



The Virgin Mary



Follow in the Footsteps

The Life of the Mother of God
The Virgin Mary

by
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The Story Behind This Book

The author had a miraculous recovery from a serious illness through the prayers and intercessions of the saints and the prayers of the whole church who were praying for her recovery. During her illness and following her recovery, she had started to translate into English some of the life stories of the saints, beginning with the life stories of Saint Mercurius, Abba Pishoi and Saint George.

At this point she had a dream in which a lady she did not know handed her a book whilst telling her, “Take this and translate it – it is the life story of the Saint of Saints”.

Not knowing who the ‘Saint of Saints’ was, she asked the lady, “Who is the Saint of Saints?” The woman replied, “Do you not know the Saint of Saints? She is Saint Madonna”.

The author had never heard of Saint Madonna, so in the morning she asked her family, “Has anyone heard of Saint Madonna?”

“Saint Madonna”, came the reply, “is Our Lady the Virgin Saint Mary”.

PROLOGUE

The Virgin Mary

*“Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand
is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5)*

*O come all of you joyfully,
O come all of you rejoicingly,
O come all of you happily,
O come, all you mankind;
The wise and the intellectual,
The elders and the youth,
Men and women:
All you sons and daughters of Adam.
Come, listen to me,
For I shall inform you
That the True God came
And of the Virgin was incarnate.
Truly she gave birth to Him,
Truly she was without sin.
Truly she gave birth to the Word,
And Virgin was she still.
Who among the intellectual and the sage
On earth, can raise his thoughts to heaven
And of the Virgin's dignity speak?
The seven ranks of angels,
The seven great soldiers,
And the seven orders of Zion*

*To the Virgin sing a hymn.
The whole creation glorifies the Virgin,
From the rising of the sun to its setting.
For God is the True God:
God is the Word of the Father,
God is the Son of the Virgin,
Daughter of Joachim and Anna
Jesus Christ, Saviour is His name,
Jesus Christ, the sweet Name,
Jesus Christ, the Life-Giver,
Was of the Virgin Mother incarnate.*

*Isaiah the Prophet said:
"The Virgin shall conceive
And give birth to Immanuel."
The six-winged cherubim,
The full-eyed seraphim
And all the ranks of angels
Give glory to the Virgin.*

*Rejoice, O my Lady, the Mother of my Lord.
Rejoice, O Queen, Mother of the King.
Rejoice, O true Bride
Who gave birth to the Bridegroom!
There is no one like you-
No one, in heaven or on earth;
I am unable to speak of your dignity
From the Theotokia of Keyahk*

Birth, Childhood and Betrothal

“Mother Zion, the Most High Himself has founded her”

(Psalm 87:3)

The holy mother of God is a descendant of the royal family of David. Her father Joachim came from the city of Nazareth in Galilee, and her mother Anna from Bethlehem. Joachim and Anna were very rich and generous donors who never neglected their duties towards the Temple and towards those who served therein, nor did they forget the poor and needy. They lived a pure and righteous life in the sight of God, and were blameless before men.

For more than twenty years, Joachim and Anna had no children. On one of the Jewish feasts, they went to the Temple with their offerings but were scorned and reproached by the people because of being childless. Very distressed, Joachim retreated to the wilderness for forty days, praying and fasting. Anna mourned, lamented her barrenness and prayed: “Woe to me! To whom shall I compare myself? I am not even comparable to the savage animals because they can breed whereas I am unfruitful. O my God, the Omnipotent, Who heard the voice of Sarah, Abraham’s wife, and gave her Isaac in her old age and Who heard the voice of Rachel and gave her Joseph and Benjamin, listen to the voice of my supplication and grant me an offspring to comfort my sorrowful heart and remove my shame. I am derided among my family and taunted by people, and my husband is deeply saddened. My Lord, I declare now before You that if You bless me with a child, I will give him or her back to serve You in Your Temple for their lifetime.”

While Anna was thus praying in tears, Angel Gabriel appeared to her, saying, “Anna, the Lord heard your

prayers. You will conceive and bring forth a daughter. She will be blessed by all generations because through her the salvation of Adam and his descendants will be achieved.”

Anna replied, “Blessed is the living Lord. If He blesses me with a child as you have said I will offer her as an oblation to serve Him all her life in His holy Temple.”

The angel of the Lord left Anna, went to Joachim in the wilderness and said to him, “O blessed man! Why are you distressed? The Lord has chosen you and dignified you more than all the men of Israel.”

“Who are you, my lord?”, asked Joachim.

“I am Angel Gabriel. I stand before the throne of the Lord God Who sent me to you with this joyful message. Get up and go to your blessed wife Anna. She will conceive and bring forth a daughter, and shall call her Mary, through whom the salvation of Adam and his descendants will be achieved.”

Joachim went to his wife Anna and they told each other of the angel’s message. They rejoiced, took sacrifices and incense, went to offer them to the Lord in His Temple and returned home praising Him, saying, “Blessed is Your holy Name, O Lord, Who listened to our supplications and accepted our offerings.” Then Anna consecrated the time of her pregnancy to prayer, whilst fasting and giving alms abundantly to the poor and needy.

On 1st Pashans, 9th May, of year 5486 of Adam, Anna gave birth to the blessed Virgin and called her name Mary, the name given her by the angel.

CHILDHOOD

When the Virgin Mary was one year old, the angel of the Lord appeared to Zachariah the high priest while he was serving in the altar, and said, "Peace be with you, O aged man. Go and tell Anna and Joachim to take their daughter and present her to the Temple to be looked after by you."

Zachariah informed his wife Elizabeth and together they hurried to Joachim and Anna. When they reached them, Zachariah gave them the message he received from the angel. But Anna replied, "My saintly father, everything you have mentioned has been said to me before I conceived her. I had vowed that whomever the Lord would grant me, whether a son or daughter, I would give to serve Him in His Temple." So Zachariah blessed the Virgin Mary and returned peacefully with his wife to his home.

Once when Anna was giving the Virgin a wash, she saw her face brighten and shine. She rejoiced, gave glory to God and praised Him, saying, "My Lord, You have lifted up the humble and humiliated the eyes of the haughty by Your dwelling in my house. You have regarded my humbleness, and saved me from misery and barrenness, and made me fruitful. My eyes have seen Your salvation. How happy I am! Lowly as I am, You made me give birth to the Virgin Mother of the Saviour. O rejoice with me, you heavenly powers, you cherubim and seraphim and all the ministers of the Lord. I thank You, Lord, and glorify You forever. Amen." Then she wrapped the Virgin Mary, laid her on the bed and sat in front of her, rejoicing at the blessing she had.

On 3rd Kiahk, 13th December, of year 5489 of Adam, when the Virgin was three years old, her parents took her to the Temple of the Lord, accompanied by six young virgins holding candles. When they left her, she did not cry, nor was she worried or troubled but was quiet and happy.

