia Minor and the bishop of Rome regarding the baptism of heretics. The council decided that the baptism performed by heretics was worthless in contrast to what the Bishop of Rome and his followers had thought.

III. They also established the Resurrection feast day. It was decided that it would be on the Sunday that followed the full moon, on which was the Passover of the Jews. Thus, they would not celebrate before the Jews or with them. They authorized the Popes of Alexandria, because of their knowledge and accuracy in calculating the dates, to notify all the churches about the day on which they would celebrate the feast.

The holy fathers confirmed the church, they established the light of the faith and then departed to their parishes. *Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our Lord forever. Amen.*

THE TENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Martyrdom of St. Sophia and the Fifty Virgins with her.
2. The Assembly of a Council in Rome because of the Feast of Theophany and Lent.

1. On this day, the holy, and pure fifty virgins and their mother Sophia, were martyred. These saints were from different countries. Divine love and ascetic life had brought them together and they lived in a convent for virgins in El-Raha. St. Sophia, the head nun, was filled with every wisdom and grace. She raised them with a spiritual upbringing until they became as angels on earth. They continually prayed, fasted and read the holy Books and chronicles of the monks and saints. Among them were some who had dwelt in the convent for 70 years and some were young in age but firm in faith and of strong conviction.

When Emperor Julian the Infidel heard that Shapur, King of Persia, intended to fight him, he prepared his army and set out against Shapur. The city of El-Raha was on his way and when he passed by the convent of these virgins, he ordered the soldiers to kill everyone in it and to rob the convent. The soldiers carried out the order, they cut the nuns with swords into pieces and took everything they found.

The Lord took vengeance on this evil Emperor by having him stabbed by the spear of a knight at war. (It was said that he was Saint Marcurius) The Emperor fell down from his horse and died in the year 363 A.D. As for the holy virgins, they received the crown of martyrdom. *Their prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also a holy council assembled in Rome in the days of Victor, Pope of Rome and Abba Demetrius, Pope of Alexandria. The reason for the assembly of this council was because the Christians used to celebrate the Epiphany, then start 40 days of fasting on the following day and end the fast on the 22nd day of the month of Amshir. After a few days they would fast the Passion week, then celebrate the honorable feast of the Resurrection.

When St. Demetrius the Patriarch was chosen for the Alexandrian throne, God illumined his mind with divine grace. He studied the church books and interpreted most of them. He formulated the basis for calculating the days of the fast and the changeable feasts which we celebrate to the present time. He sent copies of it to Abba Victor, Patriarch of Rome; Abba Maximus, Patriarch of Antioch; and Abba Agapius, Bishop of Jerusalem.

When Abba Victor received this message he read it and appreciated it very much. He gathered fourteen of his learned bishops and many of the learned priests. They examined it, accepted it, and spread it in their countries.

Since then the holy fast and the feast of Resurrection have been regulated as they are now in our Coptic Orthodox Church. To our Lord is the Glory forever. Amen.

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Departure of St. Anna (Hannah), the mother of the Theotokos.
2. The Commemoration of the Martyrdom of St. Archelaus and the Martyrdom of Elisha the Hegumen.

1. On this day, the pious and righteous St. Anna (Hannah), the mother of our Lady, the holy virgin St. Mary, the Mother of God, departed. This holy woman was the daughter of Matthan, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, who was a descendant of Aaron the priest. Her mother's name was Mary (Mariam) and she was from the tribe of Judah.

Matthan had three daughters. The first was called Mary after her mother, and she was the mother of Salome, the midwife. The second was Sophia, the mother of Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist. The third was St. Anna (Hannah), the wife of the righteous man Joachim, who was of the tribe of Judah. She was the mother of our Lady, the holy virgin St. Mary, the Mother of the Savior of the world. That makes our Lady the Virgin St. Mary, Salome, and Elizabeth cousins.

Although we know little about St. Anna, having been chosen to be the mother of the Mother of God in the flesh is an indication of her virtues and righteousness, which distinguished her from other women to have this great grace.

Because she was barren, she entreated God to take away her shame. So the Lord gave her a daughter that delighted her eyes and the eyes of all mankind; she is the Virgin St. Mary, the Mother of the Savior of the world.

Her intercession be with us all. Amen.

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the martyrdom of St. Archelaus and the martyrdom of Abba Elisha the Hegumen.

Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE TWELFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

The Commemoration of the Honored Archangel Michael

On this day the church celebrates the feast of the honored Archangel, Michael, the head of the hosts of heaven, who stands at all times before the great throne of God, interceding on behalf of the human race.

Joshua, the son of Nun, saw him in great glory and was frightened by him and fell on his face to the earth and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" So he said, "No; but as Commander of the army of the Lord... I have given Jericho into your hand, ... and its king." (Joshua 5:13-15, 6:2)

The Archangel Michael was with all the saints and martyrs. He strengthened them and enabled them to endure patiently until they finished their strife. Festivals of commemoration are held and alms offered in his name on the twelfth day of each Coptic month.

An example of one of his wonders: A God-fearing man whose name was Dorotheus and his wife Theopista, held a festival of commemoration for the honored angel Michael on the twelfth day of each month. It happened that this righteous family fell on hard times and had nothing to celebrate with for the commemoration of the honored Michael. They took their clothes to sell so that they might have a feast. Michael the Archangel appeared to Dorotheus and commanded him not to sell his clothes, but to go to a sheep-master and to take from him a sheep worth one-third of a dinar. He was also to go to a fisherman and to take from him a fish worth one-third of a dinar but Dorotheus was not to slit open the fish until he came back to him. Finally, he was to go to a flour merchant and to take from him as much flour as he needed.

Dorotheus did as the Angel commanded him. He invited the people, as was his custom, to the feast honoring the Archangel Michael. When he went into his storeroom looking for wine for the offering, he found that all the containers had been filled with wine and many other good things. He marvelled and was astonished.

After they had finished the celebration and all the people had departed, the Archangel appeared to Dorotheus as before and commanded him to cut open the belly of the fish. He found 300 dinars of gold and three coins each is a third of a dinar. He told him these three coins were for the sheep, the fish and the flour, and the 300 dinars were for him and his children. God had remembered them and their oblations and had rewarded them here, in this world and in the kingdom of heaven on the last day. As Dorotheus and his wife were astonished at this matter, the Archangel Michael said to them, "I am Michael the Archangel who delivered you from all your tribulations and I have taken your oblations and alms up to God, you shall lack no good thing whatsoever in this world." They prostrated themselves

before him and he disappeared and went up into heaven. This was one of the innumerable miracles of this honored Angel. *His intercession be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.*

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Departure of St. Timothy, Bishop of Ansena (Antinoe).
2. The Departure of St. Zacharias, 64th Pope of Alexandria.

1. On this day, the saint Abba Timothy, Bishop of Ansena, departed. He was righteous and chaste from his youth. He became a monk at a young age and lived a righteous life. Because of his chastity, righteousness, knowledge and his good character, he was chosen bishop for the city of Ansena (Antinoe). He preached to the believers and guided the people to believe in Christ. The Governor however, seized him and tortured him in various ways, inside the prison and outside it, for three consecutive years. There were many others with him in prison who were seized because of their faith. The tyrant Governor continued to bring several of them out of prison and shed their blood after torturing them, until only a few remained in prison, this father was one of them.

When the Lord destroyed Diocletian, and Constantine (the Emperor who loved Christ) reigned, he ordered all the prisoners who were persecuted for the sake of their faith in Christ to be set free, in all the countries under his authority. Father Timothy was also released and went to his diocese and gathered all the priests of his diocese.

They prayed to the Lord all night. Father Timothy asked for the salvation of the soul of the Governor who had tortured him saying, “Because O Lord, he is the one who has brought me great blessing by bringing me close to You, be good to him so he might become close to You.”

The people who were gathered marvelled at the purity of this father's heart, who was fulfilling his Master's words, “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44)

When the Governor heard that, he marvelled saying, “I had thought that he would curse me for what I inflicted upon him, for I had ill-treated him greatly, but instead he is blessing me. Truly the faith of these people is a 'Divine Faith'.” He sent for Abba Timothy. He inquired about the principles of the Christian faith. The father revealed to him the cause of the Incarnation of the Son of God and what the prophets had spoken many years before, concerning Him and how their prophesies were fulfilled, giving him proofs from the scriptures.

Consequently, the Governor believed in Christ and the father the Bishop baptized him. The Governor subsequently resigned the governorship and became a monk.

As for St. Timothy, he continued to teach his flock, guarding them until he departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also of the year 1027 A.D., the great St. Abba Zacharias, 64th Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was a native of Alexandria and was an ordained priest there. He was chaste and gentle in disposition.

When St. Philotheus, 63rd Pope, departed, the bishops assembled to choose, with God's guidance, the person who was fit to succeed him. While they were gathered in the church of St. Mark, discussing who was the most suitable man, they were informed that a rich man from Alexandria called Ibrahim Ben-Bishr, who was close to El-Khalifa (Governor) had given him a bribe and obtained a decree from him to be appointed Patriarch. El-Khalifa sent him, accompanied with some soldiers, to Alexandria. The bishops were saddened and they entreated God in one accord to keep away from His church the one who was coming to shepherd His church through bribery and the sultan's influence. They asked God to choose the person who was fit for this honor.

While they were on this subject, Abba Zacharias came down the stairs of the church carrying a vessel. His foot slipped and he fell and came tumbling down the stairs to the floor while still holding the unbroken vessel in his hand. The bishops and the priests marvelled at this and they asked the opinion of the people of Alexandria. Everyone agreed on Abba Zacharias' righteousness and his knowledge. They all agreed, along with the bishops, to ordain him Patriarch.

When Ibrahim Ben-Bishr arrived, he found that they had already ordained Abba Zacharias as Patriarch. When the bishops read the King's letter, they appeased Ibrahim and ordained him priest, then hegumen. They promised to ordain him bishop when one of the dioceses became available.

Abba Zacharias, had suffered many tribulations. As an example, a monk had made many accusations against him before El-Hakem (Be-Amr-Allah) who became El-Khalifa (Governor) in the year 989 A.D. El-Hakem seized the Pope and cast him to the lions, but they did not harm him. The Governor was angered with the keeper of the lions and thought that he had taken a bribe from the Pope. The Governor kept the lions for a period of time without food, then he slaughtered a sheep and smeared the clothes of the Patriarch with its blood. He then cast him a second time to the lions, but again, they did not harm him, for the Lord had domesticated them. The Governor marvelled and ordered that he be lifted up.

The Governor then cast him into prison for three months during which he threatened him with

death and casting in fire if he did not forsake his Christian faith. The Patriarch was not afraid. The Governor tried again bribing him by promising to appoint him a judge with jurisdiction over all other judges but he was not impressed with these earthly ranks and did not hearken to the order of the Governor. Finally, because of the mediation of one of the princes, he released him.

Abba Zacharias went to the desert of Scete, stayed there for nine years during which the people suffered great tribulations and experienced many troubles. Also, several churches were destroyed during that time.

Christ the Lord had compassion on His church and removed these tribulations from the people. He also turned the Governor away from his injustice. Subsequently, the Governor ordered the churches that were destroyed to be rebuilt. He also ordered that everything that was taken from them be returned and that the bells of the churches ring again.

Abba Zacharias lived 12 years, after his return from the desert, during which he took interest in building churches and restoring those that were destroyed. He remained in the papacy for 28 years and departed to the Lord in peace.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

The Departure of St. Martin Bishop of Tours.

Saint Martin was born in Pannonia (Hungary), around 316 ad. His father was a senior officer in the Roman army, who was later stationed in Italy, where Martin grew up. At the age of ten, he went to the church against the wishes of his parents (who were pagan) and became a catechumen or candidate for baptism. When Martin was fifteen, as the son of a veteran officer, he was required to join the Roman army, and thus, around 334 was stationed in Gaul (France).

While Martin was still a soldier he met a poor man almost naked in the dead of winter, and trembling with cold. Taking up his sword, he divided his cloak into two parts and gave one to the beggar. The following night he saw Jesus Christ in a dream, clothed with this half-cloak and saying to His Angels: "It is Martin, still a catechumen, who covered Me." Soon afterwards he received Baptism at the age of 18.

He obtained his discharge from the army at the age of twenty. Martin succeeded in converting his mother, then made his way to the city of Tours, where he became a disciple of Saint Hilary of Poitiers, a staunch opponent of Arianism. After having given striking proofs of his attachment to the faith of Nicea, he founded near Poitiers the celebrated monastery of Ligugé,

the first in Gaul, which became a centre of evangelization of Western Gaul. The brilliance of his sanctity and his miracles raised him in 372 to the episcopal throne of Tours, despite his resistance. His life thereafter was but a continual succession of miracles and apostolic labours. His flock, though Christian in name, was still pagan at heart. Unarmed and attended only by his monks, Martin destroyed the heathen temples and groves, and completed by his preaching and miracles the conversion of the people. His power over demons was extraordinary. Idolatry never recovered from the blows given it by Saint Martin.

After having visited and renewed his diocese, the servant of God felt pressed to extend his labours beyond its confines. Clothed in a poor tunic and a rude cloak, and seated on an ass, accompanied only by a few religious, he left like a poor missionary to evangelize the countryside. He passed through virtually all the provinces of Gaul, and neither mountains, nor rivers, nor dangers of any description stopped him. Everywhere his undertakings were victorious, and he more than earned his title of the Light and the Apostle of Gaul. He reposed in the Lord in 397 AD. *His prayers be with us and glory be to God forever. Amen.*

From the late 4th century to the late Middle Ages, much of Western Europe, including Great Britain, engaged in a period of fasting beginning on the day after St. Martin's Day. This fast period lasted 40 days. At St. Martin's eve and on the feast day, people ate and drank very heartily for a last time before they started to fast. This fasting time was later called "Advent" by the Church.

THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

The Martyrdom of Saint Mina, the Wonder Worker

On this day St. Mina, who is called the blessed faithful, was martyred. His father, Eudoxius, was a native of the city of Nakiyos (Nikiu) and was its Governor. His brother was envious of him and he brought charges against him before the Emperor. The Emperor transferred him to Afrikia and appointed him Governor over it. The people were pleased with him because he was merciful and God-fearing.

His mother Euphemia had no children. One day she went to church on the feast of our Lady, the Virgin, the Mother of God, at Attribes. She saw the children in the church wearing their beautiful clothes with their parents. She heaved a sigh and wept before the icon of Our Lady St. Mary, entreating her to intercede for her before her beloved Son, in order that He would give her a son. A voice came from the icon saying, "Amen." She rejoiced in what she had heard and realized that the Lord had heard her prayers. When she returned to her home and told her husband about it, he replied, "May God's Will be done."

The Lord gave them this saint and they called him Mina, according to the voice that his mother heard. When he grew, his parents taught him reading and writing and they reared him in a Christian manner. When he was eleven years old, his father departed at a good old age. Then his mother departed three years later. St. Mina devoted his life to fasting, praying and to living a Christian life. Because of everyone's love towards him and his father, they placed him in his father's position. In spite of that, he did not forsake his worshipping.

When Diocletian had reneged Christianity and issued his orders to worship idols, many were martyred for the Name of the Lord Christ. St. Mina left his position and went to the desert, where he stayed many days worshipping God with all his heart.

One day he saw the heavens open and the martyrs crowned with beautiful crowns. He heard a voice saying, "He who toils for the Name of the Lord Christ shall receive these crowns." He returned to the city over which he was Governor and confessed the Name of the Lord Christ. Knowing that he belonged to a noble family, they tried to dissuade him from his faith and promised him honours and precious gifts.

When he did not change his mind, they threatened him and the Governor ordered him to be tortured. When the Governor failed to turn him away from his faith in the Lord Christ, he sent him to his brother so that he might influence him but he failed also. Finally, he ordered his head to be cut off with the sword, his body to be cast in the fire and his ashes to be scattered in the wind. The body remained in the fire for three days and three nights, but it was not harmed.

His sister came and gave the soldiers a lot of money and they let her take the body. She put it in a sack made of fronds and decided to go to Alexandria, as her brother had previously advised her. She embarked with her brother's body on one of the ships to Alexandria.

During their trip, sea beasts came out of the water and attacked the passengers aboard the ship. They were frightened and screamed with fear. The Saint's sister prayed to the Lord and asked for the intercession of her brother. While the passengers were in fear, fire went forth from her brother's body and burned the faces of the beasts. They dived immediately into the water and as they reappeared, the fire burned them again. They finally dived and did not reappear.

When the ship arrived at the city of Alexandria, most of the people went out with the father, the Patriarch. They carried the holy body with reverence and honor and entered the city with a venerable celebration and placed it in the church, after they shrouded it in expensive shrouds.

When the time of persecution ended, the angel of the Lord appeared to the honorable Patriarch, Abba Athanasius, the Apostolic. The angel informed him of the Lord's command

which was to place the body of St. Mina on a camel and to take it out of the city without letting anyone lead it, but to follow it from a distance until it stopped at a place that the Lord had designated. They walked behind the camel until they arrived at a place called Lake Bayad, in the district of Marriot. There they heard a voice saying, "This is the place where the Lord wishes the body of his beloved Mina to be placed." They lowered the body and placed it in a coffin, then they situated it in a beautiful garden and many miracles happened through the body.

Later on, the people of Pentapolis (the five cities) rose against the cities around Alexandria. The people were getting ready to face the Berbers, and the Governor decided to take the body of St. Mina with him to be his deliverer and his strong protector. He took the body secretly and through the blessings of this saint, he overcame the Berbers and returned victorious.

The Governor decided not to return the body of the Saint to its original place and wanted to take it to Alexandria. On the way back, they passed by Lake Bayad, St. Mina's original place. The camel carrying the body knelt down and would not move in spite of frequent beatings. They moved the body over another camel, but again this second camel did not move from its place. The Governor finally realized that this was the Lord's command. He made a coffin from decay-resistant wood and placed the silver coffin in it. He then returned it to its place and invoked St. Mina's blessings, then returned to his city.

When the Lord wanted to disclose the location of St. Mina's holy body, He did it in this manner. There was a shepherd in the desert. One day a sheep with mange slipped down into the water of a well near the place of the saint's body. The sheep then came out of the water and rolled over in the sand of that place, and instantly the sheep was healed. When the shepherd saw this miracle, he was amazed. He took some of the sand and mixed it with water and smeared it over every sheep with mange, as well as on those with other infirmities, and immediately they were healed.

The news of these miracles spread in all the countries until the Emperor of Constantinople heard of them. He had an only daughter and she was leprous. Her father sent her to the place where the saint's body was and she inquired from the shepherd how these miracles were happening. She took some of the sand, moistened it with water, smeared it on her body and slept the night in that place. In her sleep she saw St. Mina saying to her, "Arise early and dig in this place, and you will find my body." When she woke up, she found herself cured. She began digging as she was told and she found the holy body. She sent word to her father, informing him of the news. The Emperor rejoiced exceedingly, thanked the Lord and glorified His Name. He then sent men and money and built a church in that place and it was consecrated on the fifteenth day of the Month of Baounah.

When Arcadius and Honorius reigned, they ordered a city to be built there. Multitudes of people came to that church asking for the intercession of the blessed St. Mina. The Lord had

honored him with many signs and wonders that appeared from his pure body. When the Arabs came to Egypt, some of them attacked the city and the church was destroyed, only ruins remained.

When His Grace, the late Pope Abba Kyrillos the Sixth was ordained Patriarch over the See of St. Mark, he took interest in building a large monastery in this area (Marriot) in the name of St. Mina. He spent a great deal of money in establishing it. There are now many churches in the monastery, visited by many Orthodox worshippers who go there to receive blessings and to pray. He also bought one hundred acres of land and built a fence around it. He ordained a number of monks who had a high degree of scientific and religious education.

The prayer of Mari-Mina be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Beginning of the Fast of the Nativity (Advent) in the Coptic Church.
2. The Martyrdom of Saint Yostus, the Bishop.
3. The departure of St. Nilus of Sinai
4. The Consecration of the Church of St. Abu-Nofer (Onuphrius).

1. Today marks the beginning of the fast of the Nativity (the Advent) in our Coptic Church. We implore our Lord, who completed our salvation by coming down to redeem us from the bondage of sin, to help us to do what is pleasing in His sight during this holy fast and through all the days of our lives.

2. Today also, is the commemoration of the martyrdom of St. Yostus, the bishop, by the hands of Maximus the prince. He tortured him severely and finally he received the crown of martyrdom. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

3. Today also is the commemoration of the departure of St. Nilus of Sinai. St. Nilus was a layman, married, with two sons. Nilus left his wife and one son and took the other, Theodulos, with him to Mount Sinai to be a monk. They lived here till about the year 410 when the Saracens, invading the monastery, took Theodulos prisoner.

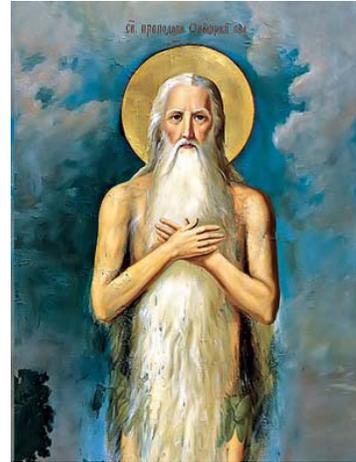
Nilus, having left his monastery to find his son, at last met him at Elusa. The bishop of Elusa then ordained them both priests and allowed them to return to Sinai. The mother and the other son had also embraced the religious life in Egypt.

St. Nilus was known as a theologian, Biblical scholar and ascetic writer. He departed in peace around 430 AD. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

4. On this day also was the consecration of the Church of St. Abu-Nofer (St. Onuphrius), the hermit, which was in El-Zaher, Misr (Cairo).

St. Onuphrius lived for 70 years as a hermit in the desert near Thebais, Upper Egypt. He lived on the fruits of a date palm-tree that grew near his cell. He wore nothing, but a loin-cloth of leaves and closed his body with his abundant hair.

St. Onuphrius died c.400 and was buried by St. Paphnutius who wrote his story. *May the prayers of these two saints be with us all and glory be to our God forever. Amen.*



THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

The Departure of Saint John Chrysostom

On this day, the honorable Saint John of the Golden Mouth (Chrysostom), departed. He was born in the city of Antioch around the year 347 A.D., to a rich father, whose name was Sakondos and a pious mother, whose name was Anthosa. They brought him up well and reared him in the Christian tradition. He went to the city of Athens, where he learned the Greek wisdom in one of its schools. He surpassed many in knowledge and in virtue. He forsook the vanities of the world and became a monk at a young age in one of the monasteries. He had a friend whose name was Basilus, who was a monk before him in that monastery. They had the same interests and they practiced many virtues.

When his father departed, St. John did not keep any of his father's possessions, but gave all of his inheritance to the poor and the needy. He then lived an ascetic life full of strife.

The grace of the Lord filled St. John Chrysostom and he wrote homilies and sermons and he interpreted many books while he was still a deacon. It was St. Meletius, Patriarch of Antioch, who had raised him to this rank. Then he was ordained a priest by St. Phlapianus, St. Meletius' successor, by the guidance of the angel of the Lord.

When Nectarius, Patriarch of Constantinople departed, Emperor Arcadius summoned St. John and made him Patriarch. He conducted himself during his patriarchate in an apostolic manner. He continued teaching, preaching and interpreting the books of the church, both old and new. He boldly admonished the sinners and the wealthy, regardless of their authority or wealth.

Queen Eudoxia, the wife of Emperor Arcadius, had a lust for money. She took a garden which belonged to a poor widow by force. The latter complained to the Saint, who went to the Queen and admonished her and asked her to return the garden to its owner. When Eudoxia did not obey him, he prevented her from entering the church and partaking of the Holy Communion. She became exceedingly angry and gathered a council of bishops whom St. John had previously excommunicated for their evil deeds and their mismanagement. They sentenced the saint to be exiled. He was exiled to the Island of Thrace, but this exile did not last more than one night. The people were enraged and they gathered around the royal palace demanding the return of the Patriarch. While the people were sorrowful because of their righteous shepherd, a severe earthquake took place and almost destroyed the city, terrifying everyone. The people thought that this was a sign of the Lord's anger, caused by the exile of the Saint. As for Eudoxia, she was disturbed, her soul was troubled and she went in haste to her husband and asked him to bring back the saint from exile. Once the light of the shepherd shone on his flock, their sorrow changed to joy and their wailing was replaced by the songs of joy and happiness.

This state of affairs did not last long. There was a large square beside the church of Agia Sophia, where a large silver statue of Queen Eudoxia was erected. On the day of its dedication, some common people danced madly, played profligate games, until they were immersed in immorality and sin. Because of St. John's zeal to curb the spread of immorality, he repudiated the people in his sermons, courageously showing his disapproval of their behavior. His enemies took advantage of his zeal and accused him before the Queen, of having said that "Herodia had risen up and danced and asked for the head of John the Baptist on a plate." This cruel accusation gave the Queen a good reason to sentence him to exile. She instructed the soldiers who were in charge of guarding him not give him any means of comfort during his travel. Thus, they moved him from one place to another hastily, until they came to a city called Komana, where his health deteriorated and he departed in peace in the year 407 A.D.

During the reign of Theodosius II, the son of Emperor Arcadius (who exiled St. John), the body of St. John was taken to Constantinople, where it was placed in the church of the Apostles. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Martyrdom of Saint Philip the Apostle.
2. Commemoration of the miracle of the moving of the mount Mukatam
3. The Martyrdom of the Two Saints: Atrasis and Yoana (Junia).

1. On this day, of the year 80 A.D., St. Philip the Apostle, one of the Twelve Disciples, was martyred. His lot fell to go to Africa and the surrounding regions. He went and preached there in the Name of the Lord Christ. There, he performed many miracles and wonders which astounded the people.

After he led the people to the knowledge of God, confirming them in the faith, he went to Herapolis, where he also led the people to the knowledge of God.

The non-believers took counsel together to kill him, accusing him of disobeying the king's order that no stranger was allowed to enter their city. They jumped him and seized him, but he smiled at them saying, "Why do you keep yourselves away from everlasting life and why don't you think about the salvation of your souls?" But they did not pay any attention to his words, instead they tortured him severely, then they crucified him head down. During the crucifixion an earthquake took place; the people were terrified and ran away. Some believers arrived and wanted to untie him from the cross, but he asked them to leave him, so he might finish his strife and receive his crown. He delivered his soul to the hands of Christ and received the crown of eternal glory in the year 80 A.D. and was buried there.

In the sixth century A.D., his body was transferred to Rome. The Lord manifested many signs and great wonders through the body of St. Philip.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the miracle of the moving of the mount Mukatam during the papacy of St. Abraam (Abraham), Ebn-Zaraa, 62nd Pope of Alexandria.

During the days of this father, El-Mu'izz, the Kalif, had a Jewish Vizier; his name was, Jacob-Ebn-Yousef, who adopted the Muslim faith (Islam). He went to El-Mu'izz and maliciously told him, "Your royal highness knows that the faith of the Christians does not have a sound base. Their Bible states, 'If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move.' (Matthew 17:20)

The Kalif thought to himself, "If the saying of Christ is true, that would be of great benefit to us, for the Mukatam mount is too close to Cairo. If the mountain can be moved away, that would make the position of the city greater than what it is now. If the saying is not true, that will give us the justification to persecute the Christians."

El-Mu'izz called the father, the Patriarch, and placed this saying before him, and asked for the proof of its soundness. The Pope asked for a three-day respite, which was granted. When the Pope left El-Khalifa, he gathered the monks and the bishops nearby and they all stayed in El-Mualaqu (the Suspended) Church in Old Cairo, three days fasting and supplicating God.

Before dawn of the third day as Abba Abraam dozed off out of sheer weariness, our Holy Lady, the Virgin, St. Mary, the Mother of God, appeared to him and told him to rise up and go to the street which leads to the market. There he would find a one-eyed man bearing a pot of water on his shoulder. She instructed Abba Abraam to tell him that he was the man designated by God to perform this sign.

This holy man's name was Simon and he was a Tanner. The father, the Patriarch, took him along with some of the priests, monks and people to see El-Mu'izz, who was out with the government leaders and the nobles of the city nearby the Mukatam Mountain. The father, the Patriarch, stood with those who were with him on one side and El-Mu'izz and his entourage stood on the other side.

The father, the Patriarch, and the believers prayed and knelt down three times, and every time they knelt, they said, "Kirya-layson" Lord have mercy. Whenever the Patriarch and the congregation lifted up their heads after each bow, the mountain would lift up and when they bowed down, the mountain was lowered down to the ground, and whenever they walked, the mountain moved before them.

A great fear came on the Khalifa and his companions and many fell on the ground. The Khalifa advanced on his horse toward the Patriarch and said, "O great teacher, I now know that you are a holy man, ask whatsoever you wish and I will give it to you." The Patriarch refused to ask for anything; but when the Khalifa insisted, he asked the Governor to allow him to build churches, especially the church of St. Mercurius (of the two swords) which was in Old Cairo. He wrote him a decree permitting the building and the renovation of churches and he gave him a large sum of money from the treasury. The Patriarch thanked him and prayed for him, but he refused to take the money. As a result, El-Mu'izz revered and respected him more for his piety and righteousness.

To commemorate this great miracle, the church added three days of fasting to the 40 days of Advent, which became 43 days. *The blessings of this great Pope be with us. Amen.*

3. On this day also is the commemoration of the Martyrdom of the Two Saints: Atrasis and Yoana (Junia). *May their holy blessings be with us and glory be to God forever. Amen.*

THE NINETEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Consecration of the Church of St. Sergius and St. Bacchus.

1. This day marks the consecration of the church of St. Sergius and St. Bacchus in the city of Rusafa. When St. Sergius was martyred in this city¹⁰, some believers carried his body, prepared it for burial, hid it in their home and lit lamps and candles before it. When the era of persecution ended, they brought the body out and a church was built in the Saint's name. Fifteen bishops and a large number of people gathered on this day and attended the consecration of the church. When the body of the Saint was brought to the church, scented oil flowed forth from it and many sick people who were anointed with it in faith were healed.

His blessings be with us. Amen.

THE TWENTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Departure of St. Anianus, 2nd Pope of Alexandria.

2. The Consecration of the Churches of Saints Theodore Tyro and Theodore Stratelates.

1. On this day of the year 86 A.D., the holy father Abba Anianus, the second Pope of Alexandria, departed. This saint was a native of Alexandria, the son of pagan parents, and he was a cobbler. When St. Mark, the Apostle, entered the city of Alexandria, it happened by God's Divine Will that he tripped and tore his sandal. He gave it to Anianus to repair. While Anianus was thrusting the awl into it, the awl went through to the other side of the sandal and injured his finger. He screamed in pain, saying in Greek, "Eis Theos" which means "O, the Only God." When St. Mark heard him mentioning the Name of the Lord, he glorified the Lord Christ. Then he took some dust from the ground, spat on it and applied it to the finger of St. Anianus and he was healed immediately.



St. Mark healing St. Anianus

Anianus was exceedingly amazed. He took St. Mark to his house, asked him about his name, his belief, and where he came from. The apostle began to tell him of the books of the prophets concerning the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the mystery of His incarnation, His Death and Resurrection and the performing of miracles in His Holy Name.

Anianus' mind was illuminated and he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and all the people of his house believed with him. They were all baptized in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and God's Divine Grace was poured upon them. They continued to listen to the teachings of the Apostle Mark, who taught them the doctrine of the church, its ordinances and its laws.

When St. Mark decided to go to Pentapolis, he laid his hand on Anianus and ordained him Patriarch over the city of Alexandria, in the year 64 A.D. St. Anianus continued preaching and baptizing its people secretly, helping and strengthening them in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He turned his house into a church; and it is said that it is the one known as the church of St. Mark the Martyr, where the church of St. Mark in Alexandria stands now. This saint occupied the throne of St. Mark for 22 years, then departed in peace.

His prayers be with us. Amen.

2. This day also commemorates the consecration of the churches of the two saints: Theodore Tyro and Theodore Stratelates.

Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Commemoration of the Virgin St. Mary, the Theotokos.
2. The Departure of Saint Gregory, the Wonder Worker.
3. The Departure of Saint Cosma, 54th Pope of Alexandria.
4. The Commemoration of the Holy Martyrs Alphaeus, Zacchaeus, Romanus and John, and the Commemoration of the Saints Thomas, Victor, and Isaac of the City of Ashmunen.
5. Departure of St. John of Lycopolis

1. On this day the church celebrates and commemorates the pure Virgin St. Mary, the Mother of

God, the Word Who was incarnated from her, for the salvation of Adam and his offspring.

Her intercession be with us. Amen.

2. Also on this day, in the year 270 A.D., St. Gregory the wonder worker, departed. Gregory was of a distinguished pagan family. He was born at Neocaesarea, Pontus, and studied law there.

About 233, he and his brother, Athenodorus, went to Beirut to continue their law studies. They met Origen and instead of going to Beirut, entered his school at Caesarea, studied theology, were converted to Christianity by Origen, and became his disciples.

Gregory returned to Neocaesarea about 238, intending to practice law, but was elected bishop by the seventeen Christians of the city. It soon became apparent that he was gifted with remarkable powers. He preached eloquently, made so many converts he was able to build a church, and soon was so renowned for his miracles that he was surnamed Thaumaturgus (the wonderworker).

He was a much-sought-after arbiter for his wisdom and legal knowledge and ability, advised his flock to go into hiding when Decius' persecution of the Christians broke out in 250, and fled to the desert with his deacon.

On his return, he ministered to his flock when plague struck his See and when the Goths devastated Pontus, 252-254, which he described in his "Canonical Letter." He participated in the synod of Antioch, 264-265, against Samosata, and fought sabellianism and Tritheism.

It is reported that at his death at Neocaesarea, only seventeen unbelievers were left in the city. *May his holy blessings be with us all. Amen.*

3. Also on this day, in the year 809 A.D., St. Cosma II, 54th Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was born in Samanoud and became a monk in the monastery of St. Macarius. When the papal chair became vacant, the bishops and the people, with one accord, agreed to choose this father.

He was ordained Patriarch and he experienced great tribulations. The believers also experienced tribulations and great afflictions; however, some wonders appeared during his patriarchate. Among them, blood flowed from the icon of St. Mary in the church of St. Severus, in the desert of Scete (the Holy desert). Also, many of the icons in the churches in Egypt became wet with tears. This unusual phenomenon was believed to be a result of the afflictions and sorrows that befell the Patriarch and the believers.

In spite of all the afflictions that he experienced, the Patriarch continued teaching the believers and strengthening them diligently and with great zeal. He stayed on the Chair of St. Mark for seven years and six months, then departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

4. This day also marks the commemoration of the martyrs Saints Alphaeus, Zacchaeus, Romanus and John. Also the commemoration of Saints Thomas, Victor and Isaac of the city of Ashmunen. *Their prayers be with us. Amen.*

5. On this day also we commemorate the departure of St. John of Lycopolis, also known as "John the Egyptian", "John the anchorite" or "John the prophet".

He was born at the beginning of the fourth century. He lived in the city of Lykopolis (Assiut) and was a carpenter. At the age of twenty-five he went to a monastery, where he received monastic tonsure.

For five years St John lived in various monasteries, and then wanting complete solitude, he went to the Thebaid and lived in a cave. St John then spent many years in solitude, never leaving the spot. He conversed with visitors through a small window, through which he also received food and other necessities.



Saint John the Anchorite

After thirty years of seclusion, St John received the gift of prophecy from God. He predicted to the emperor Theodosius the Great (379-395) victory over his adversaries Maximus and Eugenius, and a military victory over the Gauls.

He also foretold future events in the lives of his visitors, and gave them guidance. The saint gave holy oil to the sick who visited him, and anointed them with it, healing them of various maladies.

St John predicted that the historian Palladius, who wrote his Life, would become a bishop. The prediction of the seer was fulfilled, and Palladius was made Bishop of Bithynia (Asia Minor)

He knew the time of his death and spent the last three days of his life in total seclusion. His body was later found in a posture of prayer.

May his holy blessings be with us and glory be to our God. Amen

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

The Martyrdom of Saints Cosmas, Damian, Their Brothers and Their Mother

On this day, saints Cosmas and Damian, their brothers, Anthimus, Leontius and Euprepus, and their mother Theodata, were martyred. They were from one of the Arab countries. Their mother feared God and was compassionate and merciful towards strangers. She became a widow, while her children were still young. She raised them and instilled in them the fear of God and the love of righteousness. Cosmas and Damian studied medicine and they treated the sick, free of charge. As for their brothers, they went to the desert and became monks.

When Diocletian renounced the faith and ordered the worship of idols, he was told that Cosmas and Damian were preaching in the Name of Christ, and urging others not to worship idols. He ordered them to be brought to the Governor of the city, who tortured them severely

by beating them and burning them. He then asked them the whereabouts of their brothers. Upon finding out, he brought them and their mother. He ordered them to offer incense before the idols, but they refused. He then ordered the five to be squeezed through the wheel. When they experienced no harm, he took them out and cast them into a red hot furnace for three days and three nights, then into hot boiling water. Finally he placed them on red-hot iron beds. Through all this, however, the Lord raised them up whole and unharmed to reveal His glory and the honor of His saints.

When the Governor became weary of torturing them he sent them to the Emperor who also tortured them. Their mother constantly encouraged and comforted them. The Emperor rebuked her, but she admonished him for his cruelty and for worshipping idols. He ordered her head to be cut off and she received the crown of everlasting life. Her body remained on the ground and no one dared to bury it for their fear of the Emperor. St. Cosmas screamed at those present saying, “Men of this city, is there not one merciful person among you who will cover the body of this poor old widow and bury her?” Straightaway, Victor, the son of Romanus, came forward, took the body, placed it in a shroud, and buried it.

When the Emperor heard what Victor had done, he ordered that he be exiled in the land of Egypt, where he received the crown of martyrdom. The next day, the Emperor ordered the heads of the saints Cosmas, Damian, and their brothers to be cut off. They then received the crown of life in the kingdom of heaven.

At the end of the era of persecution, many churches were built in the name of these saints and God made manifest many signs and wonders therein.

Their prayer be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Departure of St. Cornelius the Centurion.
2. The Consecration of the Church of St. Marina.

1. On this day, St. Cornelius the centurion, departed. He was a captain over one hundred soldiers in Caesarea of Palestine and he worshipped the stars.

When he heard the Apostles preaching and saw the miracles performed at their hands, which were above and beyond any human power or pagan gods, he was astonished, confused, and he started to doubt his gods. He forsook the worship of the stars and opened his heart to the Lord through prayers, fasting and merciful deeds. In his prayers he repeated, “O Lord God, I am confused in my knowledge of You, direct me and guide me to You.” The Lord had compassion

on him, accepted his prayers and his compassionate deeds, and sent an angel to announce to him that his prayers and alms had ascended before God and had been accepted by Him. He ordered him to send men to the city of Joppa, to bring St. Peter the Apostle, who was lodging with Simon the tanner and who would tell him what he must do. Cornelius did as the Lord said and had St. Peter brought to his house.

As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. But Peter lifted him up saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." When Peter went in the house, he found many Gentiles who had come together. Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or to go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore, I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then for what reason have you sent for me?" So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour, I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send, therefore, to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.' So I sent to you immediately and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

Peter then opened his mouth and said, "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation, whoever fears Him and works righteousness, is accepted by Him." Then he preached to them of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, and explained to them the mystery of His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and the workings of miracles in His Name. Cornelius, his household, all his men and most of those who were with him, believed and were baptized in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Straightaway the Holy Spirit descended upon them. (Acts 10)

Afterwards, Cornelius left the military service and followed the Apostles. St. Peter then ordained him a Bishop over the city of Caesarea of Palestine. He went there and proclaimed the Name of Christ, showing them the error of worshipping idols. Their minds were illuminated with the knowledge of God and they believed in Him. He strengthened them with the signs and miracles he performed before them and he baptized them all and among them was Demetrius the Governor. Then he departed in peace and received the crown of glory of the apostles. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the great martyr, the chosen bride of the Lord Christ, the fighter St. Marina and the consecration of her church in the city of Antioch. *Her prayer be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

The Commemoration of the Twenty-Four Priests

On this day, we commemorate the twenty-four incorporeal priests of the Most High, who are sitting around His throne. They are exalted above all the saints and the spiritual hosts. Because of their closeness to God, they intercede on behalf of the human race and offer the prayers of the saints as incense, in the golden censers in their hands, before the Glorious and Blessed Lord.

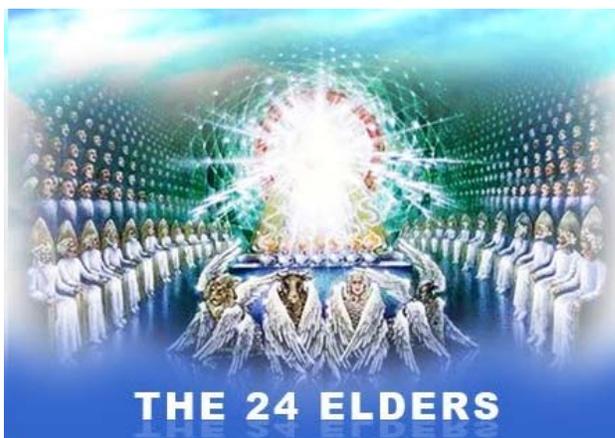
St. John the Evangelist said in Revelation, “After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here and I will show you things which must take place after this.' Immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes, and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (Revelation 4:1-4) ... each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (Revelation 5:8) who are on earth raising it to the Almighty.

St. John continued saying, “I heard the Four living creatures praising God and saying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come.' Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him Who sits on the throne, Who lives forever and ever. The twenty-four elders fall down before Him Who sits on the throne and worship Him Who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your Will they exist and were created.' (Revelation 4:8-11)

And when a command went forth from God they fell down, and worshipped saying, 'Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints, who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your Name? For You alone are Holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.'” (Revelation 15:3-4)

The fathers of the church arranged this feast to commemorate them.

Their intercession be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.



THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

The Martyrdom of St. Mercurius Known as the Saint with the Two Swords

On this day, St. Mercurius, known as the saint with the two swords (Abu-Saifain), was martyred. He was born in the city of Rome. His parents were Christians and they called him Philopateer (which means “Lover of the Father”). They reared him in a Christian manner. When he grew, he enlisted in the army during the days of Emperor Decius, the pagan. The Lord gave Philopateer the strength and the courage, for which he earned the satisfaction of his superiors. They called him Mercurius and he grew very close to the Emperor.

