

ICONS IN MY CHURCH

If you enter the church (a Coptic church) at any time, you will always find that the first row is full!! Yes, the Iconostasis (The front wall) is full of icons showing saints living with us, sharing our prayers and meetings. They face us to give us an example of purity and victory.

** The icons and honoring the saints:*

My friend, when we talk about the icons in the church, we would like to stress the point that we don't worship the icons, but we honor whom it symbolizes, whether a heavenly creature, a martyr or a saint. As Jesus Christ said: "*If any one serves me the Father will honor him*". So if the heavenly Father honors His saints shouldn't we honor them as their children!

** Icons in the old testament:*

The use of icons dates back to the old testament when the image of the cherub was displayed on the screen of the Tabernacle (1Kings 6).

** Consecration of icons:*

The icons that adorn the church are consecrated with the same Chrism which is used in baptism. Thus the icon upon accepting the Holy Spirit, is qualified to receive incensing, be kissed or accorded any other form of veneration.

** Icons in houses:*

As for the pictures we keep in our homes or wallets, they show our love and respect for our heavenly friends and intercessors. We also keep it as a blessing but we never worship it.

As for the Cross and the image of Christ on it, we do as St. Paul said : "Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified". Gal 3:1.

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ASK AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU.

Q: Where does the human soul go after death? Does it stay in the tomb? Or does it vanish till Judgment day?

Answer: The soul of a **righteous** man goes to "Paradise" as a waiting place until the Judgment day, after which it goes to the "Kingdom of God", the heavenly Jerusalem.

The soul of a **wicked** man goes to "Hades" as a waiting place until the Judgment day, after which it goes to "hell".

N.B.

- + Paradise is a joyful place where as Hades is a sorrowful place.
- + Revise the story of the rich man and Lazarus in (Lk 16) and the criminal crucified with Jesus Lk 23:43.
- + Everyone will be judged according to his deeds (1Cor 3), and a star differs from a star in splendor. (1Cor 15:41)

Q: Why do the (Coptic) clergymen wear black?

Answer: During the persecution of Christians in the middle ages, in Egypt, there were laws requiring all Christians to wear black..afterwards it seems that the clergymen kept wearing black.

This color was agreed upon among all the Orthodox churches.

Q: Where was Joseph the carpenter during crucifixion and resurrection?

Answer: The church history tells us that St. Joseph died when Jesus was sixteen years old.

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A candle of love

Enjoying the Cross..!!

A church servant told me this story about **Fr. PISHOY KAMEL**. It took place in 1978, the year during which he was seriously ill, just before his death:

The boy-scout team held a celebration for the boys, and the person in charge asked **Fr. Pishoy** to come and bless the children. This was hard for **Fr. Pishoy** due to his ill-health and inability to do much effort. So all the servants were very surprised to find **Fr. Pishoy** in church at the appointed time of the ceremony and the children were very happy because he came.

Fr. Pishoy went on greeting the children one after the other, until he was sweating and could not stand any more. In spite of all that **he endured the pain happily and cheerfully, with a smile on his face until he finished blessing all the children.**

Dear friend, it is true that we saw in Fr. Pishoy the real image of the cross, where we see that it is not just the pain we endure, but to endure this pain with happiness. Doing this we show our love to God as Fr. Pishoy did.

"But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed". (1Pet 4:13)

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A boy's diary

A MESSAGE TO MY LORD JESUS

My beloved father Jesus Christ,

I worship your glory and praise your holy name, I long to see you, there is a wish to sit in your lap and hear your voice.

In the beginning I would like to thank you for all you gave me.. Every day you give me before I ask, whenever I sit and contemplate your gifts my heart overflows with thanks.

I also thank you for the messages you send me every day in the Holy Bible, whenever I miss you I open it to hear your encouraging words.

As for me, you know that I was born in a foreign land, and yearn for my heavenly home..

My father and mother and some of those who love you, have told me about my true home. **Sometimes I imagine myself with you in heaven and how I will be full of joy in your presence.** But then I return back to face reality and find myself still a sojourner, When will all this end? My soul thirsts for you as a dry and weary land.

Lord Jesus,

Don't be angry with me because of my greediness and covetousness you know how weak I am, so please help me.

By the way, there is some evil one who persecutes me without any mercy.. But then I came to know that he really means You. He tries to make me doubt you and your care for me. Even your last gift to me, he tried to erase your name and put luck's instead. But when I opened your letters I was assured that You are the Almighty, the source of all good.

In another trick of his' when I want to meet you in prayer, he tries to distract my mind so that I won't be able to hear you, but I trust that you know what I want to say even before I do, and that you can destroy him with a breath of your mouth.

In the end, please give my wishes to all those who are with you, and a special greeting to my mother St. Mary.

As you know Lord Jesus, that my journey will sooner or later come to an end, and then I won't need any letters because I will see you face to face.

Come, Lord Jesus.

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Church history

RETURN TO THE PAST

When I was young, I used to sit beside my grandfather while he told me some nice stories about the church history from a book

he used to read. As I grew older and became a young man I used to imagine being able to return back and live in the past, I sat imagining but the dream became a reality.

The sun was about to set and all was quiet around us, the people had gone to celebrate the feast of the god serabis. There was no one except us, me and St. Mark, and we started talking.

I said: I know that you left Alexandria and went westwards then after two years you went to Rome as the wish of St. Paul, in the end, you came back to establish the first church in Bokalia, would you please tell me about this journey?

He answered: "As you wish. When Peter left Egypt, I came back to Alexandria to find that the pagan priests were angry because the number of believers had grown, we had long discussions in which we had the upper hand, which made them even more angry, and started conspiring against me.

I ordained Anianos a bishop, along with three priests and seven deacons. I then went to the countries west of Egypt, and spent two years witnessing and ordaining priests.

At this time Paul asked me to go to him in Rome, during his first imprisonment. I spent some time managing the church in Rome according to Paul's wish then went to Ephesus to visit Timothy, my friend. When Paul knew about this he sent to Timothy his second letter saying: "Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me". So we both went to Rome, and didn't leave until after the martyrdom of both the apostles Peter and Paul around the years 65-68 AD.

I then returned back to Alexandria for the second time and established the church in Bokalia. I also founded the Divinity school and appointed Yostos as its head."

After finishing his story St. Mark invited me to go to the church with him to celebrate the Easter mass, I gladly accepted his invitation.

During the Mass, the pagans attacked the church and arrested St. Mark while he was praying, they tied him with ropes and began dragging him along the roads. His bones were broken and his flesh severed, they then threw him in jail. During that night Christ himself appeared to him to encourage him.

On the next morning the pagans repeated their savage act, St. Mark kept praising the Lord and thanking him until finally his head was separated from his body, and his soul flew to paradise on the 30th of Baramoda, the 27th of April 68AD.

The pagans wanted to burn his body and lit a big fire, but heaven interrupted them, so it rained heavily and the water extinguished the fire. Some Christians came and took the body and buried it in the church with great homage.

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