The Virgin Mary grew up and was the subject of discussion among the children of Israel. Many went to the

Temple to see her and returned giving thanks to the Lord on observing her service, submission and humbleness.

Joachim and Anna used to bring the Virgin Mary varieties of food which she accepted with thanks and without any boasting. As soon as they left her, she would bring all the poor of the Temple and give them her food. This conduct on the Virgin's part greatly puzzled the priests. But the Lord allowed them to understand her behaviour and revealed the matter to them. One day they saw a bright light in her chamber; the angel of the Lord was feeding her heavenly food from the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Every weekend, Joachim and Anna made a feast in the House of the Lord and the Virgin Mary waited upon everyone, giving food to whoever was in need. When the Virgin was six years old, she lost her father and two years later she lost her mother.

The Virgin Mary received her education from the Holy Scripture. She studied the Lord's Law and the Books of the Prophets. Her Teacher and Counsellor was the Lord Himself and her visitors were His angels who protected her from every evil. She became accustomed to the solitary life and meditated on the Lord's commandments. Having enjoyed the pleasure of the solitary life, she vowed virginity.

The Virgin's good reputation and acceptable deeds increased every day. Every person who met her admired her, enjoyed her conversation and could not find in her anything worthy of reproach.

BETROTHAL

At the time when the Virgin Saint Mary was twelve years old, the high priest gave orders that all the virgins who had reached that age must leave the Temple, return home and endeavour to be married. To this command all the other virgins in the Temple yielded, except the Virgin Mary who said that she could not comply with the high priest's order, firstly because her parents had devoted her to the service of the Lord all her life, and secondly, because she herself had vowed virginity.

On hearing this, the high priest found himself in a dilemma. He could not compel the Virgin Mary, who was then orphaned, to break her vow, because the Scripture says, "*Pay what you have vowed*" (Eccl.5:4), nor could he introduce a new custom by allowing her to continue to live in the Temple after reaching that age. So he sought the advice of the elders of Jerusalem and the neighbouring cities. When they all gathered, they agreed to pray and seek the Lord's will. While they were praying, they all heard a voice coming from the Mercy Seat, saying, "The prophecy of Isaiah should be sought out in deciding to whom the Virgin should be betrothed."

The prophecy says: "*There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord*" (Is.11:1,2).

Accordingly, the high priest appointed that all the unmarried men of the family of David should bring their rods to the Temple. The one whose rod would bud a flower, and on its top the Holy Spirit would rest in the form of a dove, was to be the man to whom the Virgin Mary should be given in betrothal. When they brought their rods, the high priest took the rods, entered the Holy of Holies and laid them on the altar. The rod which belonged to an aged

man named Joseph flowered, and when he received it back from the hand of the high priest, the Holy Spirit descended from heaven in the form of a dove and rested on its top.

It was clear that Joseph, according to God's will, was the man to whom the Virgin Mary should be given in betrothal. The usual ceremonies of betrothal were completed and Joseph took the Virgin Mary into his house to look after her.

The Annunciation

"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps.118:24)

Angel Gabriel was sent by God to deliver His message to the Virgin Saint Mary. He saluted her in a very courteous manner, saying: *"Rejoice, O full of grace, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"* (Lk.1:28)

Our Lady, who was used to seeing angels, was troubled that time when she heard those words and wondered what could such an extraordinary greeting signify? In reply to her thoughts which were expressed on her countenance, the angel said, *"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there will be no end"* (Lk.1:30,31).

The Virgin Mary, having vowed virginity and resolved never to break her vow, wisely asked the angel, *"How can this be, since I do not know a man?"* (Lk.1:34)

The angel answered, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now Elizabeth, your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible"*.

The Virgin Saint Mary, who was a disciple of the Holy Scriptures and had received her education at the Holy of Holies, with complete submission to God's will, said to the angel, *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your words"* (Lk.1:38).

*Rejoice, O Isaiah!
You prophesied the birth of Immanuel;
Your prophecy is now fulfilled-
The Virgin is with Child!*

*Hail, Mary, Mother of God,
The abode of the Infinite
Hail, O Virgin, the pure bride,
Who, in your sacred womb,
Contained the Uncontainable!
Hail, O Mother of God, the Second Heaven,
Your conception was the pleasure of the Father,
Your womb was the place where the Son appeared,
And every part of you, soul and body,
Was filled with the Holy Spirit.
Therefore, we also celebrate a spiritual feast
And sing with King David:
"Arise, O Lord, to Your resting place,
You and the Ark of Your strength"
Which is you, O Mary,
We ask you to remember us before the Lord
That He may forgive us our sins.*

VISITATION

As soon as the angel left and the Virgin Saint Mary knew that she was so highly favoured as to be raised to the dignity of mother of God, she rose, hurried and travelled through the hill country of Judea to co-operate with her Saviour and serve one of His children. She went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, not to congratulate her or to see the truth of the angel's words, but to serve her until she would bring forth the Forerunner of her God and Saviour.

When the Virgin Saint Mary arrived at Zachariah's house, she entered and greeted Elizabeth. As soon as Elizabeth heard her greeting, *"the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the Fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord' "* (Lk.1:41-45).

The Virgin Saint Mary thought it fit to divert the magnifying praises from herself to her Master and sang her hymn, *"My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is Mighty has done great things for me, and Holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in the remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever"* (Lk.1:47-56).

And the Virgin Mary remained with Elizabeth for about three months, serving her until she gave birth to her son John the Baptist, and then returned to her house.

*Let us fervently use
The musical organ of our mouths
And sing due veneration to this Virgin;
She is our glory and our hope
In the appearance of our Lord,
God and Saviour Jesus Christ.
O Mary, we join Elizabeth
And praise you worthily, saying,
"Blessed are you among women,
And blessed is the Fruit of your womb"
Hail, Mary, we ask you
To remember us before the Lord
That He may forgive us our sins.*

When the righteous Joseph found his betrothed wife with Child, he was stunned and very sad, but being so virtuous he thought of divorcing her secretly so as not to make her a public example.

The Mother of God did not defend herself nor did she resort to her relative Elizabeth, to whom the holy conception had been revealed by the Holy Spirit, but waited silently for the intervention of heaven. So the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS for He will save His people from their sins*" (Mt.1:20,21).

Joseph, being aroused from sleep, understood from the angel's words that he was entrusted to keep the Virgin in

his house. And realising that the Virgin Saint Mary was then the abode of the Almighty, he was withheld from touching her. Saint Joseph accepted his betrothed wife's dedicated role and lived with her without consummating their marriage.