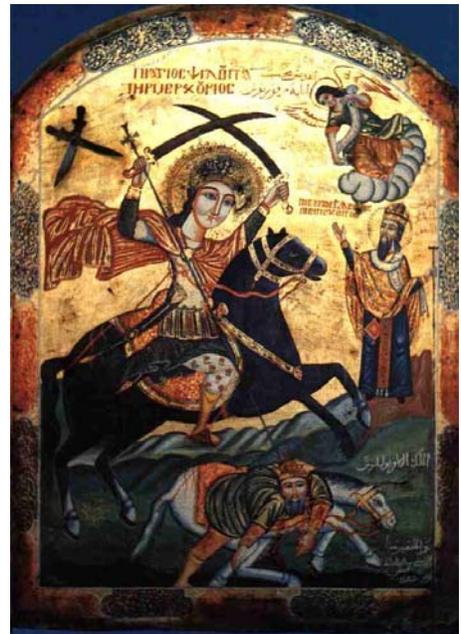
When the berbers rose up against Rome, Decius went out to fight them, but when he saw how many they were, he became terrified. St. Mercurius assured him saying, “Do not be afraid, because God will destroy our enemies and will bring us victory.” When he left the Emperor, an angel appeared to him in the shape of a human being, dressed in white apparel. The angel gave him a sword saying, “When you overcome your enemies, remember the Lord your God.” (That is why he is called, “of the two swords”, “Abu-Saifain”, one is the military sword and the other is the sword of the divine power).

When Emperor Decius conquered his enemies and Mercurius came back victorious, the angel appeared to him and reminded him of what he told him previously, that is, to remember the Lord his God.

Decius, and his soldiers with him, wanted to offer up incense to his idols and St. Mercurius tarried behind. When they informed the Emperor of what had happened, he called St. Mercurius and expressed his amazement at his abandoning of his loyalty to him. The Emperor reprimanded him for refusing to come and offer incense to the idols. The Saint cast his girdle and his military attire down before the Emperor and said to him, “I do not worship anyone except my Lord and my God Jesus Christ.” The Emperor became angry and ordered him to be beaten with whips and stalks.

When the Emperor saw how the people of the city and the soldiers were attached to St. Mercurius, the Emperor feared that they might revolt. So instead, he bound him in iron fetters and sent him to Caesarea where they cut off his head. He thus completed his holy fight and received the crown of life in the kingdom of heaven.

His prayer be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.



THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Commemoration of the Martyrdom of the Sts. Cecilia, Valerian, Tiburitus and Maximus.
2. The Commemoration of St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa.

1. On this day, Sts. Valerian and Tiburitus, his brother, who were natives of Rome, were martyred. They were the sons of pagan parents. Valerian was betrothed to the daughter of one of the nobles of Rome; her name was Cecilia. She was extremely beautiful and a Christian, who worshipped Christ in secret. When he married her, she gradually started to tell him about Christ's life and how to believe in Him, until he believed at her hands and was baptized. When St. Valerian was filled with Grace, he taught his brother Tiburitus, who also became a believer and was baptized. Because of his righteousness, St. Valerian became worthy to talk to the angels and they revealed to him future hidden things.

The governor Almachius, having learned of this, summoned them and asked them about their belief. They confessed that they were Christians. He offered them many things if they would deny Christ and offer sacrifices to idols, but they were not deceived by his promises. He threatened them with many kinds of torture, but that did not frighten them. When he saw their patience and endurance, he ordered their heads to be cut off.

The detachment of soldiers accompanying the martyrs to execution was commanded by Maximus. He was amazed at the courage of the saints, and asked them why they did not fear death. The holy brothers answered that they were relinquishing this temporal life for life eternal. Maximus wanted to learn the teaching of Christians in detail. He took Sts Valerian and Tiburtius to his own house and conversed with them all night. When she heard of this, St Cecilia went with a priest to Maximus, and he with all his family accepted holy Baptism.

On the following day when they beheaded the Martyrs Valerian and Tiburtius, St Maximus confessed before everyone that he saw how their holy souls had gone up to Heaven. For this confession the holy Martyr Maximus was condemned to die together with St. Cecilia.

Their prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also we commemorate the departure of St. Gregory, bishop of Nyssa. He was born in Cappadocia, in the year 330 A.D. and was ordained bishop by his brother, St. Basil, in the year 372 A.D.

He was exiled during the reign of Emperor Valens, then returned in the year 378 A.D., by the order of Emperor Theodosius the Great. He wrote many church books and departed in peace in the year 396 A.D. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Martyrdom of St. James the Persian (James the mutilated)
2. Commemoration of the consecration of the church of St. Victor, son of Romanos.

On this day, St. James the mutilated, was martyred. He was one of the soldiers of Izdegerd (399-420), the King of Persia. Because of his courage and his uprightness, he was promoted to the highest rank in the king's court. He found favor and access to the king, who even counselled with him in many affairs. In this way, he influenced St. James greatly to the extent that he turned his heart away from worshipping the Lord Christ.

When his mother, his wife, and his sister heard that he adopted the king's belief, they wrote to him saying, "Why have you forsaken the faith in the Lord Christ and worshipped the created objects, the fire and the sun? Know that if you persist in what you are doing, we will disown you and you will become a stranger to us." When he read their letter, he wept and said, "If by doing that, I have become a stranger to my own family and my people, how would the situation be with my Lord Jesus Christ?" Consequently, he resigned from the king's service and devoted his time to reading the holy books.

When the news reached the king, he summoned St. James. When the King saw the change that had befallen him, he ordered that James be beaten severely and if he did not change his belief, he was to be cut up with knives. They cut off his fingers, his hands, his legs and his arms. Each time they cut off a piece of his body, he praised the Lord and sang saying, "Have mercy upon me O Lord according to Your great compassion." (Psalm 50:1) Eventually, nothing was left of him except his head, his breast and his loins.

When he knew that his time was near, he entreated the Lord to have mercy and compassion upon the world and the people therein. He apologized for not standing in the presence of the mighty Lord and said, "I have neither legs to stand before Thee, nor hands to lift up to Thee, behold the parts of my body have been cast around me, O Lord receive my soul." Straightaway, the Lord Christ appeared to him, comforted, and strengthened him and his soul rejoiced. Before he delivered up his soul, one of the guards made haste and cut off his head. He thus received the crown of martyrdom. Some of the believers then came forward and took his body, wrapped it and buried it.

When his mother, his sister, and his wife heard that he was martyred, they rejoiced for his soul and came to where the body was and kissed it, weeping. They shrouded it in expensive cloth and poured sweet scents and perfumed oil over it. A church and a monastery were built in his name during the reign of the righteous Emperors Arcadius and Honourius.

When the king of Persia heard the news of the miracles and wonders which appeared through the body of St. James and of the other honored martyrs, he ordered all the bodies of the

martyrs in all parts of his kingdom, to be burnt. Some of the believers came and took the body of St. James and brought it to Jerusalem and entrusted it to St. Peter the Iberian, Bishop of Gaza. (Commemorated on the first day of the month of Koiak)

The body remained there until the reign of Marcianus, who persecuted the Orthodox Christians everywhere. St. Peter, the Bishop, took the body to Egypt. There he went to the city of Behnasa, where he stayed in a monastery occupied by devoted monks. It happened that at the sixth hour, while they were praying in the place where the holy body laid, St. James appeared to them with many other martyrs of Persia. They joined them in singing, blessed them and disappeared. Before leaving, however, St. James told them that his body should stay there as the Lord commanded.

Despite this, when Abba Peter the Bishop, decided to return to his country, he took the body with him. When he arrived at the seashore, the body was taken from their hands and returned to the place where it had originally been.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the consecration of the church of St. Victor the son of Romanos during the Papacy of St. Alexander the 19th Patriarch of Alexandria.

May their holy blessings be with us all and glory be to our God. Amen.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

The Martyrdom of St. Sarapamon, Bishop of Nikiu

This day marks the martyrdom of St. Sarapamon, Bishop of Nikiu. He was born in Jerusalem. He was Jewish, a relative of Stephen, the Archdeacon and the first martyr. He was called Simon after his grandfather.

When his father died, Simon longed to become a Christian. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and commanded him to go to Abba John, Bishop of Jerusalem, who taught him the mystery of the incarnation of the Lord Christ. However, he did not dare to baptize him in Jerusalem, for his fear of Jews, and he was pondering what he should do.

The Virgin St. Mary, appeared to Simon and told him to go to the city of Alexandria, to St. Theonas, 16th Pope of Alexandria. He departed and the angel of the Lord, in the form of a man, accompanied him on his journey to the city of Alexandria. He went to Pope Theonas, who rejoiced on seeing him, preached to him and baptized him. He then lived in seclusion.

When Pope Theonas departed and Abba Peter, the seal of the martyrs, succeeded him, Abba Peter summoned Simon so that he could assist him in the works of the patriarchate.

When the chair of the city of Nikiu became vacant, Abba Peter ordained Simon Bishop over it. His flock rejoiced greatly in him and the Lord performed many signs and wonders at his hands. There were pagan temples close to his city, and he pleaded to the Lord Christ until they were destroyed and were covered with water and Paganism was eradicated from his diocese. The heresy of Sabilius of Upper Egypt, who taught that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one person, was also eradicated.

When Diocletian denied Christ, they told him that Sarapamon the Bishop had hindered the worship of idols with his teachings. Diocletian ordered Abba Sarapamon to be brought to Antioch. When Abba Sarapamon arrived in Alexandria, on the way to Antioch, he spent the night in prison. Pope Peter, accompanied by some clergy, came to see him. When they embraced him, they saw his face as though it was that of an angel.

When Abba Sarapamon came to Antioch, the Emperor tortured him with all kinds of torture, but the Lord Christ raised him up every time without suffering. The emperor threw him to the wild beasts, but the beasts sat at his feet and many people seeing this believed in Christ.

When the Emperor saw that many people believed because of him, he sent him to Arianus, Governor of Antinoe, who happened to be in Alexandria. He took him and sailed in a ship on the way to Antinoe, but when the ship reached Nikiu, where his diocese was, the ship stopped and no one was able to move it. They took the saint off the ship and led him to the northern part of the city, where they cut off his head and he received the crown of martyrdom. The people of his diocese carried his body to the church with great honor.

His relics are preserved in a bolster in the Church of Saint Sarapamon in the village of Al-Batanun near Shibin Al-Kom in the province of Minufiya (close to Nikiu). Some relics were also kept in the Church of the Virgin Qasriyat Al-Rihan, Old Cairo.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Martyrdom of St. Peter, the Seal of the Martyrs, 17th Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Clement, Pope of Rome.

1. This day marks the martyrdom of St. Peter, 17th Pope of Alexandria and the seal of the martyrs. His father was the archpriest of Alexandria and his name was Theodosius and his mother's name was Sophia. They were God-fearing people and they had no children.

On the fifth day of the Coptic month of Abib, the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, his mother went to church where she saw other mothers carrying their children. She was exceedingly sorrowful and she wept. She besought our Lord Jesus Christ with many tears, to grant her a son. That night, Peter and Paul appeared to her and told her that the Lord had accepted her prayers and that He would give her a son, and to call him Peter. They commanded her to go to the Patriarch, to bless her. When she woke up, she told her husband about what she saw and he was exceedingly glad. Then she went to the father, the Patriarch and told him about what she saw and asked him to pray for her. He prayed and blessed her.

Shortly after, she gave birth to this saint and called him Peter. When he was 7 years old, they gave him to Pope Theonas, as was done with Samuel the prophet and he became as a son to him. He placed him in the theological school where he received his education and excelled in preaching and counseling. He then ordained him as a reader, then as a deacon, and shortly after as a priest. He relieved the Pope of many church administrative duties.

Before Pope Theonas' departure, he recommended that Abba Peter be his successor. When he was enthroned on the See of St. Mark, the church was enlightened by his teachings.

It came to pass in the city of Antioch, that a man of high authority had agreed with Diocletian the Emperor, to return to paganism. That man had two children and because of him, their mother could not baptize them there. Therefore, she took them to Alexandria. On her way there, the sea was troubled by a violent storm and she was afraid that her two sons would drown and die without being baptized. She therefore dipped them in the sea three times saying, "In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit," then she cut her breast and with her blood made the sign of the Holy Cross over their foreheads.

Eventually, the troubled sea calmed down and she arrived safely to Alexandria with her sons. On the same day, she brought them to be baptized. Whenever, the Patriarch, St. Peter tried to baptize them, the water would solidify as stone. This happened three times. When he questioned her, she informed him of what had happened to her at sea. He marvelled and praised God saying, "That is what the church proclaims, that it is one baptism." Therefore, the baptism she performed in the sea was accepted by the Lord.

Also in the days of this Pope, Arius the heretic appeared and St. Peter advised him several times to turn from his wicked thoughts, but he would not hearken to him. Consequently, he excommunicated him and prevented him from the fellowship of the church.

Arius contacted Emperor Maximianus, the infidel, and reported to him that Peter, the Patriarch of Alexandria, incited the people not to worship the gods. The Emperor was outraged and he sent messengers with orders to cut off his head. When they arrived in Alexandria, they attacked the people and destroyed most of the cities of Egypt. They robbed all their valuables, their women and children. In total, about 840 thousand of them were killed, some with the sword, some with starvation and some with imprisonment. Then they returned to Alexandria and captured the father, the Patriarch, and imprisoned him.

When the people heard about their shepherd's arrest, they gathered in front of the prison door and wanted to save him by force. The officer in charge of his slaying was worried that the general peace would be disrupted, so he postponed the execution till the next day. When the saint saw what had happened, he wanted to deliver himself to death for his people, for he feared what might happen to his flock. He wished to depart and be with Christ, without causing any disturbances or troubles. He sent for his people and he comforted them and advised them to adhere to the true faith.

When Arius, the infidel, learned that St. Peter was departing to be with the Lord, leaving him under the band of excommunication, he entreated him, through the high priests, to absolve him. St. Peter refused and told them that the Lord Christ had appeared to him this night in a vision, wearing a torn robe. St. Peter asked Him, "My Lord, who rent Your robe?" The Lord replied, "Arius has rent My robe, because he separated Me from My Father. Beware of accepting him."

After this, St. Peter summoned the Emperor's messenger in secret and advised him to dig a hole in the prison's wall on the side where there were no Christians. The officer was amazed at the bravery of the father and he did as he commanded him. He took him out of prison secretly and brought him outside the city, to where the tomb of St. Mark the evangelist, Egypt's evangelist. There, he knelt down and asked the Lord, "Let the shedding of my blood mark the end of the worship of idols and be the end of the shedding of the blood of Christians." A voice came from heaven and was heard by a saintly virgin who was near that place. It said, "Amen. May it be to you according to your wishes." When he finished his prayer, the swordsman advanced and cut off his holy head.

The body remained in its place until the people went out hurriedly from the city to the place where he was martyred, because they did not know what had happened. They took the pure body and dressed it in the pontifical clothes and seated him on the seat of St. Mark, which he refused to sit on during his life. He used to say that he saw the power of God sitting on the Chair and therefore, he did not dare to sit on it.

Then they placed his body with the bodies of the saints. He occupied the throne of St. Mark for 11 years. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. This day also marks the martyrdom of St. Clement, Pope of Rome. This Saint was born in Rome to an honorable father whose name was Fostinus; who was a member of the Senate. His father educated him and taught him Greek literature.

When St. Peter, the Apostle, came to Rome and Clement heard about his teaching, he called him to appear before him and they discussed many things together. The Apostle explained to him the falsehood of idol worship and proved to him the Divinity of the Lord Christ, in Whose Name they preached and performed miracles. He believed at his hands, was baptized by him, and followed him since that day.

St. Clement wrote the biography of the Apostles and what happened to them at the hands of the kings and rulers. He preached in numerous cities and many believed at his hands. He was the one to whom the apostles gave their Canon Books. He became the Archbishop of Rome in the latter part of the first century A.D. He preached there and brought many of its people to the knowledge of the Lord Christ.

Emperor Trajan heard of him and ordered him to be seized and brought to him. The Emperor commanded him to worship the idols and deny the Lord Christ, but St. Clement refused. Because the Emperor feared torturing him before the people of the city and before his family, he exiled him to a city and wrote a message to its Governor, telling him to torture St. Clement, then to kill him. The Governor tied his neck to an anchor and cast him into the sea. In this way, the Saint delivered up his pure spirit and received the crown of martyrdom, in the year 100 A.D.

One year after his departure, the sea water receded off his body, which appeared in the bottom of the sea as though he was alive. Many went in and were blessed and they decided to take the body away from its place. They brought a marble coffin and laid him in it and when they wanted to take his body out of the sea, they were unable to move it. They knew that he did not wish to be moved from his place, so they left him and departed.

On the day of his feast each year, the sea would flow back and the visitors would enter and be blessed by him. Many frequently travelled to see this wonder.

Among the many miracles written about him: One year the visitors went in to visit and to be blessed by him and when they left, they forgot a little child who was behind the coffin of the Saint. This was according to the Lord Christ's Will, in order to reveal the honor of His beloved ones and the grace they had received from Him. When the child's parents remembered their son, they went back to the sea, but they found the water was back and that it had covered the casket. They realized that their son must be dead and devoured by the beasts of the sea. They

wept over him and commemorated him as was the custom. The next year, when the sea waters receded, the people entered, as was their custom, and were amazed to find the child alive. They asked him how he existed and what he had eaten. He replied, "The Saint fed me, gave me drink, and protected me from the beasts of the sea." They praised the Lord Christ Who is glorified in all His saints. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE THIRTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF ATHOR

1. The Departure of St. Acacius, Patriarch of Constantinople.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Macarius.
3. The Consecration of the Church of Saints Cosmas, Damian, Their Brothers and Their Mother.

1. On this day, St. Acacius, Patriarch of the city of Constantinople, departed. He was knowledgeable and well informed about the Holy Books and was an expert in explaining their mysteries. So, he was ordained a priest over the church of Constantinople.

When the council of Chalcedon convened, he refused to attend its meeting and when they called on him to hear his opinion, he refused, claiming he was sick. He was exceedingly sorrowful for the tribulations that befell St. Dioscurus and he made that known to his companions and those he trusted: the Governors, Christians and ministers whom he knew to be dedicated and faithful Orthodox. He thanked the Lord that he did not participate in the works of this council.

When Anatolius, the Patriarch of Constantinople departed, this father was chosen by the believing ministers and the enlightened government officials to be successor. St. Acacius strove diligently to eliminate the division and enmity that dwelled in the church. When he found that the spiritual ailment was deep-rooted and difficult to overcome, he believed that the proper thing to do was to devote his efforts to the salvation of his own soul.

He sent a letter to the holy father, Abba Peter, the Pope of Alexandria, confessing the true faith which he had learned and received from the holy fathers, Abba Cyril and Abba Dioscorus. He followed that letter with many others, asking the Pope of Alexandria to accept him in the fellowship. The Pope of Alexandria answered all his letters, then he wrote him a Catholic letter and sent it with three bishops. They went disguised until they entered Constantinople and there they met Acacius, who treated them with great honor and received the letter from them. He read the letter to his friends, the Orthodox nobles of the city and they all agreed on it and with him, and confessed the True Faith. Then he wrote a letter before them, accepting the faith of Abba Dioscorus, Abba Timothy and Abba Peter and confessing the soundness of their faith.

Afterwards, he accompanied the three bishops to some monasteries and he took part with them in the celebration of the liturgy and the partaking of the Holy Communion. The bishops then exchanged the blessings with him, took the letter and returned it to Abba Peter. The Bishops informed Abba Peter about their fellowship with Abba Acacius and that they had taken part in the liturgy with him. Abba Peter accepted the letter and ordered that Abba Acacius be mentioned in the liturgies and the prayers of the Coptic church.

When the news reached the bishops of Rome, they exiled St. Acacius from Constantinople. He remained in exile until he departed in peace, all the while remaining firm in his Orthodox Faith. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of St. Macarius, the martyr.
His prayers be with us. Amen.

3. On this day, we also commemorate the consecration of the church of the Saints Cosmas and Damian; their brothers, and their mother.
Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK THE FIRST DAY

1. The Departure of St. Peter the Iberian, Bishop of Gaza.
2. The Consecration of the Church of the Saint Abba Shenouda.

Saint Peter was son of Bosmarios, the king of Iberia (Georgia) He was born around 409 AD. Ever since his childhood he preferred the ascetic life. At age twelve, he was sent as a hostage to Emperor Theodosius the Younger, as a guarantee of the loyalty of his father to the Roman empire. He carried with him the relics of the Persian martyrs (St. James the mangled included). His godfather, John the Eunuch accompanied him to Constantinople. The Empress Eudocia treated him as a son. While in Constantinople, he heard Nestorius preach in the Cathedral and was appalled by his blasphemy.

As he grew older, he desired to visit the holy land. He disguised himself and fled the royal palace accompanied by John the Eunuch. They carried the holy relics with them. Arriving at Jerusalem, they were received by Melania the younger in a residence that she had built for pilgrims. Melania had seen the young prince when she visited the Palace earlier.

Shortly after, they both received the monk's habit from the renowned Gerontius, who was priest and abbot on the Mount of Olives. A few years later, the blessed Peter chose a place on the north side of Jerusalem, by the holy church of Zion near the so-called Tower of David, and built there a cloister which is called to this day the Abbey of the Iberians.

He later left the holy city of Jerusalem, handing over his cloister to a group of men who had likewise renounced the world, and went to stay in the monastic community which is situated between Gaza and the small town named Mayuma which is by the seaside.

On the commemoration day of the glorious martyr Victor, when an assembly of many bishops was in session, Paul who was bishop of that place, caught Peter and John by surprise. and ordained them to the priesthood under duress in spite of their struggles and resistance. After he had thus received the laying on of hands, Peter refused obstinately for seven years to carry out the priestly offices, until it fell to him to be raised to the episcopate in the time of the transgression of Chalcedon.

The monks and clergy of Palestine opposed the council of Chalcedon and they implored their bishop Juvenal to remember his promise to eschew godlessness and fight for the true cause. When he refused to yield they assembled in the Holy City and elected the blessed Theodosius, a man devoted from his youth to the monastic way of life and imbued with the fear of the Lord, and they made him pastor of the Holy City of Jerusalem. Afterwards Theodosius chose pious men from among the monks and bearers of the cross to consecrate them as bishops and confessors of the faith.

Then the citizens of Mayuma which belongs to Gaza, who knew the blessed Peter to possess every virtue, hurried to the spot where he was living in tranquillity and carried him off by force, although he bolted the door against them. A crowd of prominent clergy and common people bore him to the Holy City, so that they might receive a pastor and bishop from the hands of the chief of the priesthood.

On the seventh of August [A.D. 452], he arrived at the holy church of Mayuma and was borne inside and seated on the throne amidst general rejoicing. He remained some six months in his holy church, during which time the people of Mayuma joyfully celebrated all the religious festivals, rejoicing in the protection of God who had granted them such a pastor, whom they cherished as an angel with love and affection.

The Emperor Marcian issued a decree deposing the righteous bishops who had been appointed throughout the towns of Palestine by the apostolic Patriarch Theodosius. In case of resistance, they were to be forcibly expelled from their sees and killed, while the Patriarch Theodosius was condemned to death. So the blessed Peter departed into Egypt and arrived by God's will at the city of Alexandria, where the rebel Proterius was now patriarch. Peter went into hiding and afforded encouragement and solace to the orthodox. Celebrating the divine service in secret, he did not allow their zeal and faith to be quenched.

Now when the news of the death of Marcian reached Alexandria, the God-fearing populace breathed again and gave thanks to our Redeemer Christ. By unanimous resolve they sent into the wilderness to fetch the holy Timothy, that renowned and true confessor, and brought him to the city, right into the church which is called the Kaisarion, to consecrate him as high priest and champion of the faith. But they could find only one of the orthodox bishops, namely Eusebius of Pelusium, the others having hidden themselves from the persecution. Learning that the blessed Peter was also there, the people hurried to the spot where he was living and carried him on their shoulders to the Kaisarion, where the populace was assembled. And the blessed one together with that other bishop carried out the consecration of Archbishop Timothy, the grace of God being with them. [A.D. 457]

In the period A.D. 457-74, Peter went about Alexandria and the monasteries nearby in secret, and visited many other towns and villages of Egypt, edifying the hosts of true believers like a second Paul and providing for all an exemplary model of pious ardour.

When all this came to the ears of the orthodox brethren in Palestine it awakened their love towards their holy father and bishop. Many saintly men came to him and entreated him to visit his flock in Palestine also, now that they had been so long deprived of his spiritual care. So he returned to the land of Palestine.

Now the time was drawing near for the blessed one to find rest and be called to Jesus whom he yearned for. He bid us remain fast until death in the orthodox faith and to shun the synod

of Chalcedon and the Tome of Pope Leo. Then the blessed one in happy tranquillity entrusted his spirit into the hands of God, who even now was near him and bore him away.

May his holy blessings be with us all. Amen.

2. On this day also, is the commemoration of the consecration of the church of the great saint, Abba Shenouda (Shenoute) the Archimandrite. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Departure of the Saint Abba Hor, the Monk

This day marks the departure of the saint Abba Hor, the monk. This father was a native of the city of Abraht, district of Ashmunein. He was a chosen monk that surpassed many saints in his worship. He loved the solitary life so he lived in seclusion in the desert. Satan envied him, so he appeared to Abba Hor and told him, "In the desert you can conquer me because you are alone here, but if you are brave, go to Alexandria and I will tempt you there." When Abba Hor heard that, he rose up immediately and went to Alexandria. He remained there for a while drawing water for the prisoners and the shut ins.

One day horses were galloping in the middle of the city, one of them hit a child and killed him immediately. Saint Abba Hor was standing where the child was killed. Satan entered the hearts of some of the people who were standing around and made them shout saying, "The killer of this child was that old monk." Several people were passing by and heard that. They gathered around and mocked Abba Hor. The saint, Abba Hor, was not disturbed. He took the child in his arms, while praying to the Lord Christ in his heart, then he made the sign of the honorable Cross over the child. The child's soul returned to him, and Abba Hor delivered the child to his parents.

The people standing around marvelled and glorified God, and their hearts and minds turned toward Abba Hor. Being afraid of vainglory, he escaped to the desert and stayed there in one of the monasteries for the rest of his days.

When his departure from this futile world drew near, he saw the company of saints calling him. He rejoiced exceedingly. He sent for his disciples, commanded them to remain in the path of the ascetic life, and told them that he was about to depart to the Lord Christ. They were sorrowful for his departure, and felt that they would be orphans without him. After a short sickness, he delivered up his soul in the hands of the Lord. His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen

THE THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Entrance of Saint Mary into the Temple at Jerusalem

On this day we commemorate the entrance of our holy Lady, the Virgin, Saint Mary, the Theotokos, into the Temple when she was three years old, for she was dedicated to God.

Her mother, Anna (Hannah), was childless. The women who were in the Temple stayed away from her. She was exceedingly sad and so was her husband Joachim who was a blessed old man. She prayed to God fervently and with a contrite heart saying, "If You give me a fruit, I will devote the child to Your Holy Temple." God answered her prayers and she brought forth this pure saint and called her Mary.

She reared her for three years, after which she took her to live with the virgins in the Temple. Saint Mary dwelt in the sanctuary for 12 years. She received her food from the hands of the angels, until the time when our Lord Christ came into the world, and was incarnated through her, the elect of all women.

When she had completed 12 years in the sanctuary, the priests took counsel together concerning her, so that they might entrust her to someone who would protect her, for she was consecrated to God and they were not allowed to keep her in the temple after this age. They decided that she be engaged to a man who could take care of her and who would look after her.

They gathered 12 righteous men from the house of David of the Tribe of Juda so they might place her with one of them. They took their staffs inside the Sanctuary, and a dove flew up and stood on the staff belonging to Joseph the carpenter who was a righteous man. They knew that this was God's will.

Joseph took the holy Virgin St. Mary, and she dwelt with him until Gabriel, the Angel of the Lord, came to her and announced to her that the Son of God was to be incarnated from her, for the salvation of Adam and his posterity.

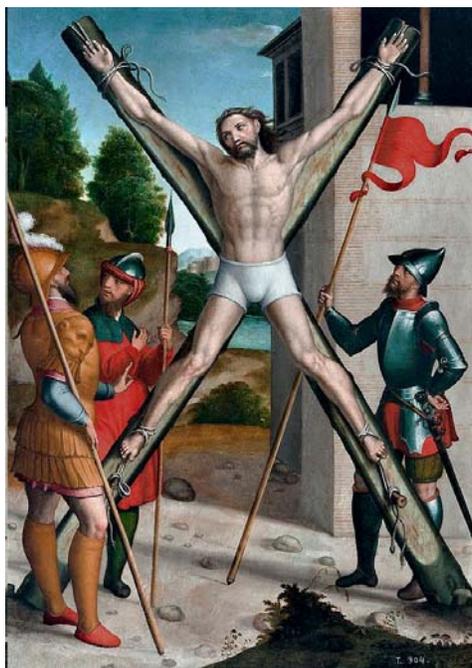
Her intercession be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Martyrdom of St. Andrew the Apostle, the Brother of St. Peter

On this day, St. Andrew the Apostle, the brother of St. Peter, was martyred. St. Andrew preached in Scythia. He also preached along the Black Sea and the Dnieper river as far as Kiev, and from there he travelled to Novgorod. Hence, he became a patron saint of Ukraine, Romania and Russia. St. Andrew also preached in Thrace and Achaea.

St. Andrew is said to have been martyred by crucifixion at the city of Patras (Patræ) in Achaea. Early texts, such as the Acts of Andrew, describe St. Andrew as bound, not nailed, to an X-shaped cross, or "saltire", now commonly known as a "Saint Andrew's Cross" — supposedly at his own request, as he deemed himself unworthy to be crucified on the same type of cross as Jesus had been. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*



THE FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Departure of Nahum, the Prophet.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Victor (Boctor).
3. The Martyrdom of St. Isidore (Isidorus).

1. On this day is the commemoration of the righteous Prophet Nahum, one of the minor 12 prophets. He was born in the village of El-Kosh, one of the villages of Galilee. He was of the tribe of Simeon, among the prophets, he was the 16th from Moses down. He prophesied in the days of Amaziah the son of Joash, and in the days of Azariah, his son.

He rebuked the children of Israel because of their worship of idols and he revealed to them that although God, the most High, is compassionate and abundant in mercy, yet He is a jealous God Who will take vengeance on His adversaries. He prophesied concerning the preaching of the Gospel and the apostles who should preach it, saying, “Behold on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace...” (Nahum 1:15)

Nahum prophesied about the destruction that would come upon Ninevah. That was fulfilled since God had sent an earthquake and a fire which destroyed and burnt up the people that returned from the way of righteousness and committed the sin. As for those who were straight in their ways, no evil nor harm befell them. When he completed his days in a life pleasing to God, he departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also St. Victor (Boctor) was martyred. He was born in a town, in the province of Assiut, east of the Nile. He was appointed a soldier in the city of Shaou (Shaw).

During that time the Edict of Diocletian was issued to worship and raise incense to the idols. When St. Victor refused to worship the idols, the Governor of Shaou called him and tried to befriend him, but when he failed to persuade him, the Governor finally cast him into prison. His parents came and encouraged him to face martyrdom.

Once again the Governor brought him from prison and ordered him to worship the idols, but St. Victor refused. When the Governor of Shaou failed to make him renounce his faith in the Lord Christ, he was enraged. He sent him to the Governor of the province of Assiut, along with some soldiers, and a message informing him of what had happened.

When the Governor of Assiut read the message, he summoned Victor. When Victor came before him, the Governor asked him, "Why did you disobey the Governor of Shaw? Know, if you listen to me, I shall place you in a high honor, and I shall write to the Emperor to appoint you as governor over one of the cities." The saint shouted with a loud voice, saying, "The kingdoms of the world vanish, the gold perishes, the cloth wears out, the beauty of the body will corrupt and be eaten by worms and will disappear in graves, therefore I would not forsake my Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and the Provider for everyone, to worship idols made of stone which are inhabited by devils."

The Governor was enraged and ordered him to be tied to the tails of horses and be dragged to the village of Ebesidia. There, they asked him again to worship the idols, but he refused. The Governor ordered him to be killed by throwing him in boiling water in the village of Mosha (Monshah), east of the village of Ebesidia (Ibsidya).

When they took him there, Victor asked the soldiers to wait in order that he might pray first. He extended his arms and prayed to the Lord. The Angel of the Lord appeared to him and promised him with many promises, and the everlasting blessings in the kingdom of heaven. Then St. Victor looked to the soldiers and told them, "Finish what you have been ordered to do." They bound him and cast him into the boiling water. He endured to the end, completed his good strife, and received the crown of the Heavenly kingdom. Some Christians secretly recovered his body and hid it till the end of the Diocletian reign. When they revealed it, the people who saw it testified that they found the body whole, with not even one hair burned, and lying peacefully like a sleeping person.

They built a great church in his name, which still exists in the village of Mosha (Monshah), province of Assiut. Many wonders and signs were manifested from his body and still appear to this day. *His prayer be with us. Amen.*

3. On this day also is the commemoration of the martyrdom of St. Isidorus. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Departure of St. Abraam (Abraham), Ebn-Zaraa, 62nd Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Patlas

On this day, of the year 970 A.D., the saint Abba Abraam, 62nd Pope of Alexandria, departed. This father was a descendant of the Christians of the East, whose name was Ebn-Zaraa the Syrian. He was a rich merchant who visited Egypt often, then finally settled there.

He was blessed with many virtues, including mercy to the needy. His reputation of righteousness and knowledge became well known. When the Patriarchal Chair became vacant, the bishops and the learned elders all agreed to choose him as Patriarch. When he sat on the chair of the See of St. Mark, he gave all his possessions to the poor and needy.

Among his accomplishments was the abolition of some corrupt and erroneous customs. He prevented and excommunicated everyone who took bribes from anyone for the purpose of gaining a clerical position. He also strongly forbade the keeping of concubines. When the people who were practicing that knew his orders, the fear of God moved them, for they also feared that the Patriarch might excommunicate them.

During the days of this father, El-Mu'izz, the Kalif, had a Jewish Vizier; his name was, Jacob-Ebn-Yousef, who adopted the Muslim faith (Islam). He went to El-Mu'izz and maliciously told him, "Your royal highness knows that the faith of the Christians does not have a sound base. Their Bible states, 'If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move.' (Matthew 17:20)

The Kalif thought to himself, "If the saying of Christ is true, that would be of great benefit to us, for the Mukatam mount is too close to Cairo. If the mountain can be moved away, that would make the position of the city greater than what it is now. If the saying is not true, that will give us the justification to persecute the Christians."

El-Mu'izz called the father, the Patriarch, and placed this saying before him, and asked for the proof of its soundness. The Pope asked for a three-day respite, which was granted. When the

Pope left El-Khalifa, he gathered the monks and the bishops nearby and they all stayed in El-Mualaqua (the Suspended) Church in Old Cairo, three days fasting and supplicating God.

Before dawn of the third day as Abba Abraam dozed off out of sheer weariness, our Holy Lady, the Virgin, St. Mary, the Mother of God, appeared to him and told him to rise up and go to the street which leads to the market. There he would find a one-eyed man bearing a pot of water on his shoulder. She instructed Abba Abraam to tell him that he was the man designated by God to perform this sign.

This holy man's name was Simon and he was a Tanner. The father, the Patriarch, took him along with some of the priests, monks and people to see El-Mu'izz, who was out with the government leaders and the nobles of the city nearby the Mukatam Mountain. The father, the Patriarch, stood with those who were with him on one side and El-Mu'izz and his entourage stood on the other side.

The father, the Patriarch, and the believers prayed and knelt down three times, and every time they knelt, they said, "Kirya-layson" Lord have mercy. Whenever the Patriarch and the congregation lifted up their heads after each bow, the mountain would lift up and when they bowed down, the mountain was lowered down to the ground, and whenever they walked, the mountain moved before them.

A great fear came on the Khalifa and his companions and many fell on the ground. The Khalifa advanced on his horse toward the Patriarch and said, "O great teacher, I now know that you are a holy man, ask whatsoever you wish and I will give it to you." The Patriarch refused to ask for anything; but when the Khalifa insisted, he asked the Governor to allow him to build churches, especially the church of St. Mercurius (of the two swords) which was in Old Cairo. He wrote him a decree permitting the building and the renovation of churches and he gave him a large sum of money from the treasury. The Patriarch thanked him and prayed for him, but he refused to take the money. As a result, El-Mu'izz revered and respected him more for his piety and righteousness.

This father renovated many churches all over the See of St. Mark. When he completed his course, he departed in peace after he sat on the chair for 3 years and 6 days.

His prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also we commemorate St. Patlas, the priest and martyr.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. Departure of St. Matthias El Fakhoury (Matthew the poor)
2. Departure of St. John, bishop of the city of Arment
3. Martyrdom of Said Ben Kateb El Faraghany

On this day, the great saint Abba Matthias El Fakhoury, Abbot of the monastery of Mount Asphoun (near Esna) departed. Due to his extreme humility, he called himself “Matthew the poor”. Born of Christian parents in the eighth century AD, during the papacy of Pope Alexander II, 43rd Patriarch of the See of St. Marc. His father was in the pottery trade, hence his surname “El Fakhoury”. Since his youth he frequented monasteries and had converse with monks.

He coveted the monastic life, so he joined one of the Pachomian monasteries near Esna, and asked Abba Marc, the Abbot of the monastery to be his spiritual tutor. He accepted him and soon after he vested him in the monastic Schema.

He started his monastic life with strenuous ascetic strife, practising prayer and seclusion. He later made himself a cave in the mountain near the monastery, where he lived a life of prayer and solitude.

When Abba Marc departed, the monks chose him to be the new Abbot of the monastery. He performed his duties well, renovating the monastery, so much so that the monastery was later called after him, when he departed and was buried there.

God granted this saint many spiritual gifts like healing the sick, exorcising, raising the dead and prophesying. Wild animals befriended him and even accepted food out of his hands. After he completed his course he departed in peace. His relics are kept in a wooden reliquary near the entrance of the ancient monastery. *May his blessings and his prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also St. John, bishop of the city of Arment departed. He was born of pagan parents, his father was a carpenter by trade. His elder brother Pisenteos searched the books diligently and was convinced of the Christian religion. He converted his younger brother, and both were baptised. They inhabited a mountain near their birthplace where they lived as anchorites. Their fame spread to the region roundabout.

In due time, the elders of the city of Arment sought John, took him by force to Alexandria, where the Pope ordained him a bishop for Arment. He returned to his city, baptised many and built churches, rightly dividing the word of truth. He suffered a lot from the pagan governor showing patience and endurance that gained him the respect of the populace. When he finished his course he departed in peace. *May his prayers be with us. Amen.*

3. On this day also the Coptic architect Said Ben Kateb El Faraghany was martyred. He was commissioned to build the Nilometer (an instrument to measure the water level in the river Nile) in the year 864 AD. During the Califate of Calif Abbas al Motawally. When Calif Ahmad Ben Toulon reigned, he commissioned him to build a bridge, later called the bridge of Ben Toulon, and a well to bring water to his capital, around the years 872-73.

Ben Toulon then wanted to build a great mosque with three hundred pillars of marble. He decided to demolish many churches and use their marble pillars for his mosque. When the Coptic architect heard that he was grieved and he proposed to build a mosque with only two pillars. He drew the mosque for the Calif, who liked the design. The mosque of Ben Toulon in Cairo is still standing as a testimony to the genius of this Coptic architect. He used arches in the building even before they were used in any part of the world.

Ben Toulon tried to convince him to embrace Islam but he refused. Ben Toulon ordered him beheaded and he obtained the crown of martyrdom. *His blessings be with us and glory be to our God. Amen.*

THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Departure of St. Heraclas, 13th Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Martyrdom of the Saints: Barbara and Juliana.
3. The Martyrdom of the Saints: Esi and His Sister Thecla.
4. The Departure of Abba Samuel the Confessor.

1. On this day of the year 246 A.D., the holy father, Pope Heraclas, 13th Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was born to pagan parents who believed and were baptized after his birth. They taught him the Greek philosophy, then the Christian wisdom. He also studied the four gospels and the epistles. St. Demetrius, 12th Pope of Alexandria, ordained him deacon, then a priest over the church of Alexandria. He was successful in the ministry and was faithful in all that was entrusted to him.

When Pope Demetrius departed, St. Heraclas was chosen as Patriarch. He shepherded the flock of Christ well. He converted many pagans and baptized them. He devoted his efforts to teaching, preaching and instructing the transgressors. He assigned to St. Dionysius the work of judging between the believers, and taking care of their affairs.

He has been identified as the first Patriarch of Alexandria to carry the appellation of “Pope” (in Greek, Papás, a term, originally a form of address meaning 'Father', that the church of Rome did not use until the sixth century). The first known record of this designation being assigned to Heraclas is in a letter written by the bishop of Rome, Dionysius, to Philemon:

το τον ἐγὼ τὸν κανόνα καὶ τὸν τύπον παρὰ το μακαρίου πάπα ἡμ ν ρακλ παρέλαβον. “I received this rule and ordinance from our blessed Pope, Heraclas.”

Pope Heraclas sat on the throne of St. Mark for 13 years and departed in peace.
May his holy blessings be with us all. Amen.

2. On this day also Sts. Barbara and Juliana, were martyred. Barbara was the daughter of a noble man from one of the countries in the east, called Dioscorus, during the days of Maximianus the Emperor, in the beginning of the third Christian century.

Because of his strong love for her, he built her a tower to live in. The saint always raised up her eyes to the sky from the top of the tower and contemplated the beauty of the sky and what was in it: the sun, the moon and the stars. She came to the conclusion that they must have an able and wise maker and that would be none other than the Almighty God who created them.

Origen, the scholar, happened to be in this area and was informed of the saint. He went to her and taught her the principles of Christianity.

There were two windows in the bathroom and she ordered a third one to be opened and a cross to be placed over the water basin. When her father came to see her and saw the changes that were done, he asked her for the reason. She told him, “Don't you know, my father, that with the Holy Trinity everything is complete, and here are three windows in the name of the Holy Trinity. This sign is the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, wherein was the salvation of the whole world. I ask you, O my dear father, to turn away from the wrong way that you are in and worship the God Who created you.”

When her father heard these words, he became angry, drew his sword and ran after her. She fled, and he ran after her. There was a rock in front of her that split into two halves and she went through. The rock then returned to its earlier state. Her father went around the rock and found her hidden in a cave. He jumped over her like a wolf, seized her and took her to Marcianus, the governor. The Governor talked to her kindly, promising her many things. Then he threatened her, but could not take away her love for the Lord Christ. Thereupon, he ordered her to be tortured with different kinds of torture.

There was a damsel called Juliana, who watched St. Barbara while she was being tortured and wept for her. Juliana saw the Lord Christ strengthening and comforting St. Barbara; she was enlightened and believed in the Lord Christ. They cut off her head and that of St. Barbara and they both received the crown of martyrdom.

St. Barbara's father perished shortly after and so did the Governor who tortured her. The water of the basin that had the cross over it in the tower had the power to heal everyone who washed with it.

They placed the bodies of these two saints in a church outside of the city of Galatia. Years later, they relocated the body of St. Barbara to the church in Cairo which is named after her to this day. *Their prayers be with us. Amen.*

3. On this day also was the martyrdom of St. Esi and his sister Thecla. They were from the city of Abu-Sair, west of El-Ashmunein. St. Esi was a very rich man. He gave the money which he earned from the shearing of his sheep to the needy.

When Esi knew that his friend Paul, whom he visited often for trading, was seriously ill in the city of Alexandria, he went to visit him and remained with him until he recovered from his illness. They both agreed to visit the saints who were in prison because of the persecution. Some of the saints in prison prophesied that they would receive the crown of martyrdom.

That was during the time when St. Victor, the son of Romanus (Ebn-Romanus) came to Alexandria. When Esi and Paul knew of his good strife and of his renouncing of the world, they wished to follow his example. Esi went to the Governor and confessed the Lord Christ. The Governor ordered him to be tortured with the most severe kinds of torture such as making him take off his clothes, binding and squeezing him, then placing burning torches on his sides. They also ordered him to be cast on the ground and beaten with whips, and to dismember parts of his body. Through it all he was patient, and the Angel of the Lord strengthened him and healed his wounds. Paul, his friend, was crying and praying along with his servants for Esi's sake.

The Angel of the Lord appeared to his sister Thecla and ordered her to go to her brother. She went to the seashore and embarked on one of the ships. Therein, the Virgin, the Mother of God, and Elizabeth, her kinswoman, appeared to her and comforted her because of her brother. Elizabeth told her, "I have a son; they beheaded him unjustly," and St. Mary told her, "I have a Son whom they crucified with envy." Thecla did not recognize them at that time.

When she met her brother, they agreed together and went to the Governor confessing the Lord Christ. He tortured them severely on the squeezing wheel (Hinbazeen), burned them with fire, nailed them, and flayed the skin of their heads. But the Lord healed, strengthened, and comforted them. When the Governor became weary of torturing them, he handed them to his son, the Governor of the city of Antione (Ansena) in Upper Egypt. When they had sailed for a short while, the wind died down so the boat stopped. The Governor ordered the heads of Esi and Thecla, his sister, to be cut off and cast into the weeds and the wild plants on the banks. They did so and thus they received the crown of martyrdom.

The Lord commanded a priest called Abba Ori (Ari) from Shatanouf to go and take their holy bodies. As for Paul, Esi's friend, and Ablanius, the son of Thecla, they were martyred later on. *Their prayer be with us. Amen.*

4. Also on this day the saint Abba Samuel, the head of El-Qualamon Monastery, departed. He was born in the city of Dakluba, diocese of Masil, from holy parents and he was their only child. Arselaos, his father, who was a priest, saw in a vision at night, a resplendent man telling him, “Your son must be entrusted with a large congregation, for he is chosen by the Lord to be His all the days of his life.”

Samuel was pure from his youth, like Samuel the prophet, and he was always harboring thoughts in his heart about the monastic life. One day he found a means to go to the desert of Scete, but he did not know the way. The Angel of the Lord, in the form of a monk, appeared to him and accompanied him as he was himself going to the monastery, until they came to the desert of Scete. There, the Angel delivered him to a holy man called Abba Agathon who accepted him as the Angel of the Lord instructed. Abba Samuel lived with Abba Agathon for three years in total obedience in every way. Later on, the holy old man Abba Agathon departed. Abba Samuel devoted himself to many prayers and fasting. He fasted a week at a time. He was ordained a priest over the church of St. Macarius in Scete.

An envoy came to the desert carrying Leo's Tome and when the envoy read it to the elders, Abba Samuel became zealous, with the zeal of the Lord. He jumped up in the middle of the gathered monks and seized the letter and rent it into pieces saying, “Excommunicated is this tome and everyone who believes in it and cursed is everyone who might change the Orthodox faith of our Holy Fathers.” When the envoy saw this, he became furious and angry. He ordered him to be beaten with pins and to be hanged up by his arms, and that his face be smitten. One of these strikes enucleated one of St. Samuel's eyes. Then he was driven away from the monastery.

The Angel of the Lord appeared to St. Samuel and commanded him to depart and to dwell in El- Qualamon. He went there and built a monastery, lived in it for a while teaching those gathered around him and confirming them in the Orthodox faith.

When El-Moquakas heard about Abba Samuel, he came to him and asked him to recognize the Council of Chalcedon. When he did not listen to him, he smote him and expelled him out of the monastery. He went and lived in one of the churches and after a while he returned to the monastery.

When the Barbers raided the monastery, they took him with them on their way back to their country. He prayed to the Lord Christ to rescue him from them. Whenever they set him on a camel, the camel was unable to stand up with him on it, so they left him and he went back to his monastery.

When the Berbers raided the wilderness again, they took St. Samuel with them to their country. They had captured before Abba Yoannis the hegomen (Archpriest) of Scete. So they were joined together and comforted each other. The captive of Abba Samuel tried to persuade

him to worship the sun. When he failed, he tied the leg of Abba Samuel to the leg of one of his maidens and sent them to attend to the camels. He intended for Abba Samuel to fall into sin with her and then he would submit to him, according to Satan's advice. Through it all, the saint was gaining more courage and became stout-hearted. He remained in these circumstances until the master's son fell ill and was close to death; Abba Samuel prayed for him and the boy was healed of his sickness. The news was spread all over this country and whosoever was sick came to him; he prayed over him and anointed him with oil and the sick were healed.

His master loved him exceedingly, he apologized and asked for Abba Samuel's forgiveness. He told him to ask for anything he wished. Abba Samuel asked to go back to his monastery. His master allowed him to return.

When Abba Samuel returned, many of his sons gathered around him and they increased in number until they became thousands. The Virgin, St. Mary, appeared to him and told him, "This place shall be my abode forever," and from that day the Barbarians never attacked this monastery again.

Abba Samuel wrote many discourses and articles. He prophesied concerning the coming of Islam to Egypt. When the time of his departure drew near, he gathered together his sons and commanded them to be strong in the fear of God, to walk according to His commandments and to fight for the sake of the Orthodox faith till their last breath. Then he departed in peace. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Departure of St. Poemin, the Confessor

On this day St. Poemin, the confessor, departed. He was from the village of Bani-Khaseeb, district of El-Ashmunein. He was the steward of a rich man, whose wife trusted him greatly. Because of his chastity and his righteousness, everybody loved him.

Because of his disdain for the vanities of this world, he left his work and went to a monastery in this city wherein he became a monk. When the rich man, his employer, knew about it, he and his wife went to him and asked him to come back to his job, for they were sorrowful for his departure. When he did not go along with them, they returned sad. The saint went on with his worship and asceticism, but he was not satisfied with that, and longed to become a martyr by the shedding of his blood in the Name of the Lord Christ, to Whom is the glory.

He went to Ansena and found many Christians were being tortured for the Name of Christ. He therefore went forward and confessed his faith. They tortured him severely by beating him, burning him, by dismemberment of his body parts, and by squeezing him on the Hinbazeen. During all these tortures, the Lord Christ strengthened him and raised him up whole. While he was suffering in this manner, the era of worshipping idols came to an end; for Constantine the Just became emperor and ordered all those in prison, because of their faith in the Lord Christ, to be set free.

The Lord Christ appeared to this saint and commanded him to make known to all the saints in prison that the Lord, Whose Name be blessed, reckoned them among the martyrs and called them the confessors. Emperor Constantine sent for 72 of them in order to receive their blessings. They went to him along with St. Abanob, the confessor.

St. Poemin lived after that in a monastery outside the city of El-Ashmunein. God granted him the gift of healing the sick and these reports spread in all the surrounding districts. The Empress of Rome became sick with a grievous illness which was difficult to treat. She visited many monasteries and churches but she was not healed of her sickness. Finally she came to the city of Ansena, and the governor of the city and his men accompanied her to the place where St. Poemin was.

When they informed him of the Empress' presence and expressed to him her desire to see him, St. Poemin did not go out to meet her but said, "What have I to do with the kings of the earth." When the brethren, the monks, besought him to go out to meet her, he did so. When she saw him, she bowed down at his feet. The saint prayed over some oil and anointed her and she was instantly healed of her sickness. The Empress offered St. Poemin much money along with several expensive gifts but he did not accept them, except for a few sacred vessels for the altar, a paten, a chalice, and a cross of gold. The Empress returned to Rome glorifying God.

There was a holy bishop close to St. Poemin while he was celebrating the feast of some martyrs with several believers in one of the monasteries. He knew that the Arian heretics took a false bishop and lead many people astray. The bishop went to St. Poemin and told him. St. Poemin took some monks and went where those heretics were. He debated with them, explaining to them their evil counsel, and the Lord dispersed them.

The saint went back to his monastery, until he became an old man. When he became sick, he gathered the brethren and advised them, telling them that his time was drawing nigh to be with the Lord. The brethren were sorrowful because of his approaching separation from them. When he delivered up his soul, the brethren swathed him and prayed over him. Many healing signs were manifested through his body.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Relocation of the Body of St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch.
2. The Departure of St. Nicholas, the Confessor, Bishop of Myra (Mora).

1. On this day, the body of St. Severus, Archbishop of Antioch, was relocated to the Zogag Monastery. This holy man departed in the city of Sakha at the house of a righteous wealthy man called Dorotheus, where he was hiding. Dorotheus sent the body, in a ship, with trustworthy men to the Zogag Monastery, located to the west of the city of Alexandria.

He commanded them not to enter the bay but to use the lake until they came to the shore. When they came to Kartasa, facing north, they sailed towards the west, but they did not find water deep enough to sail their ship and the crew was saddened and worried.

God, the Lover of man, He Who saved the children of Israel from their enemies, and opened up a way for them in the Red Sea and made them pass over, this same God preserved the body of Saint Severus from those who hated him. God made manifest this miracle. He made the ship sail in shallow water for six miles until they arrived to the shore.

From there they took the body of the Saint, carried it to the Zogag Monastery and laid it in the place which Dorotheus had built for it. There was great joy in the city of Alexandria and God worked great signs and wonders through the body of His saint Abba Severus.

God honored St. Severus after his death even more than during his life.

His blessings be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also the righteous St. Nicholas, Bishop of Mora (Myra), departed. He was from the city of Mora, his father's name was Epiphanius and the name of his mother was Tona. They were rich, as well as God-fearing, people. They had no children to bring joy to their hearts and to inherit their wealth after their deaths. They remained without a son until they grew old and they were enveloped with despair. God had pity on them and gave them this saint. He was filled with the Divine grace since his young age. When he reached school age, he demonstrated, through intelligence and knowledge, that he learned far more from the Holy Spirit than he did from his teachers. He learned all the doctrine and the teachings of the church since his young age and was ordained deacon.

Then he became a monk in a monastery wherein his cousin was the abbot. He lived an ascetic and a righteous life, and was ordained a priest when he was 19 years old. God gave him the gift to work signs and wonders and to heal the sick.

St. Nicholas is too illustrious to describe all the signs that were performed by his hands, but an example of his good deeds and benevolent works follows:

There was a very rich man in the city of Mora who lost all his wealth. He had three daughters who had passed the age of marriage, and he could not marry them because of his poverty. Satan tempted the man to think that he should make his daughters live in sin so that they might get their food by means of fornication. God revealed to St. Nicholas the thoughts which were in this man's head, and what he intended to do. St. Nicholas took 100 dinars of his father's money and tied it up in a sack. During the night, secretly and without anyone seeing him, he threw the money into the window of that poor man's house. When the man found the gold, he was astonished and rejoiced exceedingly and was able to give his eldest daughter away in marriage. During another night the saint threw another hundred dinars into the man's house and the man was able to give his second daughter away in marriage. The man wanted to know who this charitable person was. The third time when the saint threw the gold into the house, the man was watching and immediately when he felt the drop of the sack, he ran out of his house to see who was throwing the gold to him. He found the kind bishop St. Nicholas and the man bowed down at his feet and paid him great homage and thanked him because he saved his daughters from poverty and from a life of sin. The saint refused to accept any thanks and asked them to thank the Lord Who put this thought in his heart.

St. Nicholas drove out the devil and his angels from people, he healed many sick people, and he blessed little bread to satisfy many people, with much more left over.

Before being selected bishop, he saw in a vision, a great throne and magnificent vestments placed on it and a man said to him, "Put on these vestments and sit on this throne." Another night he saw our Lady, St. Mary, giving him the vestments of the priesthood and our Lord Jesus Christ gave him the Gospel.

When the Bishop of Mora departed, the Angel of the Lord appeared to the Archbishop and told him the one who was chosen for this rank was Nicholas and described his virtues to him. When he woke up he told the bishops what he had seen, and they all believed that vision. They knew that it was from the Lord Jesus Christ. They took St. Nicholas and made him Bishop over the city of Mora.

Shortly thereafter, Diocletian reigned, and incited the pagan worship. When Diocletian arrested many of the believers, he heard about this saint. He seized him and tortured him severely for many years. The Lord Christ strengthened him, protected him, and raised him whole from all these tortures so that he might become a mighty branch of the tree of faith. When Diocletian was tired of torturing him, he cast him into prison. Saint Nicholas wrote to his congregation from prison to teach, encourage and confirm them in the faith. He remained in prison until God perished Diocletian and established the reign of Constantine the Just. Constantine brought out all the confessors from prison, among them was St. Nicholas, who returned to his city.

When the Council of Nicea convened in the year 325 A.D. to judge Arius, he was one of the 318 fathers assembled there. Having finished his course and guarded his flock, he departed to be with the Lord. He sat on the episcopal throne for more than 40 years, and all the days of his life were about 80 years.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Departure of the Saint Abba Pijimi

This day marks the departure of the saint Abba Pijimi. He was a native of Feesha, diocese of Masil. When he was 12 years old, and while he was shepherding his father's sheep, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the form of a young man and told him, "Let us go and become monks." Abba Pijimi agreed and went with him to the desert of Scete; to a place where three elder monks dwelled, then the angel disappeared. The saint dwelt with them for 24 years until they departed.

Then he left that place and went into the desert, a distance of three days travel. The devils appeared to him in the form of wild beasts, pigs and serpents. They surrounded him to devour him. He was able to discern their intent by the spirit. He prayed and they were vanished. Then he lived in a valley there for three years, fasting a week at a time; and at the end of the week, he ate a handful of dates and drank a little water.

He prayed the Lord's prayer: "Our Father, who art in heaven.....", he recited it day and night. Once he fasted for 40 days and another time he fasted for 80 days, to the point that his skin cleaved to his bones. Then an angel brought him bread to eat and water to drink. That bread and water lasted for many years.

Afterwards, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a vision at night and commanded him to return to his city. Abba Pijimi built a small cell on the outskirts of his city. He dwelt there alone, devoting himself to worshiping and asceticism. He became a good model and a good example for everyone who saw him. The people of his town came to him to be nourished with his spiritual teachings.

One day the angel of the Lord lifted him up and brought him to the land of Euphrates¹¹, for its people had gone out of the Orthodox way. He converted them all to the Faith and returned to his place.

Once he was carrying some baskets to the village to sell and he became weary and sat down to rest. The power of the Lord lifted him up with his baskets and carried him to where he wished to go.

One day the great saint Abba Shenouda saw an exceedingly shining pillar and heard a voice telling him, "This is Abba Pijimi." Abba Shenouda went to him, walking until he came to Abba Pijimi's city. They recognized each other through the divine guidance. Abba Shenouda visited with him for a few days then returned to his monastery.

When the day of his departure from this world drew near, he called his disciple and informed him of his departure and commanded him to bury his body in the place where he was. He fell ill and was feverish and, while in this condition, he saw a company of saints approaching him. He delivered up his soul into the hands of God. The angels carried his soul and ascended with it, chanting hymns. Abba Pijimi lived for 70 years, 12 years in the world and 58 in worship.
His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWELFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Commemoration of the Honorable Michael, the Archangel.
2. The Departure of St. Hedra, Bishop of Aswan.
3. The Commemoration of St. John the Confessor.
4. Assembly of a Council in Rome Against Novatian the Priest.

1. On this day is the commemoration of the honorable angel Michael, the Archangel, who is standing before God the Almighty interceding on behalf of the human race saying, “O Thou Who art not prone to anger, do not be angry. O Righteous One, have mercy on Your creation. O Thou Who is long suffering, do not destroy the work of Thy Hands.”

His intercession be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also, the great father Abba Hedra, Bishop of Aswan, departed. His parents, who were Christians, raised him and taught him the fear of God since an early age. When he was 18 years old, his parents wanted him to marry one of his relatives, but he refused with the excuse that he was ill. That morning he went to church early, prayed with the congregation asking the Lord Christ to reveal to him, through the readings of the scriptures, what was His will for him. He heard what comforted him.

When he left the church, he saw a deceased person was carried and on his way to the cemetery. He walked among the mourners, talking to himself saying, “Listen Hedra, it is not this one that died but you yourself who died from this futile world.” When they arrived at the cemetery and buried the deceased, he did not go back to his home but joined the monastery and lived among the monks.

When his family and friends heard what he did, they went and told him, “In so doing you have brought grief to us and have saddened your fiancée's heart.” They added, “You can worship God in any place you desire.” When they failed to change his mind, they went back with grief-filled hearts for his separation.

Henceforth St. Hedra went on in intense worship, asceticism, continuous fasting, uninterrupted prayers, and numerous metanias. He was a contemporary of St. Poemin and became his disciple. St. Hedra was guided by Abba Poemin's teachings and his good example.

Eight years later, he asked to live a solitary life in the desert. Abba Poemin asked him to read the biography of the great saint Abba Antonius (Antony) the father of all monks, in order to learn how to fight the evil enemy, Satan. When the elders allowed him, he went in the desert until he found a cave wherein he lived. He lived there for many years fighting the devil and his soldiers.

The devil tempted him frequently. One time the devil appeared with a sword in his hand and wanted to cut off Abba Hedra's hands. The saint cried to the Lord and the devil disappeared at once. One day he left his cave and when he came back, he found a huge dragon in the cave. He prayed to the Lord saying, "My Lord and Master, if it is Your will for me to live with this beast, so be it" He then looked at the dragon and found that it was cut into three pieces.

He was in a continuous war with the devils, awakened during the night and unsettled during the day, but the Lord saved him from them all. The defiled spirits cried saying, "Woe to you Hedra for your prayers burnt us and expelled us from the wilderness."

He shut himself up in his cell. Nevertheless, they brought the sick and those with evil spirits to him, he prayed over oil, anointed them with it, and they were healed immediately.

Syrian monks came to him, asking about unclear issues in the Scriptures (Holy Books). He explained all to them and they marvelled at his knowledge, saying, "We have been in many monasteries and mountains, visited teachers and philosophers, but we did not find anyone to explain these issues as St. Hedra did."

When the bishop of the city of Aswan departed, some of the people of the city went to the monastery. There they met the Syrian monks who praised St. Hedra highly. They went to St. Hedra and took him, against his will, and travelled to Alexandria. Abba Theophilus, Pope of Alexandria, ordained him bishop over them. When he sat on his chair, he went on preaching to his people and teaching them the way of life. He performed many miracles and lived the rest of his life in a good demeanor then departed in peace.

His prayers be with us. Amen.

3. Today we also commemorate the departure of St. John the Confessor.

His prayers be with us. Amen.

4. Also on this day, of the year 249 A.D., a holy Council was assembled in the city of Rome. This was in the first year of the reign of Decius, the infidel, and during the days of Cornelius, Pope of Rome, Dionysius, Pope of Alexandria, Flavianus, Patriarch of Antioch, and Germanus, Archbishop of Jerusalem.

They assembled to judge Novatian, a priest who said that whoever denied Christ and forsook the faith in the time of persecution, will not be accepted when he repents. Those who committed fornication shall not be accepted when they repent. Abba Cornelius rebuked him for what he was saying, but he did not hearken. Abba Cornelius gathered a Council of 60 bishops and 18 learned priests and deacons of Rome to debate with Novatian his teachings.

These, he said were based on the words of St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have

become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” (Hebrews 6:4-6)

The fathers replied and explained to him that the Apostle did not say this concerning the man who repents but concerning the man who intends to be baptized every time he is fallen into sin, for baptism can be carried on only once. Therefore, the Apostle went on saying, “They crucify again for themselves the Son of God and put Him to an open shame.” The Apostle here explains that since the crucifixion happened only once, so it is for baptism. As for the door to repentance, it is open to every repentant, otherwise everyone who falls in the sin of denying Christ or sins again will not be accepted even if he repents.

That would mean then that David's repentance was not accepted, and when Peter denied the Lord Jesus, his repentance also was not accepted. Therefore, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon St. Peter would be worthless also, setting him to shepherd His flock, invalid, and that would nullify every baptism he performed. On the whole, according to Novatus' opinion, everyone would have perished and that is extreme ignorance.

Christ the Lord came to the world to save sinners and to lead them to repentance for He said, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3)

All those who gathered against Novatus advised him to abandon his erroneous opinion and repent for it. They told him, “Do not be an enemy of God, yourself and of all mankind.” Since Novatus did not relinquish his opinion, the Council exiled him, and excommunicated him and all those who believed in his word.

The prayers of those saints be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. Consecration of the church of Archangel Raphael in Constantinople
2. The Martyrdom of St. Barsanuphius.
3. The Departure of St. Abracius (Apraxios)
4. The Consecration of the Church of St. Misaeal (Misayil), the Anchorite.

1. This day commemorates the consecration of the church of the great archangel Raphael, which emperor Theodosius built after the many miracles wrought by this great archangel.

The intercession of this great archangel be with us. Amen.

2. This day also marks the martyrdom of St. Barsanuphius the monk in the early days of the Islamic era in Egypt. He lived in the church of Mari Mina in the old district of Cairo (Fum-El-Khaleeg).

He worshipped God with dedication and piety. He fasted two days at a time, praying incessantly with numerous metanias.

Some wicked people accused him of cursing the judges and the Muslim sheikhs. They brought him and tortured him severely, then they finally cut off his head, thus St. Barsanuphius received the crown of martyrdom. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

3. On this day also, the father St. Abracius (Apraxios) departed. He was from upper Egypt and became a monk in one of the monasteries when he was 20 years old.

He fought a perfect fight until Satan grew tired of tempting him. Satan faced him saying, "You still have 50 more years to live in this world," wishing by these words to cast the saint into despair. The saint replied, "You have made me sorrowful for I have thought that I had another hundred years to live and I have slackened in my fight and in my worship. If this is the case, I have to fight harder before I die." In this way, he overcame the devil that tried to put slackness in his heart.

He fought strenuously and departed in peace in the same year after spending 70 years of worship and asceticism. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

4. On this day also we commemorate the consecration of the church of St. Misaeal, the Anchorite. While Abba Isaac, the head of El-Qualamoon monastery, was sitting in the monastery a young man came to him. Abba Isaac made the sign of the cross over his face as is the custom of the monks and allowed him to draw near. The young man came closer and prostrated himself before the saint and told him, "My father, Abba Isaac, accept my weakness for the sake of the Lord Christ. Help me to save my soul and count me among your children."

The abbot marvelled, for he called him by his name and asked him, “Who told you about my name?” The young man replied, “The grace that dwells in you informed me.”

The abbot asked Misaeal to sit down and he told him, “May God Almighty make you a holy temple. And now tell me about yourself.” The young man replied, “My name is Misaeal. My father loved the world which kept him from worshipping God and he was sad because he did not have children. One day he hosted a holy old monk and expressed to him his sorrow for not having a child to inherit his wealth. The monk told him, 'Reform your way with the Lord, the Lover of mankind, Who will give you a blessed son.' He asked the monk, 'How can I go about that?' The holy old monk replied, 'Live a perfect life and live according to the commandments of the church that are required of the believers; do not stay away from the holy church and have a priest to consult with, in all your affairs. If you do that, you and your wife will have what you wish.’” St. Misaeal said, “My father did all that the holy old monk commanded, and his words were fulfilled and my mother gave birth to a son, me.”

“When I was six years old, my parents departed. The father, the bishop, took care of raising me, he also took care of my education and of managing my money. When I studied the Scripture, I longed for the monastic life, so I came here.” The abbot was pleased as a result of what the young man, Misaeal, told him. He entrusted him to one of the elders in the monastery who trained him in asceticism, in worship and in the fight in the spiritual life. Afterwards, they put on him the garb of the monastic life and the holy Schema. From there on, he lived a solitary life in worship and asceticism.

One day, one of the brothers in the monastery came to Abba Misaeal. He found him standing up praying and when he knocked at the door of his cell, he opened it to him. They prayed together, blessed each other and sat discussing the ways to overcome the evil enemy. St. Misaeal told him, “The devil flees away when our spiritual prayers are sincere and warm.” After they ended their spiritual talk, they praised God and the brother left him. After a while that brother came to Abba Misaeal and found him praying saying, “O Lord save me, look upon my meekness; wash me of my iniquities, for my mother and father have forsaken me but the Lord accepted me.” When the brother saw how thin he was and how his skin cleaved to his bones, he cried and told Abba Misaeal, “Your body looks like it has been burnt.” The saint told him, “I thank my God for he has given me my eyesight and my hearing to read the Scriptures (Holy Books) and hear the word of God and he also gave me the strength to stand as I pray.”

When the abbot of the monastery heard about St. Misaeal's asceticism, he came to visit him. St. Misaeal told the abbot, “My holy father, after three days some people looking like soldiers will come and ask you about me. Do not keep me away from them. Do not be afraid or sorrowful for it is the Will of God. Also you should know that a famine will happen next year and I shall come back to see you at that time.” After a while, the people resembling soldiers came, took the saint and left.

The abbot listened to what the saint said and he bought much of the grain. As St. Misaeal predicted, the famine took place and wheat was in shortage. The Governor came with his men to take whatever grains he might find in the monastery. Soldiers appeared and prevented him from doing so and he went back empty handed. The abbot welcomed those soldiers, thanked them and offered them food to eat. They told him, "We do not need any of that food." One of the them came forward, took the abbot's hand, and took him aside and told him, "I am your son Misaeal and those people who look like soldiers are hermits who came last year and took me with them. I ask you now to go to Abba Athanasius, the bishop of my town where I was raised; tell him about me, and ask him for my father's money with which you should build a church in my name. Then call our father, the bishop, to consecrate it."

The abbot did as St. Misaeal asked. He went to the bishop and took the gold, the silver, many books and 500 heads of sheep from him. Besides, he also received fabrics, jewels and utensils that belonged to the saint. The abbot tore down the saint's old house, bought the land next to the house and built the church there. While the father, the Bishop, was celebrating the consecration of the church, St. Misaeal and the fathers, the hermits, came and attended the consecration prayers. St. Misaeal told the abbot of the monastery, Abba Isaac, that he would depart from this world in the following year. Then they went back to wherever they came from. *The prayers of these saints be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Martyrdom of Saints Behnam and Sarah, His Sister.
2. The Departure of Saint Christodoulos.
3. The Martyrdom of Saints Simeon of Menouf, Abba Hor, and Abba Mina the Elder.
4. The Martyrdom of Saint Ammonius, Bishop of Esna (Latopolis).

1. On this day, Saints Behnam and Sarah, his sister, the children of Sennacherib, King of Persia, were martyred. One day Behnam was out with 40 of his slaves hunting in the wilderness. He saw a huge wild beast, so he went after it for a long distance, and he was separated from his slaves. Night fell upon him and he had to sleep in that place. During his sleep he saw someone who told him to go to St. Matthew who dwelt in that mountain and he would pray for his sister so that the Lord would heal her. His sister was afflicted with an incurable disease, she was leprous.

When St. Behnam woke up and was joined by his slaves, they searched for St. Matthew until they found him in a cave. He knelt between his hands, told him about the vision and they asked him to accompany them to the city. Behnam went before him to the city and told his mother about the vision and the presence of St. Matthew out of the city. Because of her love and trust

in Behnam she allowed his sister to go with him in secret. When they arrived to where the saint was, he prayed for her and the Lord healed her. St. Matthew preached and taught them the way of life. He prayed also and a spring of water rushed forth and he baptized them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the one God, then he returned to his cave.

When King Sennacherib knew that his daughter was cured, he called her and asked her how she was cured. She told him, "The Lord Jesus Christ granted me the healing at the hands of St. Matthew and not through the stars that you worship." The king became angry and threatened to punish them if they did not change their noble opinion.

During the night, St. Behnam and his sister decided to go together to St. Matthew before their deaths. While on their way secretly to the saint, surrounded by some of their friends, their father became aware of what they were about to do, and he sent his men after them. They found them on their way to the saint and they slew them. St. Behnam, his sister and their companions received the crown of life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

When the men that killed St. Behnam and his sister went back, they found the king possessed by an evil spirit, which tormented him painfully. The queen sent for St. Matthew, begging him to come. When he arrived, he prayed for the king and the Lord healed him immediately. The saint preached to them, and the king and his wife, along with all those in the city, believed. The king built a monastery for St. Matthew and placed the bodies of St. Behnam, and his sister, his children, in it. St. Matthew dwelt in it for a long while. The Lord worked many signs of healing and wonders through the bodies of Sts. Behnam and Sarah, his sister.

Their prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also was the departure of St. Christodoulos the jeweler. He was from the city of Ayn-Shems. One day a beautiful woman brought him a broken vessel of gold and tried to tempt him. She uncovered her hands and told him, "Make rings for these fingers, bracelets for these arms, a cross for this chest and earrings for these ears." He replied, "Today I am ill and as for tomorrow, may it be the will of God." He closed his shop, went home and started rebuking himself saying, "I am not any stronger than the saints Anthony the Great or Macarius or Pachomius and the others that escaped from this world and lived in the wilderness. O my soul escape from this world if you wish to be saved."

He recounted what happened to him to his mother and he asked her with flowing tears to allow him to go to the wilderness. She said, "If this was the case, as you indicated, take me first to a convent where I can be a nun, and as for you, may the Lord be with you." He took her to one of the convents and entrusted her to the head of the convent. He gave her whatever money she needed, then he gave the rest to the poor and went toward the mountain.

After walking three days, he saw three men, each one with a cross in his hand and a shining light brighter than the sun shining from the crosses. He went to them, was blessed by them and

then he asked them to advise him as to what he should do to save himself. They guided him to a valley which had fruitful trees and a spring of fresh water. He remained there for many years in continuous prayers, and readings of the psalms with many long fasts. He ate the fruits of the trees of that valley.

When satan failed to overcome him, he appeared to evil men, in the form of a barbarian, and told them, "There is a great treasure in the valley. A man found it and is living beside it. Come with me, I will show it to you." They followed him to the mountain but they were not able to go down to the valley. The devil went in a monk's attire to St. Christodoulos and told him, "On the top of the mountain, there are some monks who lost their way; they are tired and will die of thirst. Go to them and give them something to eat and drink so that they may survive." The saint made the sign of the cross over his face as was the custom of the monks and immediately the devil turned into smoke and disappeared. In this way, St. Christodoulos was always able to overcome the devil with the sign of the cross.

He increased in his worship and he lived until a good old age. When the day of his departure drew near, the three hermits who guided him to the valley came and prayed together. After they blessed each other they told him, "The Lord sent us to write down your biography for the benefit of others." He told them all that had happened to him. After a short illness he departed in peace. They prayed over him and buried him.

His prayers be with us. Amen

3. Today also was the martyrdom of St. Simeon of Menouf in the days of the Arabs and the commemoration of the martyrdom of Saints Abba Hor and Abba Mina.

Their prayer be with us. Amen.

4. On this day also the great father Abba Ammonius, Bishop of the city of Esna (Latopolis), was martyred. He was extremely well mannered since a young age and his virtues were well known. Abba Peter, Pope of Alexandria, ordained him a bishop over the city of Esna.

Because of his strong desire for a solitary life, he built a monastery at the foot of the mountain beside a spring of water. He prepared a cave for his stay all week and went down to church on Saturday. He served the Holy liturgy on Sunday, met with his people, preached to them and settled their disputes. He spent Monday with them also, then returned to his cave to continue his worship and asceticism.

During his days, many of his people were martyred. When Arianus the Infidel went to upper Egypt, on his way he persecuted Christians. He ordered them to worship idols and those who refused were tortured and slain. He continued doing that until he reached Esna, where he met four young men driving asses loaded with melons. One of the governor's soldiers asked them about their belief. They answered, "We are Christians," so they seized them. When their mother knew what happened, she went in haste to encourage them saying to the soldiers, "We

love Jesus Christ and do not worship your despicable idols.” The governor ordered that she be cast into prison.

In the middle of the night the Virgin, St. Mary, appeared to this mother and told her, “Know that my Son the Savior and the Lord has called you and your blessed sons Sarous, Herman, Banouf and Bistay to the kingdom of heaven.” St. Mary bid her peace then ascended to heaven. The next morning the governor summoned them and asked them to worship the idols but they refused courageously. As a result, he ordered that their heads be cut off. That took place on the 6th day of the Coptic month of Bashans. The believers took their bodies and hid them in their homes. Many wonders and signs were manifested through their bodies.

There were also four notable persons who worked as tax collectors in the city of Esna. While they were going over the account of their work with Arianus, one of them mentioned the Name of Christ. Arianus became enraged and ordered that they be tortured. When he saw their endurance, he ordered that their heads be cut off, so they received their martyrdom on the 6th day of the month of Baounah. Many were martyred along with them, women, men and monks.

When Arianus went to Armunt, two women called Thecla and Martha who were from Esna went there in hast and confessed Christ before him. Arianus addressed the people of Armunt around him and said, “Why did you say that there were no Christians in your city?” They investigated and found out that the two women were from Esna. They went to Arianus and told him that they were strangers and that they did not belong to their city which loved the emperors and the gods (idols). Arianus ordered their heads to be cut off, and that was on the 17th day of the month of Abib.

As for St. Ammonius, the angel of the Lord appeared to him when he was in the desert and told him, “Hail to you Ammonius, the Lord accepted your prayers on behalf of your people and prepared crowns for you. Arise, go down and preach to them and instruct them to be steadfast in confessing the Lord Christ.” The angel bid him peace and departed.

The saint arose and went down immediately to the city. He gathered the people, preached to them and informed them of what the angel had told him. They all cried out saying, “Our father, we are ready to withstand any suffering in the Name of the Lord Christ, even unto death.” That took place on the feast of St. Isaac, so he took his people up to the Mount of Katoun, which means the mount of good things, to celebrate the feast there.

Arianus departed from Armunt to a village called Helwan, west of Esna. All its citizens came out and confessed the Name of Christ before him. He ordered them beheaded and they received the crown of martyrdom. Then Arianus entered Esna and wandered in its streets which were empty until he came to the southern gate which is called the gate of thanksgiving, because Abba Armanius had prayed there with his people, the prayers of

Thanksgiving. There he found an infirm old woman who was left behind because she could not go up the mountain with them. He asked her about the whereabouts of the people of the city. She replied, "The people heard that the infidel governor was coming to slay the Christians; so they went up to the mountain to celebrate the feast of St. Isaac before they faced martyrdom." He asked her which one of the gods she worshipped. She replied, "I am a Christian," and she was immediately beheaded.

Arianus then went out of the city going towards Mount Katoun, passing on the way through the village of El-Mabgalah where he found a group of people who declared themselves Christians and those he promptly beheaded. He continued through the villages of Harmajahat and Seroya where he executed the Christians.

He executed every Christian he met in his way till he finally reached Mount Katoun where all the people greeted him with one accord shouting, "We are Christians." Arianus threatened them and as this had no effect, he ordered his soldiers to draw their swords and to slay them all. Each one brought forth his daughter or his son to the swordsman saying, "Go forward to the true bridegroom that does not die." They all went to death saying, "We are going to the everlasting joy in the kingdom of heaven." They fulfilled their martyrdom on the 19th day of the Coptic month of Abib.

On their way back to Esna, the soldiers met three men who were crying, "We are Christians." The soldiers told them, "Our swords are dull from much use." So the men told the soldiers, "Here are our axes." The soldiers took their axes and the men put their heads on a stone beside the western gate of the city. The soldiers beheaded them and the men received the crown of martyrdom.

As for the bishop, Abba Ammonius, they seized him and brought him before Arianus, and in rage he ordered the saint to be tied behind the horses on their way to the boat which was sailing to Aswan. Then they threw him in the stern of the ship. Arianus brought him out every now and then and asked him to raise the incense before the idols but the saint refused. Finally he ordered his men to burn the saint who received the crown of martyrdom on the 14th day of the Coptic month of KOIAK.

The believers took his body which was untouched and unharmed by the fire. They shrouded it and hid it until the end of the era of persecution. When the people of his diocese came to transfer the body to their city, they heard a voice from the body saying, "This is the place that God chose for me."

The prayers of all these saints be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Departure of St. Gregory, Patriarch of the Armenians

This day marks the departure of St. Gregory, the Patriarch of the Armenians who was a martyr, without bloodshed (A Confessor). This saint, as it was mentioned on the 19th day of the Coptic month of Tute, was tortured by Tiridates, the Armenian king, in the year 272 A.D. for disobeying the king and refusing to worship the idols. The king cast the saint into an empty pit where he lived for 15 years, during which God took care of him.

Near the pit lived an old widow, who saw, in a vision, someone telling her to make bread regularly and cast it into this pit. She continued to do so for 15 years. Because of the length of time, no one in his congregation knew if he was alive or dead.

When the king killed Arbsima, the virgin, and all the virgins who were with her, he also ordered that their bodies be cast away on the mountains. Later on he regretted what he did for he wanted to marry Arbsima.

When the king's family and close advisers saw how he grieved for killing St. Arbsima, they advised him to go out for hunting to recreate himself. While he was riding his horse the Devil jumped on him and cast him on the ground. King Tiridates became possessed with an evil spirit and assumed the appearance and manners of a wild boar, to an extent that no one was able to go near him safely. Many of the people of his kingdom had the same fate. Great fear and crying was heard all over the palace and the kingdom as a result of what had happened to the king and many others as a result of what the king did to the virgins.

The king's sister saw a vision on three consecutive nights. A man was telling her that unless she brought St. Gregory out of the pit, the King would not be saved nor would be cured. The people were surprised, since they believed that he was dead. They went to the pit and dropped a rope and called his name. When the saint moved the rope, they knew that he was still alive, they asked him to tie the rope around him and they pulled him out.

The people took the Saint with great honor to the palace. They asked him to heal the king of his sickness. The Saint asked him if he would go back to his evil deeds. When the king expressed no intention of going back to his evil works, the saint prayed for him, and the evil spirit departed from him. His personality and his mind were restored, but he was not completely cured. The nails of his hands and feet remained like those of a boar as a punishment and as a reminder to him of what he was and in order for him not to go back to his evil works.

The saint inquired about the whereabouts of the bodies of the virgins. He went and found them undecayed and he placed them in an honorable place.

St. Gregory cured all who were sick and cast out many devils. The king and his people believed. He taught and baptized them. He built many churches, ordained bishops and priests for them and he instituted laws for them to follow. When he completed his strife, he departed in peace. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Departure of the Righteous Gideon, One of the Judges of Israel.
2. The Martyrdom of Saints Harouadi, Ananias and Khouzi.
3. The Consecration of the Church of St. James, the Persian.

1. On this day, of the year 1349 B.C., the righteous Gideon, one of the Judges of Israel, departed. He was from the tribe of Manasseh and his father's name was "Joash". The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor." (Judges 6:13) Gideon said to him, "O my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of Midianites."

Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my Father's house." The Lord said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man."

Then Gideon said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You Who talk with me. Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set it before You."

He said, "I will wait until you come back." Then Gideon went in and prepared his offerings and brought them out to Him and presented them. And they were accepted. (Judges 6:11-21)

The Lord then commanded him to destroy the idols and their altars and to build an altar for the Lord and to offer the sacrifices and burn them with the wood, of which the idols were made. He did so as the Lord commanded him. (Judges 6:25-31) When God commanded him to fight the Midianites, he asked Him to show him a sign to encourage him and said, "Look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand as You have said." And it was so.

Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more; Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece. Let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.” And God did so that night. (Judges 6:33-40)

Then Gideon and all the people who were with him rose up early and encamped opposite the camp of the Midianites. The Lord said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people saying, 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'” Twenty-two thousand of the people returned and ten thousand remained.

But the Lord said to Gideon, “The people are still too many. Bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go.”

So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, “Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink.” The number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men, but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.

Then the Lord said to Gideon, “By the three hundred men who lapped, I will save you and deliver the Midianites into your hand.” (Judges 7:1-7) With this number of people Gideon overcame the Midianites and the people with him captured the loots and gave them to Gideon and they put him in charge of them. The Lord God was with Gideon in all that he did. He departed and was buried in the tomb of his father. *His prayers be with us all. Amen.*

2. On this days also, St. Harouadi, St. Ananias and St. Khouzi, who were from El-Fayyoum (in other texts, Akhmim), were martyred. *Their prayers be with us all. Amen.*

3. Also, on this day is the commemoration of the consecration of the church of St. James the Persian, known as the mangled. *His prayers be with us all and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Commemoration of the Departure of St. Luke the Stylite and the Relocation of His relics

On this day we commemorate the departure of St. Luke, the Stylite, and the relocation of his holy relics. He was born in Persia, to Christian parents. He became a soldier and was promoted until he became a centurion (an officer over a hundred soldiers).

Later in his life, he wanted to live a solitary life. He left the world and all its vainglory and became a monk in one of the monasteries of the east. When his virtues were known, he was ordained a priest for that monastery.

From this time on, he devoted himself to the ascetic life in continual prayers and fasting. He used to fast six days at a time and then break his fast on the seventh day after Mass, by eating a “Korbana” and some green pulses (beans). Then he lived on the top of a high rock for 3 years. One day, he heard the voice of an angel calling him by his name to go down. When he went down, the angel showed him a cross of light. He followed the voice and the cross went before him until he came to some mountains. There he stayed for some time, teaching his visitors the way of salvation.

He was inspired by God to go near Constantinople. He went and dwelt in a village nearby, on the top of a rock, in the shape of a pillar, for 45 years fighting the spiritual fight. God granted him the gift of prophecy and the gift of performing miracles. He healed everyone who went to him.

When he completed his holy course, he departed on the 15th day of KOIAK. His disciple went and told the Patriarch about his departure. The Patriarch went with the priests, crosses and censers and came to where the body of the saint was. They carried him to Constantinople on the third day of his departure, with hymns and prayers, and they placed him in the sanctuary and that was on the 17th day of KOIAK. After they prayed on him the third day prayer and the believers present received the blessing of his pure body, they put him in a marble sarcophagus next to the bodies of the saints. God revealed many signs and miracles from his body. *His prayers be with us all and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Commemoration of the Relocation of the Relics of St. Titus to Constantinople.
2. The Commemoration of St. Heracleas the Martyr and St. Philemon the Priest.

1. On this day, the relics of the great St. Titus, the Apostle, and the disciple of St. Paul, were transferred from Crete to Constantinople at the order of Emperor Constantine the great.

When Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, he paid his attention to the affairs of the churches in his empire, decorating them with the best paintings and precious stones, especially those churches in Constantinople, the capital of his empire. He also wanted to enrich the churches with the precious spiritual jewels, by collecting the relics of the saintly apostles and the honored martyrs.