Giving Birth

*“A garden enclosed is My spouse,
a spring shut up, a fountain sealed”* (Song 4:12)

When Augustus Caesar issued his decree ordering everyone to register to his native land, the Virgin Saint Mary accompanied Saint Joseph to the city of David called Bethlehem because he was of the lineage of David. So Saint Joseph helped the Virgin Saint Mary onto his donkey and he led the way. While they were in Bethlehem, her days were completed to give birth to the Saviour of the world.

O Bethlehem, rejoice and be prepared,

“You are not the least

Among the rulers of Judah:

For out of you shall come a Ruler

Who will shepherd My people Israel.”

The fullness of time has come...

O manger, decorate yourself;

Be ready to receive

The Word Incarnate.

Saint Joseph and the Virgin Saint Mary could not find a room in any inn. They entered a cave which was used as a stable. In that holy night, Saint Joseph went out to find a Hebrew midwife. When he returned with the midwife, they saw a bright cloud overshadowing the cave. Then the cloud turned into light too bright for the eyes to tolerate. The great light gradually decreased until the Infant

appeared nursing at the breast of His mother. The midwife cried out, saying, “How glorious is this day in which my eyes have seen an extraordinary sight!”

*Ezekiel testified and said:
‘I have seen an eastern gate
The Lord, the Saviour, entered by it,
And it remains shut as it was before’ ”
We magnify you,
O mother of the True Light,
And venerate you,
O Virgin Saint Mary
The Mother of God
Because you gave birth
To the Saviour of the world
He came and saved us.*

*Your virginity was intact;
You are the Burning Bush seen by Moses,
The Gate seen by Ezekiel,
And the Sealed Book seen by the Visionary,
We ask you, O trustful intercessor,
To remember us before our Lord Jesus Christ
To forgive us our sins.*

Heaven rejoiced and proclaimed the birth of the Saviour. Hosts of angels went and informed the shepherds, singing, “*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace,*

good will toward men.” The special star appeared in the East to the Magi and guided them until they reached Bethlehem to pay their homage to the Great King of the Jews.

*We also sing happily and say:
Rejoice, O Mary,
The maidservant and the mother,
For He in your lap
Is the One whom the angels praise.
The cherubim worship Him worthily,
And the seraphim fervently.
No intimacy have we
With our Lord Jesus Christ,
Save through your pleadings and intercessions
O our Lady, the Mother of God.*

The Flight into Egypt

*“Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud,
and will come into Egypt;
the idols of Egypt will totter at His presence” (Is.19:1)*

In the wake of the star, news spread of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Around Bethlehem the shepherds told of the heavenly hosts who had declared the birth of the Saviour. In addition to this, the prophetess Anna and aged Simeon talked about Him to all who were looking forward to the liberation of Israel. Then the Magi who had followed His star to worship Him returned and recounted the wonders they had seen. People began to magnify the Lord, saying: “A King is born to the Jews”.

When news of this reached King Herod, he was both perplexed and frightened. After the news had been confirmed by the chief priests and teachers of the Law, Herod, thinking that the Lord Jesus Christ was a worldly king who would reign in his stead, gave orders that the Child be sought. Yet although all Israel became eyes seeking the Child, God blinkered their sight so they could find neither the Child nor His mother, although they were amidst them. Herod roared like a lion and ordered that all the children of two years old and under be killed.

That same night, the angel of the Lord appeared to Saint Joseph in a dream and said to him: *“Arise, take the 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”*.

On awakening, Saint Joseph informed his betrothed wife of his dream, saddled his donkey and helped the

Child and His mother on to it, whilst he walked alongside them. They traveled through Palestine until they reached Al-Farma at Al-Arish Valley, the border of Egypt at the time, where they spent the night. The following morning they resumed their journey until they came to a village called Basta which they entered and sat under a tree to shelter from the sun. That day was 24th Pashans, 1st June. It happened that the Christ Child was thirsty and the Virgin Saint Mary could not find water or anyone to give her some because the inhabitants of the village were unkind. Aged Joseph rose up, looked around the tree and, with a piece of iron that he found, dug the ground which immediately revealed a spring of fresh water. They all drank of it and thanked the Child, the Creator of all things.

While the Holy Family were sitting under the tree a man called Qoloom passed by. When he learnt that they were strangers, he invited them to his house. They accepted the invitation and stayed with him for a few days during which the Virgin Saint Mary went out daily to bring water from the spring. One day she took the Child with her. The idol of the village could not remain standing but shattered and collapsed, and its masters the demons fled. The priests went and informed the ruler who ordered that the Child be killed. Qoloom went immediately and advised the Virgin Saint Mary to leave the village. The Virgin blessed him and the Lord Jesus Christ blessed his house, saying: "Peace and blessing be upon you and upon your house all your life because have sheltered Us. My name will be remembered in this house forever."

The Holy Family continued their journey until they reached a desolate place where they rested beneath a tree. The Lord Jesus Christ caused a well to spring from

which they drank and the Virgin Saint Mary washed His clothes. At a village called Belbais, the Lord Jesus noticed His mother feel pity for a poor woman whose dead child was being carried to the graveyard. He touched the coffin and rebuked the dead child, saying, "You sleepy, wake up!" The dead child rose from the dead, stood up and worshipped the Lord, crying aloud, "This is the True God, the Saviour of the world, who came incarnate of this Virgin in a mystical way that surpasses human understanding!" The crowds were astonished and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Resuming their journey, the Holy Family reached Miniat Ganah, near the province of Samanoud, where they were greatly welcomed. The Virgin Saint Mary asked her Son to bless that province and its people. He replied, "There will be a church in this province in your name forever." Then they went to another place called Al-Matla'a where they were greatly welcomed and looked after. The Lord Jesus Christ said to His mother: "A great church will be built in this place in the name of the Archangel Michael."

The Holy Family continued their journey until they reached a town called Sakha where they were thirsty and could not find any water. The Lord Jesus Christ sat on a rock and caused freshwater to spring up. He said to His mother, "This water shall heal whoever drinks of it in faith, and a church shall be built here in your name."

Then the Holy Family went through Natroun Valley which the Lord Jesus blessed, saying: "Churches and monasteries will be built here and people from all over the world will come to this place to receive God's blessing. I shall not allow wild beasts to roam this Mount any longer, but it will be a blessed and sanctified place forever."

On their way, the Holy Family was attacked by two thieves who left them with nothing. As the Virgin Saint Mary sighed and began to weep, thinking of what had happened, the two thieves, watching from afar, began to disagree. One of them regretted and said to his comrade, "Those people are strangers and have nothing left. We were wrong to rob them. Let us return what we have taken from them because the Child's face is illumined like lightening. He could be the Son of a King and our deeds may cause us to suffer more afflictions in the future." The other was disturbed and frightened and reluctantly agreed to his comrade's suggestion. When they returned to the Holy Family their belongings, the Lord Jesus turned to His mother and Saint Joseph, opened His sacred mouth and said, "A day will come when these two thieves will be crucified with Me, one on My right and the other on My left."