When he heard that the relics of St. Titus were on the island of Crete, he sent some bishops there, and they carried the relics with great honor and brought them to Constantinople. He built for it a splendid sanctuary, placed the body in a coffin which was placed inside the sanctuary.

God honored this saint by manifesting many miracles and signs from his sacred relics. Among them, when they carried the relics to the Sanctuary (the Hekal) of the church, the stone coffer fell on and broke the foot of one of the carriers. The man took some of the oil of the lamp (Kandeel) that was hanging in front of the icon of the saint, and anointed his foot with it, then wrapped it. He remained in the church that night beside the coffer, for he could not go to his home. The following morning, his foot was cured. What remained on it were only traces of blood. He and all those who saw him marvelled. He washed the blood and walked on his feet as usual without pain, glorifying the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the One God, and witnessing to this miracle. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, the church commemorates Saint Heracleas, the martyr, and the hermit, St. Philemon the priest. *Their blessings be with us and glory be to God. Amen.*

THE NINETEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Departure of St. John, Bishop of El-Borollos
Who Gathered the Biographies of the Saints (The Synaxarion)

On this day St. John, Bishop of El-Borollos, departed. He came from a wealthy family and from priestly ancestors. His parents were charitable and gave generously to the poor. When they died, St. John took the money they left and built a hostel for strangers. He gathered the sick, served them himself, and offered them what they needed.

Once a monk visited him and saw his good deeds, he praised him and praised monasticism in his presence, showing him its honor. The saint was attracted to the monastic life and he had a deep love in his heart for it. After the monk departed, the saint distributed his wealth among the poor and went into the wilderness of "Shiheet" (Scetis). He became a monk under the guidance of St. Daniel the archpriest of the wilderness. St. John was known for his zeal for worship and for his great asceticism. He lived alone in a secluded building. Satan and his soldiers envied his good deeds, and they gathered against him and painfully beat him. He was sick for so many days, after which the Lord Christ healed him. He regained his strength and overcame the devil.

God then called him to become a bishop of Borollos. At this time, there were some heresies and he made a great effort to eradicate them, and converted the heretics to the Orthodox Faith. Also in his time, a monk from upper Egypt claimed that he could reveal certain things which were imparted to him by the Archangel Michael, and he misled many by his deception. St. John saw that the monk's deeds were from the devil. He commanded that the monk be beaten until he confessed his sins and he drove him out of the country. Another claimed that Habakkuk, the prophet, appeared and revealed hidden things to him and, as a result, he was followed by many. St. John drove him out of the country, after he had exposed his deception. He also put an end to the use of several bad books.

Every time this saint went up to the sanctuary (Hekal) to serve the divine liturgy, his face and all his body were flushed red, as though he came out of a fiery furnace, and his tears poured heavily on his cheeks, for he was beholding the heavenly hosts on the altar. Three times when he placed his finger in the chalice to make the sign of the Cross during the fraction prayer, he found that the cup was as hot as fire.

Furthermore, in his days, some infidels were partaking of the Holy Mysteries without having fasted. The saint rebuked them, but since they did not hearken to him, he excommunicated them and forbade them from the fellowship of the church. When they disobeyed his order, he entreated God, so fire came down from heaven, and the fire burned their leader. Fear fell upon the rest and they repented.

When the Lord wanted to repose him from the toil of this world, He sent to him St. Antony and St. Macarius to tell him of the day of his departure. He called his people and commended them then departed in peace. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Departure of the Upright Haggai the Prophet

On this day, the upright Haggai, the Prophet, departed. This righteous man was a descendant of Aaron, the priest, and from the tribe of Levi. He was one of the twelve minor prophets. When King Nebuchadnezzar captured the Jews of Jerusalem and took them to Babylon, the parents of this prophet were among them, and he was born in exile. This prophet returned to Jerusalem along with Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah and the rest of the people of Israel. He prophesied in the second year of the reign of Darius, King of Persia, who reigned in the year 3484 of the world and that was 15 years after the return of the people of Israel from the Babylonian exile.

This prophet directed his prophecies by the command of God to Zerubbabel, then to Joshua the son of Jehozidak, the high priest. He incited the Jews to complete the rebuilding of the temple of Solomon, the son of David. They had started rebuilding the temple after they returned from captivity, then they abandoned it to build their own homes. The prophet rebuked them saying, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses and this temple to be in ruins? Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag of holes.'" (Haggai 1:4-6) Those who were upright amongst the people of Israel feared the threats of the Lord and built the house of the Lord as they were supposed to. Haggai the prophet had announced to the people after they finished building it, that the Lord was pleased by that. This prophet lived more than 70 years, and he was 430 years before the advent of our Lord Christ. He departed in peace and was buried in the tomb of the priests in Jerusalem. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Barnabas, One of the Seventy Apostles.

1. On this day the church celebrates the commemoration of the pure lady, the Virgin, St. Mary, the mother of Light, the mother of the Savior of the world. *Her intercession be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Barnabas, one of the seventy apostles, was martyred. He was from the tribe of Levi. His ancestors left Judea long before he was born and moved to the island of Cyprus. His name was Joses. Our Lord, to Whom is the glory, gave him the name “Barnabas”, which means son of “encouragement” or “consolation”, when He called him to become an apostle.

He received the gift of the Holy Spirit in the upper room with the disciples. He preached the gospel with them and witnessed to the Name of Christ. He had a field which he sold and brought the price and placed it at the feet of the apostles. (Acts 4:36-37) The apostles honored him for his many virtues and for his honesty.

When St. Paul believed in the Lord Christ, St. Barnabas presented him to the rest of the disciples in Jerusalem, three years after his conversion. St. Barnabas told the apostles how the Lord appeared to St. Paul near Damascus and attested to his zeal before them. The apostles accepted St. Paul in their fellowship. The Holy Spirit said to the disciples, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” (Acts 13:2)

St. Paul and St. Barnabas travelled together to many countries preaching the Name of the Lord Christ. When they entered Lystra and St. Paul healed the man who was crippled from his mother's womb (Acts 14:8-18), the people of Lystra thought that they were gods, and they brought oxen and garlands to the gates intending to sacrifice them at the feet of the apostles. St. Paul and St. Barnabas forbade them and rejected the glory of men. They tore their clothes saying that they were men with the same nature as they.

After they travelled together to many cities, they were separated from each other. St. Barnabas took with him St. Mark and went to Cyprus. They preached there and converted many people to the faith of the Lord Christ and baptized them. The Jews resented them. So they falsely accused them before the governor. They seized St. Barnabas and brutally beat him, then they stoned him and finally burnt his body with fire. Thus, his strife was completed and he received the crown of martyrdom. After the people had left, St. Mark came and carried the body, wrapped it, and placed it in a cave in Cyprus. St. Mark then went to Alexandria to preach there. *The prayers of these two apostles be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Commemoration of the Archangel Gabriel.
2. The Departure of St. Anastasius, 36th Pope of Alexandria.

1. This day marks the commemoration of the honorable archangel Gabriel, the announcer, the consecration of his church in Caesaria and the appearance of many miracles in it. He was the angel who was sent to the Virgin Mary to announce her with the glorious birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. He also announced the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias. (Luke 1: 11-22) Because of this he is called “the angel-evangel”

We should rejoice in his feast and pray intently with supplications, asking for his intercession before God.

2. On this day also of the year 611 A.D., St. Anastasius, 36th Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was one of the great noblemen of Alexandria. Before he became a Pope, he was an overseer of the patriarchal court, then he became a priest for the church of Alexandria. Shortly afterwards, he was chosen to be Pope.

He devoted much of his attention to the churches and he ordained bishops and priests to fill the vacant posts. He built several churches and regained from the “Melkites” (those who were appointed by the Roman Emperor) those that they took over by force. Because he was loved by them for his knowledge, virtues and righteousness, he brought many of them back to the Orthodox faith.

When the Emperor of Constantinople died, some wicked people spoke evil of the Pope to his successor, that when the Pope was ordained he anathematized (excommunicated) the Emperor and his belief. The Emperor was enraged and sent to the Governor of Alexandria, commanding him to take the church of “St. Cosmas and St. Damian” and all its properties by force and to give it to the Roman Patriarch “Ologius”. St. Anastasius was exceedingly sad, but the Lord comforted him in another matter.

Peter, the heretic, Bishop of Antioch, died. A well informed saintly monk called Athanasius of the Orthodox Faith was ordained in his place. As soon as Athanasius became Patriarch, he renewed the union between the Church of Antioch and the Church of Alexandria. He wrote an epistle, stating in it his Orthodox faith, and sent it to St. Anastasius, who rejoiced and gathered the bishops and the priests and read it to them. He wrote back to Abba Athanasius indicating his desire to see him.

Abba Athanasius went to Alexandria with his bishops and priests. When Abba Anastasius learned of his arrival, as he was in “Scetis”, he departed to Alexandria. He went directly to the sea along with the bishops and priests to receive Abba Athanasius and welcome him to

Alexandria with great respect and honor. They held a council in one of the monasteries that was at the sea coast, which lasted one month, to discuss the doctrines of the church. Then, the Antiochian Patriarch went back to his See in peace.

St. Anastasius continued to teach his flock in person and through his books. Because of his great knowledge, he was able to write a book every year. He remained on his throne for 12 years, 6 months and 10 days. During this period, he wrote twelve books and gave them the Coptic alphabet as titles. His first book was Alpha (Α), his second was Beta (Β) and so on, then he departed in peace. *His prayers be with us and glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Departure of David, the Prophet and King.
2. The Departure of St. Timothy, the Anchorite.

1. On this day, of the year 2990 of the world, the great King and the saintly honored prophet David, the son of Jesse, departed.

He was the second king over the children of Israel and the first among their kings to walk in virtue and in justice. He was from the tribe of Judah from Bethlehem. God chose him to be a king over Israel, when Saul, the son of Kish, disobeyed the commandment of God.

God commanded the Prophet Samuel to anoint for Him one of the children of Jesse, a king over Israel. Samuel chose the eldest son who had a good appearance and was tall in stature, but God rejected him and said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (I Samuel 16:7)

Jesse called all his sons and showed them to Samuel and he chose David and anointed him king. God was with him in all his ways, for his purity of heart and his meekness. He overcame Saul who wanted to kill him on several occasions. Once Saul went out to kill David and he went into a cave to attend to his needs. David came to him secretly and cut off a corner of Saul's robe (I Samuel 24:4) to show him that he wouldn't stretch his hand to kill him. Another time David found him sleeping and he took his spear and a jug of water that was by his head and did not hurt him and spared his life for the second time. (I Samuel 26:1-25) When David's men told him to destroy Saul, David said, “The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed.” (I Samuel 26:11)

When a man announced to David the news about the death of his rival Saul saying, “I stood over him and killed him,” David took hold of his own clothes and tore them and he mourned

him. David called one of the young men and said, "Go near and execute him," (2 Samuel 1: 11-15) and he struck the man so that he died.

God honored this Prophet over all mankind, for he had many virtues. Besides the virtue of humility, he was a prophet, a righteous man, and a just king. In spite of that, he called himself a "dead dog" and a "flea". (I Samuel 24:14) God praised him by saying, "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." (Acts 13:22; Psalms 89:20; 1 Samuel 13:14) God protected Jerusalem for his sake during his lifetime and after his death, and He made the kings of the people of Israel from his seed, and He called Himself "his Son." He prophesied in the Book of Psalms, which is a book full of useful teachings and good instructions.

David's might and power were supported by God. When he was young and guarding his father's sheep, once a bear and another time a lion attacked his sheep and David killed both the bear and the lion.

When the army of Israel faced the army of the Philistines and Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, whose height was six cubits and a span, and who was armored with a bronze helmet on his head and a coat weighing five thousand shekels of bronze, and he had bronze grieves on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders and the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam and his iron spearhead weighed six hundred shekels; Goliath went out, stood up and cried out to the armies of Israel, "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give us a man that we may fight together." The Philistine presented himself for forty days, morning and evening. All of Israel heard these words and were dismayed and greatly afraid.

When David came to visit his brothers and brought provisions to their camp, he saw and heard Goliath. David was moved with divine zeal and said to him, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the Name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." David took out a stone and he slung it and he struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank in his forehead and he fell on his face to the ground. David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and cut off his head and removed the reproach of Israel. (I Samuel 17)

David lived 70 years, 30 years of which were before he became a king. He was born one thousand, one hundred and twenty years before Christ. *His prayers be with us all. Amen.*

2. On this day also, the fighter, St. Timothy the Anchorite (Pilgrim), departed. He was born of God-loving parents, who educated and raised him according to the church disciplines. He desired the monastic life and became a monk in one of the monasteries. He loved the solitary life and lived in a cell alone near the monastery. He lived there for some time, making a living from his handiwork.

The enemy of everything that is good tried to deceive him by appearing to him in the form of a nun who approached him to buy his handiwork. Because of her frequent visits, a special relationship developed between them. They sat to eat together at one table. After a short time, the saint realized the trick of the devil to make him fall in sin. He remembered the hour of death and the awesome nature of Judgement; consequently, he arose and took flight from that place.

God guided him to another place with a spring of water and a palm tree. He stayed there practicing worship and asceticism. He reached a great level in his ascetic life, to the extent that the wild beasts befriended him. This continued for 30 years, during which his hair became very long and spared him of wearing clothes. When he finished his course and fought the good fight, he departed in peace. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen*

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Martyrdom of St. Ignatius, Patriarch of Antioch.

On this day, the honorable St. Ignatius, Patriarch of Antioch, was martyred. St. Ignatius converted to Christianity at a young age. Later in his life he was chosen to serve as a Bishop of Antioch, succeeding Saint Peter and St. Evodius (who died around AD 67). St. Ignatius is called Theophorus (God Bearer). A tradition arose that he was one of the children whom Jesus took in his arms and blessed. Tradition also identifies Ignatius, along with his friend Polycarp, as disciples of John the Apostle.

In 107, during the reign of the brutal Emperor Trajan, this holy Bishop was wrongfully sentenced to death because he refused to renounce the Christian faith. He was taken under guard to Rome where he was to be brutally devoured by wild beasts in a public spectacle.

During his journey, his travels took him through Asia Minor and Greece. He made good use of the time by writing seven letters of encouragement, instruction and inspiration to the Christians in those communities. We still have these letters as a great treasure of the Church today.

Bishop Ignatius was not afraid of death. He knew that it had been defeated by the Master. He followed the Lord Jesus into his Passion, knowing that he would rise with Him in his Resurrection. He wrote to the disciples in Rome: "Permit me to imitate my suffering God ... I am God's wheat and I shall be ground by the teeth of beasts, that I may become the pure bread of Christ." He was finally thrown to the beasts. His remains were later buried in honour. *His prayers be with us and glory be to God. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Departure of St. John Kama

On this day, the great Saint John Kama departed. He was from “Shubramento” of the region of “Sa”. His parents were God-fearing Christians and he was their only child. They forced him to marry against his will. When he entered his wife's room, he stood, prayed for a long time, then came near the young girl and said to her, “My sister, you know that the world and all of its lusts will go away. Do you agree with me to keep our bodies pure and clean?” She answered and said, “My brother, the Lord's Name lives. This also is my desire and now the Lord has given me what my heart desires.”

They mutually agreed to live together as brother and sister and to keep their virginity. When they slept, the angel of the Lord came and covered them with his wings. For their many virtues, God planted a vine for them which grew up and covered their place of sleep. That was a sign of their purity and holiness; for what they did was above human nature, that two young people, a man and a woman, would sleep next to each other without being driven by the lust of the flesh; for who can come near a fire and not be burnt, unless it is God's divine power and care that keeps them and preserves them.

When their parents saw that they lived together for a long time without having any children, they thought that this was due to the fact that they were young. One day John said to his wife, “My sister, I desire to go into the wilderness to become a monk and I cannot do that without your permission.” She gave him her permission and he placed her in one of the virgins' convents. There she became a virtuous nun and she performed many miracles, so they chose her to become the abbess of the convent.

As for St. John, when he left his town, the angel of the Lord appeared to him and guided him to the wilderness of Scetis “Shiheet”. He went there and became a monk in the cell of Saint “Darudi” in the monastery of St. Macarius. He stayed with this saint learning piety from him until the saint departed.

Then the angel of the Lord told him to go west of the monastery of St. John the Short and to build a cell for himself there. He went and did as the angel commanded him. Three hundred brethren gathered around him and became his disciples. They built a church and a house with a garden for themselves and Saint John Kama taught them how to pray and the “Epsalmodia”.

One night, St. Athanasius the Apostolic appeared to them while they were singing the song of the three young men. St. Athanasius revealed many mysteries to him. Another time, St. Mary appeared to him and told him, “This is my dwelling forever, and I shall be with them as I have been with you and this monastery will be named after me.” The church of the monastery was named after the Virgin St. Mary.

Some of the monks of upper Egypt desired to be under the guidance of St. John Kama and they asked him to come to see them. He called a brother named Shenouda, and gave him the responsibility of caring for the brethren until his return. When St. John Kama completed his course, he departed in peace. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Martyrdom of St. Anastasia.

On this day, of the year 304 A.D., St. Anastasia, was martyred. She was born in the city of Rome in the year 275 A.D., to a pagan father whose name was “Britastanos” and a Christian mother whose name was “Flavia”. Her mother baptized her secretly without her father’s knowledge and she brought her up in the teachings of the Christian faith. She was steadfast in her faith and no one was able to dissuade her.

When she was of marriage age, her father gave her in marriage to a pagan youth, against her wishes. St. Anastasia prayed to the Lord Christ with fervent supplications, asking Him to separate her from this pagan youth who was away from the faith.

When her husband left to go to his work, she also left to visit those who were imprisoned for their faith and she ministered to them, comforted them, and offered them whatever they needed. When her husband learned about this, he shut her up in the house and placed guards over her. She continued to pray and ask God with tears and supplications to save her from the hands of her husband. God answered her prayer and speeded up his death. She distributed her wealth among the poor and those who were in prison, the confessors and the strivers, for the sake of the faith.

When her fame reached “Florus”, the Governor, he brought her before him to inquire about her religion. She confessed that she was a Christian. He tried to entice her to leave her faith by promising her many precious gifts. When she did not listen to his promises, he punished her by torturing her with various tortures and when he became weary of her he ordered her to be drowned. She came out from the sea unharmed with the grace of God. When the governor learned that she was still alive, he ordered that she be tied up to four pegs on the ground and be beaten ferociously, then be thrown into a pit of fire. They did so until she gave up her pure soul and received the crown of martyrdom.

Her prayers be with us. and glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Martyrdom of St. Abba Psati, the Bishop

On this day, the great saint Psati, the Bishop of “Ebsay”, (Ptolomais) was martyred. When Emperor Diocletian heard that Abba Psati and Abba Gallenicus were confirming the Christians in the faith and hampering the worship of idols, he sent to bring them before him. Abba Psati asked the messenger to give him a chance for one night. He went to the church and called his people and celebrated the divine liturgy and administered to them the Holy Communion.

He commanded them to be firm in their Orthodox Faith, then he bade them farewell and submitted himself to the Lord. He went with the messenger to Arianus, the Governor of Antioe, and when the latter saw his illumined face and his reverence, he had compassion upon him and said, “You are a man of great dignity and you should have pity upon yourself and obey the command of the Emperor.” Abba Psati answered and said, “It is impossible for me to replace the kingdom of heaven with this temporal life.”

After a lengthy negotiation with him, the Governor ordered Abba Psati to be tortured and then thrown in a very hot water bath. God preserved him and raised him unharmed and without any pain. The Governor then ordered him beheaded. Thus, he received the crown of life in the kingdom of heaven. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Martyrdom of 150 Men and 24 Women from Ansena

On this day, 150 men and 24 women were martyred. They were from the city of Ansena (Antione) and they worshipped idols. They came once to the Governor's place and they watched the torture of St. Paul the Syrian. The Governor ordered the soldiers to gouge out the saint's eyes with red- hot nails then they cast him in prison.

The following morning when they brought him, these men and women were present and they saw that his eyes were whole as they were before. They marvelled saying, “No one can do this sign except God alone Who is the Creator of nature from nonexistent.” They cried with one accord, “We believe in the God of St. Paul.” They came and bowed down at the saint's feet asking him to pray for them. He lifted them up and blessed them. Then they went before the Governor and confessed the Name of the Lord Christ. He ordered them beheaded and they received the crown of martyrdom.

Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

1. The Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Christmas)
2. The Martyrdom of 8140 in Akhmim.

On this day, of the year 5501 of the world, as calculated by our glorious church, we celebrate the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God in the Flesh from the virgin St. Mary. Through the Divine plan of God and His foreknowledge, Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a general census in all the Roman Empire. For that reason, Joseph rose, and the virgin with him, and went from the city of Nazareth to “Bethlehem” to be counted in the census there because he was from the tribe of Judah, from the house of David. Bethlehem was the city of David. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the Virgin gave birth to her first born child and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes and put him in a manger, for they did not have a place for them in the inn.

Now there were, in the same country, shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all the people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: you will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.” Suddenly there was, with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they came with haste and found the Babe, Mary, Joseph, and Salomi. The place was shining with light. Now when they had seen him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this child. Then they worshipped the child and they returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen. (Luke 2:1-20)

On this day, the prophecies about the birth of the Lord from a chaste virgin had been fulfilled. Isaiah the prophet said, “Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His Name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

Ezekiel the prophet also said about this wonderful mystery, “And the Lord said to me, 'This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it, therefore it shall be shut.'” (Ezekiel 44:2)

About this child, Daniel the prophet said, “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and

they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and the Kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13-14)

Jeremiah the prophet said, “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a Branch of Righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgement and righteousness in the earth. In His days, Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His Name by which He will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness.” (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

We must therefore now direct our minds toward the manger of Bethlehem, where the Son of God was lying in it in the flesh at the time of His birth, contemplating in silence and reverence worthy of the mystery of the incarnation of God, and His birth in a manger for our salvation. Knowing that He teaches us through this mystery to despise the world and all the vain things in it, and that He urges us to be humble and to love our neighbor seeking his own good, and that we should live in virtue and holiness according to the Christian ethics; not ignoring the great dignity that has been granted to us by this Divine Incarnation.

Since we have kept this fast before the Advent, and have arrived at this glorious feast, we should receive it with purity and every good thing. We should extend our hand to comfort the weak, to help the poor, and to be instruments of peace and reconciliation among the people, taking our Lord Who has made an eternal peace by His Incarnation as our example. We should ask God in supplications to have compassion upon us and to forgive our sins, and to bless our gatherings, and to keep the life of His Holiness Pope ... , Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, to keep his pontificate for many years with the joy, peace and the safety of the church, and the advancement of his people in virtue. May God grant us many returns of this feast, filled with the blessings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who came for our salvation. *To Him be the Glory and Honor forever. Amen.*

2. And on this day also the men of Akmim became martyrs. They were gathered together in the church on the festival of the Nativity, which is to be praised! And they were performing the service of the consecration of the Offering, and they saw our Lord sitting upon the Altar administering the Holy Mysteries to the people. And whilst they were enjoying this happiness Arianus came and attacked them, and he entered the church and seized the two prefects of the city whose names were Behwafa and Wenin, and cut off their heads with the sword. After that he slew the deacons, and the sub-deacons, and those who sang (i.e. the choir), and the steward of the church, and he left not alive neither woman nor child; and he slew so many that the blood ran out of the door of the church and along the road for a distance of twenty cubits. And Abba Venudius, the bishop, and Dioscurus, and Saclabius and his brethren who were with them, Arianus took with him bound in fetters. And behold the memorial of their martyrdom is written in the section for the First Day of the month of Tobe. *The blessings of the martyrs of Akmim be with us and glory be to our God. Amen.*

THE THIRTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF KOIAK

The Departure of St. John, Archpriest of Scetis

On this day, St. John (Youannis), the archpriest (Heagomen) of Shiheet (Scetis) departed. When he was ordained archpriest for the monastery of St. Macarius, the whole wilderness was illumined by him and he became a father to many of the saints. Among those saints were Abba Gawarga and Abba Abraam, the two great stars, and Abba Mina, bishop of Tamai “Tamuz”, and Abba Zacharias and many others, through whom many souls were saved.

Because of his holiness and his great piety, when he was administering Holy Communion to the people, he was able to recognize those who were sinners and those who were righteous. Several times he saw Christ and the angels surrounding Him upon the altar.

He once saw one of the priests, who was of bad reputation, coming to the church and the evil spirits surrounding him. When the priest arrived at the door of the church, the angel of the Lord came out from the sanctuary (Hekal) with a fiery sword in his hand and dismissed the unclean spirits. The priest entered the church and put on the service clothes and administered the liturgy and gave the Holy Communion to the people. After he was finished, he took off the service clothes and went out of the church, the evil spirits returned to him. This was what St. John said to his brethren the monks, to make them aware that there was no difference between a sinful and an un sinful priest in ministering the church sacraments. For it is for the sake of the people that the bread and the wine are transubstantiated to the Body and the Blood of Christ.

He told them a parable, “As the picture of the emperor is imprinted on his seal that is made from iron or gold, and the seal is one, also the priesthood is one with the sinner and the righteous, and the Lord rewards everyone according to his deeds.”

This saint suffered many tribulations. The “Berbers” took him captive to their country. He stayed there for many years, during which he was tortured. He met St. Samuel, the abbot of the monastery of Qualamon, during his captivity.

By the grace of God, he returned to his monastery. When he knew in a vision the day of his departure, he called the brethren and commanded them to keep the Commandments of the Lord, and to walk in the pathway of the saintly fathers, to share with them the good portion and the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. Shortly after, he became ill and he saw a crowd of saints were coming to take his spirit, and he gave up the spirit in the hand of the Lord. His brethren carried him to the church and because of their strong love for him and their firm belief in his holiness, they kept a portion of his burial clothes which was a source of healing for many sicknesses. This father lived for 90 years.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE BLESSED MONTH OF TUBAH THE FIRST DAY

1. The Martyrdom of St. Stephen the Archdeacon.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Lawindianus (Leontius).
3. The Mrtyrdom of Sts. Dioscorus and Sclapius in Akhmim

1. This day marks the martyrdom of St. Stephen, the Archdeacon and the first martyr (protomartyr). St. Luke testified about him in the Acts of the Apostles saying, “Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.” (Acts 6:8) The Jews envied him and seized him and brought him to the Council. They also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.” (Acts 6:12-13) And all who sat in the Council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel. (Acts 6:13)

Then the high priest said, “Are these things so?” St. Stephen answered with convincing words and told them the history from Abraham to Moses. The coming out of Abraham from Haran, the birth and the circumcision of Isaac, Jacob and his sons and their selling of Joseph, and how Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. St. Stephen continued to narrate to them all the events until the building of the temple. He concluded by saying, “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of Whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.” (Acts 7:51-53)

When they heard these things they were cut to their hearts, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran toward him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him.

They stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus receive my Spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:51-60) Devout men carried St. Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Leontius (Lawindianus) was martyred. He was from Syria during the time of the infidel Emperor Maximianus. When the Emperor heard about this Saint and his worship of Christ, he sent for him. He tried to entice him with much money to renounce the

worship of Christ and to worship the idols.

The saint mocked the Emperor's words and despised his presents, belittling his threats of tortures. The Emperor, was enraged, ordered him to be hung on the squeezing machine (Hinbazeen) to be pressed and then be beaten with pins, and to be cast in boiling oil. The saint endured it all, and the Lord Christ strengthened and healed him.

When the Emperor was weary of torturing him, he ordered Leontius to be beheaded, and Leontius received the crown of martyrdom. Many miracles and wonders appeared through his body until he became well known in all Syria, and several churches and monasteries were built in his name. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*

3. On this day also we celebrate the martyrdom of Sts. Dioscorus and Sclapius from Akhmim. There was a certain man of the men of Akmim who was a judge, and he was rich in gold and silver, and his name was Ammonius, and he begot two sons whose names were Dioscurus and Sklapius (Aesculapius), and they were reared in the fear of God, with fasting and prayer. And when their father died they wished to adopt the monastic life; and the angel of God appeared unto them and [commanded] them to go to the monastery of Abba Moses, the desert monk; and having gone to him they put on the garb of the monk, and they fought the spiritual fight strenuously, and performed signs and wonders. And after a few [days] Dioscurus was made a priest, and Saklapius a deacon.

And then it happened that Diocletian denied the God of heaven, and commanded Arianus, the governor of Ensena (Antinoe) to slay [all] the Christians who would not sacrifice to his gods. And Arianus arrived in Akmim and he seized Peter, the bishop, and he bound him, and came into his city.

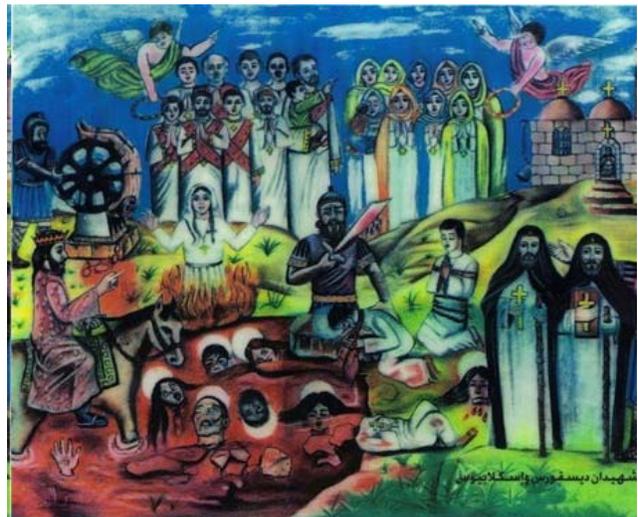
And Michael, the angel of God, appeared unto Dioscurus and Saklabius, and told them that they were to receive the crown of martyrdom in the kingdom of the heavens, and on the twenty-eighth day of the month of Koiak they and twenty-four monks went to Arianus. And when they arrived in the city of 'Akmim they found the Christians, together with their wives and children, in the church of Christ our Redeemer, ready to celebrate the festival of the Glorious Birth and to die for His Name; and Abba Benudyas (sic) the bishop came with them. And on the following morning Abba Abadion the bishop prayed the Liturgy, and when he came to the passage wherein is said "Holy," the angels cried out, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory." And the saints saw our Redeemer sitting upon the Altar and the angels standing round Him raising the Offering, and He placed the Offering in the hand of the priest that he might present it to those assembled there. When Arianus heard [this] he was filled with great wrath, and he came into the church, and seized the two elders of the city whose names were Behwafa and Wenin, and cut off their heads with the sword. And after that he killed the deacons, and the sub deacons, and the singers, and the steward of the church, and he left neither woman nor child alive; and at length their blood ran

out of the door of the church, and flowed down the road for a distance of twenty cubits. Then [the officer] took Abba Bunudyas (sic) the bishop, and Dioscurus and Saklabius, and the brethren who were with them, and carried them before Arianus, who persuaded them to worship idols. And when they refused to do so, he commanded soldiers to beat Dioscurus and Saklabius until their bones were shattered, [and they did so], but the angel of God appeared unto the saints, and healed them. And Karyon and Philemon, the chief officers of the guard of Arianus, and the forty soldiers who were with them, saw this miracle, and they believed on Jesus Christ. And the governor commanded his soldiers to cast them into a red-hot oven, and they finished their martyrdom on the thirtieth day of the month of Koiak.

And on the first day of the month Tobe, whilst Dioscurus and Saklabius were shut up in prison, Michael the Archangel appeared unto them and made them strong to finish their martyrdom. And on the following day Arianus held converse with them concerning their worshipping idols, and when they refused to do so, he commanded the soldiers to gouge out the eyes of Dioscurus, and the saint took up his eyes and put them back in their sockets, and they were as they had been before [they were gouged out]. And Lucius, an officer, and his company of soldiers believed in Christ, and the governor cast them into a pit, and they completed their martyrdom.

And then Arianus commanded the soldiers to kill the saints, and whilst they were praying the Lord Jesus Christ appeared unto them and gave them the covenant that whosoever invoked their names, and commemorated them, and wrote a history of their strife should be numbered with the company of the righteous. Then the soldiers came and cut off the head of Saint Dioscurus with the sword, and Saklabius they cut in halves, and the four and twenty monks they split in twain, from their heads to their feet, and they were crowned on the first day of the month Tobe.

And Samuel, who was a kinsman of theirs, swathed their bodies for burial, and he buried them in the church, which was consecrated in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. And the number of the martyrs who were slain is eight thousand one hundred and forty. Of these were sixty priests, one hundred and thirty deacons, fifty-three singers, eighty stewards of churches, forty-two judges, one hundred and fifty sub deacons, eight thousand four hundred and ninety members of the laity, and their elders Ledianus, and Tadros (Theodore), and Paul.
Glory be to God Who is glorified in His Saints.



THE SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TUBAH

1. The Departure of St. Theonas, 16th Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Callinicus (Gallinicus), Bishop of Oseem.
3. The commemoration of Abel the righteous.

1. On this day in the year 300 A.D., St. Theonas, 16th Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was chosen as Patriarch after Pope Maximus departed in 282. This saint was a righteous, meek scholar, gentle and loving to everyone. By the spirit of friendship and gentleness with everyone, he was able to build a church in Alexandria, dedicated to the name of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos.

Until his time, the faithful were praying and performing their services in homes and in caves for fear of the unbelievers. Pope Theonas dealt with them wisely and gently to achieve what he wanted to do. He converted many of them to believe in the Lord Christ and baptized them.

He baptized, in the first year of his papacy, St. Peter, who succeeded him on the apostolic throne of St. Mark and was the 17th Pope. It was said that he ordained St. Peter as a reader at the age of five, then he promoted him to be a deacon at the age of twelve, then as a priest at sixteen.

At the time of this saint, a man by the name of Sabellius appeared in Alexandria who was teaching that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one person. St. Theonas excommunicated him and he invalidated his heresy by convincing proof.

When he completed his course, he departed in peace, after he had been on the throne of St. Mark for 19 years. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. Also on this day, St. Callinicus (Gallinicus), bishop of Oseem, was martyred.

When Emperor Diocletian heard the report that St. Callinicus was teaching the people to get away from the worship of idols, he sent envoys to seize him and torture him. When the saint heard about the envoys of the Emperor, he called the people of his diocese to the City of Oseem. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy and after he administered the Body and the Blood of Christ to them, he told them, "You will not see my face again." The people wept bitterly, but they could not prevent him from delivering himself to the Emperor's envoys. They took him and delivered him to Arianus, Governor of Ansena (Antinoe). He tortured him, with different kinds of tortures, but the Lord healed him and strengthened him. The Governor took him to the city of "Edku", and there he tortured him again. When the Governor became weary of torturing the Saint, ordered that the Saint's arm be split down to his hand.

Subsequently, he took him in a ship to the city of “Tukh”. When the saint felt, while he was on the ship, that the time of his departure from the world had drawn near, he commanded one of the sailors who was a believer, “If I die, when we arrive ashore, cast out my body on a hill.”

When St. Gallinicus departed, the sailor did as he was commanded. Some believers, through a command of God, came and took the body of the saint and shrouded it for burial and hid it in their homes until the end of the era of persecution. *His blessings be with us. Amen.*

3. On this day also we commemorate the righteous Abel who was slain by his evil brother Cain. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*

THE THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

The Commemoration of the Slain Children of Bethlehem by the Order of King Herod

On this day, in the second year of the Advent of Christ, the children of Bethlehem were martyred. King Herod secretly called the wise men and determined from them what time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.”

When they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary, His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him. When they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

When they were about to return to Herod, the Angel of the Lord warned them in a dream that they should not return to Herod, and that they should depart for their own country another way. When they had departed, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him.”

Joseph arose, took the young child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Herod's intention was for Jesus to be slain among the children who were slain.

It was said that Herod schemed to achieve his evil objective, by sending envoys to Bethlehem and all its districts saying, “By the command of Caesar all the children two years old and under had to be counted.” They gathered 144,000 children in the hands of their mothers. He thought that Jesus would be among them. Then King Herod sent a commander with one thousand soldiers, who slaughtered all these children on one of the mountains in one day.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet saying, “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and a great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.” (Jeremiah 31:15) For Bethlehem is related to Rachel, and the children were killed nearby her tomb, which is located close to Bethlehem. (Genesis 48:7)

St. John the Evangelist said in Revelation that he saw under the altar the souls of those children that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

A white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.” (Revelation 6:9-11)

St. John said also that the new song that the four living creatures and the elders were singing, no one could learn except the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth, who were not defiled with women for they are virgins. They follow the Lord (the Lamb) wherever He goes, and He wipes every tear from their eyes. (Revelation 14:3-4)

Blessed are they, and blessed are the wombs that carried them.

Their intercession be with us and Glory be to our Lord, now and forever. Amen.

THE FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

The Departure of St. John the Evangelist and Theologian

On this day, in the year 100 A.D., St. John, the virgin, the evangelist, and apostle who was the son of Zebedee, departed. St. John Chrysostom (of the Golden Mouth) said that St. John the Evangelist was originally a disciple of St. John the Baptist. He was the brother of St. James the Elder, who was killed by Herod by the sword. The Lord called him with his brother "Boanerges" (Mark 3:17), that is "sons of thunder," for their strong zeal and great faith. He was also the disciple whom Jesus loved.

St. John followed his Master to Galilee, and was with him at the marriage feast of Cana, journeyed with him to Capernaum, and thenceforth never left him, save when sent on the missionary expedition with another, invested with the power of healing.

He, James, and Peter, came within the innermost circle of their Lord's friends, and these three were suffered to remain with Christ when all the rest of the apostles were kept at a distance [Mark 5:37, Matthew 17:1, 26:37]. He was with the Lord Jesus Christ at the Transfiguration. He leaned (reclined) on the chest of our Lord at the Last Supper. Peter, James, and John were with Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

To St. John was committed by our Lord the highest of privileges, the care of his mother [John 19:27]. John [the "disciple whom Jesus loved"] and Peter were the first to receive the news from the Magdalene of the Resurrection [John 20:2], and they hastened at once to the sepulcher.

In the interval between the Resurrection and the Ascension, John and Peter were together on the Sea of Galilee [John 21:1] When Christ appeared on the shore in the dusk of morning, John was the first to recognize him.

After the ascension, we hear of him and St. Peter entering together as worshipers into the Temple [Acts 3:1], and protesting together against the threats of the Sanhedrin [Acts 4:13].

He probably remained at Jerusalem until the death of the Virgin, and after that he went to Ephesus. When he went to Ephesus is uncertain. He was at Jerusalem fifteen years after Saint Paul's first visit there [Acts 15:6]. There is no trace of his presence there when Saint Paul was at Jerusalem for the last time.

Irenaeus says that Saint John did not settle at Ephesus until after the death of SS. Peter and Paul, and this is probable. He certainly was not there when Saint Timothy was appointed bishop of that place. Saint Jerome says that he supervised and governed all the Churches of Asia. He probably took up his abode finally in Ephesus in 97 AD.

In the persecution of Domitian he was taken to Rome, and was placed in a cauldron of boiling oil, outside the Latin gate, without the boiling fluid doing him any injury. [Eusebius makes no mention of this. The legend of the boiling oil occurs in Tertullian and in Saint Jerome]. He was sent to labor at the mines in Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. At the accession of Nerva he was set free, and returned to Ephesus, and there it is thought that he wrote his Gospel.

This saint lived 90 years, and they used to carry him to the gatherings of the believers. Because of his old age, he only gave them very short sermons saying, “My children, love one another.”

He wrote the gospel known after him, and the Book of Revelation which he had seen on the island of Patmos, which is full of divine mysteries. He also wrote the three epistles known by his name.

When St. John felt that he was about to depart from this world, he summoned the people and administered to them the Body and the Blood of the Lord. He preached and commanded them to be steadfast in their faith. He then departed from the City of Ephesus for a short distance. He commanded his disciple and others with him to dig there a pit for him. He went down in it, raised his hands and prayed and then bade them farewell. He commanded them to return to the city and to confirm the brethren in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, and said to them, “I am innocent of your blood, for I did not leave any command of God that I haven't taught you, and now, let it be known that you will never see my face again, and God will reward everyone according to his deeds.”

When he said that, they kissed his hand and his feet, and they left him and returned to the city. When the people knew what had happened, they went out to where the saint was, and they found that he had departed. They wept and were deeply sad. They talked about his miracles and marveled about his meekness.

In spite of the fact that he did not die by the sword, as the rest of the apostles did, he was equal to them in the heavenly glories, for his virginity and his holiness.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Martyrdom of St. Eusegnius (Eugenius) the Soldier
2. Departure of Pope Matthew I of Alexandria (or Matheos), 87th Pope of Alexandria
3. Departure of Pope Theodosius II, 79th Pope of Alexandria.
4. Martyrdom of St. Panicarus.

On this day, St. Eusegnius (Eugenius) was martyred. He was a soldier during the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great. He was merciful and had many charitable deeds.

When Emperor Constantine saw the sign of the Cross, he could not understand its significance, for he was not a believer yet. He asked the soldier Eugenius, who told him that it was the sign of the Lord Christ. The Emperor started to think deeply about it and particularly in the sentence that was written on the sign of the cross, "By this you conquer." At night the Emperor saw the Lord Christ in a dream and He showed him the sign of the Cross. He commanded him to make the flags of his army similar to it. The following morning, the Emperor did as he was commanded, and he won the war against his enemies. He entered Rome victoriously and became a Christian since then, and he lifted up the horn of the Christians and their faith all over the Roman Empire.

St. Eusegnius lived until he was 120 years old, until the days of Julian the infidel Emperor (the apostate).

One day, when he was walking in one of the streets of Antioch, he found two men fighting together. They stopped him and asked him to judge between them, for he was an honorable old man. He made peace between them.

Some evil men plotted evil against him, by telling Emperor Julian that he made himself a judge and a ruler over the city. The Emperor brought him, rebuked him and said to him, "Who has appointed you a judge and a ruler?" St. Eusegnius replied with great courage, "I am not a judge nor am I a ruler, but you have forsaken the worship of the God of Heaven, in Whose hands is your soul, and you worshipped unclean idols and you did not follow in the footsteps of those who came before you. I had been a soldier under the righteous Emperor Constantine for 60 years, and with his sons after him, and I did not see anyone as devilish as you."

The Emperor was exceedingly angry with him, and he commanded that he be crucified and to apply lighted torches to his sides. They did all these things to him, but the saint endured them all for his love of the Lord Christ. At last, the Emperor commanded that his head be cut off. When he was approached by the swordsman, he asked him to wait until he prayed. When he finished praying, they beheaded him and he received the crown of martyrdom.

His prayers be with us, and Glory be to our Lord forever. Amen.

2. On this day also we commemorate the departure of Pope Matthew I of Alexandria (or Matheos), 87th Pope of Alexandria.

As a young boy, Matthew worked tending his father's sheep. He used to give his food to the shepherds, and spend the whole day fasting. When he was fourteen he was admitted to the monastery to practice asceticism and worship. He was ordained a priest at the age of eighteen. Then he left to St. Anthony's monastery to escape vainglory. He did not tell any of the monks about his priesthood, but rather used to serve mass as a deacon. Once, while he was reading the Gospel a heavenly hand appeared and offered him incense three times. Seeing that, the elders of the monastery said that he should be elected a patriarch.

For the second time he escaped to Palestine, and worked in construction. But when he heard that the Copts were persecuted because of the Crusaders' actions, he returned to St. Anthony's Monastery where he was appointed abbot of the monastery.

Shortly after his ordination, Prince Yalpogha led the monks and their abbot in humility through the streets of Cairo to avenge the Crusaders. For the Crusaders had raided Alexandria, killing many, and kidnapping others before they fled; and since they bore the sign of the Cross on their breasts, this roused the ruling prince and his men against the Copts.

Once again, Matthew left for Al-Muharraq monastery to work in the kitchen, and serve the elders. He lived a life of self-denial, and did not allow himself to have more than one garment. It was said that he was a friend of the wild beasts who kept him company outside the monastery.

On the death of Gabriel IV, Patriarch of Alexandria (1378), Father Matheos was elected be the next Patriarch. On hearing the news, Matthew escaped and hid in the bottom of a ship, but a little child exposed his hiding place. Finally, he solicited the opinion of the council of the elders of St. Anthony's monastery, and accepted their decision. Escorted to Alexandria, he was consecrated as Pope, and gave himself the title El-Meskeen ("The Poor").

The fact that Father Matthew became the Pope of the See of St. Mark did not change him a bit. He cared for the poor, loved to give alms, and was always humble. Through the heavenly wisdom given to him, it happened that he was inspired to buy lots of wheat before a famine. And when the famine struck he distributed the grains to anyone who asked for it, without any discrimination between Muslims, Jews, or Christians. He gave generously, and God blessed his crop, so it did not diminish.

Matthew is said to have always been venerated by God and by men. When he stood before the Altar, his face often radiated with divine light and his eyes glittered, as he looked to our Saviour Jesus Christ who often appeared to him. Also, because of his heavenly wisdom, people used to ask his advice about their private matters. The Sultan Barquq is said to have asked the

Pope's advice before accepting the Sultanate.

One day, Sultan Barquq asked Pope Matthew to write to the Emperor of Ethiopia, Wedem Asfare. But Matthew wrote to his brother Dawit instead. When the messengers arrived in Ethiopia, they found out that Wedem Asfare had died, and that Dawit had become the new Emperor. Dawit received the letter, and asked them about the two presents sent to him by the Pope (which were a cross and a handkerchief). The messengers were astonished that he knew about these presents, but he told them that the Pope appeared to him in a dream and told him about what was going to happen.

Through his cordial relation with Sultan Barquq, he was able to stop the mob from burning Al-Muallaqa church and the Shahrān monastery, because the Muslims were claiming that new constructions were taking place in those two locations. The Sultan appointed four Islamic judges who declared such claims to be false.

However, the situation worsened when two Mamaluk princes exiled Sultan Barquq, and took his place. Mentach and Yalpogha inflicted severe sufferings upon the Copts and their Pope. Finally, Yalpogha arrested Pope Mattheos and imprisoned him. When he tried to kill him by the sword, the Pope stretched out his neck to him. The prince was deeply troubled, and he ordered Pope Matthew to be released. Later, Yalpogha himself was imprisoned and died in chains in Alexandria.

Tradition states that Pope Matthew was granted the gift of performing miracles. During the renovation of St. Mary's church, a large stone fell on one of the workers and killed him instantly. The Pope prayed over the body, and the Lord raised the worker from the dead.

During the reign of Sultan Al-Nasser Faraj, the prince Sodon plundered the Sultan's palace. Sodon plotted with some of his followers to massacre the Copts. In response, it is said that Pope Mattheos devoted seven days to fasting and praying in St. Marcorius' church, and at the end of those seven days the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him and comforted him. Shortly after that, Sodon summoned the Pope to the palace and confessed to him the plot he intended against the Copts.

However, the tribulations inflicted upon the Copts by Sodon and his supporters became very severe. The Pope retreated this time to the church of Archangel Michael to dedicate his time to prayer and fasting. Then news came from the palace that Sodon was stabbed by a horseman six days ago, on the exact day when the Pope started his retreat.

One of the Mamaluks, Gamal-El-Din, also caused trouble for the Pope by persecuting Christians. He imposed on the Pope a tribute of five hundred thousand dinars, which the Copts had to raise amongst themselves. Gamal-El-Din continued his persecution, and he ordered the Pope to appear before him in the palace. But the Pope asked the messengers to wait until the

next day. That night, Pope Matthew died after serving his flock for 30 years and five months, having named as his successor Gabriel V. The miracles that are believed to have come through his prayers continued after his death and continue until this day.

May his holy blessings be with us and glory be to our God. Amen.

THE SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Commemoration of the Circumcision of the Lord Christ.
2. The Ascension of Elijah the Prophet.
3. The Departure of St. Marcianus, 8th Pope of Alexandria.
4. The Departure of St. Basil the Great, Bishop Of Caesarea.
5. The Departure of the righteous Noah

1. On this day, the church celebrates the commemoration of the circumcision of the Lord Christ, to Whom is the glory. God had ordained the law of circumcision as a sign that His people would become a particular people over all others. This was that every male of the seed of Abraham be circumcised on the eighth day of his birth. God put every soul that did not obey this law under judgement.

As our Lord Jesus was born from the posterity of Abraham, according to the flesh, He willed to be circumcised on the eighth day, to fulfill the law of Moses and to relieve us from the heavy burden of this commandment, as St. Paul says, “Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers.” (Romans 15:8)

He also gave us the sign of the new covenant through baptism, as St. Paul says, “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in Baptism in which you also were raised with Him, through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” (Colossians 2:11-13)

Therefore, He demands from us to keep the spiritual circumcision, that is to say the circumcision of the heart, so that we may live for Him in righteousness and in holiness, for He says, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) *Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

2. Also, on this day was the departure of the prophet Elijah (Elias), the Tishbite, to heaven, alive.

This prophet lived during the time of King Ahab. His heart was filled with sorrow, for he saw the king had turned from the worship of the God of Israel to the worship of idols. He followed Queen Jezebel, who helped the priests of Baalzebub. The worship of idols spread out in his days. Therefore, Elijah stood before the king and said, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before Whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word." (I Kings 17: 1)

Immediately the brooks dried up, for there had been no rain in the land, and the grass dried up and the drought set in the whole land. God however did not forsake his zealous servant. He commanded him to go to the brook of Cherith, and the ravens came to him everyday and brought him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening.

The Lord ordered the water of the river to dry, but He did not forsake the prophet Elijah. God commanded him to go to Zarephath, which belonged to Sidon, where he found a widow gathering sticks and he asked her for bread to eat. She said to him, "As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks, that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die."

Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'The bin of flour shall not be used up; nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.'" So she went away and did according to the words of Elijah, and she, the prophet, and her household ate for many days.

Elijah stayed with the widow until the drought had ended. She had a son who was sick, and his sickness progressed until he died. The prophet saw the grief of the woman. He took her son from her and carried him to the upper room where he was staying and laid him on his own bed. Then he cried out to the Lord and he stretched himself out on the child three times. The Lord heard the voice of Elijah and the soul of the child came back to him, and he was revived. Elijah took the child and brought him down and gave him to his mother alive. (I Kings 17:17-23)

When Jezebel knew that Elijah executed all the priests of Baal by the sword, she threatened to kill him. When he saw that, he arose and ran for his life. He went to Mount Horeb where he hid himself. The Lord talked to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" So he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life." The Lord said to him, "... Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal..." (I Kings 19:10-18)

When Ahab died and King Ahaziah reigned, he did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father Ahab. Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and was injured. He sent messengers to inquire from Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether he would recover from his injury.

Elijah, the Prophet, met with his messengers and he told them to go and tell the King, “Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore, thus says the Lord! You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.”

When they said this to the King, the King knew that it was Elijah the prophet. The King sent to him a captain of fifty, and the prophet was sitting on the top of the hill. He said to Elijah, “Man of God, the King has said, ‘Come down.’” So, Elijah answered and said to the captain, “If I am a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men.” And the fire came down from heaven and consumed them. Then the King sent another captain of fifty and said to him what the first captain said. And the fire came down from heaven and consumed them. The third captain came to Elijah and fell on his knees before him and pleaded with him. Elijah arose and went down with him to the King whom he rebuked. The King died in his bed. (2 Kings 1:1-18)

After that, Elijah went to the Jordan River and he took with him Elisha, his disciple. He struck the water with his mantle, and the river was divided and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. While they were talking to each other, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, separated the two of them, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. (2 Kings 2:1-12) *His prayers be with us. Amen*

3. Also on this day in 152 A.D., St. Marcianus, 8th Pope of Alexandria, departed.

He was raised to the Apostolic Throne in the month of Athor in the year 141 AD during the reign of the Roman Emperor Antonius Pius. Marcianos was born in Alexandria, Egypt and he was the Dean of The Catechetical School of Alexandria.

He was worthy of being chosen as Patriarch for his virtues and his commendable character. He fulfilled the hopes of those who elected him, for after his enthronement, he followed in the footsteps of his worthy predecessors. Working in the same manner to reassure the souls and edify the morals, in spite of the persecutions which were fierce at the time. He continued in his steady struggle for nine years, two months, and twenty-six days, and departed in the Lord on the 6th of Tobi (14 January), in the year 152 AD.

He sat on the throne of St. Mark for 9 years, 2 months and 26 days. He was always teaching his flock and protecting the church from all the foreign teachings. When he completed his well pleasing course to God, he departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

4. Today also of the year 379 A.D., the great St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, departed. Basil was born into the wealthy family of Basil the Elder, a famous rhetor, and Emmelia of Caesarea, in Pontus, around 330. His parents were renowned for their piety. His maternal grandfather was a Christian martyr, executed in the years prior to Constantine's conversion. His pious widow, Macrina, (Basil's maternal grandmother) herself a follower of Gregory Thaumaturgus (who had founded the nearby church of Neocaesarea), raised Basil and his four siblings (who also can be venerated as saints): Macrina the Younger, Naucratus, Peter of Sebaste and Gregory of Nyssa.

He was instructed in the art of rhetoric, at the hands of the philosopher Libianus of Antioch, where he met and befriended St. Gregory the Theologian. For sometime, he worked as an advocate. In 358 A.D., he abandoned the world and all its vain glories. He travelled through the wilderness of Egypt, where he witnessed the ascetics and was influenced by them. Upon his return, he withdrew to a wild and beautiful spot in Pontus and devoted himself to prayer and study. When the news of his holiness spread around, many came to him and they took him as a guide to lead them in the way of perfection.

In 362, Bishop Meletius of Antioch ordained Basil as a deacon. Eusebius then summoned Basil to Caesarea and ordained him as presbyter of the Church there in 365. Basil and Gregory Nazianzus spent the next few years combating the Arian heresy, and in was consecrated bishop of Caesarea on June 14, 370.

St. Basil was generous and sympathetic. He personally organized a soup kitchen and distributed food to the poor during a famine following a drought. He gave away his personal family inheritance to benefit the poor of his diocese.

His letters show that he actively worked to reform thieves and prostitutes. They also show him encouraging his clergy not to be tempted by wealth or the comparatively easy life of a priest, and that he personally took care in selecting worthy candidates for holy orders. He also had the courage to criticize public officials who failed in their duty of administering justice. At the same time, he preached every morning and evening in his own church to large congregations. In addition to all the above, he built a large complex just outside Caesarea, called the Basiliad, which included a poorhouse, hospice, and hospital, and was compared by Gregory of Nazianzus to the wonders of the world.

St. Basil was filled with the Holy Spirit, and wrote the liturgy that is named after him. God wrought by his hands many signs and miracles. An example is that of a young man who wrote a covenant with the devil to deny his Christianity and his baptism. Through the prayer of the Saint, the young man was saved from the servitude of the devil. This miracle is celebrated on the 13th day of the month of Thout.

This saint had many virtues and performed many miracles besides the above mentioned

miracle. He wrote many articles, homilies, and discourses. He put down canons which the believers follow till now. He also wrote commentaries on some of the Books of the Old and New Testaments. *May his holy blessings be with us all. Amen.*

5. On this day also we commemorate the departure of Noah the righteous. *His prayers be with us, and Glory be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*

THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

The Departure of St. Silvester, Pope of Rome

On this day in the year 335 A.D., St. Silvester (Sylvester), Pope of Rome, departed. He was born in Rome. For his virtues, his ascetic life and his knowledge, he was chosen for the pontificate of Rome in 314 A.D., after the departure of his predecessor St. Miltiades. That was in the eleventh year of Emperor Constantine's reign and less than a year after the issuing of the edict of Milan, which granted freedom to Christianity.

He baptized Emperor Constantine, for he was not yet baptized. He was occupied with wars, demolishing pagan temples and building churches.

The life of this father was a bright and shining life. He continued to teach the people, and remove all doubts from them. He explained to them that which was difficult to understand. He frequently debated with the heretics and converted many of them to believe in the Lord Christ, and baptized them. He composed several discourses and he wrote several books about the knowledge of God and the mystery of Incarnation.

During the seventh year of his papacy, the Ecumenical Council of Nicea convened, he could not attend but sent two priests, who supported the decisions of the great council. When he completed his good course, he departed in peace. He occupied the Roman chair for 11 years. *His prayers be with us, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Consecration of St. Macarius' Church.
2. The Departure of St. Andronicus, 37th Pope of Alexandria.
3. The Departure of St. Benjamin, 38th Pope of Alexandria.
4. Commemoration of the return of the head of St. Marc.

1. On this day, the church of St. Macarius, in the monastery known after his name, was consecrated by the hand of Abba Benjamin, 38th Pope of Alexandria. This took place when El-Moquakas (Cyrus) was appointed as a ruler and patriarch over Egypt by Emperor Heraclius. Both of them believed in the teachings of the Council of Chalcedon.

El-Moquakas started to persecute the Christians of Egypt (the Copts) because they refused to follow him. He pursued Pope Benjamin, the legitimate Pope of Alexandria, who took flight to upper Egypt. He moved from one church to another and from one monastery to another, confirming his flock in the faith. He did this for ten years, until the Arab conquest of Egypt and the death of El-Moquakas.

When Abba Benjamin returned to his throne, the elders of the wilderness of the holy desert of Scete (Scetis) asked him to consecrate for them the new church that they built there in the name of St. Macarius. He went with them joyfully. As he approached the monastery, the monks received him with palm fronds and olive branches, just as the city of Jerusalem received Christ when He entered it.

When he was consecrating the church and as he was starting to consecrate the altar, he saw the Hand of Christ anointing the altar with him. He fell upon his face in great fear, and one of the Cherubim raised him up and comforted him. Abba Benjamin said, "Truly this is the house of the Lord and this is the door of heaven." He looked to the west side of the church and he saw an elder standing there with reverence and awesome appearance, and his shining face looked like an angel. He was St. Macarius who came to attend the consecration of his church.

St. Benjamine asked the Lord Jesus Christ that his departure might take place on a similar day. This was fulfilled, and he departed on the eighth day of Tobi, after he had been on the throne for 39 years. The altar in which he saw the Lord Christ was named after him.

His prayers be with. Amen.

2. Also on this day, of the year 623 A.D., the holy father Abba Andronicus, 37th Pope of Alexandria, departed. This father was from a rich family of great influence and his cousin was the chief of the imperial court at Alexandria. He was very well educated and he studied the holy scriptures and excelled in their interpretation. Because of his knowledge, his righteousness and his charity toward the poor, he was ordained a deacon. By consensus he was chosen to be patriarch, although he never lived in any monastery. He remained in Alexandria

all the days of his papacy.

Shortly after the ordination of Abba Andronics, the Persians invaded the East and crossed the river Euphrates. They seized Halab, Antioch in Syria, Jerusalem, and many other cities. They killed and imprisoned many Christians. They captured Egypt and went to the City of Alexandria, around which there were six hundred inhabited monasteries. They killed all the inhabitants, plundered their possessions, and destroyed the monasteries. When the people of Alexandria heard what they had done, because of their fear, they opened the gates of the city for them.

The Persian King saw in a night dream someone saying to him, "I have delivered to you the city. Do not destroy it. But kill its heroes for they are hypocrites." He arrested the Governor of the city, and tied him up in chains. He ordered the elders of the city to bring forth the men, from 18 to 50 years old to come forward to give everyone twenty denari, and to enlist them as soldiers for the city. Eighty thousand men came forward and he killed them all by the sword.

Afterward, the Persian King went with his army to Upper Egypt. He passed by the city of Nikiu. He heard that there were some seven hundred monks living in cells and caves around it. He sent men to kill them. He continued to kill and destroy until Emperor Heraclius conquered him and drove him out of Egypt.

As for Pope Andronicus, he lived a virtuous life. He remained on the throne of St. Mark for 6 years, then departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

3. On this day also, of the year 656 A.D., the blessed and holy father Abba Benjamin, 38th Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was born around 590 in Barshüt, in the Beheira region of the western Nile Delta area. He came from a Coptic family of comfortable means. The proximity of his home to the capital city of Alexandria has led some to assume that he received some education there. He had one brother, Mena. Mena is known for having been tortured with fire and, eventually, being drowned in the Nile by the Byzantine Patriarch Cyrus of Alexandria for refusing to take the Chalcedonian profession of faith and refusing to reveal the whereabouts of Benjamin, who was himself a fugitive at that time.

Benjamin was noted for ascetic habits from an early age, and in 620, at the age of thirty, he took monastic vows at the monastery of Canopus, Egypt, which had avoided destruction by the Persians due to its isolated location. Benjamin further developed his asceticism in the cenobitic communities which followed the rule of Pachomius. It was at Canopus that Benjamin first met an older monk named Theonas, who presented Benjamin with the schema or monastic garment.

Theonas instructed Benjamin in the virtues of the monastic life, including holiness, patience, and self-control, and in the study of the Bible. Theonas himself is said to have been particularly

devoted to the Gospel of John, which he went so far as to memorize.

One night he heard in a night vision someone saying, “Rejoice Benjamin, for you will shepherd the flock of Christ.” When he told his spiritual father about what he had heard, he said to him, “The devil wants to hinder you. Beware of pride.” He increased in virtue. His spiritual father took him to Pope Andronicus and told him about Abba Benjamin's vision. The Pope ordained him priest and eventually appointed him as his assistant, making Benjamin the heir presumptive to the patriarchy.

In his position as assistant to the patriarch, Benjamin became acquainted with the intricacies of church affairs and within the Coptic Christian community. Benjamin became highly regarded for his work both within and without the church, which helped bring about his election to the patriarchate upon the death of Andronicus.

When he was chosen to the patriarchate, he faced many tribulations. The angel of the Lord had revealed to him the hardships that the church was about to experience. The angel told him to flee with his bishops. St. Benjamin celebrated the Divine Liturgy and administered the Holy Mysteries to the people. He also commanded them to be steadfast in the faith of their fathers and informed them of what was about to happen. He wrote a circular to all the bishops and all the heads of the monasteries, advising them to hide until the hardships were over. Then he went to the wilderness of St. Macarius, then to Upper Egypt.

In 631 AD, after the Pope had left Alexandria, the Chalcedonian El-Moquakas (Cirus) arrived, and took charge over the country and seized the church with authority from Emperor Heraclius. He persecuted the believers and arrested “Mena”, St. Benjamin's brother, and tortured him severely. Then he burnt his sides, and finally killed him by drowning him.

Shortly after, Amr Ebn-Elas invaded the land of Egypt and stayed there for three years. In 642 A.D., Amr went to Alexandria and gained control of its fortress. Many evil men took the chance and burned many churches, among them was St. Mark's Church on the seashore, and many other monasteries that were surrounding Alexandria, and plundered their contents.

One of the sailors went to the church of St. Mark during this disturbance and he thrust his hand into the sarcophagus of St. Mark, thinking that he would find money. He did not find anything except a body. He stole the clothing that was on it and took the head with him, and hid it in his ship and did not tell anyone.

When Amr Ebn-Elas knew about the disappearance of Pope Benjamin, he sent a circular to all the cities of Egypt, giving orders that the Pope's hiding place be safe and secure. He asked the Pope to come back to his people and to take charge of the church. Pope Benjamin came back after he had been in hiding for 13 years. Amr Ebn-Elas was courteous toward him and honored him. He returned the churches and all their properties back to him.

When Amr was about to leave Alexandria, heading to Pentapolis (the five western cities), one of the ships could not move and was unable to leave. The captain of the ship was questioned and when they searched the ship they found the head of St. Mark. They called upon Pope Benjamin and he carried it and walked with the priests and the people while they were joyfully singing hymns, until they arrived to Alexandria. The captain of the ship paid a great amount of money to the Pope to build a church after the name of St. Mark.

This father was dedicated to converting the unbelievers to the Christian faith. He departed in peace after he had been on the apostolic throne for 37 years. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

4. Today also we celebrate the return of the head of St. Marc. The head was stolen by an Arab sailor who hid it in the ship, but the ship refused to move until the head of St. Marc was returned to Pope Benjamin.

The prayers of St. Marc be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Departure of Abba Abraam, Companion of Abba Gawarga.
2. Departure of Abba Phis disciple of Abba Hor.

On this day the blessed St. Abraam departed. His father was a pious man, merciful and kind to the poor. Because of his piety and good nature, he was entrusted to look after the treasury of his village, as well as that of the neighboring villages. When Egypt suffered a famine, he gave all he had to the needy.

As for St. Abraam's mother, she lived in the fear of God and Satan envied her, and provoked an evil man against her. As a result, he accused her to the Persians who captured and took her to Persia. During her captivity, one night she saw in a vision, one who told her; "you shall return to your country." Shortly thereafter, the vision was fulfilled and she returned to her country, Egypt, safely.

After her husband's death, she wanted her son, Abraam, to be married, but he refused and told her of his desire for monastic life, and she rejoiced. As she bid him farewell at the outskirts of the city, she lifted up her arms toward heaven and prayed saying, "Please Lord, accept him from me as an offering."

St. Abraam went to the wilderness of Sheheet (Scetis), where he became a monk and a disciple of St. Yoannis, the Archpriest of the wilderness. Abba Abraam led an extremely harsh monastic life, exerting himself with long fasts and many worships. One day, St. Abraam saw

the roof of his cell opened and the Lord Jesus came down, riding a heavenly chariot, and the Cherubim were praising Him. Abba Abraam knelt down in great fear and the Lord blessed him. Then the Lord Christ ascended to heaven. A sign remained in the roof of his cell as a commemoration of this visitation. His cell was near the cell of his spiritual father Abba Yoannis, which is known by “Babgeeh”. An angel of the Lord used to visit Abba Abraam from time to time to comfort him.

One day he went to Mount Orion where he met with St. Gawarga. St. Gawarga came back with Abba Abraam to the wilderness of Sheheet and stayed with Abba Abraam until the day of their departure.

After the departure of Abba Yoannis to heaven, Abba Abraam became ill for 18 years. When the time of his departure drew near, Abba Abraam received the Holy Mysteries. Abba Yoannis appeared to him in the spirit and told him that the Lord Christ had prepared for him a heavenly banquet. Abba Abraam departed in peace at the age of 80.

His prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also is the departure of Departure of Abba Phis disciple of Abba Hor. He was born near Mallawy to pious parents who raised him up in the fear of the Lord. After their departure he crossed the Nile to the eastern shore and came to Abba Hor near Minia. Abba Hor rejoiced at seeing him and vested him with the monastic Schema.

Abba Phis exerted himself with many ascetic labours. When his spiritual father Abba Hor departed, he left and crossed the Nile to the west and became a hermit there. On a certain day, the Lord appeared to him and gave him his peace, telling him to build a church and a monastery. About a hundred brethren came to him and helped him with the building, and he became a spiritual father to them.

He endured many battles with the devil and he prevailed in all of them by the grace of God. Near the end of his life, he lived in seclusion with one of his disciples in a place called the salty mountain and when he had completed his course he departed in peace. His disciple took his body back to the monastery where he was buried with great honour.

Many miracles and cured were done through his holy relics so much that the place was called Miniat Abba Phis, but now it is occupied by the city of Minia.

The blessing of his prayers be with us all and glory be to our God. Amen.

THE TENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

Paramouni of Holy Theophany (Epiphany)

On this day it has been the tradition of the Orthodox Church, following the teachings of the holy fathers of the church, to fast until dusk, eating only what is permitted to be eaten during the holy forty days (Lent). If Christmas day or Epiphany falls on Wednesday or Friday, the saintly apostles ordained that the believers eat all the food that one is permitted to eat during the Pentecostal days (the post-resurrection fifty days). They are feasts to the Lord. The Paramouni days are fasted to compensate for the feast days, so that we may have the blessings of both the fast and the feast.

In the custom of our Coptic Orthodox church, if the Paramouni day falls on Saturday or Sunday, it is the tradition to fast on the Friday that precedes them also. Then they pray on water before midnight and they wash and bless everyone who wants to be blessed. The reason to complete this before midnight is because of the fear that the little children may break their fasting by drinking water.

We ask Christ to purify us, cleanse us from all our abominations, forgive our sins, and make us worthy to receive the revelation of the glory of His divine nature in our hearts and in our deeds, as He revealed His glory in the Jordan River.

To Him be the Glory with His Good Father and His Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the end of ages. Amen.

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Holy Theophany of Our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ
2. Departure of Abba John, the seventy-fourth Archbishop of the city of Alexandria

1. On this day of the year 31 A.D., our Master, Lord and God, Jesus Christ, was baptized at the hands of St. John the Baptizer (the dyer). The feast is called in Greek the Feast of Theophany or the Feast of the Revelation of the Divine Nature of the Lord, for the Holy Trinity was revealed: our heavenly Father was heard from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son," and the Son standing in the Jordan river, and the Holy Spirit was descending in the form of a dove, and alighting upon Him.

St. John the Baptist bore witness that the Lord Christ, when He had been baptized, came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

St. John the evangelist said about this day, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. This is He of Whom I said, 'After me comes a Man Who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' I did not know him but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.'” (John 1:29-31)

The glory of our Lord Jesus Christ was revealed on this day, that He is the Son of God and that He is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. For this reason, this feast has become a great feast for all believers, in which they are purified with water after the example of the baptism of our Lord, to Whom is the glory, to obtain forgiveness of their sins.

Glory, honor and worship to our Lord God, now and forever more and to the end of ages. Amen.

2. And on this day also Saint Abba John, the seventy-fourth Archbishop of the city of Alexandria departed. This father was a merchant before he was made Archbishop of Alexandria, and he traded with the country of India, and he was always traveling on the sea. First of all he became a deacon in the church of Saint Mercurius, the martyr, in Mesr (Cairo). And he became a scribe, but he abandoned the scribe’s profession and became a merchant. And [the bishops] elected him archbishop, and they enthroned him on Sunday, the fourth day of the month of Meshir in the nine hundred and fifth year of the martyrs (A.D. 1189); and he protected his flock well. And he had very much money before he was made archbishop, that is to say, a sum of twenty thousand dinars in gold. And he gave all his money in his lifetime to the poor Christians, and to the churches and monasteries, and all his money came to an end before his death, and he died in debt to his brother’s son.

He was the last Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria to consecrate a bishop for Western Pentapolis as the people converted to Islam under the rule of the Arabs.

During the days of his archiepiscopate he never ate bread at the expense of any Christian person, or at the expense of any nobleman, or any poor man; and he never accepted a present (or fee) from any of them. He held his office for eight and twenty years, and he died on the day of the festival of the Baptism (i.e. Epiphany), on the eleventh day of the month of Tobi in the nine hundred and thirty-second year of the martyrs (AD. 1216).

May his holy blessings be with us and glory be to our God. Amen.

THE TWELFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Commemoration of the Archangel Michael.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Theodore Tiro (the Oriental).
3. The Martyrdom of St. Anatole (Anatolius).

1. On this day, the church commemorates the honorable Angel Michael, the head of the heavenly host, the intercessor for the human race, and the faithful steward.

His intercession be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also of the year 306 A.D., the church celebrates the commemoration of the martyrdom of the courageous prince, St. Theodore Tiro (The Oriental).

He was born in the City of Tyre in 270 A.D. In his youth, he enlisted in the Roman army and was promoted to the rank of commander. His father's name was Sadrikhos, "Adrakos" who was a high ranking official during the reign of Emperor Numerianus (283-284 A.D.), and his mother was the sister of Basilides, the minister.

When Emperor Numerianus died in the war against the Persians, his son, Justus, was fighting in the west. The two officials Sadrikhos and Basilides continued to run the affairs of the Empire, until the infidel Diocletian took charge of the Empire, and started to persecute the Christians.

At that time, St. Theodore was in charge of the army that was fighting against the Persians. He saw a vision at night: a ladder was extended between earth and heaven, and at the top of the ladder the Lord sat on a great throne, surrounded by hosts of angels chanting. He also saw under the ladder a great beast which was the devil. The Lord said to St. Theodore, "Your blood will be shed for My Name's sake." The saint asked the Lord, "How about my friend Lawondius?" The Lord replied, "Not only Lawondius, but Banikaros, the Persian, also."

During a truce, between the Roman and Persian armies, St. Theodore met with Banikaros, the commander of the Persian army. St. Theodore guided him to Christianity and he believed in Christ.

Emperor Diocletian ordered that Prince Theodore be brought to him. The prince came back with his army and with him were Lawondius and Banikaros. When St. Theodore knew that the Emperor was going to ask him to worship idols, he told his soldiers, "Whoever among you wants to fight for the Name of the Lord Christ, let him come and join me." They all shouted in one accord, "We die with you and your God is our God also."

When he arrived in the city, he left his soldiers outside and went alone to the Emperor who received him well. The Emperor inquired about the war and the army and he asked St.

Theodore to worship Apollo. The saint answered in great courage and faith, "I do not know any god that I can worship except my Master, Jesus Christ." Diocletian commanded his soldiers to nail the Saint to a tree and to brutally torture him. But the Lord was strengthening and comforting him. Finally, he delivered up his pure soul into the hand of the Lord Whom he loved. He received the crown of eternal glory in the kingdom of heaven.

The Emperor sent the priests of Apollo to the soldiers of the saint, to call upon them to worship the idols. They all shouted, "We have no king except our Master, Jesus Christ, Lord of Lords, and King of Kings." When the Emperor heard what they said, he had them all beheaded. They received the crowns of martyrdom and eternal bliss.

Their prayers be with us all. Amen.

3. On this day also, St. Anatole (Anatolius) was martyred. He was born in Persia. When he grew up, he became a soldier of the Roman Empire and was promoted to a commander in the army. He spent fifteen years in the army until the reign of Diocletian. He longed for the heavenly kingdom, preferring it over all the vain glory of this temporal world.

He came before the Emperor, took off his military attire and sword, threw them before him and confessed his faith in the Lord Christ. The Emperor was astonished at his boldness. When he knew that he was a Persian, the Emperor treated him with kindness, then sent him to Romanos that he might persuade him to change his counsel. Romanos failed to do that and he returned him to the Emperor. The Emperor tortured him with all kinds of tortures, sometimes by pressing his body, sometimes by beating him and casting him to wild beasts, and other times by cutting his tongue.

The Lord Jesus Christ sent to him His Angel to comfort him in all his afflictions. He remained under persecution for a long time and when the Emperor became weary of torturing him, he ordered his head cut off. He received the crown of martyrdom in the eternal kingdom.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Feast of the Miracle at Cana of Galilee.
2. The Departure of St. Theophilus, the Monk.
3. The Martyrdom of St. Demiana.

1. On this day, the church celebrates the Feast of the miracle that our Lord Jesus Christ performed at Cana of Galilee, one of the seven minor feasts of our Lord. It was the first miracle that our Lord Jesus performed after His baptism. He was invited to the wedding with His virgin mother, St. Mary, and also some of His disciples.

When they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." There were set there six water pots of stone. Jesus said to them, "Fill the water pots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the master of the feast."

When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, he said to the bridegroom, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine and when the guests have well drunk, then that which is inferior; but you have kept the good wine until now."

This was the beginning of the signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him. (John 2:1-11) *To Him is the Glory with His Good Father and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Theophilus the Monk, departed. He was the only son of a king of one of the Roman islands. He brought him up well in the Christian faith and knowledge. When he was 12 years old, he read in the epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, "And you, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands. They will perish but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail." (Hebrews 1:10-12) Then he read in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband... for I wish that all men were even as I myself... and I think I also have the spirit of God." (I Corinthians 7:1,2,7,40)

He also read in the holy gospel the words of the Lord, "If you want to be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." (Matthew 19:21)

Theophilus left his father's house and all that was his, and went out in disguise. He went from one monastery to another until he arrived in Alexandria. From there, he went to the

“Glass Monastery”. When St. Boctor, the abbot of the monastery, saw him and knew by the spirit that he was a descendant of kings, he received him well and blessed him. He asked him about his story. St. Boctor was greatly surprised and glorified God and accepted him in the monastery. When he saw his successful, virtuous, and active spiritual life, he clothed him in the holy Eskeem.

Ten years later, some soldiers sent by Theophilus' father came and took him by force. When he came before his father, he could not recognize him, for asceticism had changed his appearance. The saint revealed his identity to his father, who rejoiced greatly. The saint started to preach to his father telling him about life, death and judgement. His words left a mark in the heart of his father. His father took the crown off his head, relinquishing his throne to his brother. He went with his wife and St. Theophilus, their son to the “Glass” monastery, where the king became a monk and stayed with his son. St. Theophilus' mother became a nun in a convent. They all lived an ascetic life in worship and in virtue until the end of their days. When they completed their strife, they departed in peace. *Their prayers be with us. Amen.*

3. On this day also, St. Demiana was martyred. This chaste and fighter virgin, was the daughter of Mark, Governor of El-Borollus, El-Zaafraan, and Wadi Al-Saysaban in the Northern delta of the valley of the Nile. She was the only daughter to her parents. When she was one year old, her father took her to the church of the monastery of Al-Maymah. He offered alms, candles and oblations so that God might bless her and keep her in His care.

When she was fifteen years old, her father wanted her to be wed. She refused, and told him that she had vowed herself a bride to the Lord Christ. When she saw that her father was pleased with her intention, she asked him to build her a place where she could worship God in seclusion with her virgin friends. He fulfilled her wish and built her the house that she wanted. She lived in it with forty other virgins. They spent their time reading the holy scripture and in worship.

Shortly after, Emperor Diocletian sent for Mark, St. Demiana's father, and ordered him to worship the idols. He refused at first, but after the Emperor appeased him he obeyed his order and worshipped the idols and forsook the Creator of the Universe. When Mark returned to his official seat, and St. Demiana knew what had transpired, she rushed to meet him. She did not greet him, but said, “What is it that I heard about you? I would have preferred to hear about your death rather than to hear that you have renounced your faith and forsaken the God Who created you from non-existence into being, to worship gods made by hands. Take note that if you do not return to your first faith and renounce the worship of stones, you are not my father and I am not your daughter,” and she left him.

Her father was greatly moved by the words of his daughter, and he wept bitterly. In haste, he went to Diocletian and confessed the Lord Christ. When the Emperor could not convince him with threats and promises, he ordered him beheaded.

When Diocletian knew that the one who turned Mark from worshipping the idols was St. Demiana, his daughter. He sent her a prince to try first gently to convince her to worship idols, and if she disobeyed him to behead her. The prince went to her with two hundred soldiers and the instruments of torture. When he arrived at her palace, he said to her, “I am a messenger sent from Emperor Diocletian. I came to call upon you according to the Emperor's orders, to worship his gods, so that he can grant you all that you want.” The saint shouted in his face saying, “May God denounce the messenger and the one by whom he was sent. Don't you have any shame at all to call stones and wood gods which are inhabited by devils? There is no god in heaven or on earth except one God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Eternal Creator, the Everlasting, Who is everywhere, Who knows all the secrets, and Who can throw you in hell where is the everlasting torment. As for me, I am the maidservant of my Master and my Savior Jesus Christ, and His Good Father and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, Him I confess and upon Him I depend, and in His Name I die, and by Him I live forever.”

The prince became exceedingly angry and ordered her to be placed in the Hinbazeen (the squeezing press), until her blood poured out of her body on the ground. The virgins were standing weeping over her. When they put her in prison, the angel of the Lord appeared to her, touched her body with his illumined wings, and she was healed of all her wounds. The prince used all his evil imagination to torture St. Demiana, once by tearing her flesh and another time by placing her in boiling oil. Through it all the Lord raised her up safely. When the prince saw that all his attempts were in vain, before the steadfastness of this pure virgin he ordered her beheaded, and all the other virgins with her. Thus, they all received the crowns of martyrdom. *Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Departure of St. Archileidis (Arselidas).
2. The Martyrdom of St. Mehrael.
3. The Departure of St. Maximus, Brother of St. Domadius (Domatius).

1. On this day St. Archileidis departed. This fighter was born in the city of Rome. His father's name was “John” and his mother's name was “Sinclitiki”. They were righteous before the Lord and lived according to His commandments.

This saint's father died when he was 12 years old. When his mother wanted him to get married, he declined. She advised him to go to the Emperor to take over his father's position. She sent along with him two of their men and a precious gift to present to the Emperor. While they were sailing, they encountered a great tempest with high waves and strong winds, so that the ship was wrecked. The saint hung onto one of the ship's planks, and God saved him

from drowning. When he made it to the seashore, he found a body of a dead man that was thrown to the shore by the waves.

He reflected on the transience of the world and its temporal nature, and said to himself, “What do I have to do with this temporal world, and what would I profit when I die and become dust?” He arose and prayed to the Lord Christ to guide him to the right way.

Then he walked diligently until he arrived at the monastery of St. Romanus. He gave to the abbot of the monastery what was left of his money. He stayed there living an ascetic life, denying himself food and clothing, until he reached a level of perfection. The Lord granted him the gift of healing the sick. He made an oath not to ever see the face of any woman.

When he did not return to his mother for a long time, and she did not know his whereabouts, she thought that he died, and she grieved much over him. She built a hostel for the poor and the strangers, and she lived in one of its rooms.

One day she heard two merchants talking about her son and his holy monastic life and the grace of God that was upon him. When she inquired about him, she became sure that it was him, her own son. She arose quickly and went to that monastery.

When she arrived, she sent to inform the saint of her arrival. St. Archiledis answered her saying that he had made an oath before God not to ever see a woman. She repeated her request, and threatened that if he did not allow her to see him, she would go to the wilderness to be eaten by the wild beasts.

When he learned of her persistence, and that he could not renege on his oath, he prayed to the Lord Christ to take his soul. Then he told the gate keeper to allow her to come in while God had answered his request. When his mother entered his cell, she found that he had given up his spirit. She cried, wept and asked God to take her soul also, and God answered her prayer. When they tried to separate their bodies, they heard a voice coming from St. Archiledis' body saying, “Let my body be with the body of my mother, for I did not grant her own heart's desire to see me.” They buried both of them in one grave. God honored this saint in performing many miracles. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also On this day the most excellent Mehrael, the virgin, became a martyr. She was a native of Tamwah, and she had God-fearing and Christian parents; her father was a priest and his name was John, and [the name of] her mother was Hilaria. They had no children, and because of this were very sad, and they prayed to God, and after they had waited some days, Hilaria was rewarded with a beautiful daughter, whom she named “Mehrael.” And they raised her well in the Christian faith.

And then when the wicked Diocletian was reigning she went out one day to the river bank, and

she found a ship and she embarked in it, and she departed with those who were going to martyrdom. When she arrived at the city of 'Ensna' (Antinoe), they set her before the governor, whose name was Philipianus. And when he saw her, he had pity on her for her tender body, and he wanted to set her free; but as soon as she knew that he was going to release her, she cursed him with great boldness, and reviled his unclean gods. Therefore was the governor wroth, and he commanded her to be tortured severely.

When he could not persuade her to abandon the True Faith, he commanded the hunters to collect all kinds of serpents, and scorpions, and vipers, and reptiles which sting, and to throw them into a corn sack and to put the saint into the sack with them; and the soldiers did so. Thereupon the angel of God appeared, and gave her a promise; and after this she delivered up her soul, and finished her martyrdom, and received her heavenly crown. Then they took her out of the corn sack and buried her in that place.

When her father and mother heard of it, they set out with very many natives of their city, and when they arrived at the place where her body was, they took it up, and made it ready for burial with great honor, and they built over her a church, and many miracles were made manifest there. *May her holy blessings be with us. Amen.*

On this day also, in the year 382 AD. St. Maximus, brother of St. Domadius (Domitius), departed. They were the children of Emperor Valentinian II (371-392) *Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

The Departure of Obadiah, the Prophet

On this day, Obadiah, one of the prophets of the children of Israel, departed. He was the son of Hananya, the prophet from the tribe of Judah. Obadiah prophesied in the days of King Jehoshaphat, King of Judah.

It was said that Obadiah was the head of the fifty men who were sent by King Ahaziah, for the third time, to Elijah the Prophet. He came to Elijah in humility and pleaded with him not to destroy him as those who proceeded him, for fire had come down from heaven and burned them. He asked Elijah to have compassion upon him and to come with him to go to see King Ahaziah. The Prophet went with him as was told by the angel of the Lord. (2 Kings 1:15)

Thus, Obadiah realized that to serve Elijah the Prophet was far more noble than to serve earthly kings, and that if he were to accompany him, it would lead him to the service of the

Heavenly King. He left the service of the King and followed Elijah, and was filled with the grace of God.

He prophesied for more than twenty years. He prophesied about the destruction of the land of Edom, for they rejoiced for the distress of the people of God. (Obadiah 1-16) He also prophesied about the salvation of Jerusalem and her victory over the Family of Esau, and her victory over all her enemies. (Obadiah 17-21)

He lived more than seven hundred years before the advent of the Lord Christ. He departed and was buried in the tomb of his fathers.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Departure of St. Maximus and St. Domitius (Domadius).
2. The Departure of Abba Yusab, Bishop of Girga, known as El- Abbah.

1. On this day is the commemoration of the two honored saints Maximus and his brother Domitius (Domadius). Their father's name was Valentinian II (371-392), he was one of the Roman emperors who feared God and was Orthodox in faith. God gave him these two sons who were angelic in their purity and holiness since their young age, always praying and reading the holy books.

When they realized the vanity of this world and all its glory, they decided to leave it and live a monastic life. They asked their father to allow them to go to the City of Nicea, to pray in the place where the first Ecumenical Council was held in 325 A.D. Their father rejoiced, and he sent an entourage of soldiers and servants with them, as was the custom for the children of kings.

When they arrived, they asked the soldiers to go back to their father and tell him that they wanted to stay there for some time. Then they revealed their thoughts to a saintly monk, that they desired to put on the holy garb of the monks. The monk did not agree with them because he feared their father, but he advised them to go to Syria where St. Agabius abided.