The Virgin Saint Mary was ever watchful over her Son's comfort. Once, when He said to her, "Mother, I am thirsty and need a cold drink of water", she rose immediately and carried Him in her arms to a village for a drink. However, the people of that village were uncharitable; when she asked one of them for water, he refused. So the Lord Jesus Christ asked His mother to return and He created a well of fresh water under the tree where they were resting.

The Holy Family resumed their flight and rested when they reached the outskirts of Cairo, in a region called Ein Shams which is now known as Al-Mataria. Aged Joseph was leaning on a rod made of Jericho wood. The Lord Jesus Christ took a small piece of the rod, dug in the earth with it, and placing His Divine hand on the earth, immediately caused it to bring forth fresh water. He took some water in His sacred hands, drank and

watered the dry piece of wood which grew and developed branches and a fragrance. That was the balsam which used to grow in Jericho and was used for anointing kings and priests and consecrating holy vessels. However, the Almighty's flight into Egypt stopped the balsam from growing in Jericho and instead it grew only in its new place in Al-Mataria. It is now used for making the Myroon (the Chrism; the holy oil used in the Sacrament of Confirmation). The Lord Jesus blessed the tree which became renowned for healing many diseases.

From Al-Mataria, the Holy Family came to Fostat and stayed in a cave which was enclosed within a place kept especially for strangers. The Lord Jesus Christ said to His mother, "There will be a church here in your name and it will be a haven of salvation for many people." This church exists to this day and is known as Abu Serga's Church.

The Holy Family then travelled towards Upper Egypt and stopped at Gabal Al-Tair. On their way a huge rock was about to fall on them and the Virgin Saint Mary was frightened. At once the Lord Jesus Christ stretched out His hand and stopped it from falling on them. He blessed the rock and said, "A church will be built here in My name and My mother's name." Indeed, a great church was instructed to be built there by Queen Helen, the mother of King Constantine. This church is known as the Church of our Lady of the Palm, because when the Lord Jesus's sacred hand touched the rock, His palm was imprinted on it. In 1168AD, after his invasion of Egypt, Americ, the King of Jerusalem, took that part of the rock to Syria.

The Holy Family left Gabal Al-Tair and continued their journey until they reached Ashmunain whose people worshipped a copper horse inhabited by demons. When the Lord Jesus entered Ashmunain, the horse was

not able to remain standing but fell to the ground immediately. In that town, the Lord Jesus Christ performed many miracles, and many churches are dedicated to the Virgin Saint Mary there. From Ashmunain, the Holy Family travelled westwards until they reached Qosqam Mount which is now known as Our Lady's Monastery 'Al Meharaq'. They remained there for six months.

Thus the Holy Family kept moving from one city to another and from one village to another until Herod died and the angel of the Lord appeared to Saint Joseph in a dream, saying: *"Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead"*.

Joseph arose, took the Child and His mother and returned from Qosqam Mount to Assiut where they stayed in a cave now known as the Virgin's Monastery of Assiut, and journeyed back to the land of Israel. Thus the Lord's word in the prophecy, *"Out of Egypt I called My Son"*, was fulfilled.

*Hail, O Virgin Mary,
Truly, you were the swift cloud
Which through Egypt carried
Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.
Through you came true
The prophecy of Isaiah,
"Blessed is Egypt My people."*

Saving Matthias from Prison

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jas.5:16)

After the ascension of the Lord of Glory, the disciples went into the world to preach the Gospel, and the Virgin Saint Mary remained in Jerusalem. It came to pass that Satan provoked the chief priests against her so much that they decided to banish her into the wilderness. When our Lady heard this she was deeply saddened and said, “Where shall I go after my Only Son has ascended into heaven? I will go to John, the Beloved of my Son, in Ephesus”. While she was thinking about this matter her Lord and Son Jesus Christ appeared to her, saying, “Peace be with you, My beloved mother. Why are you sad? You should know that no one can touch you. Rise and mount this cloud of light and go to the city of Bartus to save My Apostle Matthias. He is chained and suffering from the people of that city. I could not find anyone to strengthen him. Be assured, mother, that his rescue and the faith of the people of that city, will be accomplished through your prayers. They will glorify the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit because of you, My kind mother.”

When the Virgin Saint Mary heard the Saviour’s words, she rejoiced and mounted the cloud which took her to the city of Bartus. There she met an old woman who was weeping. Our Lady asked her, “Why are you crying, woman? Tell me what has happened to you, and my Son Jesus Christ will save you.”

The old woman replied, “Do not let anyone hear you mention that Name lest you receive great affliction.

Three days ago a man named Matthias came to our city and performed many miracles by the power of that Name. He drove out evil spirits, brought dead people back to life and opened the eyes of the blind. Many people followed him, crying out, 'There is no God but Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God!' When the ruler heard about Matthias, he ordered that he be arrested, chained and thrown into prison. And here I wait, praying for his release so that I can take him to my house to heal my son who has had an evil spirit tormenting him for three days."

The Virgin Saint Mary replied, "Who can hide the light of the sun? Who can hide the work of my Son and His pure Apostles? Go and bring your son here so that my Saviour Jesus Christ may heal him of all his illnesses."

The old woman replied, "It would be better if we go together to my house so that your blessing may come upon us."

The Virgin Saint Mary accompanied the old woman and as soon as she entered the house, the evil spirit fled from the boy who rose up and praised the Lord, saying, "Blessed is the hour in which the blessed Lady, the Mother of the True King Jesus Christ, visited us."

Our Lady said to the old woman, "Now, after you have been comforted by the healing of your son, arise and let us go to the prison where they have thrown Matthias the Apostle, so that the prisoners may receive God's blessing."

When the Virgin Saint Mary and the old woman arrived at the prison, they found the gates bolted with iron bars and tight locks, and the prisoners inside suffering great tortures. The Virgin Saint Mary lifted up

her hands in deep prayer at the end of which the iron bars, bolts and locks liquefied, the prison gates swung open, and the prisoners came out shouting with great joy, "We believe in the God of Matthias the Apostle, the One God who delivered us today from the hands of the wicked. Let the ruler be put to shame and may his idols perish!"

When the ruler heard the shouts of the prisoners, he was deeply vexed and ordered that they all be killed. However, when the soldiers went to bring the execution instruments, they found that all the swords had liquefied. Then the prison warden came in tears and said to the ruler, "My master! Listen to the astounding event that occurred today. In the morning, after locking the gates of the prison, we all gathered to eat. A young servant was serving us with wine from a copper pot when it suddenly melted. I raised my hands to strike him with the iron rod I was holding, when it also melted. Then a cloud of light filled the whole prison. We heard a voice addressing the prisoners, saying, 'Today you have received the blessing of the Virgin Saint Mary, the Mother of God. Let the ruler know that neither the Apostle Matthias nor those who are imprisoned because of the Name of Christ will ever be harmed.' Then we discovered that every metallic object in the prison had melted.