They went to St. Agabius and stayed with him until his departure. Before he departed, he put on them the monastic garb, and told them that he saw St. Macarius in a night vision saying, "Command your two sons to come to me after your departure, so that they may become my children." Then St. Agabius told them, "I desired to see St. Macarius in the flesh, but I have seen him in the spirit. After my departure, you should go to him in peace."

God granted them the gift of healing the sick. Their report was heard in all the countries, especially among the sea merchants and the travellers. They learned the trade of making ships' sails, and they were able to support themselves with money earned from selling them, and they gave the rest to the poor and the needy.

One day, one of their father's stewards saw a ship with the names "Maximus and Domitius" on its sail . He inquired of the owner of the ship about these names. The owner told the steward, "These are the names of two monk brothers, which I have written on my ship as a blessing, so that God with their prayers may prosper my business." He described the brothers to him, as one with a full beard, and the other without a beard. The steward recognized them and he took the man and brought him before the Emperor. When the Emperor made certain about what he had heard, he sent their mother and the princess, their sister, to meet them. When the women met with the two saints and recognized them, they wept. Their mother wanted them to return with her, but the Saints refused, and they comforted the hearts of their mother and sister.

After a while, the Patriarch of Rome departed, and they remembered Maximus, whom they wanted to ordain in his place. His father rejoiced when he heard this. When the news arrived to St. Maximus and his brother, they remembered the command of their father Abba Agabius. They disguised themselves, and took the road along the Mediterranean sea shore, and when they were thirsty, God transformed for them the salty water into sweet water. They became very tired of walking, and their feet were bleeding. They slept on a hill because of their exhaustion and God sent them a certain power that carried them to the wilderness of Scetis where St. Macarius was residing. They told St. Macarius that they wanted to live under his guidance. When St. Macarius saw that they were of rich background, he thought that they would not be able to live in the desert because of its harsh living conditions. They answered him saying, "If we are not able to live here, our father, we will return to where we came from." Then he taught them how to plait palm leaves, and he helped in building a cave (cell) for them. He also told them about someone who would take the work of their hands to sell and bring them back bread.

They lived in this manner for three years, never communicating with anyone. They only went to church to partake of the Divine Sacraments silently. St. Macarius marvelled, for they did not go to him all these years. He prayed to God to reveal to him their secret. He went to visit them in their cell where he stayed the night with them. When he woke up at midnight, as was his custom, to pray, he saw the two saints praying and a ray of light going from their mouths to heaven, and the devils were all around them like flies, and the angel of the Lord standing with a sword of fire to protect them. The next day, St. Macarius put on them the holy Eskiem, and asked them to pray for him. They bowed to the ground before him (made metanias) in silence.

When they completed their course, and the Lord wanted to take them away from the sorrows of this temporal world, St. Maximus became sick. He sent word to St. Macarius, asking him to

come. When St. Macarius arrived, he found St. Maximus ill with a fever, and he comforted him. St. Macarius saw a company of prophets and saints, including St. John the Baptist and Emperor Constantine, gathered around the Saint until he delivered his pure spirit in dignity and in honor. St. Macarius wept and said, “Blessed are you, O Maximus.”

St. Domitius, his brother, wept bitterly, and asked St. Macarius to pray on his behalf to the Lord Christ to take him also to be with his brother. After three days, he also became sick, and when St. Macarius knew by the spirit he went to visit him. On his way, he saw the company of saints who carried St. Maximus before carrying the soul of St. Domitius ascending up to heaven. When he arrived at the cave, St. Macarius found that St. Domitius had passed away. St. Macarius put St. Domitius' body with his brother's, whose departure was on the 14th day of this month. St. Macarius ordered that the monastery be called after their names, the monastery of “El-Baramus” as it is known until today. *Their prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, of the year 1826 A.D., Abba Yusab, the great scholar and honorable father, departed. He was the Bishop of Girga and Ekhmiem, and was known by the name “El-Abbah”.

He was born in the town of Nekhila in Upper Egypt, to rich parents who were compassionate to the poor and the needy. When Abba Yusab was 25 years old, his parents wanted him to be wed, but he refused. Because of his inclination towards the monastic life, he went to the estate of St. Anthony's monastery in the city of Boash. He stayed there for some time, during which his humility and piety were evident. This convinced the abbot to send him to the monastery. When he arrived, the monks received him with joy, for they had heard of his virtues and his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Shortly after, they clothed him in the monk's tunic.

When the reports of this father reached Pope John, 107th Patriarch, he called Abba Yusab and kept him with him. After the Pope verified what he heard of Abba Yusab' righteousness and knowledge, he counseled with the bishops who agreed to ordain Abba Yusab a bishop over Ekhmiem and Girga. Abba Yusab refrained from accepting this rank because of its responsibilities; however, he was ordained against his will.

When he arrived at his diocese, Abba Yusab found many heretics mingled with his people. He built a church, and made a great effort to gather his flock, to teach them, to restore those who were lost, and to guide many of the heretics to the faith. He wrote several articles on the Incarnation of the Lord Christ and explained several difficult issues and ambiguous verses in the Bible. He urged his people to forsake all the bad customs that they were engaged in, both inside and outside the church. He succeeded in putting an end to the quarrels and divisions from those who were in opposition to the truth. He was merciful to the poor, and never judged anyone by his appearance. He was fair in judgement, never took sides, and did not accept bribes. He sent whatever money he had left to his brethren, the monks, in their monasteries. He did not own anything except the clothes that he wore and those things which fulfilled his basic needs. He never uttered anything but the truth, and was not afraid of the mighty rulers

of the land. He shepherded his flock with the best of care.

When God wanted to take him away from this world, Abba Yusab became ill for a short period of time. While he was sick, he stayed some time in his diocese, and then in the cell of Pope Abba Peter, 109th Pope. Then he went to his monastery in the wilderness. The monks rejoiced to see him, and his blessed life ended there, and he gave his pure spirit into the hand of the Lord who loved him. He lived 91 years, 25 years before his monastic life, 31 years in the monastery, and 35 years as bishop.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Departure of St. James, Bishop of Nisibis
2. Commemoration of Mary and Martha

On this day of the year 338 A.D., St. James, Bishop of Nisibis, departed. He was born in the city of Nisibis, and was brought up there. He was Syrian by race.

Early in his youth, he chose the monastic life. He wore sackcloth made of hair to protect him from the heat of summer and the cold of winter. His food was composed of the vegetation of the earth, and his drink was only water. For this reason, he was very thin, but his soul was illumined and full of grace. He was worthy to receive the gift of prophecy and the performing of miracles. He also was able to foretell the future and he advised the people of what would happen to them in advance.

His miracles are numerous. One day he saw some promiscuous women jesting without shame by a spring of water, and they had let their hair down to take a bath. He prayed to God, and the water of the spring dried up, and the women's hair became white. When the women apologized to him and repented for what they had done, he prayed to God, and the water came back to the spring, but their hair remained white.

Another miracle occurred when he was passing by certain people who stretched a man on the ground and covered him as though he was dead. They asked the saint for some money for his burial. When they returned to the man, they found him dead. They came back to the saint and repented for what they had done. St. James prayed to God, and the man came back to life.

When his virtues became widely known, he was chosen to be a bishop over the city of Nisibis. He shepherded the flock of Christ very well, and protected his people from the Arian wolves. He was one of the bishops who attended the first Ecumenical Council at Nicea in 325 A.D.,

and agreed on the excommunication and exile of Arius.

When Shapur, the Persian King, came and surrounded the city of Nisibis with his army, God, in answer to the prayer of St. James, brought swarms of mosquitoes and wasps over their horses and elephants which caused a great stampede and the animals fled away. The King of Persia then became fearful, and he fled with his army and the siege was ended. When the saint completed his good course, he departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus, who were of Bethany. The Lord often rested in their house and when He raised their brother from the dead, they expressed their faith in Him as Christ the Son of God. Their prayers be with us. *and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE NINETEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

The Discovery of the Relics of St. Abahor, St. Bisoura and their Mother Ampira

On this day, the church commemorates the discovery of the relics of St. Abahor, St. Bisoura, and their mother Ampira.

They were from the town of Shabas, near Desouk in Egypt. They were martyred during the era of idol worshipping, and their bodies were buried in the church of their town.

When the Europeans invaded Egypt, during the Crusades in 1248 A.D., they gained control of Damietta (Domiati) and all the surrounding towns. King El-Kamil, King of Egypt at that time, went out with his army to fight the invaders. On their way, they destroyed many churches, among which was the church of Shabas, where the relics of the saints were placed. One soldier opened the coffin of these saints, hoping to find something of value, rather he found these invaluable treasures that were of no value to him. He threw their relics beside the wall of the church and took the coffin and sold it. But the long suffering God was patient toward that soldier, until he went back to his camp. He was the first to be killed as witnessed by his companions on their return.

The precious relics were seen by the wife of one of the priests. She took them joyfully, and because of her fear, she entered the church and hid them in a side of the church and covered them with pieces of brick.

The relics remained hidden for twenty years, for the woman forgot everything about them. But God wanted to reveal the relics for the benefit of the faithful. The woman remembered them and she made it known to the rest of the faithful. The priests came and carried them while they

were praying and praising God. They put them in a new coffin in the church. Abba Gabriel, the bishop of the diocese, ordered this day to be a feast and a memorial, and that their names be placed in the chronicle of the feasts of the Church.

Many miracles and signs were brought about by God through these relics. One of these miracles concerns a daughter of one of the believers who lost her sight and lost all hope for healing. She interceded through the saints' pure relics and was instantly healed and her sight returned. She glorified the Lord Christ Who honored His servants with this great honor.

The prayers of these saints be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Departure of St. Prochorus, One of the Seventy Disciples.
2. Martyrdom of Abba Aklog the priest
2. The Commemoration of the Consecration of the Church of St. John, the Owner of the Golden Gospel, and the Transfer of His Relics to It.
4. Commemoration of the Martyrdom of St Behnu.

1. On this day, St. Prochorus departed. He was one of the seventy disciples who were called by the Lord and sent to preach His Name, and granted the gift of healing and casting out of evil spirits. St. Prochorus was with the disciples in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost, and he was filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. He was chosen by the Apostles to be one of the seven deacons, who were filled with the Holy Spirit and with wisdom. (Acts 6:5)

He accompanied St. John the Theologian, and travelled with him to many cities. St. John laid his hand on him and ordained him bishop for Nicomidia in Bithinia. He preached the Name of the Lord Christ, and restored many Greeks to the faith, baptizing them and teaching them to keep the Commandments. After he built a church for them and ordained priests and deacons, he went to the surrounding cities. He preached to them and baptized many of their inhabitants, as he also preached to and baptized many of the Jews. He endured many afflictions and hardships because of his preaching of the Name of Christ.

When he completed his course, he departed at a well-advanced age, and received the eternal bliss. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the martyrdom of Abba Aklog (Eclogius) the priest. This saint was a man of the city called "El-fent," in Beni Swaif (Egypt), and his father's name was Dioscorus, and his mother's name was Euphemia; they belonged to a noble family

and were very rich in gold, and silver, and cattle, and sheep, and horses, and camels, and lands. And they had no son, and were therefore very sad, and they prayed to God continually to give them a son; and God heard their prayer and gave them this holy son, and they called him “Aklog” (Eclogius), which is, being interpreted, “pleasant to God.” When he was eight years old his parents gave him to a teacher so that he might instruct him in the Law of God, and each day he went to the church, and heard the praises and prayers before he went to his teacher.

His piety was apparent to every one since his youth, and his fame went around the area. When the men of his city saw his spiritual gifts, they asked the bishop to appoint him their priest so that he might pray for them. He fasted all the days of his life; and he prayed day and night; and he wore hairy sackcloth under his apparel next to his flesh. And the bishop seized him against his will, and made him a priest. And when he was being appointed the people heard a voice crying out and saying, “Axios, Axios, Axios”; and the people glorified God.

And after those days a great persecution of the Christians broke out in all the land of Egypt under Diocletian the infidel, who destroyed the churches; and many people became martyrs. And God summoned Abba ‘Aklog (Eclogius) to become a martyr, and he stood up and prayed the liturgy for his people, commanded them to be firm in the faith and said farewell to them.

He then went to Arianus and confessed to him that he is a Christian. Arianus tried to treat him kindly hoping to convince him to offer incense to the gods but he was steadfast. Arianus the governor commanded the soldiers to torture Abba ‘Aklog (Eclogius) severely, and to send to his own country his head [after it was cut off with] the sword. When the saint heard this he rejoiced greatly, and he stood up and prayed, thanking the Lord for this great blessing.

After this the saint turned to the soldiers, and said unto them, “O my brethren, finish that which the governor hath commanded you to do.” And the soldiers, seeing that his face was shining like the sun, feared greatly his majesty and his light, and they were unable to approach him. But one of them, a man dense of heart and unmerciful, stretched out his hand to the saint, and smote him on the neck with the sword and cut off his holy head; and the saint finished his martyrdom on the twentieth day of the month of Tobe.

And the angels took his soul and carried it up into heaven singing as they went. And the soldiers left the body of the saint on the riverbank, and they embarked in their ship and departed. And certain young men were there, and they went into the city and told the people how the martyrdom of Saint Abba ‘Aklog (Eclogius) took place. And the people and the priests gathered together, and went and carried his body, with great honor and with singing of psalms and dirges, until they brought it to the city and laid it in a good resting place. And great signs, and miracles, and healings of the sick took place through it. His relics are still kept in the church carrying his name in El-fent. *May his holy blessings be with us. Amen.*

3. This day also is the commemoration of the consecration of St. John “El-Koochy's” church, which was in the city of Rome, and the relocation of the saint's relics to it. He was known as the owner of the Golden Bible. His blessings be upon us.

4. On this day also is the commemoration of the martyrdom of St. Behnu.
May his blessings be with us and glory be to God. Amen.

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

The Dormition of Our Lady, the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos.

Mary, the holy Virgin, lived in Jerusalem in a remote place where a crowd of virgins were under her supervision. She taught them about purity and the fear of the Lord. The Apostles Peter and John stayed by her, accomplishing her orders and her evangelic precepts. She was to them a guide in the way of a wise pilot.

Then it came to pass that one day, it was the 20th of Tobe, the Apostles went near her to be given her blessing as usual. They found her disconcerted, they said to her, “what befalls you today O mother of Life, that your face is so sad?” She answered them saying, “this happened to me this night after I finished my little meeting; I slept a little and I saw a handsome young man of about thirty years of age, ten thousand times more bright than the sun. I saw you also standing on his right side carrying clothes in your hands and holding them out to me. The young man spoke and said to me, 'Do you know who I am whilst I make myself visible?' It was my Son. I said unto Him, 'My Lord art Thou Jesus, my son, the true Son of God?' He replied, 'I am' I added, 'My Lord, for what purpose are these clothes in the hands of thy disciples, that they are holding out to me?' He said to me, 'their purpose is your shrouding when you leave your body.' Having thus spoken He vanished from my sight. That is why I am full of fear O my sons because of this path which is extremely narrow. I have heard my Son many times while He taught the children of men calling on them to repent saying, 'A river of fire is on the path sending up great waves higher than all the mountains, all flesh, whether righteous or guilty, must come to cross it. Will I be able to save myself from it O my sons? What shall I say of the soul and body's separation? O how full of fear and terror is this moment! But may the will of God be accomplished in me.’”

Hearing this, they lifted up their faces and cried with grief, “Lord, we have not even yet forgotten the first affliction which is Thy life-giving suffering, and here is the second one that will soon reach us. Woe betide us if what makes us orphans comes to strike us.”

Then she said to us, “withdraw a little my children until the Lord whom my soul loves reveals Himself. Then, opening her mouth, she made this prayer, “I give thanks to Thee, O my Lord

Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, who came out of the Father's mouth, who stayed nine months in my womb. I bless Thee, treasure of all good, Thou, that owns all flesh, in whose mouth I gave my milk. I bless Thee, Thou that can be carried, and cannot be contained. Thou, that by a word of Thy power, bears all things, and that I bore in my hands. I bless Thee, Thou, the Patriarchs' life, who was with Abraham, Thou that comforted Isaiah, that expanded Israel. I bless Thee, Thou, the prophecy of the prophets, who came to fulfill them. I bless Thee, Thou, the judges' call and the salvation in struggles. I bless Thee, Thou, the crown of the kings of truth, whose judgments are righteous. I bless Thee, Thou, the Angels' song and the Archangels' hymn. I bless Thee, Thou the Cherubim's trumpet and the Seraphims' clamor. I bless Thee, Thou, the martyrs' courage and the glory of their crown. I bless Thee, Thou, the virgins' pledge and the light of their lamps. I bless Thee, Thou, the Apostles' preaching and the spreading of the fragrance of their sanctity. I bless Thee, Thou who art my Lord and my Son at the same time. I pray and beseech Thy kindness, be my help and forsake me not. Make my soul leave this prison that I may bear witness to Thee. Let the fire calm down and may Thy mercy go ahead of me. Let the darkness drift away and Thy light appear. Shut the mouth of the enemy who wants to adjoin me to him. Let those who venerate Thy mother's peace come forward, the worm that never dies quickly perish and may Thy living mercy strengthen my soul. Yea, my Lord, my God and my Son all in One. At this hour, cast a glance at me whose heart is full of fear and terror. Come unto me, Thou that art the love of my soul. Let Thine Holy Spirit lead me into the straightforward path. Let me worship Thy presence in truth, Lord my God, so that I reveal Thee with the aid of the psalms of Thine truth, Thou to whom is due the glory of Thy Father, who is goodness itself and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.”

When she finished this prayer, they too said the Amen. Then, unexpectedly, thunders and lightening shook the whole place on its foundation. Amidst them appeared the Lord Jesus in a chariot of light. Moses was ahead of Him with the rest of the prophets, David the king, and the kings of truth. All the place became bright as a fire too dreadful to be endured. They all fell to the ground as if dead, in the midst of all these things. But He, the Lord Jesus, speaking in a soft voice was saying, “Hail, my Mother the Virgin, hail my holy Apostles, hail virgins gathered in this place.” At this moment, fear left them. They were on the ground, They worshiped Him. He said to His Mother, “I heard your prayer and your supplication. It came to my throne of glory by the right hand of my Father and the Holy Spirit. At last, O my Mother, the Virgin, rise, let us go from here. Why do you remain in this house of sinners while the residences of the righteous are ready for you? O most fair Mother, depart from here. Why would I leave you in the earthly Jerusalem which has killed prophets and stoned those who were sent to her. You are impatiently expected in the celestial Jerusalem, My Father's and the Holy Spirit's City. Rise, my beloved Mother, let us go away from here. How can I leave you in this house of soil and bricks, while the porticos of precious stones are open before you. How can I wait, my most fair mother, you who have been a dwelling place for me on earth, while the heaven of heavens, my real dwelling place together with my Father and the Holy spirit is fervently desiring you? O my beloved Mother rise and let us go away from here. My living Father and the Holy Spirit urge me to lead you to them, for you have borne their unity, that

unity of my Divine nature that rested in you. O my beloved Mother, rise and let us go away from here, from this house of tears into the city of joy. From this region of death into the land of the living. For these reasons, O my beloved mother, rise, let us go away from here.”

Having said that, the Saviour, turning towards the Apostles said also, “Trust me my companions the Apostles, I will not keep her away from you for a long time. Soon she will reveal herself to you. When two hundred and six days would have elapsed, counting from the day of her dormition to the day of her holy Assumption, I will lead her to you in the same body, the same you are seeing now with you, to take her to the highest heaven, by my Father and the Holy Spirit, to remain there praying for you all.” Having said that, He added, “Rise and go to the holy place, you will find on the altar of incense clothes and perfumes from heaven that my good Father and the Holy Spirit sent me to honour my beloved mother's body.” Having gone there, they brought them to Him. He then said to the Apostles, “spread them out on the couch.” When we did so, He said to His Mother, “O queen of all women, come upon them, be relieved of all grief, sorrow and groaning. Go into joy and eternal happiness.”

She got up, stretched her hands and said this prayer, “Adonai, Elohi Sabaoth, Messiah, Rabbi, Emmanuel, take me now by Thee my Son. Let the Royal gates of Thy holy palaces open up before me so that I come in to worship Thy presence, O my Master, for Thou art the One to whom is due the glory with Thy Holy Father and Life-giving Holy Spirit, forever and ever Co-Essential with Thee. Amen.” Having said these words, she laid down on the clothes, turned her eyes towards her Saviour and at this very instant gave up the ghost in His hands.

He then said to Peter and John, “Make haste, cloth the body of my Mother before I go away from you. They got up and shrouded her sumptuously as He had commanded them to do. As to the Lord, turning His hand towards the east, He brought three green palm branches and perfumes from the Paradise of Joy, then, turning once more, He brought three olive branches from the olive tree where the dove had brought a branch to Noah to make him know that the Lord had pity on the world. When the Apostles had placed them on the holy body of the Virgin, the Lord said to them, “Carry the body of my holy Mother, put it in the tomb of stone, close the tomb and stay by it in prayer until I have fixed the time of her Assumption. In two hundred and six days time, I will come with her blessed soul to unite her with her body and raise her gloriously to heaven by my good Father and the Holy Spirit.” Having said these words, He gave them His peace and gloriously went up into heaven.

As for the apostles, they carried away her holy body and went out with it accompanied by all those who had joined them. They took her away solemnly and calmly to Josephat's field. They came near a group of Jews that had gathered. When they saw them marching calmly and in silence they said to one another, “Who is that dead person and who are those that carry the body in such an orderly manner? It must be a new custom in Israel.” But one of them, a Galilean having a good knowledge of the apostles and upon whom the Holy spirit had come, said to them, “That body they are carrying is Mary's body, Joachim and Anna's daughter, who

gave birth to the Messiah, the Christ; He who healed your sick ones, who gave light to your eyes, who brought back to life your dead. We believe that as He raised the dead, He will also raise His Mother from death and take her to heaven with Him.”

When the Jews heard him, they were filled with confusion and said, “What are we going to do? The error is still among us as it appears from the words of the one who spoke to us; but hurry up, let us light a fire to burn that body, or else, if we let it be buried in the vicinity, we will have evidence of miracles, because of it; crowds believing in Him will gather together and, joining forces with the Romans will rule over our cities and humiliate our race.” Having said thus, they quickly lighted a fire by means of lamps and went after the apostles to burn the holy body of the blessed Virgin. As to the apostles, seeing what was happening, human fear took hold of them, they put down the stretcher on which was the body and ran away. But as the Jews were about to reach the stretcher, they were plunged into obscurity and darkness, having become blinded. The fire they had prepared to burn the Virgin's body hurt a number of them. When sparks of fire fell down on them they screamed saying, “Woe betide us O Christ our Master. We have sinned against heaven and against Thee. Forgive us, for we are Abraham's children. If Thou grant us our eyes' light, we will come to know Thy Divinity's glory and we will believe in Thee and in Thy mother the Virgin, for she is our sister.” Then, having thus spoken Christ had pity on them. He relieved them of their blindness and their error. Many of them joined us glorifying the Holy Trinity. As for the Apostles, they went back to Jerusalem praising God for all His marvelous graces. They often went back to the place where they had left the stretcher and sang songs and hymns as is suitable to God and went on doing this until the Virgin's glorious Assumption. *May the intercession of the holy Theotocos be with us all and glory be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

The Departure of St. Anthony the Great

On this day, of the year 355 A.D., St. Anthony the Great, the star of the wilderness, and the father of all monks, departed.

This righteous man was born in the year 251 A.D. in the city of Qimn El-Arouse, to rich parents who loved the church and the poor. They raised him up in fear of the Lord. When he was twenty years old, his parents departed, and he had to take care of his sister.

Once, he entered the church and heard the words of the Lord Christ in the Gospel, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven; and come, follow Me.” (Matthew 19:21)

He returned to his house, decided to fulfill this commandment and considered it directed to him personally. He gave his wealth to the poor and needy, and he took his sister and placed her with some virgins.

At that time, monasticism had not yet been established. All those who wanted to live a solitary life went and lived on the outskirts of the city. This was what St. Anthony did as he dwelt alone, worshipping and living an ascetic life.

The devil fought him there by afflicting him with boredom, laziness, and the phantoms of women. He overcame the devil's snares by the power of the Lord Christ. After that, he went to one of the tombs, and he resided therein and closed the door on himself. Some of his friends used to bring him food. When the devil perceived his ascetic life and his intense worship, he was envious of him, and he beat him mercilessly, then left him unconscious. When his friends came to visit him and found him in this condition, they carried him to the church. After he somewhat recovered, he went back to the same place. The devil again resumed his war against St. Antonius, only this time the phantoms were in the form of wild beasts, wolves, lions, snakes and scorpions. They appeared as if they were about to attack him or cut him into pieces. But the saint would laugh at them scornfully and say, “If any of you have any authority over me, only one would have been sufficient to fight me.” At his saying this, they disappeared as though in smoke, for God gave him the victory over the devils. He was always singing this psalm, “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let those also who hate Him flee before Him.” (Psalm 68:1)

St. Anthony used to prepare a quantity of bread that would sustain him for six months. He did not allow anyone to enter his cell, and whoever came to him, stood outside and listened to his advice. He continued in this condition of solitary worship for 20 years. Then by God's command, he went to El-Fayyoun and confirmed the brethren there in the faith, then returned

to his monastery.

During the time of persecution, he longed to become a martyr. He left his monastery and went to Alexandria. He visited those who were imprisoned for the sake of Christ and comforted them. When the Governor saw that he was confessing the Lord Christ publicly, not caring what might happen to him, he ordered him not to show up in the city. However, the saint did not heed his threats. He faced him and argued with him in order that he might arouse his anger so that he might be tortured and martyred. But God preserved him all along, according to His will, for the benefit of many, and so the Governor left him alone. Then the saint went back to his monastery according to God's will, and many came to visit him and to hear his teachings.

He saw that these visits kept him away from his worship. As a result, he went far away to the eastern desert. He travelled with some bedouins to the inner wilderness for three days, until he found a spring of water and some palm trees, and then he chose to settle there. On this spot now stands the monastery of St. Anthony the Great. The bedouins came to him with bread, and the Lord drove away all the wild beasts from this place, for his sake.

On occasions, he would go to the monastery on the outskirts of the desert by the Nile to visit the brethren, then return to his inner monastery.

His fame spread abroad and it reached Emperor Constantine. The Emperor wrote to him, offering him praise and asked him to pray for him. The brethren were pleased with the Emperor's letter, but St. Anthony did not pay any attention to it, and he said to them, "The books of God, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, commands us everyday, but we do not heed what they tell us, and we turn our backs on them." Under the persistence of the brethren who told him, "Emperor Constantine loves the church," he accepted to write him a letter blessing him, and praying for the peace and safety of the empire and the church.

One day, he was bored, and he heard a voice telling him, "Go out and see." He went out and saw an angel who wore a girdle with a cross, one resembling the holy Eskiem, and on his head was a head cover (Kolansowa). He was sitting while braiding palm leaves, then he stood up to pray, and again he sat to weave. A voice came to him saying, "Anthony, do this and you will rest." Henceforth, he started to wear this tunic that he saw, and began to weave palm leaves, and never got bored again.

St. Anthony prophesied about the persecution that was about to happen to the church and the control of the heretics over it, the church victory and its return to its formal glory, and the end of the age.

When St. Macarius visited St. Anthony, St. Anthony clothed him with the monk's garb, and St. Anthony foretold him what would be of him.

When the day of the departure of St. Paul, the first hermit in the desert, drew near, St. Anthony went to him. St. Anthony buried St. Paul the hermit after he had clothed him in a tunic which was a present from St. Athanasius the Apostolic, 20th Pope of Alexandria.

When St. Anthony felt that the day of his departure had approached, he commanded his disciple to hide his body and to give his staff to St. Macarius, and to give one sheepskin cloak to St. Athanasius and the other sheepskin cloak to Abba Serapion, his disciple. He stretched himself on the ground and gave up his spirit. The angels and the saints took his spirit and carried it to the place of perpetual rest.

This saint lived for 105 years, struggling in the way of holiness and purity.
His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Martyrdom of St. Timothy, the Apostle.
2. The Departure of Pope Cyril IV (Kyrillos), 110th Pope of Alexandria.

1. On this day, of the year 97 A.D., St. Timothy, the Apostle, was martyred. He was born in the city of Lystra of the district of Lycaonia in Asia Minor, to a Greek father who worshipped the stars and a Jewish mother whose name was Eunice. (Acts 16:1-2, Timothy 1:5)

When St. Paul preached in Lystra, this saint heard his teachings and saw the signs that God wrought by his hands. He believed and was baptized. Timothy rejected the gods of his father and forsook the faith of his mother. He became a disciple of St. Paul the Apostle, followed him in his travels, and shared his labors.

In the year 53 A.D., St. Paul ordained St. Timothy bishop over the city of Ephesus and the neighboring cities. St. Timothy preached there and converted many to the Christian faith and baptized them.

St. Paul wrote two epistles to St. Timothy: the first of which was in 65 A.D., and the second was shortly before 67 A.D., urging him, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." (1Tim. 4:16) He also



**St. Timothy and his
grandmother Lois**

wrote to him about the qualifications of bishop, priest, deacon, and the widow. He cautioned him also about false prophets and commanded him not to lay his hand on one in haste but only after thorough examinations and testing.

St. Paul called Timothy his son and his beloved. St. Timothy delivered four epistles for St. Paul: the first was the Epistle to Corinth, the second to Philippi, the third to Thessalonica, and the fourth to the Hebrews.

St. Timothy shepherded the flock of Christ extremely well, and he illumined minds by his teachings, instructions, and admonitions. He continued to rebuke the Jews and the Greeks, therefore they envied him and congregated against him and started beating him until he was martyred in the city of Ephesus. The believers took his body and buried it.

His prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also, the great father Pope Kyrillos IV (Cyril), 110th Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was born in the town of Sawamaa of the district of the city of Girga, to righteous parents in the year 1816 A.D. They gave him the name David (Daoud) after his grandfather. His father brought him up and educated him well. He grew up despising the things of the world and its vanities. When he was 22 years old, he went to the monastery of St. Anthony, where he conducted himself virtuously and lived an ascetic life, which convinced the abbot of the monastery, Father Athanasius (El-Kalousni), to clothe him with the garb of the monks. He continued to read and to study the holy books.

Two years after David's ordination as a monk, the abbot of the monastery departed. David (Daoud) was chosen, by the consensus of the monks, to become their abbot. Pope Petros "El-Gawli" (Abba Petros VII), 109th Pope of Alexandria, ordained him a priest, and he appointed him as abbot of the monastery. He took care of the state of affairs of the monastery and those concerning the monks.

He was very sharp intellectually and was very well versed in religious matters. When a problem transpired among the Ethiopians concerning some doctrinal issues, the Pope, Abba Petros called upon him to go to Ethiopia to solve these problems. He performed his duty admirably.

Father Daoud returned on July 13, 1852, to find that Pope Petros had departed on April 15, 1852. When they tried to choose a successor to the Pope, there was a split in the people's opinions. Some wanted Father Daoud and others wanted to choose someone else.

Finally they decided to ordain Father Daoud an auxiliary bishop in the year 1853. He performed his duties as such, for a year and two months, during which, he showed discretion and good conduct, that made him worthy to be chosen patriarch on the 28th of Bashanse of 1571 A.M. (1854 A.D.).

He devoted all his efforts to disciplining the youth and educating them. He established the great Coptic school in the patriarchate. He also established another school in Haret-El-Sakkayeen. He paid great attention to the teaching of the Coptic language. He also established a great printing house and printed many church books.

Generally, the progress of the Copts at that time attributed to his efforts. He demolished the old church in the Patriarchate and built another, but he could not complete it because of his absence in Ethiopia for the second time.

This great pontiff upheld the canons of the church, and was charitable to the poor and the needy, and was deeply loved by his flock. He departed on the 23rd of TOBI in 1577 A.M. (1861 A.D.) *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Departure of St. Mary the Ascetic (The Shut-In).
2. The Martyrdom of Abba Bisada (St. Psati), the Priest.

1. On this day, St. Mary the Ascetic, the shut-in, departed. Her parents were among the wealthy and noble people of Alexandria. Several of the sons of the great men in the city asked to marry her, but she declined. When her parents departed, she distributed all that they left among the poor, keeping just a modest part for herself. Then she joined a convent near the City of Alexandria, and wore the monastic garb. She exerted herself in worship for 15 years, then she put on the holy “Eskeem” and put on a garb made of hair. After she took the permission of the abbess, she shut herself in her cell, closed the door, and opened a small window in it to receive her provisions. She spent 22 years in this cell, fasting two days at a time. During the holy forty days fast (Lent), she fasted for three days, and then broke her fast on some pulses moistened with water.

On the 11th day of the month of TOBI, she asked for a little of the holy water. She washed her hands and feet, then she received the Holy Communion, and drank from the holy water. She became sick and stayed in her bed until the 21st of TOBI, when she received the Holy Mysteries once more. She called upon the abbess and all the sisters, bade them farewell, and asked them to visit her after three days. On the 24th day of TOBI, they visited her and found that she had departed in peace. They carried her to the church, and after praying over her, they placed her with the bodies of the virgin saints.

Her prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also, St. Bisada (St. Psati) was martyred. His father was from El-Kase and his mother, who was the daughter of one of the pagan priests, was from Ehreet. She was a believer

in the Lord Christ. When the son of a pagan priest asked her to marry him, she took flight to El- Kase where she married a farmer, and God gave her a son whom she called Bisadi.

They brought him up in the fear of the Lord and in the keeping of His Commandments. When St. Bisadi was twenty years old, his father departed and left him a great wealth. St. Bisadi increased in the deeds of charity and righteousness.

When Emperor Diocletian issued his decree of worshipping the idols, the saint hid himself in his home, and continued to worship God. A voice came to him from heaven saying, “Why are you delaying?” Immediately, he rushed to the governor and confessed his faith saying, “I am a Christian.”

The Governor ordered him be tortured by beating with whips, hitting his head with pins, pulling out his nails, and dipping his fingers in vinegar and lime. He endured the torture for several days with great patience, and the Lord Christ healed all his wounds.

St. Bisadi performed several miracles, and the Governor became weary of torturing him; he chained him and sent him to the Governor of El-Fayyoun. There St. Bisadi raised a child from the dead. A large stone had fallen on the child while standing beside a wall. The bishop of the City of El-Fayyoun heard about St. Bisada, brought him and ordained him a priest. Then he went back to reappear before the Governor of El-Fayyoun who tortured him, then sent him to Alexandria where he received the crown of martyrdom.

St. Julius El-Akfahsi (who wrote the biographies of saints) took his body and gave it to his mother who was present. She returned with the body to her home town, Ehreet, and all the people of the town received the body of St. Bisadi with joy, and buried him with great honor. They built a church after his name, and the Lord performed many miracles through his body. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Departure of St. Peter, the Worshipper.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Askala (Asela), the Ascetic.

1. On this day, St. Peter the worshipper, departed. He was at first a tax collector, who was very cruel and had no mercy. Because of his selfishness and greed, he was nicknamed “the merciless”. The Lord Jesus had compassion upon him and He wanted to turn him away from all his bad deeds.

One day, God sent him a poor man to ask him for a little food, and it thus happened that his servant arrived at the same time when the poor man was standing before him, with bread. The tax collector took a loaf of bread and hit the poor man with it on his head, not as an act of mercy, but to get rid of him so that he might not come back again.

That same night, Peter, the tax collector, saw a vision in his sleep, as though he was in the judgement day, where the scale of justice was erected, and he saw some people clothed in black in the ugliest forms. They came and put his sins and his injustices in the left pan of the scale. Then a group of the angels of light, with beautiful countenances and in white clothes, came and stood beside the right pan of the scale. They appeared perplexed, for they did not find anything to put in the pan. One of them came forward, and put in the loaf of bread with which he had hit the head of the poor man, and said, “There is nothing for this man except this loaf of bread.”

At this moment, Peter woke up from his sleep trembling and afraid. He started to rebuke himself for all that he had done. He started to be exceedingly merciful and compassionate, and he even gave his own tunic away.

When his good deeds became well known, he fled to the wilderness of St. Macarius, where he became a monk and lived an ascetic life with great devotion and good repute, that made him worthy to know the day of his departure. St. Peter called the elders of the monks and bade them farewell, and departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, we celebrate the commemoration of the martyrdom of saint Asclas. He suffered in Antinoe, a town in Egypt, in the time of Diocletian. He was flogged, flayed and burned with torches, but remained to the end steadfast in the Faith. He prophesied that his torturer, Arianus, would believe in Christ as the one, almighty God. Arianus continued to torture the man of God even more harshly. At last, Asclas had a stone tied around his neck and he was thrown into the Nile. But, on the third day, Christians found his body on the bank, with the stone still round his neck (as the martyr had foretold to them before his death), and gave him burial, with the stone around his neck in 287 AD. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Martyrdom of the Forty-Nine Saints, the Elders of Scetis (Sheheat).
2. The Departure of St. Anastasia of Alexandria.

1. On this day, in the year 444 AD., the forty-nine elder priests of Scetis (Sheheat), Artemius, the envoy of the emperor, and his son, were martyred.

Emperor Theodosius II, son of Arcadius, desirous of having a male heir, sent to the elders of Scetis (Sheheat) a request to intercede on his behalf that God might bless him with a son. St. Isidore wrote to the emperor to the effect that God refused him a son lest the child associate with heretics.

Some time later it was recommended to the emperor that he marry a second wife, and again he sent a messenger to the desert monks, this time asking if his offspring from the new wife would include a male child.

In the meantime, St. Isidore had died, so the monks took the imperial letter to the place where he had been buried and placed it on his corpse. Thereupon the answer came that even if Theodosius had taken for himself ten wives, he would never have a male heir.

Accordingly this response was included in a letter written by the monks and given the messenger. As the latter (whose name was Artemius and who had brought his son, Dios, to Scetis with him to be blessed by the elders) prepared to start the journey back, the Berbers came down upon them in one of their recurrent attacks on the monastery.

Abba John, hegumen of Scetis called on his brethren to take refuge in the nearby fort of Piamoun, unless they preferred to join him in martyrdom. Forty-eight monks, besides John, were massacred by the Berbers.

Meanwhile, Artemius and Dios were fast riding away, but Dios saw a vision in which angels were conducting the souls of the martyrs to paradise and placing the crowns of martyrdom on their heads. He begged his father to allow him to obtain a similar crown for himself, so both father and son rode back and shared the martyrdom of the monks. When the Berbers had gone away, the other monks came down from the fort, collected the remains of the massacred martyrs, and buried them in a cave. In 538, during the patriarchate of Pope Theodosius I, their relics were removed to a new cave, and a chapel was built on the top.

In the following century, when Pope Benjamin I was restored to his throne following the Arab conquest of Egypt, he visited Scetis and the cave where the forty-nine were buried and instituted a feast day to commemorate their reinterment, to fall on 5 Meshir.

When the chapel was dilapidated, the monks removed their relics once again to a cell opposite the fort, where they remained till 1773, when Ebrahim al-Jawhari, a charitable Copt, built a new church in the monastery of St. Macarius, where their relics still rest.

Their prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also we commemorate the departure of St. Anastasia of Alexandria. She lived in Constantinople and was descended from an aristocratic family. She was an image of virtue and enjoyed the respect of Emperor Justinian. Widowed at a young age, Anastasia decided to leave the world and save her soul. She secretly left Constantinople and went to Alexandria. She founded a small monastery not far from the city, and devoted herself entirely to God.

Several years later, Emperor Justinian was widowed and decided to search for Anastasia and marry her. As soon as she learned of this, St. Anastasia journeyed to a remote skete to ask Abba Daniel for help.

In order to safeguard Anastasia, the Elder dressed her in a man's monastic garb and called her the eunuch Anastasius. Having settled her in a very remote cave, the Elder gave her a rule of prayer and ordered her never to leave the cave and to receive no one. Only one monk knew of this place. His obedience was to deliver a small portion of bread and a pitcher of water to the cave once a week, leaving it at the entrance. Anastasia dwelt in seclusion for twenty-eight years.

The Lord revealed to Anastasia the day of her entry into the heavenly kingdom. Having learned of her approaching death, she wrote several words for Abba Daniel on a piece of broken pottery and placed it at the entrance to the cave. The Elder appeared and brought everything necessary for her burial. He found Anastasia still alive, she confessed and Abba Daniel communed her with the Holy Mysteries. At Abba Daniel's request, St. Anastasia blessed him and the monk accompanying him. With the words: "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," the saint died in peace in 567 AD.

After the grave was prepared, the Elder gave his disciple his outer garment and ordered him to dress the deceased "brother" in it. As he was doing this, the monk noticed that she was a woman, but he did not say anything. However, when they returned to the monastery after her burial, the disciple asked Abba Daniel whether he knew the "brother" was a woman, and the Elder related to the young monk the life of St. Anastasia. Later, this narrative was written down and received wide acclaim.

The relics of St. Anastasia were transferred to Constantinople in 1200, and placed near the Church of Hagia Sophia. *May her holy blessings be with us and glory be to God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Martyrdom of St. Sarapion.
2. The Commemoration of the Archangel Suriel.
3. The Relocation of the Relics of St. Timothy, the Apostle.
4. The Martyrdom of St. Abe-Fam, the Soldier (St. Phoebammon).

1. On this day, St. Sarapion was martyred. He was a native of the City of Binosah (Babousah), a town of Lower Egypt. He was wealthy, had many possessions, and he was also a charitable man. At the time of the persecution, he heard that the governor of Alexandria, Armanius, had arrived in Lower Egypt, the northern part of the country, to torture the Christians. He went out with his friend, Theodore and another friend who was a shepherd called Thomas. They all confessed the Name of Christ before the Governor, who cast them into prison.

When the people of his town heard about his arrest, they came carrying arms to kill the Governor and to free the saint. The saint constrained them and told them that he wanted to be martyred in the name of Christ and they went away.

The Governor took the saint with him to Alexandria on a ship, and there he tortured St. Sarapion with the pressing wheel (Hinzazin), and threw him in a ditch filled with fire. Then he put him in a cauldron full of pitch and bitumen and lit fire under him. Through it all, the Lord was with him and delivered him safely. At last they crucified him and threw arrows at him.

The angel of the Lord came and brought St. Sarapion down, and crucified the Governor in his place. They continued to throw arrows at the Governor as if he was the saint, while he was crying and saying, "I am Armanius." The saint said to the Governor, "The Lord God lives, you will not be brought down from the tree, until you bring out those who are in prison and spread the accounts of their struggle." The Governor did as the saint told him. The number of martyrs that were beheaded on that day was 540 souls.

Then the Governor gave the responsibility of torturing the Saint to one of the princes, whose name was Orion. He traveled with the saint by sea to his own town. At night the ship was ashore at one of the villages, and they slept. In the morning, Orion found that the place where the ship was ashore was the town of the saint, and he marvelled, and he heard a voice saying, "This is his town, you should get him out of the ship."

After they had tortured the saint, they beheaded him, and he received the crown of martyrdom. Orion wrapped the body of the saint in his tunic and delivered him to his family. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, the church commemorates the honorable Archangel Suriel. One of the seven archangels standing before God. *His intercession be with us. Amen.*

3. On this day also, the church celebrates the commemoration of the transfer of the relics of St. Timothy, the Apostle, from the City of Ephesus to Constantinople.

When Emperor Constantine built the City of Constantinople, he relocated the relics of many of the saints to it. When he heard about the whereabouts of the relics of St. Timothy, he sent some priests who carried the holy body to Constantinople. They placed it in the church of the apostles and the saints. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

4. On this day also, St. Abe-Fam, the Soldier, was martyred (Bifam or Phoebammon). He was born in Oseem (Awsim) to a wealthy father whose name was Anastasius, and a righteous mother whose name was Susanna.

They brought him up in the Christian faith. He grew up in the fear of God, merciful to the poor, and steadfast in prayer and fasting. His parents wanted him to get married, but he declined.

When Emperor Diocletian reigned and knew that this saint did not raise incense to the gods, the Emperor sent to the governor Arianus to torture St. Abe-Fam if he did not offer incense to the idols.

Arianus went to Oseem and when he saw the saint he said, "Peace be with you," and the saint replied, "Why do you speak the word of peace? Did you not know that peace is only for the righteous?" and "there is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord." (Isaiah 48:22) The Governor became extremely angry and took the Saint to Qaw where he tortured him severely, then beheaded him. The Saint received the crown of martyrdom. God honored this saint by performing many miracles through his body.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Martyrdom of St. Clement bishop of Ancyra.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Abba Kaou.

1. On this day we commemorate the Martyrdom of St. Clement bishop of Ancyra. He was born in 258 in the town of Ancyra (Asia Minor) of a pagan father and a Christian mother. His devout mother, Euphrosyne, prophesied a martyr's death for her son, and left this world when Clement was twelve years old.

Her friend Sophia took Clement into her own home as her son and saw that he was brought up a Christian. Clement became so famed for his virtuous life that he was chosen as bishop of Ancyra at the age of twenty. He acquired a mature wisdom in his early years, and harnessed and conquered his body by great restraint. He ate only bread and vegetables, and never anything slaughtered or with blood.

He was arrested by Roman authorities and tried by Diocletian. Emperor Diocletian attempted to convert Clement to Paganism but Clement refused and withstood tremendous torture.

Clement was eventually beheaded by a Roman soldier whilst he was celebrating the Divine Liturgy in the year 312 AD. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Kaou was martyred. He was from the City of Bamway (Bimay) in El-Fayyoun. At that time, Emperor Diocletian issued an edict commanding the worship of idols.

The saint resided in a home that he had built for himself outside of his city, where he worshipped God. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a vision saying, "Why are you sitting here, while martyrdom is available? Arise now, and go to El-Lahoon where you will find the messenger of the Governor of Alexandria. Go and confess the Name of Christ before him and you will be granted the crown of martyrdom."

St. Kaou rose up from his sleep with great joy and he went to El-Lahoon and found the messenger at the seashore. When the messenger saw him, the messenger marvelled at St. Kaou's beautiful old age, and he honored him. The messenger took out from his pocket an idol made of gold and precious stones and said to the saint, "This is the gift of the Emperor to the Governor of Ansenia."

St. Kaou took it in his hand and admired its wonderful workmanship. Then he cast it to the ground and smashed it. The messenger became very angry and ordered him to be bound. He took him to the Governor of Ansenia and told the Governor what St. Kaou had done. The Governor tormented him, then he sent him to the Governor of Bahnasa, who also tortured him.

When he did not surrender and did not worship the idols, he was beheaded and received the crown of martyrdom. Some believers came and took his body to the place where he used to worship and buried him there. They built a church after his name in the same place later on and God manifested many miracles in it.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

1. The Departure of St. Xenia of Rome.
2. The Commemoration of St. Cyriacus, the Fighter.

St. Xenia of Rome, (her name at birth was Eusebia), was the only daughter of an eminent Roman senator. From her youth she loved God, and wished to avoid a marriage that had been arranged for her. She secretly left her parent's home with two servants, and set sail upon a ship.

On reaching the island of Kos in the Aegean Sea, through the Providence of God, she met a venerable old man named Paul who took her and her two servants to Milassa, a town of Caria (Asia Minor). She also changed her name, calling herself Xenia (which means "stranger" or foreigner" in Greek).

At Milassa, she bought land, built a church dedicated to St. Stephen, and founded a convent. The man who took her to Milassa was later chosen to be the bishop of that city. Soon after this, Bishop Paul of Milassa made Xenia a deaconess because of her virtuous life. She helped everyone – for the destitute, she was a benefactress; for the grief-stricken, a comforter; for sinners, a guide to repentance. She possessed a deep humility, accounting herself the worst and most sinful of all.

She was guided in her ascetic deeds by the counsels of the Palestinian ascetic, St. Euthymius. The sublime life of St. Xenia drew many souls to Christ. The holy virgin died in 450 while she was praying. During her funeral, a luminous wreath of stars surrounding a radiant cross appeared over the monastery in the heavens. This sign accompanied the body of the saint when it was carried into the city, and remained there until her burial. Many of the sick received healing after touching St. Xenia's relics. Her relics were later relocated from Asia Minor to Greece. *May her prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. Today also is the commemoration of St. Cyriacus, the fighter.
- His blessings be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE THIRTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF TOBI

The Martyrdom of Saints Pistis, Helpis, Agape, and Their Mother, Sophia

On this day, the holy and blessed virgins, Pistis, Helpis, Agape, and their mother, Sophia, were martyred. St. Sophia was from a rich and noble family in Antioch. When she had these three girls, she called them Pistis, which means faith, Helpis, which means hope, and Agape, which means love.

Emperor Hadrianus (Hadrian), the infidel, heard about them and he summoned them before him. Their mother preached to them, and encouraged them to be steadfast in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, saying to them, "Let not your determination grow faint or weak, and let not the glory of the world entice you, lest you lose the eternal glory. Be patient and persevere until you meet your Bridegroom, the Christ, with Whom you will enter into the everlasting joy."

The oldest sister was 12 years old, the second was 10 years old and the youngest was 9 years old. When they came before the Emperor, he asked the oldest to worship the idols, promising her that he would marry her to one of the great men in his kingdom, and that he would bestow on her many delights and pleasures, but she refused. He ordered her to be beaten with hammers, mutilating her breasts, and to place her in a cauldron of boiling water over the fire. The Lord was with her, saved her, and He granted her strength and peace, and everyone was astonished and glorified God. Then the Emperor commanded that she be beheaded.

Then they brought the second daughter before the Emperor. He also beat her severely and also placed her in the boiling water, then they brought her out and beheaded her. With the youngest daughter, her mother feared that she would weaken, so she encouraged and strengthened her. When the Emperor ordered her placed in the pressing wheel (Hinbazin), she cried to Christ, and He sent His angel who broke it.

The Emperor then ordered her to be thrown into the fire. She prayed and made the sign of the cross on her face. Then she threw herself in it. All those who were present saw three men in white robes surrounding her, and the fiery furnace was as cold as the dew. They marvelled, and many believed in the Lord Christ, and they were all beheaded.

The Emperor ordered afterwards that her sides be pierced with hot rods, but the Lord strengthened her and she did not feel the pain. Finally, she was beheaded. Their mother carried their bodies outside the city, sat and wept, and asked them to ask the Lord Christ to take her soul also. The Lord granted her wish and her spirit went immediately to her Creator. Some believers came and carried the bodies and buried them with great honors.

Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR THE FIRST DAY

1. The Commemoration of the Ecumenical Council in Constantinople.
2. Martyrdom of St. Abadiu bishop of Antinoe
3. The Commemoration of the Consecration of the Church of St. Peter, the Seal of Martyrs.

1. On this day of the year 381 A.D., one hundred and fifty fathers assembled upon the order of Emperor Theodosius the Great, in the city of Constantinople. They assembled to judge Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople, and Sabellius and Apollinaris, for their blasphemy against God the Word and the Holy Spirit.

When this blasphemy became widespread, the fathers of the church were concerned about the peace of the church, and made these heresies known to Emperor Theodosius. He ordered that a council be assembled, and invited Abba Timothy, 22nd Pope of Alexandria; Abba Damasus, Pope of Rome; Abba Petros (Peter), Patriarch of Antioch; and Abba Cyril (Kyrillos), Patriarch of Jerusalem. They came to the council with their bishops, except the Pope of Rome, who delegated others to attend on his behalf.

When the holy council convened in Constantinople, they called upon Macedonius. Abba Timothy, Pope of Alexandria, who was presiding over the council, asked him, "What is your belief?" Macedonius answered that the Holy Spirit was created like any other creature. Abba Timothy said, "The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. If we say as you claim that the Spirit of God is created, we are saying, in essence, that His Life is created, and therefore, He is 'lifeless' without it." He advised Macedonius to renounce his erroneous belief. When he refused, Macedonius was excommunicated, anathematized and striped of his rank.

Then Abba Timothy asked Sabellius, "And you, what is your belief?" He answered, "The Trinity is one being and one person." Abba Timothy said, "If the Trinity is as you claim, then the mentioning of the Trinity is groundless, and your baptism is futile, because it is in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity would have suffered pain and died, and the saying of the gospel would be invalid, when it is said that the Son was in the Jordan River, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the likeness of a dove, and the Father called upon Him from heaven." Then Abba Timothy advised him to renounce his belief. When Sabellius did not accept, Abba Timothy excommunicated, anathematized and striped him of his rank.

Then Abba Timothy asked Apollinaris, "And you, what is your belief?" Apollinaris said, "The Incarnation of the Son was by His union with the human flesh without the rational being, for His divinity replaced the soul and the mind of the human being." Abba Timothy replied, "God the Word united with our nature to save us, therefore if He only united with the animal body, then He did not save mankind but the animals. Humans will rise on the day of Resurrection

with the rational and speaking soul with which there will be the communication and the judgement, and with it they will be granted the blessing or the condemnation. Accordingly, the Incarnation would be in vain. If that was the case, why did He call Himself a man if He did not unite with the rational speaking soul?" Then Abba Timothy advised him to turn away from his erroneous belief, but he also refused. He excommunicated Apollinaris as he did the other two friends.

Ultimately, the council excommunicated these three and all those who agreed with them. Then they completed the creed that was established by the fathers at the Council of Nicea until its saying, "Of Whose Kingdom shall be no end." The fathers of the Council of Constantinople added, "Truly we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, Giver of Life... to the end." They put down many canons that are still in the hands of the believers today.

The prayers of these holy fathers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also in the year 304 AD. St. Abadiu, bishop of Antioe was martyred. He was ordained by St. Peter Seal of the martyrs, and he shepherded his people well.

When Diocletian started persecuting Christians, Arianos, the governor of Antioe was very harsh in treating Christians. He arrested this saint and took him with him to upper Egypt to witness the torture of Christians in Assiut and Akhmim. Arianus thought that this will scare him into offering to idols, but he remained steadfast.

Arianus ordered him crucified, but two doves miraculously appeared and the nails were undone and saint came down unharmed. Arianus ordered him beheaded and he was crowned.

The blessing of his prayers be with us all. Amen.

3. On this day also, we celebrate the commemoration of the consecration of the Church of St. Peter, 17th Pope of Alexandria and the Seal of Martyrs. He was martyred in Alexandria during the last days of the reign of Diocletian the Infidel.

When Emperor Constantine the Great reigned, and all the idol temples were destroyed, churches were built. So the believers built this church west of Alexandria in the name of St. Peter, the Seal of Martyrs. The church existed till shortly after the reign of the Arabs over Egypt, when it was destroyed. *His blessings be with us and glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Departure of the Great Saint Abba Paul, the First Hermit.
2. The Departure of St. Longinus, Abbot of El-Zugag Monastery.

1. On this day of the year 341 A.D., the great saint Abba Paul, the first hermit, departed. This Saint was from the city of Alexandria, and had a brother whose name was Peter.

After the departure of their father, they divided the inheritance between them. When his brother took the greater share, Paul's feelings were hurt, by his brother's action. He said to his brother, "Why don't you give me my rightful share of the inheritance of my father?" Peter responded, "You are a young man, and I am afraid that you might squander it. As for me, I will keep it for you."

When they did not agree with each other, they went to the governor to judge between them. On their way, they saw a funeral procession. Paul asked one of the mourners about the deceased man. Paul was told that he was one of the noble and rich people of the city, and that he left his riches and his wealth behind, and that they were taking him to bury him with only his garment.

St. Paul sighed in his heart and said to himself, "What do I have to do then with all the money of this temporal world which I shall leave naked?" He looked to his brother and said to him, "My brother, let us return, for I shall not ask you for anything, not even for what is mine."

On their way back, Paul left his brother and went on his way until he came out of the city. Paul found a grave where he stayed for three days praying to the Lord Christ to guide him to what pleases Him. As for his brother, he searched for Paul diligently and when he did not find him, he was very sorry for what he had done.

God sent St. Paul an angel who took him out of this place, and walked with him until they reached the eastern inner wilderness. He stayed there for 70 years, during which he saw no one. He put on a tunic made of palm tree fiber. The Lord sent him a raven every day with a half loaf of bread.

When the Lord wanted to reveal the holiness of St. Paul and his righteousness, He sent His angel to St. Antony (Antonius) the Great, who thought that he was the first to dwell in the wilderness. The angel told St. Antony, "There is a man who lives in the inner wilderness; the world is not worthy of his footsteps. By his prayers, the Lord brings rain and dew to fall on the earth, and bring the flood of the Nile in its due season."

When St. Antony heard this, he rose right away and went to the inner wilderness, a distance of one day's walk. God guided him to the cave of St. Paul. He entered, and they bowed to each

other, and sat down talking about the greatness of the Lord.

In the evening, the raven came bringing a whole loaf of bread. St. Paul said to St. Antony, “Now, I know that you are one of the children of God. For 70 years, the Lord has been sending to me everyday, half a loaf of bread, but today, the Lord is sending your food also. Now, go and bring me back in a hurry the tunic that Emperor Constantine had given to Pope Athanasius.”

St. Antony went to St. Athanasius, and brought the tunic from him and returned to St. Paul. On his way back, he saw the soul of St. Paul carried by the angels up to heaven. When he arrived to the cave, he found that St. Paul had departed from this world. He kissed him, weeping, and clothed him in the tunic that he asked for, and he took his fiber tunic.

When St. Antony wanted to bury St. Paul, he wondered how could he dig the grave? Two lions entered the cave, bowed their heads before the body of St. Paul, and shook their heads as if they were asking St. Antony what to do. St. Antony knew that they were sent from God. He marked the length and width of the body on the ground, and they dug the grave with their claws, according to St. Antony's directions. St. Antony then buried the holy body, and went back to Pope Athanasius and told him what had happened. St. Athanasius sent men to bring St. Paul's body to him. They spent several days searching in the mountains, but they could not find the place of his grave. St. Paul appeared to the Pope in a vision and told him that the Lord would not allow the revelation of the location of his body. He asked the Pope not to trouble the men, but to have them brought back.

Pope Athanasius used to put the palm fiber tunic on three times a year during the Divine Liturgy. One time, he wanted to let the people know about the holiness of the owner of that tunic. He put it over a dead man, and the dead man rose up instantly. The news of this miracle spread all around the land of Egypt. *His prayers be with us all. Amen.*

2. On this day also, the pure saint Abba Longinus, the abbot of the El-Zugag monastery, departed. He was from Cilicia (in Asia Minor). He became a monk in one of the monasteries, where his father Lucianus became a monk after his wife had died.

When the abbot of this monastery departed, the monks wanted to appoint St. Lucianus an abbot over them, but he refused, for he shunned the vain glory of the world.

He took his son Longinus and went to Syria, where they lived in a church. God revealed their virtues by performing many miracles through them. For fear of the vain glory of this world, Longinus went to Egypt with his father's permission.

When he arrived, he went to the monastery of El-Zugag, west of Alexandria. The monks received him with joy. After the departure of the abbot, the monks appointed Abba Longinus abbot over them, for what they saw of his virtues and his good conduct. Shortly after, his father

Lucianus came to him, and they worked together in making the canvas sails of boats, and sold them to support themselves. God performed many miracles and signs on their hands.

Father Lucianus departed from this world in peace, and shortly after, his son, Abba Longinus, departed also. *The prayers of these two saints be with us, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

The Departure of St. James (Jacob), the Ascetic

Today we commemorate the departure of St. James the Ascetic. This fourth century saint, left all worldly things to settle for fifteen years in a cave near a village called Porphyrianos (now Haifa) in Palestine. There he led an ascetic's life. Zealous in prayer and in the mortification of the flesh, God granted him the gift to work miracles.

Never leaving his cave, he received many visitors, including many Samaritans whom he led to the Christian faith. Once there was a prostitute who, moved by certain jealous Samaritans, came to see the Saint dressed as a nun. She incited him to sin but he reminded her of the future punishment of eternal fire, making her repent and come to Christ. The woman repented of her shameful behavior, entered a convent, and made rapid progress in the virtues.

Because of the many miracles James wrought, his fame spread rapidly, he began to think he had been established in the virtues, and this made him fall into pride. This was just what the devil was waiting for to go on the attack.

At this time, a distraught nobleman who had a daughter possessed by demons offered her to the Saint for healing. The Saint prayed and immediately freed her from the demon. The girl's father, though, was afraid that the demon would disturb her again, and so he left her in a nearby cave to the ascetic to look after her. Unfortunately, James was overcome by desire and he violated the girl. He then became afraid that his abhorrent sin would be revealed, so he killed the woman and threw her dead body in the nearby river. Thus, he despaired completely of his salvation and made haste to return to the world. But on his way he met a holy elder who exhorted him to have confidence in the mercy of God.

Leaving the elder, James went on his way and came upon an old, desolate sepulcher. He made it his dwelling and began to send up humble prayer to God. With his heart warmed by tears of repentance, the holy ascetic spent ten years in this dark tomb, unknown to mankind and venturing forth only at night to feed on some of the plants that grew nearby.

Some time later, when the land suffered from drought and lack of rain, God ordered the bishop of the city that unless James who was shut in the tomb prayed, the dry spell would not end. Then the bishop together with all the people went to the Saint, begged and finally convinced him to pray for them. As soon as he prayed there came a heavy rain. From this sign the Saint received good hope about the forgiveness of his sin, for God “desires not the death of the sinner but that he should turn from his ways and live” (Ezek. 33:11).

The days passed and he added tears to his tears so that he advanced continuously in humility. In this way he commended his soul into the hands of God in peace at the age of seventyfive. A church was later built on the site of the tomb where he found repentance.

His blessings be with us and glory be to God forever. Amen.

THE FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

The Martyrdom of St. Agabus, One of the Seventy Disciples

On this day, St. Agabus, one of the seventy disciples, was martyred. The seventy disciples were chosen by the Lord to go before Him to preach the gospel. St. Agabus was with the twelve disciples in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

He received the gift of prophecy, as the Acts of the Apostles tells us, “And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, 'Thus says the Holy Spirit, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" (Acts 21:10-11) This prophecy was fulfilled. (Acts 21:17-36)

He also prophesied about a famine on all the earth, and this was fulfilled during the time of Claudius Caesar, the Roman Emperor. (Acts 11:27-28)

He preached the gospel together with the holy apostles. He went to many countries, teaching and converting many of the Jews and the Greeks to the knowledge of the Lord Christ. He sanctified them by the life-giving baptism.

This moved the Jews of Jerusalem to arrest him, and they tortured him by beating him severely, and putting a rope around his neck, and they dragged him outside the city. They stoned him there until he gave up his pure spirit. At this moment, a light came down from heaven. Everyone saw it as a continuous column between his body and heaven. A Jewish woman saw it and said, “Truly this man was righteous.” She shouted in a loud voice, “I am a Christian and I believe in the God of this saint.” They stoned her also and she died and was buried with him in one tomb. *Their prayers be with us and glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Departure of St. Agrippinus, 10th Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Commemoration of the Saints Abba Bishay and Abba Abanoub.
3. The Departure of St. Apollo, friend of Abba Abib.
4. The Commemoration of the Relocation of the Relics of the Forty-Nine Elders of the Wilderness of Shiheet (Scetis).
5. Martyrdom of St. Hippolytus bishop of Rome

1. On this day of the year 181 A.D., the holy father Abba Agrippinus, 10th Pope of Alexandria, departed. This father was holy and pure and he feared God. He was ordained a priest on the church of Alexandria.

When Pope Cladianus (Celadon), 9th Pope departed, Abba Agrippinus was chosen Patriarch by the people and clergy of Alexandria. By the grace of God, he took over the apostolic throne of Alexandria and walked in the footsteps of the apostles.

Abba Agrippinus preached the word of God and taught the principle of faith with its life-giving laws. He Guarded his flock, with all his strength, by teaching them and praying on their behalf. He did not own any silver or gold, except for what met his basic personal needs. He completed his course after 12 years on the throne of St. Mark, and he departed in peace. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, the church celebrates the commemoration of the saints Abba Bishay of Akhmim monastery, and Abba Abanub, known as the owner of the Golden Fan. *Their prayers be with us all. Amen.*

3. On this day also, the church commemorates the departure of St. Apollo, friend of St. Abib. *His prayers be with us all. Amen.*

4. Today also, we celebrate the commemoration of the relocation of the relics of the forty-nine saints of the wilderness of Shiheet to their church in the monastery of St. Macarius. Their prayers be with us. Amen

5. On this day also in the year 235 AD.,we commemorate the martyrdom of St. Hippolytus bishop of Rome. He was born 170 AD. He was critical of the bishops of Rome in his day, and led a schismatic group of Greek speaking Christians in Rome, becoming the first antipope.

He was the most important theologian in Rome in his generation. Origen heard him preach when he visited Rome. He left a lot of valuable writings. He died as a martyr during the persecution at the time of Emperor Maximinus. He was reconciled with the Roman church before his martyrdom. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

The Martyrdom of Saints Cyrus, John, the three virgins and their mother.

On this day, the great saints Cyrus, John, Athanasia, Theoctiste, Theodota and Eudoxia were martyred. Saint Cyrus was a noted physician in the city of Alexandria, where he had been born and raised. He was a Christian and he treated the sick without charge, not only curing their bodily afflictions, but also healing their spiritual infirmities. He would say, "Whoever wishes to avoid being ill should refrain from sin, for sin is often the cause of bodily illness."

Preaching the Gospel, the holy physician converted many pagans to Christ. During the persecution by Diocletian (284-305), St Cyrus withdrew into Arabia, where he became a monk. He continued to heal people by his prayer, having received from God the gift to heal every sickness.

In the city of Edessa (Mesopotamia) at this time lived the military doctor John, a pious Christian. When the persecution started, he went to Jerusalem and there he heard about St Cyrus. He began to search for him, going first to Alexandria and then to Arabia. When St John finally found St Cyrus, he remained with him and became his faithful follower.

They learned of the arrest of the Christian woman Athanasia and her three young daughters. Theoctiste was fifteen; Theodota, was thirteen; and Eudoxia, was eleven. Sts Cyrus and John went to Alexandria and hastened to the prison to help them. They were concerned that faced with torture, the women might renounce Christ.

Sts Cyrus and John gave them courage to endure what lay before them. Learning of this, the ruler of the city arrested Sts Cyrus and John, and seeing their steadfast and fearless confession of faith in Christ, he brought Athanasia and her daughters to witness their torture.

The tyrant did not refrain from any form of torture against the holy martyrs. The women were not frightened by the sufferings of Sts Cyrus and John, but courageously continued to confess Christ. They were all flogged and then beheaded, receiving their crowns of martyrdom. Christians buried their bodies in the church of the holy Evangelist Mark in Alexandria. Their tomb became a renowned shrine in Egypt, and a place of universal pilgrimage.

On June 28, 414 AD., the relics of Sts Cyrus and John were transferred from Alexandria to Menuthis by St. Cyril of Alexandria in order to displace the idolatrous cult of Isis there. They were placed in the church built by his predecessor, St. Theophilus, in honour of the Four Evangelists. Miracles and healings multiplied and the sanctuary became one of the greatest places of pilgrimage in Christendom. The city of Menuthis was later called Aboukir after the Arabic name of St. Cyrus (*Aba Kyr*). *May their holy blessings be with us all and glory be to God forever. Amen.*

THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Departure of St. Alexandros II, 43rd Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Departure of St. Theodorus (Theodore), 45th Pope of Alexandria.

1. On this day of the year 715 A.D., the Holy Father Abba Alexandros II (Alexander), 43rd Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was from the City of Bana. He became a monk in the monastery of Pateron (Barbarun) or the monastery of the fathers, which was also known as El-Zugag monastery, which was west of Alexandria. Because of his righteousness and his knowledge, he was chosen to the throne of St. Mark.

During his papacy, he suffered many hardships. He was contemporary to the Caliph El-Walid Ibn Abd-Elmalek. When the latter took the caliphate, he appointed his brother Abdallah a governor of Egypt in the year 698 A.D. He mistreated the Christians of Egypt, and confiscated the monasteries of the wilderness of Shiheet (Scetis). His evil nature went to the extreme. One day he entered a monastery in Upper Egypt, and saw an icon of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and inquired about it. He was told that it was the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ, the Savior of the world, he spat on the icon and said, "If I live, I shall destroy all the Christians." He then blasphemed against the Lord Christ also.

At night, he saw a vision during his sleep which disturbed him, and filled his heart with fear. He wrote to his brother saying, "that he suffered the day before as he saw a Man sitting on a great throne, and His face shone more than the sun, and around Him were thousands carrying arms. We were bound behind Him. When I asked who He was, I was told that He was Christ Jesus, the King of the Christians, Whom I mocked and despised the day before. One of the armed men came and pierced my side with a spear." His brother was extremely sad when he heard about the vision. The same night, that man, Abdallah, caught a severe fever and died. Forty days later, his brother El-Walid died also.

In 701 A.D. another Governor replaced Abdallah, and he followed his predecessor's policy. He mistreated the Christians, and arrested St. Alexandros and tortured him until the believers collected for him three thousand Dinari. God perished this Governor soon after that.

The following Governor, was even more wicked than the one before him. He ordered the arrest of the Pope, and asked him for three thousand Dinari. The Pope excused himself saying that part of the money that he paid to his predecessor was collected from some of the believers and the rest was borrowed. The Governor did not accept his words, and finally the Pope asked him for a grace period.

The Pope went to Upper Egypt to collect the money from the believers. During his travel, an ascetic monk asked two of his disciples to dig out a cave. While they were digging, they found five copper jars filled with gold. They kept one of them and gave the rest to the hermit, which

he sent to the Pope. The two disciples took the gold and left the desert. They went out into the world, married, and owned cattle, slaves and maidenservants.

The Governor was informed about these two men, and he called them to him. He threatened them if they did not tell him the truth about their sudden wealth. They told him about the five jars of gold, and that four jars were given to the Pope. He rushed to the patriarchate and plundered all the church vessels. He seized the Pope, insulted him and put him in prison. He demanded from the Pope the jars and the three thousand Dinari. He did not release him until the Pope gave it all to him.

Shortly after that, this Governor died, and another even more evil came after him. He ordered the Christians to tattoo on their wrists, instead of the sign of the honorable Cross, the name of the “beast” that St. John the Theologian had prophesied about in all the land. He also commanded the Pope to tattoo the sign of the beast on his wrist, but the Pope refused. As the Governor insisted, the Pope asked him for three days. The Pope went to his cell and prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ not to forsake him so that he would not fail in this test. The Lord answered his prayer, so he fell with a brief sickness.

He went to the Governor and asked his permission to go to Alexandria. The Governor refused, thinking that the Pope was pretending to be sick just to escape the tattooing. Afterwards, the Lord inspired him that he would depart from this world after four days. He told this to his disciples, and asked them to prepare a carriage to carry his body and to bury him beside the holy fathers. He departed in peace, and was carried for his burial as he requested.

During the papacy of Abba Alexandros, the Melkites had a Patriarch in Egypt by the name of Anastasius, who was hated by his own people because he loved the Orthodox Copts and was peaceful with them. He left his own congregation and went to Pope Alexandros, and confessed the Orthodox faith before him. The Pope treated the Patriarch well, honored him and wanted to hand him the affairs of the patriarchate so he could go and worship in seclusion in one of the monasteries. Father Anastasius refused and said to him, “If I had desired the patriarchal seat, I could have remained there, for I was a patriarch, but now I want to be your disciple.” He finally accepted, however, to become a bishop in one of the bishoprics, and he shepherded the flock entrusted to him well. Abba Alexandros remained on the seat of St. Mark for 24 years and 9 months. *His prayers be with us all. Amen.*

2. On this day also, of the year 728 A.D., St. Theodorus (Theodore), 45th Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was a monk in a monastery near Mariut, which was known as the monastery of Tanboura, under the guidance of a virtuous elder called Yoannis (John). Abba Yoannis was inspired by the Holy Spirit that his disciple Tadros one day would become a Pope. He told those who were in authority.

Tadros struggled in his worship, and was perfect in his humility and meekness. He was chosen by the will of God to become the Pope of Alexandria. He shepherd the flock of the Lord Christ well. He continued to read and to preach to his people, especially on Sundays and on feast days. He completed 12 years on the seat of St. Mark and departed in peace.
His prayers be with us, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Feast of Presenting the Lord Christ in the Temple
2. Departure of Simeon the Elder.

1. On this day we celebrate the feast of presentation of the Lord Christ to the temple after 40 days of His blessed birth. St. Joseph the righteous and His mother, the Virgin Mary, brought Him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. (Luke 2:22-24)

St. Luke the Evangelist says that when His parents brought Him according to the custom of the law, the just and devout Simeon the elder took Him in his arms and blessed God and said, “Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” (Luke 2:29-32)

And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:34-38) *May the blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also we celebrate the departure of the righteous Simeon the Elder. Simeon was one of the 70 elders who translated the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek. This was in the time of Ptolemy Soter in the year 296 B.C., who was sent by the will of God to Jerusalem. He brought 70 men from among the learned Jewish teachers and scholars and commanded them

to translate the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek (Septuagint translation).

He put every two of them in an isolated place so they would not agree on one translation, and to ensure a correct text after comparing all of the translations. Simeon the elder was one of them.

When Simeon was translating the verse from Isaiah 7:14, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel,” he was afraid to translate that a virgin would conceive, because the King would mock him. He wanted to translate the virgin as a “young lady.” He was disturbed because of this inaccurate translation, and God revealed to him in a vision that he would not die before he would see Christ the Lord born of a virgin.

This was fulfilled and he lived about three hundred years. When Christ was born; he was very well advanced in age and his sight dimmed. When he carried the child Jesus in his hands, his sight came back to him, and the Holy Spirit told him, “This is the child that you have been waiting for.”

He blessed God and said, “Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”, and he departed in peace. *The prayers of this righteous man be with us, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Departure of St. Barsauma, the Father of the Syrian Monks.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Paul, the Syrian.
3. The Martyrdom of St. Euphrosyne of Alexandria.

1. On this day of the year 458 A.D., the blessed father Abba Barsauma, the father of the Syrian monks, departed. His father was from Samosata. One of the saints prophesied about him before his birth, saying to his parents, “There shall go forth from you a righteous fruit, whose fame shall spread out every where,” and this prophecy was fulfilled.

When Barsauma grew up, he left his parents and went to the river Euphrates where he stayed with a holy man called Abraham. Afterwards, he lived a solitary life in the mountain and many disciples gathered around him. The water in this place was salty, and the saint prayed to God and the water became sweet. He used to fast for a week at a time. God wrought through him many miracles.

St. Barsauma was a contemporary of St. Simeon the Stylite. When St. Barsauma knew about him, he went to visit him and they blessed each other. He was well known for his resistance to the heresy of Nestorius and his followers.

He attended the Ecumenical Council at Ephesus at the invitation of Emperor Theodosius the Less, who gave him a great honor. Some accused St. Barsauma of eating, drinking and living a luxurious life. The Emperor called him and saw for himself St. Barsauma's righteousness and his ascetic living. The Emperor vindicated him and allowed him to return to his monastery with great honor.

When Emperor Marcian called for the Council at Chalcedon, the fathers asked the Emperor not to call upon St. Barsauma, for they knew of the grace that was in him. When the council agreed on the two natures of Christ, St. Barsauma resisted these heretic teachings and he was persecuted by the Chalcedonians.

When the Lord wanted to take St. Barsauma from the world, He sent him an angel to tell him that 4 days were left in his life on earth. He gathered his disciples and told them to go to the neighboring cities to confirm its people in the Orthodox faith. He blessed them and departed in peace.

At the time of his departure, a pillar of light appeared at the door of his cell which the faithful saw from afar. They came and found that St. Barsauma had departed. They took his blessings and buried him with great honors. *His prayers be with us all. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Paul, the Syrian, was martyred. He was born in the City of Alexandria to Syrian parents who lived afterwards in the City of Ashmunin. They were very rich merchants.

St. Paul heard about the persecution of the Roman governors to Christians. He gave up his money to the poor, after the death of his parents, and prayed to God to guide him in the way that pleased Him. God sent him His angel Soriel, who said to the saint, "The Lord has commanded that I be with you and strengthen you, so that you should not be afraid."

The saint arose and came before the governor of Antioe (Ansena) and confessed the Lord Christ. The Governor ordered him to be stripped naked, beaten with whips, and burned in the sides with torches. The governor tried again to entice him with money, but the saint said to him, "My parents left me a fortune of gold and silver, and I rejected them for the sake of the love of the Lord Christ. How can I look to your money now?"

The Governor became angry to hear that and he tortured him with different kinds of tortures. The angel Soriel came to him, healed and strengthened him. The Governor ordered to release venomous serpents on him, but they did not harm him.

The Governor then went to Alexandria and took the saint with him and put him in prison, where St. Paul met his two friends: Abba Esi and his sister Teckla. His soul rejoiced when he saw them. God inspired him that he would be martyred in Alexandria.

When the Governor wanted to go back to his city, he ordered that the head of St. Paul be cut off at the sea shore. The faithful came and they took the body and prepared it for burial, and they kept it in their possession. *His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

3. On this day also we celebrate the departure of St. Euphrosyne of Alexandria. She was born at the beginning of the fifth century in the city of Alexandria. She was the only child in her family of famous and rich parents. Since her mother died early, she was raised by her father, Paphnutios, a deeply believing and pious Christian. He frequented a monastery, the Abbott of which was his spiritual guide.

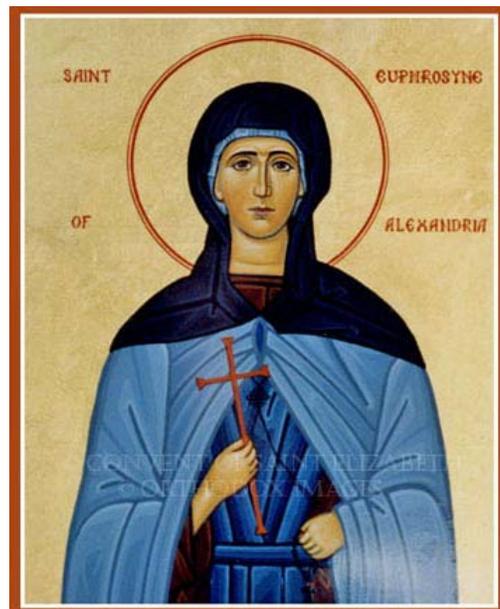
When Euphrosyne turned eighteen, her father wanted her to marry. He went to the monastery to his spiritual guide to receive his blessing for the planned wedding of his daughter. The Abbott conversed with the daughter and gave her his blessing, but she yearned for monastic life. She secretly left her father's house, and decided to enter a monastery in order to lead her life in solitude and prayer. She feared, however, that in a women's monastery her father would find her. Calling herself the eunuch Smaragdus, she went to the very same men's monastery, which she had visited with her father since childhood.

The monks did not recognize St Euphrosyne dressed in men's garb, and so they accepted her into the monastery. Here in a solitary cell, she spent 38 years in works, fasting and prayer, and attained a high level of spiritual accomplishment.

Her father grieved over the loss of his beloved daughter and more than once, on the advice of the Abbott, he conversed with the monk Smaragdus, revealing his grief and receiving spiritual comfort. Before her death, the nun Euphrosyne revealed her secret to her grieving father and asked that no one but he should prepare her body for burial.

Having buried his daughter, Paphnutios distributed all his wealth to both the poor and to the monastery, and then he accepted monasticism. For ten years right up to his own death, he laboured in the cell of his daughter.

May the blessing of St. Euphrosyne and her father Paphnutius be with us and glory be to God forever. Amen



THE TENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Martyrdom of St. Justus, Son of Emperor Numerian.
2. The Departure of St. Isidore of Pelusium.
3. The Martyrdom of St. Philo, Bishop of the Persian.

1. On this day also, St. Justus, son of Emperor Numerian, was martyred. When he returned from war, he found that Emperor Diocletian had married his sister and had become the new emperor. Emperor Diocletian had apostatized the faith in the Lord Christ, and St. Justus was greatly sorrowful for what happened.

When the nobles of the empire met together to enthrone him in place of his father, he did not accept, for he preferred the heavenly kingdom over the earthly. He came before Diocletian and declared his faith in the Lord Christ. The Emperor sent St. Justus with his son Abali and his wife Theoclea to the Governor of Alexandria, and commanded him to persuade them first and to behead them if they did not obey.

When they arrived in Alexandria, the Governor received them and treated them well to persuade them. As he could not change their deep conviction in their faith in the Lord Christ, to Whom is the Glory, he sent St. Justus to Antinoe (Ansena), Abali, his son, to Basta (near Zagazig, Sharkia), and Theoclea to Sa (Salhagar, Gharbia). Each of them took a servant with him so when they completed their strife, the servant would take care of the body. They tortured them, beheaded them, and they received the crown of martyrdom.

Their prayers be with us all. Amen.

2. On this day also, the ascetic, scholar and holy man, Abba Isidore of Pelusium (El-Pharma), departed. His parents were among the rich and noble people of Egypt. He was related to Pope Cyril and Pope Theophilus, patriarchs of Alexandria.

He was the only child of his parents, who cared about his education. They taught him the books of the church, and the Greek language in which he excelled and surpassed many. He was also ascetic and humble. When he knew that the people of Alexandria and the bishops wanted to make him the Patriarch of Alexandria, he took flight by night to Pelusium and became a monk in a monastery there.

Then he went to a small cave where he lived alone for several years. During these years, he wrote many books about emperors and governors. He also commented on many books of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. His epistles that he sent to bishops and patriarchs were counted as eighteen thousand epistles. The gifts of the Holy Spirit poured upon him, and he reached a good old age, then departed to the Lord in peace.

His prayers be with us all. Amen.

3. Today also, the honorable St. Philo, bishop of the Persians, was martyred by the hand of the Persian emperor. When he did not accept worshipping fire and the sun, they tortured him with different kinds of tortures, and then they beheaded him with the sword.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

The Martyrdom of St. Fabian (Fabianus), Bishop of Rome

On this day in the year 250 AD., St. Fabian, bishop of Rome was martyred. He became bishop of Rome on January 10, 236. According to Eusebius; after the short reign of Bishop Anterus, Fabian had come to Rome from the countryside when the new papal election began. "Although present," says Eusebius, Fabian "was in the mind of none." While the names of several illustrious and noble churchmen were being considered over the course of thirteen days, a dove suddenly descended upon the head of Fabian. The congregation took this as a sign that he was marked out for this dignity, and Fabian was at once proclaimed bishop by acclamation.

During Fabian's reign of 14 years, there was a lull in the storm of persecution which had resulted in the exile of both Anterus' predecessor Pontian and the antipope (and later saint) Hippolytus. Fabian had enough influence at court to effect the return of the bodies of both of these martyrs from Sardinia, where they had died at hard labor in the mines.

When the emperor Decius reigned he ordered Christians to offer incense to the Roman idols. This who refused were killed. St. Fabian was thus one of the earliest victims of Decius, dying as a martyr on 20 January 250, at the beginning of the Decian persecution.

May his prayers be with us. And glory be to God forever. Amen.

THE TWELFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Commemoration of the Archangel Michael.
2. The Departure of St. Gelasius.

1. On this day we celebrate, commemorating the honorable Michael the Archangel, the intercessor of mankind. *His intercession be with us. Amen.*

2. Also on this day, St. Gelasius, the struggling ascetic, departed. He was born of Christian parents, who brought him up in the Christian faith. They taught him the church subjects, and then he was ordained a deacon in the church. He labored in his obedience to Christ and in carrying His yoke.

He went to the wilderness of Shiheet and became a monk. Afterwards, he was ordained a priest, and the angel of the Lord guided him to a distant place where many monks gathered around him, and he was a great example for them. He considered himself as one of them. He was patient and long suffering to the point that he transcribed the Holy Bible and placed it in the church for the other monks to read.

One day a stranger visited him and stole the transcribed Bible and went to try to sell it to someone. That person wanted to know its value, so he went to St. Gelasius and showed him the Bible. St. Gelasius knew that it was his book and asked him, "For how much did he sell it to you?" He answered, "For sixteen Dinari." The saint said to him that it was cheap, and so the man took it and went to his home.

When the seller came back to him to pick up the price, he said to him, "I have shown the Bible to Father Gelasius and he said that the price was too high." The seller asked, "Did the father tell you anything else?" The buyer replied, "No." The man who stole the Bible said, "I do not want to sell it." He took the book and went to Father Gelasius and gave it to him weeping and regretting what he did. The saint did not accept it from him. However, after the man had insisted with many tears, the saint at last accepted it from him.

God granted this saint the gift of performing miracles. One day, the monastery was presented with an amount of fish. After they were cooked, the cook asked one of the servants to guard it, but the servant ate a great part of it. When the cook knew what had happened, he was angry at that servant, for he ate before the time of eating and before the elders had blessed it. The cook beat him with a deadly hit that killed him.

The cook was afraid of what he had done and went to St. Gelasius and told him what had happened. The saint told him to take the body and put it in the church in front of the altar and to leave it there. The saint and the monks came to the church, prayed the Vespers prayer, and then the saint departed from the church, and the boy rose up and followed him. The monks

did not know of this miracle until the saint had departed.

When this father finished the course of his life in a good old age, the Lord wanted him to rest from the labors of this world, and he departed leaving us with this good memory.
His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Martyrdom of St. Sergius of Atripe, His Father, Mother, Sister, and Many Others with Them.
2. The Departure of St. Timothy III, 32nd Pope of Alexandria.

1. On this day, St. Sergius, his father, his mother, his sister and many others with them, were martyred. This saint was born in the city of Atripe to a righteous father whose name was Theodore, and a faithful mother whose name was Mary.

When he was 20 years old, St. Sergius desired to die for the Name of the Lord Christ. He presented himself to Cyprianus (Cyprian), the governor, and confessed his faith in the Lord Christ. The governor commanded him to be tortured with different kinds of tortures and to cast him in prison.