"As for the old man whom you had ordered yesterday to be executed, we left him dead and today One of the people touched the dead body, saying, 'Rise quickly because the blessing of My Mother Mary has come upon the whole city.' The dead man rose up immediately and joined the prisoners praising the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe, my master, that what I have told you could never have happened except by a great power from above."

*O Virgin, Mother of God,
You are the fence of our salvation.
Intercede for the peace of the world
And remember us before our Lord Jesus Christ
To forgive us our sins.*

The Virgin's Dormition

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps.116:15)

Before the Lord Jesus Christ's Passion, the Virgin Saint Mary requested Him to inform her of her departure. He replied, "My pure mother, the Queen of saints, Temple of the living God and most blessed among women, how will I abandon you? You bore Me in your womb, nourished Me, endured the flight into Egypt for My sake and suffered with Me. As you have looked after Me, so will I look after you forever. My angel who guards you will continue to guard you until your departure. When Angel Gabriel comes to you with an olive branch know that your hour of departure has drawn near and I Myself will come with angels to take your soul. As for your body, it will be ascended to heaven."

After the Ascension of the Lord of Glory, the Virgin Saint Mary used to go to the tomb where His body had been laid, and pray. The chief priests appointed guards at the sacred tomb and ordered them to prevent anyone from approaching it to receive a blessing or offer a prayer. When the Jews saw her by the holy tomb, they went to the chief priests, saying, "Mary goes every day to the tomb". Summoning the guards, the chief priests enquired of them if this were true. But they answered that they had not seen her, God not allowing them to see her when she was there.

One day the guards saw the Virgin Mary praying at the tomb. When they informed the chief priests they were told to stone her. But they refused, saying, "It is not our duty to stone anyone. We will only inform you of her actions." The following day, the Virgin went to the holy tomb of her Only Son and lifted up her hands in prayer. Angel Gabriel appeared to her with an olive branch in his hand, saying, "Peace be with you, O Virgin full of grace. The Lord is with

you, O you who have brought forth Christ our God! He listened to your prayers and has sent me to inform you that you will leave this vanishing world for the everlasting life." When the Virgin heard this, she rejoiced, knelt down worshipping the Lord and returned home peacefully.

At home, the Virgin stood up to pray and asked the Lord to accomplish her departure and lead her to what would be best for her. At once, Angel Gabriel appeared to her, saying, "Peace be with you, O full of grace. The Lord wills that you agree to the chief priests' request to leave Jerusalem for Bethlehem. When they come to you tomorrow asking this, go and collect the virgins and accomplish the Lord's will."

The Virgin replied, "May the Lord's will be done."

The following day, some men sent by the chief priests came to the Virgin and requested her to leave Jerusalem. She replied, "I am going to Bethlehem according to the Lord's will." Then she collected her friends the virgins and said to them, "I am going to stay in Bethlehem. Whoever of you wishes to accompany me, let her come."

Three of them rose up, saying, "We will come with you. We will never leave you till the end." She accepted them joyfully and blessed them. At Bethlehem, they enjoyed listening to her words about the holy Mysteries until evening came when they stood up together to pray. They witnessed many miracles performed through her.

The following morning, the Virgin lifted up her hands in prayer and said, "My Lord and God Jesus Christ, the Eternal who are in heaven, who made me a sacred dwelling and was incarnate of me and appeared to the world in human form so that the world could see You, believe in Your Divinity and be saved from their sins, listen to Your maidservant and instruct Your beloved Apostle John and the rest of the pure Apostles to visit me that I may be comforted by seeing them before I depart from this life. You are Omnipotent."

The Lord appeared to John the Apostle and said to him, "My pure mother desires to see you and all your brethren the Apostles, the living and the departed." Then a cloud took John to Bethlehem to the Virgin's house where the rest of the Apostles and the Virgin were praying. When our Lady finished her prayer, they said to her, "Peace be with you, Mother of God. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the Fruit of your womb. Rejoice, O full of grace, because God is pleased to visit you with His mercy and take you from this vanishing world to the everlasting bliss." The Virgin said to John, "The Jews have planned that when I die they will take my body and burn it."

John replied, "The Jews have no power over your body, neither now or after your departure, because the Lord is with you forever."

Then the Virgin lifted up her hands towards heaven, praised the Lord and said, "I worship You, my Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in Your greatness and mightiness because You did not leave me in the hands of the insane but looked to my humility and showed Your wonders through me. You are the Almighty and the Omnipotent. In Your name I give praise, to Your mightiness I give glory and to Your grace I give thanks forever."

When the Apostles were praying, they heard a voice from heaven and smelt a sweet aroma. Angels were ascending and descending in the same way as on the night of the Lord's birth, singing joyfully, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Your holy glory." The people of Bethlehem were astonished and went to the ruler and the chief priests, telling them of the wonders and signs they had seen in the house of the mother of Jesus. So the ruler and the chief priests went with them to the Virgin's house to investigate the matter. On approaching the house, they saw the gates of heaven open and angels filling the house in a wonderful apparition. The stars shone although it was day and the Virgin was lying on her bed with the Apostles around her, saying, "Peace be to the

blessed Virgin. Blessed is He who was born of you, the Lord of hosts who performs miracles through you.”

The Jews shouted, “We will perish because of what this witch has done. Give orders that he leave our city before she demolishes it.”

The ruler answered harshly, “I will not do anything because it is beyond my power to fight the Lord of powers and His pure mother.” However, at the Jews’ persistence, he yielded and ordered some of his men to go and arrest whomever they found in the house of the Virgin Mary. But their efforts came to naught. The Jews tried to burn the house but the Lord sent fire from within which burnt them.

When the ruler heard these things, he went to the Virgin, accompanied by a great number of his people, and said to her, “Truly, my Lady, you are the mother of our God. Of you was born the Son of the King of kings and the Lord of lords. We believe in His name and worship Him.” Then he started to preach those who accompanied him. Some of them believed but to the unbelievers he said, “You wicked nation; you have assaulted the Lord of Glory and crucified Him without cause though He showed you miracles and signs when He was among you and at His crucifixion, death and resurrection. You have not believed because you love evil, but I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and that the Virgin Mary is His pure mother.”

When the ruler returned home he found his son ill. He took him to the Virgin’s house and said to one of the virgins, “Tell my Lady, the mother of my Lord, that her servant the ruler of the city wishes to see her.” The Virgin permitted that he be let in. When he entered, he knelt down before her, saying, “Peace be with you, O pure mother of God. I believe in your Son the Saviour who was incarnate of you. Lay your pure hands and bless your servant and ask your Son to heal my son.”