At night he saw in a vision as if he was in heaven, and he saw the mansions of the saints. His soul was greatly comforted, and the Lord Christ healed him from his afflictions.

A priest by the name of Mansoon heard about the labors of St. Sergius. Fr. Mansoon came with two deacons to Atripe and confessed the Name of the Lord Christ before the governor. The governor beat them with great cruelty. A multitude of people watched the tortures, and moved with compassion toward the priest, who could not do anything but to look at them, preach and command them to be steadfast in their faith in the Lord Christ. He prayed and blessed them and they all confessed the Orthodox faith. After they had been tortured, they were all beheaded, and received the crown of life. However, the Governor tortured the priest with fire, but the Lord saved him. The Governor sent him to Alexandria where he received his crown of martyrdom.

As for St. Sergius, Governor Cyprianus brought him and tortured him with excruciating tortures but the Lord healed, strengthened and comforted him. They brought an idol and ordered him to worship it. He kicked the idol with his foot and it fell and broke. Cyprianus believed instantly and said, "The god that cannot save itself, cannot save others." The captain of the soldiers "Ohios" continued to torture St. Sergius, and ordered to skin him and to rub his wounds with salt and vinegar, but the Lord gave him strength and grace.

His mother and his sister came to visit him and saw him in this condition, they wept bitterly, until his sister died from her extreme grief, but God raised her up by the prayers of the saint.

St. Julius of Agfahs came, wrote the biography of St. Sergius, and promised him that he would take care of his body and his burial. The captain "Ohios" ordered that St. Sergius be tortured by pressing his body through the pressing wheel (Hinbazeen), that his nails be pulled out, that he be placed over an iron bed, with a fire under it, and that torches of fire be placed in his ears. The Lord strengthened him through all of this and healed him. When "Ohios" the captain was tired of torturing him, he decided to behead him.

St. Sergius called his mother and sister to bid them farewell. They came with the rest of his family and when they saw him tied up with the bridle of a horse that was dragging him to the place of his martyrdom, they protested to the Governor for his extreme cruelty. He ordered to behead them all and they all received the crown of life and the eternal bliss.

There was a young boy among the crowd whose eyes were opened by the Lord and he saw the souls of the saints who were martyred carried by the angels, ascending to heaven. He cried with a loud voice saying, "O My Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me." His parents were afraid that the governor would hear him and destroy them because of him. When they could not calm him down, they put their hands upon his mouth to prevent him from screaming, asking the help of the Lord Christ, until he gave up his pure soul at the hand of the Lord.

Their prayers be with us all. Amen.

2. On this day also of the year 528 A.D., the holy father Abba Timothy III, 32nd Pope of Alexandria, departed. His enthronement on the apostolic throne was in 511 A.D. He suffered many hardships because he was steadfast in the Orthodox faith.

In his days, St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, came to Egypt escaping persecution. The two saints traveled together to Egyptian cities and monasteries confirming the people in the Orthodox faith.

Because he did not agree with Emperor Marcion with regard to the canons of the Council of Chalcedon, he was exiled.

On the day of his exile, the faithful opposed the enforcement of the order of his exile, and many of them were killed, about two hundred thousand, by the order of the Emperor. The saint departed in exile together with St. Severus of Antioch, after he had been on the apostolic throne for 17 years.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Departure of St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch.
2. The Departure of St. James (Yacobus), 50th Pope of Alexandria.

1. On this day of the year 538 A.D., the holy father St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, departed. St. Severus was born to a family of Greek origin in the town of Sozopolis in the Roman province of Pisidia (Asia minor).

In Alexandria, he studied grammar and rhetoric in Latin and Greek. Severus later studied law and philosophy at the famous law school in Berytus. St. Severus was baptised in 488 in the Church of the Martyr Leontius in Tripolis.

St. Severus became a monk at the monastery of Saint Romanus between Gaza and the port of Maiuma. Here he met Peter the Iberian, the non-Chalcedonian bishop of Maiuma, who became his mentor. St. Severus was later ordained as a priest.

In AD 511, during the reign of emperor Anastasius, who was a Miaphysite, he became Patriarch of Antioch. He exchanged letters with the other Miaphysite patriarchs.

Anastasius was succeeded in 518 by Justin I, who embraced the beliefs of Chalcedon. The Miaphysite prelates were everywhere replaced by Chalcedonian successors, Severus being one of the first to fall.

St. Severus escaped to the land of Egypt, during the papacy of St. Timothy III, 32nd Pope of Alexandria and traveled everywhere and visited monasteries disguised as a monk. He strengthened the faith of the believers in the Orthodox doctrine. He dwelt in the city of Sakha in the home of a holy lay leader called Doretheos. God performed through him many miracles. He departed in the city of Sakha, and his body was relocated to the monastery of El-Zugag. *His prayers be with us all. Amen.*

2. On this day also of the year 821 A.D., the great saint Abba James (St. Yacobus), 50th Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was a monk in the monastery of St. Macarius. For his holiness and righteousness, he was chosen by a consensus to become patriarch after Pope Mark, 49th Pope, had departed. He was enthroned in the month of Bashans in the year 810 A.D.

St. James renovated the churches and populated the monasteries, and God granted him the gift of performing miracles. One of the deacons in Alexandria dared to say to him rudely, "Pay what you owe to the churches, or else go to your monastery." The Pope replied to him, "You will never see me again from now on." The deacon went home, immediately became sick and died shortly after.

Another miracle: There was a lay leader (Archon) named Macarius from Nabarouh who was very well advanced in years and had no children. After a while, God gave him a son. He made a feast to celebrate this occasion, and invited Abba James. During the celebration, the child died but his father did not panic. He carried the child in his hands and placed him in faith before the Pope, trusting that God would hear His chosen one, and give life to his child. The Pope took the child and made the sign of the cross on his forehead, his heart and his chest, while he prayed, “My Master, Jesus Christ, the Giver of Life, raise this child alive again by Your mighty power.” He breathed in his face, and the soul of the child returned to him, and he gave him to his father.

When he finished his good strife, Abba James departed in peace, after he had been on the throne of St. Mark for 10 years, 9 months and 28 days.

His prayers be with us, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Departure of St. Zechariah, the Prophet.
2. The Consecration of the First Church Dedicated for the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste.
3. The Departure of St. Paphnoute (Paphnotius).

1. On this day St. Zechariah the Prophet, the son of Berechiah, one of the twelve minor prophets, departed. He was from the tribe of Levi, born in the land of Gilead, and was exiled to the land of the Chaldeans.

In exile, he started to prophesy, in the second year of King Darius, 520 B.C. He prophesied about “Jeshua, the son of Jozadak,” and “Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel,” that they would rebuild the temple. (Ezra 5:1; 6:14)

He prophesied also about the entrance of the Lord to Jerusalem riding a donkey, the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9); the thirty pieces of silver that Judas Iscariot received to deliver his Master to the Jews (Matthew 26:14-15); the scattering of the disciples on the night of the crucifixion; the coming of Christ in glory; and the grief of the children of Israel who did not believe in Him (Zechariah 12:10). He also prophesied about many other things.

He was the prophet who was killed between the altar and the temple. He was buried in Jerusalem in the tomb of the prophets. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the consecration of the church of the forty martyrs from Sebaste by the hand of Emperor Licinius. It was the first church that was built after their

names. St. Basil the Great consecrated it, wrote their biographies and established a great feast day for them. *Their prayer be with us. Amen.*

3. On this day also, the ascetic St. Paphnoute (Paphnotius) departed. He became a monk at a young age, and followed the hardest way in his monastic life.

God inspired him to travel to the inner wilderness, and there he saw many hermits and anchorites and St. Paphnoute wrote about them. Among those was St. Timothy and St. Abu Nofr. In his travels, he suffered much hunger and thirst, but the angel of the Lord appeared to him often to strengthen him. When he finished his strife, he departed in peace.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

The Departure of St. Elizabeth, Mother of St. John the Baptist

On this day the upright and righteous St. Elizabeth, mother of St. John the Baptist, departed. This holy woman was born in Jerusalem to a righteous father called Matthan from the tribe of Levi and from the house of Aaron the priest. Her mother's name was Sofia.

Matthan had three daughters. The first was called Mary, the mother of Salome, the midwife who cared for the Virgin St. Mary during her virginal birth. The name of the second daughter was Sofia, the mother of St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist. The youngest daughter was St. Hannah, the mother of the Virgin St. Mary, the mother of the Savior. Therefore, Salome, Elizabeth and the Virgin St. Mary were cousins.

When St. Zacharias the priest married St. Elizabeth, they lived in righteousness and holiness before God, as the evangelist said, "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke 1:6)

This upright woman was barren. She and her husband continually supplicated God who gave them St. John the Baptist. God was slow in answering their prayers until the time when the Virgin Mary conceived with the Word of God. When they were stricken in age, God sent His angel Gabriel to Zacharias to announce to him, "Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John," (Luke 1:13) and the angel told him what would become of St. John.

The Virgin St. Mary visited St. Elizabeth to congratulate her on her pregnancy. "And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." (Luke 1:41) When she gave birth to St. John, the

shame of her barrenness was lifted up from her and her people. When she completed her days in purity, righteousness and chastity, she departed in peace.
Her prayer be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

The Martyrdom of St. Mina (Menas), the Monk

On this day St. Mina the monk was martyred. This saint was born in Akhmim to Christian parents who were farmers. Since his youth, his heart was inclined to renounce the world, so he became a monk in one of the monasteries of Akhmim.

For a period of time, he fasted two days at a time and he was ascetic in his food and drink. Then he went to El-Ashmounein and dwelt in a monastery there for 16 years without leaving it.

When the Arabs ruled the country, St. Mina heard that they denied that God had a Son from His nature and essence, and equal with Him in Eternity. This denial of faith was painful to the saint, so he took permission from the abbot of the monastery and went to El-Ashmounein.

He came before the commander of the Arab camp and asked him, "Is it true that you say that God has no Son from His nature and essence?" The commander replied saying, "We deny that saying about God and totally reject it." The saint told the Arab commander that it should only be rejected if His Son was born through parental procreation, but our belief is that the Lord Christ is God of God, and Light of Light. The commander replied, "In our faith, this is blasphemy." The saint told him that the Bible says, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides in him." (John 3:36)

The commander became enraged at this and ordered his soldiers to cut the saint into pieces and to throw him into the sea. The believers gathered the pieces of his body, shrouded and buried it. They arranged a commemoration of St. Mina the monk on this day.
His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Departure of St. Meletius the Confessor, Patriarch of Antioch
2. Consecration of the church of Abba Paul the simple.

On this day of the year 381 A.D., St. Meletius the Confessor, Patriarch of Antioch, departed. He was ordained a bishop for Sebaste in the year 357 A.D. He left it because of the rudeness of its people and lived a solitary life nearby the city of Halab in Syria.

In the year 360 A.D., he was chosen a patriarch for Antioch during the days of Constantius, the son of Constantine the Great.

He was an eminent, learned and meek man, who was loved by everyone. When he entered the city of Antioch, he resisted the Arians and kept them away from the churches. When the Emperor heard that, he exiled him in the same year that he was enthroned patriarch. The noble men of the city of Antioch, the bishops and the priests met and wrote to the Emperor asking for the return of the Patriarch. The Emperor returned St. Meletius in shame to them.

When St. Meletius came back in the year 362 A.D., he did not cease resisting the Arians, excommunicating them and all those who believed in their doctrines. He made clear to them their errors and explained to them their blasphemy. He declared, preached and confirmed that the Son was of the same essence as the Father, consubstantial with Him in essence and in Godship. The followers of Arius returned to slander St. Meletius before Emperor Valens, who exiled him again to a country further away than the one to which he was exiled first. When he arrived to his exile, the bishops and the fathers that were exiled from different countries came and gathered around and stayed with him.

St. Meletius did not slack in teaching and interpreting what was difficult to understand in the Holy Scriptures. His epistles reached his flock, in spite of the distance, confirming their faith in the Holy Trinity, preaching the faith of the Council of Nicea and refuting the teachings of Arius.

He was in exile for many years until his return to Antioch in the year 378 A.D. He was present in the Council of Constantinople in the year 381 A.D. Then he departed in peace.

St. John Chrysostom (Golden Mouthed) praised St. Meletius on his feast day declaring his greatness and that he was not in any less stature than the apostles in honor for what he suffered from exile and humiliation for the sake of the Orthodox faith.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the consecration of the church of Abba Paul the simple, the disciple of St. Antony. He was a simple farmer who was married to a beautiful woman of lax morals.

One day he came home to find her with another man, he sighed and told the man that he can keep her! He went to St. Antony and asked him to accept him as a monk. St. Antony told him that he cannot be a monk on account of his old age. When he insisted, St. Antony tested him and found him steadfast and so he accepted him.

He was a very simple man, so much that he did not know who came first, Moses or Jesus! And yet he advanced in his ascetic life that he equalled his teacher. The great and blessed Anthony had become convinced that the soul of this servant of Christ had become almost perfected in all things, even though he was somewhat simple.

After a few months Anthony was moved by the grace of God to build a cell for him three or four miles away from his own cell, and said to him, “See now, by the help of the grace of Christ you have become a monk. Now live by yourself, and even take on the demons.”

So a year after Paul the Most Simple came to live with him he was highly experienced in a disciplined way of life and was found worthy to battle against the demons and against all kinds of diseases.

One day there was brought to Anthony a young man vexed beyond measure by one of the most powerful and savage demons who railed against heaven itself with curses and blasphemies. Anthony had a look at the young man and said to those who had brought him, “This is not a task for me. I have not yet been given the grace to deal with this very powerful type of demon. Paul the Simple has the gift of dealing with this one.”

St. Antony ordered Abba Paul to exorcise the young man. The unassuming old man stood up and poured out a strong prayer to challenge the demon and said, “Abba Anthony says, ‘Depart from this man!’” “I will not, you disgusting, pompous old man,” said the demon, with many curses and blasphemies.

This made Abba Paul get angry with the demon. He went outside. It was midday when the Egyptian heat bears comparison with the furnace of Babylon. The holy old man stood up straight, like a statue, on top of a rock, and prayed, “O Jesus Christ, you were crucified under Pontius Pilate, take note that I will not come down from this rock, nor will I eat or drink even if I die, until you hear me and cast out this demon from this man and liberate him from the unclean spirit.”

And even as the simple and humble Paul was praying, before he had even finished, the demon cried out, “I’m



getting out of this man and won't come back any more. It is the simplicity and humility of Paul which has driven me out and I don't know where to go.”

St. Paul finished his strife and departed in peace.

May his holy blessings be with us and glory be to God forever. Amen.

THE NINETEENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

The Commemoration of the Relocation of the Relics of
St. Martianus, the Monk

On this day we commemorate the relocation of the relics of St. Martianus (Martinianus) the fighter monk from Athens to Antioch. After he led an adulterous woman to repentance and then to monasticism, he placed her in one of the convents. Then he went to an island and visited many countries. Finally, he came to the city of Athens where he stayed for a short while, until he fell sick and departed in peace.

St. Demetrius, Patriarch of Antioch, took on the endeavor to relocate the relics of the saint during the reign of Emperor Valens the Infidel. St. Demetrius sent priests to Athens. They carried the body of St. Martianus with great honor to Antioch. He placed the body in a sarcophagus and appointed a feast to celebrate him on this day.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Departure of St. Peter, 21st Pope of Alexandria.
2. The Martyrdom of Sts. Basil, Theodore and Timothy, the Martyrs.

1. On this day of the year 370 A.D., the blessed father Abba Peter II, 21st Pope of Alexandria, departed. He was the successor of St. Athanasius the apostolic, who was his teacher. Abba Peter II suffered many tribulations from the followers of Arius who often tried to kill him, but he escaped them.

He was forced to hide for two years, during which the Arians put in his place one of them named Lucius. Nevertheless, the believers were able to remove Lucius, the false pope, and brought back Abba Peter who remained on his chair for 6 years of persecution, during which he resisted the Arians. When he completed 8 years, the Lord relieved him from the toil of this world and he departed to the eternal bliss. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of Saints Basil, Theodore and Timothy, the martyrs, in the city of Alexandria. *Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Commemoration of the Virgin St. Mary.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Onesimus, the Disciple of St. Paul.
3. The Departure of St. Gabriel, 57th Pope of Alexandria.
4. The Departure of St. Zacharias, Bishop of Sakha.

1. We celebrate on this day the commemoration of the pure Lady St. Mary the Virgin, the Mother of God, the Word, through whom was the salvation of Adam and his offspring. *Her intercession be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also St. Onesimus, the disciple of St. Paul, was martyred. This saint was a slave for a man from Rome called Philemon who believed at the hands of St. Paul, when he heard his preaching in Rome.

Philemon departed from Rome on a business trip and took with him Onesimus among others of his servants. There the devil enticed Onesimus, so he stole money from his master and fled to Rome. According to the Divine Will, Onesimus attended the preaching of St. Paul, which he kept in his heart. He believed at the hand of St. Paul and his heart was filled with the grace and the fear of God. He remembered what he stole from his master and from others and since he did not have anything left from the stolen money to return to its rightful owners, he was sorrowful and told St. Paul about that.

St. Paul comforted him and wrote an epistle to Onesimus' master, Philemon, informing him in it, that Onesimus became a follower of Christ saying, "I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains." St. Paul asked him to treat him gently and not to mind what he did but to consider what he lost as owed by the apostle.

When Onesimus took the epistle to his master Philemon, he was pleased by his faith and repentance and treated him as the apostle commanded. Furthermore, he offered him more money but St. Onesimus refused saying, "I am rich with Christ." Then he bid Philemon farewell and returned to Rome.

St. Onesimus continued to serve St. Paul until his martyrdom and deserved to be ordained a priest. After the martyrdom of St. Paul, the governor of Rome seized him and exiled him to one of the islands. He remained there preaching and baptizing the people of the island. When the governor came to the island, he found him guiding the people to the belief in the

Lord Christ. He was beaten severely and his legs were broken. He departed in peace.
His prayers be with us. Amen.

3. On this day also of the year 911 A.D., the great father St. Gabriel, 57th Pope of Alexandria, departed. This saint became a monk at a young age, practising many worships. He loved solitary life and wept much while praying, asking the Lord to save him from the snares of the devil.

When Pope Mikhael, 56th Pope, departed, they chose this father to be the Pope in his place. He was ordained in the year 900 A.D. against his will. He cared for the church affairs well, and the duties of the patriarchate did not prevent him from his worship and asceticism.

He spent most of his days in the wilderness and whenever he had some affairs to take care of in Cairo or Alexandria, he would leave and then return back to the wilderness. He fought against the flesh and the devil by increasing fasting, watching, prayers and humility. He used to wake up in the night, put on a ragged garment, take a metal shovel and go around the bathrooms of the monks' cells, washing and cleaning them. He did the same for many years until the Lord looked upon his humility and humble heart, so He relieved his pains and gave him the grace of victory over sin and the body. This father was a worshipper, fighter and a preacher for 11 years, then he departed in peace.

His prayers be with us. Amen.

4. On this day also St. Zacharias, Bishop of Sakha, departed. He was the son of a scribe called John who left his job and was chosen to be a priest. His son Zacharias was raised on studying literary and religious subjects.

When he grew up, El-Wazeer appointed him as a scribe in his court. Afterward he agreed with a friend called Ptolemy who was the prefect of the town of Sakha, to leave their work and go to the wilderness to become monks.

Immediately, they left in secret, walking to the wilderness, without knowing their way. They met on their way, by the will of God, a monk who took them to the monastery of St. John the Short (Colobos). When their friends knew about that, they took a letter from the Governor to bring them back, but the Lord defeated their counsel. As for Zacharias and his friend, they put on the garb of the monks and exerted themselves in many worships. That was during the time of the saints Abba Gawargah and Abba Abraham who were the best guides for them.

When the Bishop of Sakha departed, the people wrote to the father, the Patriarch, asking for Zacharias to be their bishop. The Patriarch brought him and ordained him against his will. At the time of the ordination, when the Pope was about to put his hands on Zacharias' head, a light shined in the church and his face appeared as a bright star.

When he arrived to his diocese, the people rejoiced and went out to meet him with great honor. The church was illumined with his teachings. St. Zacharias was eloquent and filled with grace and he wrote many articles, sermons and discourses. He stayed on his chair for 30 years, then departed in peace.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

The Departure of St. Maruta (Maruthas) the Bishop

On this day in the year 420 AD., the church commemorates the departure of St. Maruta (Maruthas), bishop of Maypherkat in Mesopotamia (Meiafarakin). He brought into his episcopal city the relics of so many martyrs that it received the surname Martyropolis. He was a friend of Saint John Chrysostom.

St. Maruthas was sent by Emperor Theodosius II to the court of Persia, where, he won the esteem of King Yazdegerd I of Persia by his affability, saintly life, and, as is claimed, by curing his daughter. St. Marutha managed to negotiate a peace between the two empires. He then asked for the relic of the Christians killed in the persecution.

He was present at the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381 and at a Council of Antioch in 383 (or 390), at which the Messalians were condemned.

He left many valuable writings including “Acts of the Persian Martyrs” (these acts remember the victims of the persecution of Shapur II and Yazdegerd I). He also wrote a liturgy in Syrian, many hymns on the Eucharist, on the cross and on the martyrs of Persia.

He departed in peace. *May his holy blessings be with us and glory be to God. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

The Martyrdom of St. Eusebius, Son of Basilides, the Minister

On this day we commemorate the Martyrdom of St. Eusebius, Son of Basilides, the Minister. Basilides, a minister in the administration of emperor Numerianus had a son named Eusebius who joined the Roman army. Eusebius fought in the army along with Emperor Numerianus for many years. Emperor Numerianus left the battle they were in together to fight on another front and died in battle leaving the throne of the Roman Empire unoccupied.

The new emperor Diocletian, abandoned the Christian faith and so Basilides the minister, left the service of the emperor instead of having his faith challenged. Basilides also sent word to his son and his fellows that were still fighting in battle of what was happening. Saints Eusebius and Yostos amongst others decided that they would die for Christ upon their return.

Months later, the soldiers, Eusebius, Abadir, Yustos, Ecladius, and Theodore returned from battle victorious and were met by Basilides who informed them of all that had happened in detail.

Emperor Diocletian came to greet them and congratulate them on their victory and he asked them to worship idols with him. The saints Eusebius, Yostos, and other believers drew their swords to kill Diocletian and all the men that were with him, but were stopped by Eusebius' father Basilides.

Basilides then returned to his home and told all the people that worked for him and his family that he wished to lay down his life for Christ. They all agreed to do so and went before Diocletian and refused to worship idols and laid down their swords.

One of Diocletian's ministers named Romanus advised the emperor to send the entire family, all of them to different parts of Egypt to be tortured and Emperor Diocletian agreed.

St. Eusebius was sent to upper Egypt to be tortured and killed there. The governor there inflicted upon him many tortures. He was beaten harshly and many bones were broken. The Lord sent him angels daily to strengthen him in all his afflictions, to comfort him and to heal his wounds.

St. Eusebius also had a vision and saw heaven with many mansions prepared for him and his family for all they were enduring for Christ. Eusebius was ordered to be thrown into a fire, but an angel came, put out the fire and delivered him safely from it. Finally the governor sentenced him to death and he was martyred by the sword.

His prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Departure of St. Agapetus (Agapius), the Bishop.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Timothy and St. Matthias.

1. On this day St. Agapetus (Agapius), the bishop, departed. He was born of Christian parents during the time of the infidel emperors Diocletian and Maximianus. His parents brought him up in a Christian upbringing, and he was ordained a deacon. Then, he went to one of the monasteries and served the elders therein. He learned from them worship and asceticism and was accustomed to fasting and prayer. His food was legumes to break the fast. He grew in his ascetic life and in every virtue, and God wrought through him many miracles, among which were the following:

He healed a girl from a debilitating sickness which had stricken her for a long time, and doctors had failed to cure her. He also prayed once and God destroyed a beast which was devouring people. By his prayers, God granted healing to many sick people.

The news of his asceticism, righteousness and the power of his prayer spread everywhere. When Lucinus the governor heard about St. Agapius, he brought him by force and appointed him a soldier in his army. This did not prevent St. Agapius from continuing in his ascetic life and his worship and he rather increased in virtue.

Shortly after, God perished Diocletian and the God-loving emperor Constantine took over the empire after him. St. Agapius desired to gain his freedom and to return to his monastery, and God answered him.

Emperor Constantine had a servant who was very dear to him for the good qualities he had. The servant was stricken with an evil spirit which tormented him. Some friends of the Emperor advised him to ask Agapius, the soldier, to pray for his servant to be healed. The Emperor was surprised to know that one among his soldiers had the gift of healing. The Emperor sent for St. Agapius who prayed upon the servant, made the sign of the holy cross over him, and God healed him.

The Emperor rejoiced and wanted to reward him. St. Agapius refused to accept any reward except to be granted his release from military service to go back to the place of his worship. The Emperor granted him what he wanted. The saint returned to where he was before and he lived a solitary life. After a while, he was ordained a priest.

After the departure of the bishop of his town, the people asked for this saint from the abbot of the monastery, and he gave him his permission to leave. St. Agapius was ordained bishop and shepherded the flock of Christ with the best of care. He was granted the gift of prophecy and performing miracles. He rebuked the sinners for what they had done in secret. He rebuked

the priests for forsaking teaching and instructing their flocks.

His biography included more than one hundred miracles that he had performed, and he departed at a good old age. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the martyrdom of St. Timothy of Gaza, and St. Matthias of the City of Koos (Quoce).

Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Martyrdom of Sts. Archippus Philemon and Apphia .

2. The Martyrdom of St. Quona (Kona) and St. Mina.

1. On this day, the Sts. Archippus Philemon and Apphia , were martyred. St. Philemon and St. Archippus were fellow workers with St. Paul. St. Apphia was the wife of St. Archippus. They are mentioned in Philem 1-2: “..Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house”. In Col 4:17: “ And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.”

According to the Apostolic Constitutions, St. Archippus was the first bishop of Laodicea in Phrygia (now part of Turkey). Another tradition states that he was one of the 72 disciples. Another tradition states that St. Philemon was also a bishop.

During the persecution against Christians under the emperor Nero (54-68), saints Archippus Philemon and Apphia were brought to trial by the ruler Artocles for confessing faith in Christ. St Archippus was brutally slashed with knives, while Sts Philemon and Apphia were stoned until they died. *Their prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also is the commemoration of the martyrdom of the deacon Quona of the City of Rome, and the martyrdom of St. Mina of Cyprus.

Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Departure of Hosea, the Prophet.
2. The Martyrdom of St. Sadoth and the 128 who were with Him.

1. On this day, Hosea, the prophet, one of the twelve minor prophets of Israel, departed. This righteous man prophesied during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, King of Israel. (Hosea 1:1)

He mentioned in his prophecy some remarkable and marvelous things. He rebuked the children of Israel for their sins and their transgressions, and warned them in advance about the evil things that would befall them because of their offenses. He promised them the uplifting of these calamities if they returned to the Lord their God.

He also prophesied about the passions of our Savior, His resurrection and the salvation of the human race. He said, "He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord..." (Hosea 6:1-3)

He prophesied also about the abolishment of the sting of death and the dominion of hell by saying, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death, O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction." (Hosea 13:14) "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (I Corinthians 15:55)

He departed at a blessed old age. *His prayers be with us. Amen.*

2. On this day also, St. Sadoth and the 128 saints with him were martyred in Persia. St. Sadoth became bishop of Sleucia in Persia in 341, after St. Simeon, the bishop who preceded him was translated to glory by martyrdom, in the beginning of the persecution raised by Sapor II.

When King Sapor came to Seleucia, St. Sadoth was apprehended, with several of his clergy, some ecclesiastics of the neighbourhood, and certain monks and nuns belonging to his church, to the amount of one hundred and twenty-eight persons. They were thrown into dungeons, where, during five months' confinement, they suffered incredible misery and torments. Amidst these tortures the officers cried out to them: "Adore the sun, and obey the king, if you would save your lives."

The martyrs all cried out with one voice: "We shall not die, but live and reign eternally with God and his son Jesus Christ. Wherefore inflict death as soon as you please; for we repeat it to you that we will not adore the sun, nor obey the unjust edicts." Then sentence of death was pronounced upon them all by the king; for which they thanked God, and mutually encouraged each other. *Their prayers be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Departure of St. Eustathius, Patriarch of Antioch
2. Martyrdom of St. Perpetua

1. On this day of the year 330 A.D., St. Eustathius, Patriarch of Antioch, departed in exile. He was enthroned Patriarch of Antioch during the reign of the righteous Emperor Constantine the Great.

He was righteous and well learned. He attended the Nicene Council, and the fathers gathered there agreed on excommunicating Arius and exiling him and all those who believed in his teachings. Those were Eusabius the Nicomedian; Thaoghonius, Bishop of Nicea; and Eusabius, Bishop of Caesarea.

After the council was concluded and the fathers went back to their parishes, those who were excommunicated pretended that they wished to go to Jerusalem, but instead they went to Antioch. There, they enticed a harlot with money and other things in order to accuse St. Eustathius the Patriarch that he fathered a child from her. She took the money and went to the church and said as they had instructed her. They pretended to disbelieve her and said, "Bring forth your proof if you are truthful in what you are saying. We will not accept your statement unless you swear on the Bible that what you claim against this father is true." She swore to them and they replied, "We do not need any more proof."

They condemned St. Eustathius and judged to strip him from his episcopal rank. They informed Emperor Constantine saying: "A council of clerics judged to remove Fr. Eustathius, Patriarch of Antioch, from his office". The Emperor believed their unfounded judgement, and he deposed and banished St. Eustathius to Thrace where the saint remained until his departure.

The Lord God, Who loves His holy servants, did not neglect to reveal the truth. The woman became ill with a debilitating long illness and suffered great pain. She realized that her suffering was a punishment for her false accusation against the Saint. She came and confessed before the people of the city that the charge she had brought against St. Eustathius the patriarch was untrue. She pointed at those who bribed her with money to lie. She indicated that the Patriarch was innocent and that the child was born to another man whose name was the same as the Patriarch. They convinced her to swear against the Saint but at the same time to mean in heart her friend who was the father of the child, to be saved from falsely swearing.

The priests resumed mentioning the name of St. Eustathius in the divine liturgy after his innocence was evident. He was eulogized and praised by St. John Chrysostom (of the Golden Mouth) on the day of his commemoration.

His prayers be with us. Amen.

2. On this day also in the year 203 AD. Saint Perpetua, a 22 years old woman with a nursing child, the slave Felicitas, and her fellow-slave Revocatus, also Saturninus and Secundulus. Soon one Satorius, who deliberately declared himself a Christian before the judge, were martyred in North Africa.

After their arrest, and before they were led away to prison, the five catechumens were baptized. Perpetua's mother also, and her brother, yet a catechumen, visited them. Her mother brought in her arms to Perpetua her little son, whom she was permitted to nurse and retain in prison with her.

A few days later Perpetua's pagan father, hearing a rumour that the trial of the imprisoned Christians would soon take place, visited their dungeon and besought her by everything dear to her not to put this disgrace on her name; but Perpetua remained steadfast to her Faith.

The next day the trial of the six confessors took place, before the Procurator Hilarianus. All six resolutely confessed their Christian Faith. Perpetua's father, carrying her child in his arms, approached her again and attempted, for the last time, to induce her to apostatize; the procurator also remonstrated with her but in vain.

She refused to sacrifice to the gods for the safety of the emperor. The procurator thereupon had the father removed by force, on which occasion he was struck with a whip. The Christians were then condemned to be torn to pieces by wild beasts, for which they gave thanks to God.

Secundulus, one of the confessors, died in prison. Felicitas, who at the time of her incarceration was with child (in the eighth month), was apprehensive that she would not be permitted to suffer martyrdom at the same time as the others, since the law forbade the execution of pregnant women.

Happily, two days before the games she gave birth to a daughter, who was adopted by a Christian woman. On 7 March, the five confessors were led into the amphitheatre. At the demand of the pagan mob they were first scourged; then a boar, a bear, and a leopard, were set at the men, and a wild cow at the women.

Wounded by the wild animals, they gave each other the kiss of peace and were then put to the sword. Their bodies were interred at Carthage. Their feast day was solemnly commemorated even outside Africa. *Their holy blessings be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

Relocation of the relics of St. Theodore Tiro (the oriental).

On this day we commemorate the relocation of the relics of St. Theodore Tiro (the oriental). When the righteous Constantin reigned, by God's grace, the relics of this saint were relocated to the city of Nyssa, where a church was built in his name and the relics were put there. *May his holy blessings be with us and glory be to God. Amen.*

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna

On this day of the year 155 A.D., St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was martyred. Born 69 AD., he became the disciple of St. John the Evangelist. He was the "angel of the church in Smyrna" to whom the Lord said: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev 2:10)

Around the year 150 AD., he visited Anicetus, bishop of Rome to discuss the date of Easter. They could not agree but Anicetus invited him to celebrate the Eucharist in his church.

When Emperor Marcus Aurelius incited persecutions against Christians, they strongly pressured him saying, "Swear and we will set you free; curse Christ and we will spare your life." Polycarp replied, "Eighty and six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong, so how can I blaspheme against my King Who saved me?"

The Governor said, "If you do not fear the wild beasts, I will make the fire consume you if you do not repent." St. Polycarp said, "You threatened me with fire that burns for a while, then burns out, for you do not know the everlasting fire of judgement and the eternal punishment that are awaiting the evil ones. Now why are you lingering? Do whatever you want."

St. Polycarp was burned at the stake and was pierced with a spear for refusing to burn incense to the Roman Emperor. On his farewell, he said "I bless you Father for judging me worthy of this hour, so that in the company of the martyrs I may share the cup of Christ."

The Christians of Smyrna took his relics and buried them with great honour and kept his feast ever since. *May his holy blessings be with us and glory be to God forever. Amen.*

THE THIRTIETH DAY OF THE BLESSED MONTH OF MESHIR

1. The Appearance of the Head of St. John the Baptist
2. Commemoration of the departure of the triple blessed Pope Cyril VI, The one hundred and sixteenth among the holy fathers the Patriarchs of Alexandria.

1. On this day we celebrate the commemoration of the appearance of the head of St. John the Baptist. Herod commanded his head to be cut off and brought on a platter and given to Herodias, according to her request. (Mark 6:7-28) It was said that after the feast he regretted the slaying of St. John so he kept the head in his house.

Aritas, the Arabic King, Herod's father-in-law, was enraged because Herod banished his daughter and married the wife of his brother, while his brother was still alive. Aritas instigated a war against Herod in revenge for his daughter. He overcame Herod, dispersed his army and destroyed the cities of Galilee.

When Tiberius Caesar learned that the reason for these wars was the slaying of a prophet, who was great among his people, by Herod, who banished his wife, the daughter of Aritas, the Arabian king, and married his brother's wife, he summoned Herod and Herodias to Rome. Herod hid the head of St. John in his palace and went to Rome. When he arrived there, Tiberius removed him from his position and stripped him of all his possessions and exiled him to Spain where he died.

A few years later, two believing men from Homs went to Jerusalem to spend the holy fast (Lent) there. Night fell on them while passing by the ruins of Herod's palace, so they spent the night there. St. John appeared to one of them and told him about his name and the whereabouts of his head and ordered him to take it to his house. When he woke up, the man told this to his friend and they went to the place where the head was buried. They dug and found a sealed pottery vessel. When they opened that vessel, a sweet aroma spread out of it. They found the holy head, took its blessing and placed it back in the vessel. The man that saw the vision took it to his house. He put it in a safe place and put a candle in front of it. Before his departure, he told his sister about it and she went on doing the same thing.

The head was handed from one person to another until it came to the hand of a follower of Arius who attributed the wonders and miracles that happened through the holy head to the heresy of Arius. The Lord commanded someone to force him out of his house. The place of the head remained unknown until the time of St. Cyril (Kyrillos), Bishop of Jerusalem. St. John appeared to Abba Martianus, Bishop of Homs, in his sleep and told him about the place of the head. He went there and found the head and that was on the thirtieth of the month of Meshir. *The prayers of this saint be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

2. On this day of the year 1687 AM (March 9, 1971 AD) the saintly Pope Abba Cyril, the one hundred and sixteenth among the holy fathers the Patriarchs of Alexandria departed. His name before becoming a monk was Azer Yousef Atta.

Born August 8, 1902 AD (Messori 2, 1618 AM) in the city of Damanhour to devout Christian parents. An old blind monk named hegoumen Tadros Al Baramousi used to visit the family and Azer, ever since age four used to remain close to that monk as long as his visit lasted. One night he slept on the knees of the old monk. His mother wanted to take him away but the monk told her, "Leave him, he belongs to us!"

When he grew up he worked for Cox company in Alexandria after finishing his studies in 1921 AD. He always preferred to stay alone in his room studying the holy Bible. He also was diligent in studying the Church's rites, praises and hymns.

His love for the monastic life was evident from the fact that he preferred to sleep on the floor rather than his bed, and his food was basically a piece of bread. He continued in this monastic way of life for five years before joining the monastery.

In July 1927, he entered the Baramous monastery during the papacy of Pope Cyril V (112th Patriarch of Alexandria) He remained as a candidate for several months and when the monks nominated him for the monastic life he was ordained as monk Mina Al- Baramousy. He chose the name Mina since he was attached to the memory of Saint Mina the wonder worker and considered him his patron saint.

On Sunday July 18, 1931 he was ordained a priest. While staying in the monastery he joined the seminary at Helwan. When he heard that Pope Youannis (113th Patriarch of Alexandria) intended to ordain him as a bishop, he fled into upper Egypt where he stayed in the monastery of St. Shenouda in Souhag.

He later met the Pope and confided in him that he wishes to be an anchorite. The Pope agreed to his request and assigned a pious elderly monk named Hegoumen Abdel Massih Al Baramousy to be his spiritual guide. He lived in a cave that was one hour walking distance from the monastery. He used to come to the monastery Saturday night to wash his clothes as well as those of the other monks and to attend Vespers and the Sunday Liturgy for communion.

Early in 1936, he started to live in a deserted mill in the desert of Old Cairo, where he diligently held a daily liturgy. In 1941 he was assigned to be the abbot of Abba Samuel the Confessor in Maghagha. He renovated the monastery and the church and built new cells for the monks. Many pious monks became his disciples. The new church was consecrated by the late Bishop Athanasius of Beni Sweif who gave him the rank of Hegoumen.

In 1947 he returned to Old Cairo, where he built a small church named after St. Mina using the meagre contributions that he received. He participated in the actual building with the workers. In that church several pious monks became his disciples, many of whom later became bishops of the Church. In 1949 he annexed to the church a student residence for out of town students.

Hegoumen Mina Al baramousy became famous for ceaseless prayer and strong faith. Many who were afflicted by various diseases came to see him from all over the country and they were healed through his prayers. God honoured him by these miracles both during his life as well as after his departure.

When Pope Yousab II (115th) departed, a Presidential decree was issued on November 13, 1957 concerning the regulations for the election of the new Pope of Alexandria. The long process of nominations and elections were concluded and an altar lot was drawn following the Divine Liturgy at the Great Cathedral of Saint Mark on April 19, 1959. The liturgy was attended by all the clergy of the Church and the anchorite Hegoumen Mina Al Baramousy was chosen to become the 116th successor of Saint mark the apostle. His ordination took place on Sunday May 10, 1959 as Pope Cyril VI, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint mark.

In June 28, 1959, His Holiness ordained a Patriarch Catholicos for the Church of Ethiopia and a protocol was signed between the two churches ascertaining the mutual love between them.

In November 1959 His Holiness put the foundation stone of the monastery of the great martyr Saint Mina the wonder worker in the wilderness of Mariot and returned his relics there. He also built several churches and a great cathedral that is almost as great as the old cathedral (that was built by St. Athanasius the Great.)

His Holiness also renovated the old Cathedral of saint Mark which was built a century ago and adorned it with beautiful icons.

In 1967 His Holiness compounded the holy Myron, which was a historical occasion, since this was the 26th time this was done during the history of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

In April 2, 1968 the immaculate Mother of the Light Saint Mary was transfigured on the domes of her church in Zeitoun, a suburb of Cairo. This was a heavenly revelation unsurpassed since the coming down of the Holy spirit on the holy Disciples on the day of Pentecost. The holy virgin appeared in a celestial light that no man can describe. The apparitions continued for many days together with celestial bodies and luminous doves and fragrant incense. Thousands who had diverse incurable diseases were healed, for the blind received their sight and the paralytics were cured and the lame walked from all religions and nationalities. Joy and comfort filled all and they glorified God exceedingly.

In June 1968 His Holiness received the relics of Saint Mark after sojourning away from Egypt for close to eleven centuries. He laid it to rest in a reliquary specially built under the altar of the great cathedral of Saint mark which His Holiness had built and which was inaugurated in a magnificent celebration attended by the then President Nasser as well as the late Emperor HaileSilasi of Ethiopia, delegates from churches all over the world and multitudes of Copts.

Pope Cyril VI never forgot that he is the poor monk Mina the anchorite. His food was very simple. Many days he would subsist on a meal of dry bread, salt and cumin. During Lent and the fast of the holy Virgin he would eat one meal at night after the conclusion of his daily liturgy and which concluded in the evening. His clothes were simple and he slept very little.

He was diligent in singing midnight praise daily. He started it before sunrise. His daily liturgy was serene and profound sung in a low voice with his face looking down and his eyes closed. He prayed almost without tune in reverence and compunction, often crying profusely so much so that those who saw him cried.

He was the first pope in a generation to have an open door to every one. Any one could sit with him and talk to him without barriers or impediments. He guided those were lost and reformed those who were crooked.

He prayed for these who needed help so much so that the lives of those who encountered him were noticeably renewed. How many were healed by him and how many demons were exorcised by a simple word of his blessed mouth and how many problems were solved through his prayers.

At evenings he always attended Vespers, thus his whole day was spent in prayer whether in church or in his cell or while meeting people. While he walked or ate he always recited the psalms raising his mind and his heart and indeed all his senses towards God. No wonder he was known as a man of prayer and miracles.

When God wanted to give him rest from the afflictions of this present age, he revealed to him with many celestial revelations that he often told to his loved ones. He had a brief illness, and on the day of his departure he received a number of his children and when the last one went away (and he was a priest) he raised the cross and said “May the Lord arrange your affairs” He then entered into his cell and gave up his pure soul into the hands of God whom he served. He was buried under the altar of the new Cathedral which he had built.

On Hathor 15, 1688 (November 25, 1972) his pure relics were translated to the monastery of saint Mina at Mariot according to his hand written will, in a dignified ceremony so that he can be beside his great intercessor Saint Mina. On the day of the translation of his relics heaven honoured this great saint for the sky thundered and rain came down in such a way that had never been seen before. *May the blessing of this apostolic saint be with us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*