The Virgin blessed him and laid her hand on the boy who was healed immediately. The ruler and his son left joyfully and talked about the miracles of the Virgin to everyone.

The Apostles remained all night at the Virgin's side, singing and praying. At the ninth hour of the following morning, a heavenly cloud appeared on which stood twelve fiery chariots full of angels and archangels and a cherubim chariot carrying the Lord of hosts. The angels were singing joyfully, "holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Your holy glory. Amen. Alleluia. Praise the Lord from above. Amen. Alleluia. Praise Him from the heavens, all you His angels. Amen. Alleluia. Praise Him all you His soldiers. Amen. Alleluia. Reveal His mercy and justice, all you His Creation. Amen. Alleluia."

When the chariots descended, the pure Apostles knelt down worshipping the King of kings and the Lord of lords, saying, "You are the Almighty and the Omnipotent. You are worthy of worship and glorification now and forever. Amen." Everyone present approached and knelt down worshipping the Almighty God who blessed them all.

The Lord said to His mother, "Peace be with you My pure mother, the most blessed among women."

The Virgin replied, "Yours is the glory and the power, my Son and God Jesus Christ. Lay Your sacred hands on me to give me strength, You who created heaven and earth with Your mighty hand."

The Lord replied, "From now on you will be in Paradise where angels and archangels will minister to you and the powers will magnify you. Your soul will illuminate in heaven, the habitation of everlasting peace."

The Apostles asked the Virgin to pray for them and for the whole world before her departure. She prayed, "My Lord and God Jesus Christ, Son of the living and Eternal God, One of the Holy Trinity, who created everything, I ask You in supplication to accept my pleadings for Your servants baptized in Your Holy Name and forgive them their sins. Support them and protect them day and night, in sea and on land, in wilderness and deserts, as You promised them, 'I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Your words are true."

The Lord replied, "My pure mother whom I chose from all the women of the world, I will accept your intercession. Whoever asks in your name will be granted his request." Then He said to those around Him, "Now, it is the time for the departure of the Lady. Sing joyful praises and raise incense."

The Apostles and the virgins obeyed the Lord while they wept, praying solemnly and in supplication, until the face of the Lady shone with heavenly light. The Lord looked at her and said, "Have courage, My kind mother. I am Jesus, Son of the living God, who was incarnate of you. Blessed are you, O full of grace, because you were worthy of that great Mystery."

The Virgin replied, "My beloved Son, stay with me until I commend my soul into Your hands." Immediately she commended her pure soul into the hands of her Son and God.

The dormition of the blessed Virgin Mary took place on 21st Tobi of year 5545 of Adam when she was fifty-eight years old.

*O Virgin Mary, I humbly appeal to you,
And ask your intercession;
Help me that I may not be put to shame.
And at the hour of my death be near me,
Shut the gates of Hades,
And overcome my enemies
Lest they devour my soul,
O undefiled bride of the True Bridegroom.*

The Assumption

“At Your right hand stands the queen” (Ps.45:9)

After the dormition of the Virgin Saint Mary, the disciples carried the bier on which her sacred body lay and went to the place known as the field of Jehoshaphat to bury it, as the Lord commanded. On their way, the Jews saw them and ordered a man named Tawphina to snatch the bier and await them at the top of the mountain where they would burn the body. Tawphina walked behind the Apostles and before they reached the mount, he advanced, stretched out his impure hands and held the bier. With his fiery sword, the angel of the Lord struck him on the shoulder, cutting off his arms which remained attached to the bier while he fell on the ground screaming and begging the disciples: “Have mercy on me; I did this in my ignorance, forced by the wicked Jews. My name is Tawphina. I am the man who was paralyzed for thirty-eight years at the Pool of Bethesda. When the Lord healed me, He commanded me not to return to sin lest I be afflicted with worse. But I have now fallen into greater sin. Please pray for me and ask the Virgin Lady to have compassion on me, a sinner.” The Apostles prayed for him and, through the intercession of the Virgin Saint Mary, he was healed.

When the disciples laid down the sacred body of the Virgin Saint Mary in the tomb and rolled a stone over its mouth, a great light shone around them and they smelt a sweet aroma and heard a voice saying, “Blessed are you, O full of grace. The Lord is with you.” They fell on the ground and the angels took the body of the Virgin

and ascended with it to heaven without being seen by the Apostles.

Saint Thomas was the only Apostle who did not attend the Virgin Mary's dormition and burial. He was in India hindered from attending that sacred event by a certain reason unknown to the Apostles. The Lord willed to reveal to him the great mystery of our Lady's Assumption. On his return from India, he was carried by a heavenly cloud to the field of Jehoshaphat. Whilst on the cloud, he saw the Virgin Mary's body being carried by hosts of angels who told him that that was the body of the Virgin Saint Mary who had reposed, and the Lord commanded them to lift it up to Paradise. He greatly rejoiced and invoked the Virgin Saint Mary to pray for him and bless him. Suddenly a belt dropped on him. He picked it up, kissed it and kept it in his pocket and gave glory to God.

Then the heavenly cloud alighted Saint Thomas at the place where the Apostles were gathered. When he entered, they asked him, "What hindered you from coming at the time of our Lady's dormition to see the wonders and miracles that occurred through her? Truly, you have missed a great event."

He replied: "I was occupied in baptizing Princess Aclaudia, the daughter of the King of India. Now I have come and have a great desire to see the body of my Lady."

They replied: "It is inside the tomb and it is very difficult for us to lift up the huge stone laid at the door."

He said: "I do not believe what you are telling me unless I see with my own eyes."

They replied: "Are you still in your doubts? Have you forgotten what you did on the day of our Lord's resurrection?"

He said: "I am Thomas who does not believe without seeing."

The Apostles escorted Saint Thomas to the tomb where they had laid our Lay's body. They rolled the stone away with great difficulty and entered the tomb but could not find the body of the Virgin Saint Mary. They were astounded and puzzled, not knowing what had happened. Saint Thomas started to explain to them, saying, "Do not be sad, my brethren, because today I saw the body of my Lady the Virgin Saint Mary carried by angels, who informed me that that was the body of the Lady being carried to Paradise according to the Lord's command. When I invoked her to bless me and pray for me, I found this belt dropping on me. I picked it up and kissed it and glorified the Lord." Saint Thomas took out the belt from his pocket and showed it to the Apostles. With great astonishment they examined it and recognized it as the same belt which they themselves had wrapped around the sacred body of the Virgin. They all gave glory to God.

On the 15th of Mesra, seven months after the Lady's dormition, the Apostles gathered in the tomb and spent the whole night in vigil, singing and praying to be blessed with an appearance of the Virgin Mary's Assumption. At dawn of 16th Mesra, they heard the sound of great thunderstorm and hosts of angels appeared to them. Then the Lord Jesus Christ, carried on the cherubim, appeared to them with the holy Virgin His mother at His right. He gave them peace and they worshipped Him, giving Him glory for His mercy and tender care.

*Hail, O Virgin, the true Queen
Hail to the pride of our race.
You gave birth to Immanuel.
We ask you, O trustful intercessor,
To remember us
Before our Lord Jesus Christ
That He may forgive us our sins.
You are exalted higher than the Patriarchs,
You are dignified more than the Prophets.
You have more intimacy with our God,
Than the cherubim and the seraphim.
Truly, you are the pride of our race,
And the intercessor of our souls.
Intercede for us before our Saviour
That He may have mercy upon us
And forgive us our sins.*

CHAPTER EIGHT

The First Church in the Name of the Virgin Saint Mary

“In every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the nations” (Mal.1:11)

When the disciples, headed by Paul and Barnabas, preached to the Corinthians the words of the Lord of Glory, many of them accepted the Christian faith and confessed their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. The believers used to meet together for worship in the house of a disciple called Aristarkhus. Because the house was too small, not all the people were able to hear the Holy Liturgy and partake of the Holy Communion. This matter worsened in the eyes of Paul and Barnabas. They wrote to the brethren in Antioch and informed them that the Gentiles who accepted the faith increased in number and there was no room for them to partake in the prayers. When the letter reached the Apostles, they agreed not to take any action themselves but to leave the matter to the Lord who would advise them, since it was He who sent them to preach to the Gentiles; whether He willed that churches be built in His name or not, His will be done.

The Apostles stood up to pray after and whilst fasting, trusting that God would never leave them but would listen to their supplication and lead them to what should be done. Then they sent letters to Paul and Barnabas on the 12th of Baouna and informed them that they decided to fast with purity of heart for seven days, together with all the faithful. At the end of the seven days, a cloud carried the pure Apostles to the house of Aristarkhus where they met all the brethren. Together

they conversed on the power and greatness of God the Omnipotent and how the Faith had spread into all the world. Whilst they were talking, the Lord Jesus Christ, glory be to Him, appeared to them on a cherubim chariot and at His right the Virgin Saint Mary, and angels and archangels praising and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" The disciples worshipped the Lord, praised Him and glorified His Holy name. Then they offered due homage to the Virgin Saint Mary and all the angels.

All the disciples delegated John to speak on their behalf. So John with all humility talked to the Lord and asked His help. The Lord replied, "It is good to ask, John. I am with you to direct you regarding building many churches in every place for the faithful to offer on their altars accepted oblations, and venerate the name of My mother, Mary. Come with Me, and I will show you a place where you can build a church in the name of My mother and I will lay down the foundation with My own hands."

They went, headed by God, till they reached a town called Philippi, close to Corinth. The Lord showed them from the eastern side, a vast space and said to them, "Here, a House for God is to be built." Then after going around its four corners, they brought Him a stone, and He said to them, "Let this be the cornerstone."

With the help of the Lord, they started to work and when the people of the city heard that that was the Lord's will, they helped the disciples to complete the building. They brought the necessary materials in no time and the church was built at the best level. It was founded on 15 alabaster pillars and the Lord Himself supplied them with the altar vessels. That was completed on 20th Baouna. Then the Lord commanded

that the people be told that the consecration of the church would be on the following day on which they were not to engage in any other work but consecrate it as a spiritual day in the name of the Virgin Saint Mary. Immediately, Saint Paul the Apostle went and declared the matter in Corinth and Philippi, returned and gathered with the Apostles for prayers all night in the new church until the morning when all the faithful came and filled the whole place. The Apostles stood to teach the people the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, His crucifixion, His redemption to mankind and His resurrection. They taught them the commandments of the holy Gospel, stressing that if they kept the commandments, they would inherit eternal life.

Suddenly, a heavenly light shone around them and the Lord Jesus Christ, His mother the Virgin Saint Mary and angels appeared and stood amidst the congregation. The apostles hurried towards the Saviour and worshipped Him. The Lord blessed them and the congregation, and said to them, "Prepare the consecration utensils of this church because this day is a great day in which My Good Father is pleased to have altars on earth for worship." Then the disciples brought the water for consecration. The Lord blessed it and sprayed it on the fences of the church, on every part of the church and its utensils, and consecrated them in the name of the Holy Trinity and the Virgin Saint Mary. Then He ascended to heaven.

Immediately, the Apostles celebrated a Holy Liturgy after which all the congregation partook of the Holy Communion and returned home in peace glorifying the Lord, rejoicing for their salvation from the bitter slavery.

Our Lord is the True Sacrifice

For the remission of sins:

*He offered Himself
An accepted oblation on the Cross
For the salvation of our race.
His Good Father smelt Him
In the evening, on the Golgotha.
Through Mary, daughter of Joachim,
We knew the True Sacrifice
For the remission of sins.
We also pray to be endowed with mercy,
Through her intercession,
From the Lover of mankind.
Holy and full of glory
Is the Mother of God,
The pure Saint Mary.
Holy and full of glory
Is this Sacrifice
Offered for the whole world.*

Veneration of the Virgin Mary

*“For behold, henceforth all generations
will call me blessed” (Lk. 1:48)*

TITLES OF THE VIRGIN MARY

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, so all His titles can be attributed to her motherhood. Therefore, the Church calls her:

The Mother of God
The Mother of the True Light
The Mother of the Saviour
The Mother of the Holy One
The Mother of the Lord
The Mother of the Beloved
The Mother of Immanuel
The Mother of the Word Incarnate

With regard to God’s dwelling in the Virgin Mary, the Church calls her:

The Cherubim Chariot
The New Heaven (or Second Heaven)
The King’s Throne
The Holy of Holies
The Gate of Heaven
The Gate of Life
The Bearer of the Fruit of Life
The Tent of Meeting
The City of God (or The City of the Living God)
The Temple of God
Zion (or The Daughter of Zion or Mother Zion)
The Manna Pot

The Dome of Moses

With regard to her purity and perpetual virginity, the Church calls her:

The Ever-Virgin

The All-Holy

The Undeiled Bride (or The Pure Bride)

The Lampstand of Pure Gold

Aaron's Censer (or the Golden Censer)

The Burning Bush

The Ark of Testimony

With regard to her other qualities, the Church calls her:

The Pride of our Race

The Ornament of our Souls

The Beautiful Dove (because of her meekness)

Jacob's Ladder (because she was heaven on earth)

The True Queen (who sits on the right of the King)

The True Vine (who neither experienced senescence
nor was reaped by anyone)

FEASTS OF THE VIRGIN MARY

- + Her Birth, 1st Pashans
- + The Annunciation to her parents, 7th Mesra
- + Her Presentation to the Temple, 3rd Kiahk
- + Her Entry into Egypt, 24th Pashans
- + Her Dormition, 21st Toubi and the 21st of every Coptic month
- + Her Assumption, 16th Mesra
- + The Consecration of the First Church in her Name in Philippi, 21st Baouna

- + Her Appearance at her Church at Zeitoun, Cairo,
2nd April

SYMBOLS OF THE VIRGIN MARY

- + The Burning Bush
- + The Manna Pot
- + The Ark of Covenant
- + Aaron's Censer
- + Aaron's Road
- + Jacob's Ladder
- + The Golden Lampstand
- + Ezekiel's Gate
- + The Tabernacle
- + The City of God
- + Mount Sinai

Miracles of the Virgin Saint Mary

*“For behold, henceforth all generations will call me
blessed” (Lk.1:48)*

A HISTORICAL MIRACLE

During the era of Caliph Harun Al Rashid (c.786-809), the Abbasid Caliph of Islam, Egypt was governed by a tyrant who persecuted the Christians, put them through all sorts of tortures and ordered all churches to be demolished. He sent troops throughout the Country with strict orders from the Caliph to demolish every church they passed. The troops carried out this order until they reached a city called Atrib near the province of Banha, where there was a church built on the name of the Virgin Saint Mary. The church was beautifully erected; its pillars were made of marble and coated in gold.

When the priest of the church sensed the arrival of the troops, he entered the church and prayed fervently in tears, imploring the Virgin Saint Mary to help him in that fearful hour. Then he went out to meet the prince, brought him inside the church and showed him all the valuables and gold. He led him to an icon of the virgin Saint Mary and said to him, “Please give me a chance of three days and I will bring you an order from the Caliph to spare the church from being demolished.” The priest laughed at him and said, “The Caliph is in Baghdad and the distance between here and there is not less than two months’ travel. How can you say you will bring an order from him after three days? That is impossible!”

The priest answered: "I will certainly obtain the order, even if he is farther away than that. I will be responsible for you and your men's accommodation during the three days." The priest took out 300 denarii from his pocket and gave it to the prince. After much persuasion the prince agreed to give him three days, saying: "Know for sure that this church will be demolished after three days."

The priest replied, I have great hope in the Virgin Saint Mary whose prayer turned iron into liquid and saved Matthias from prison. She is able to protect us from all your threats because she guards her church."

The priest hurried and knelt before the icon the Virgin Saint Mary and prayed fervently, saying, "Save us, O pure Virgin, and do not let our enemies triumph over us. If we erred against you, forgive us. We lay this burden on you. Kindly ask your Son for us. This is the time in which we are in need of the great power of your intercession. Our Lady, hasten to our rescue and do not let your church be demolished. How can we be put to shame among people when you are with us, O Mother of God?" The priest continued praying in deep faith and steadfast hope, his tears streaming down his face. He did not taste any food and grew very weak from hunger. Then the Virgin Mary spoke to him from her icon, saying: "I am the Virgin your helper. Do not be afraid of the prince's threats. I have done all that you asked, and he will immediately receive an order from the Caliph to spare this church."

That night, while the priest was praying, the Virgin Saint Mary appeared to the Caliph in a bright light that woke him from sleep. He was greatly frightened from her awesomeness. She said to him: "I am Mary, Mother of Jesus against Whom you have planned and done all this wickedness by ordering all churches to be demolished.

How can you sleep in peace when Christians everywhere are suffering because of you? I am the Virgin, the Mother of God by Whose will you were given the leadership of this kingdom. Return and repent from all your deeds. Fear God otherwise you will receive afflictions and suffer bitter difficulties so that you will desire your death rather than your life.”

The Caliph, trembling in fear, replied, “My Lady, I will do whatever you want me to, but do not harm me.”

The Virgin Saint Mary answered, “I want you, now, to write an order to your people in Atrib to stop them destroying the churches and attacking the Christians. It is to be in your own handwriting, signed and endorsed with your seal, and must reach them tonight.”

The Caliph said: “How can it reach them tonight? It is impossible, whether by land or sea.”

The Virgin Saint Mary answered him: “You write the decree, and by God’s help, it shall reach the prince before he wakes up.”

The Caliph was frightened by the authority with which the Virgin Saint Mary spoke and wrote, “I am Caliph Harun Al Rashid. I write this edict by my hand. Return immediately. Do not attack the Christians or demolish any of their churches but come back to Baghdad at once.” Then he endorsed the letter, waiting in amazement for what would happen. A bird flew in, took the letter from his hand and flew out while the Virgin Saint Mary disappeared from his sight.

A short while later, the bird was in the city of Atrib. It flew into the place where the prince was staying, dropped the letter on him, and left. The prince opened the letter and was amazed when he found it a command from the Caliph to return immediately. He read it over and over again and scrutinized the seal and the

handwriting and found that they were genuine. He sent for the priest to come quickly, then said to him: "Tell me what you have done. Who saved you so wonderfully and brought you this exemption?"

The priest answered: "This is not the work of visible men but is the work of the Mother of Light, the Mother of God, who eases everything for us and carries our burdens." He recounted to the prince his prayer and the reply of the Virgin Saint Mary from the icon. The prince was astounded and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He entered the church, kissed the icon of the Virgin Saint Mary and prayed in supplication that she might hear him also and protect him in his travels. Then he took out of his pocket the 300 denarii and returned them to the priest with an extra hundred denarii as a donation to the church.

The prince set off and travelled to Baghdad where he met the Caliph and said to him, "Master, we received a message from you. Was it real or a forgery?"

The Caliph replied, "The letter was from me, but quickly inform me about what happened." The prince recounted all that he had seen in Atrib. The Caliph replied, "We will build a church for the Christians in the name of the Virgin Saint Mary, the Mother of Light, that she may be my helper in my life and deliver me from all the evil that surrounds me. The church shall be the most splendid building of all the places of worship we have seen in our life."

Indeed, they built the church and furnished it with a great icon of the Virgin Saint Mary. The church became a shelter for all the scattered Christians who had been hiding in cells and caves for fear of the tortures. Thus, peace prevailed due to the intercession of the Virgin Saint Mary.

Healing a Paralytic

This is one of the thousands of miracles which occurred during the apparitions of the Virgin Saint Mary in her church in Zeitoun, Cairo, which commenced on 2nd April, 1968.

This miracle happened to a Moslem lady, Mrs. Ensherah Amin Al-Nayal, wife of Mr. Mahmoud Shoukry Ibrahim Awad, who reside in Cairo. In 1963 she suffered from hemiplegia which did not improve. She was seen by many doctors but even after a long period of treatment she could not use her right hand or leg. She leant on a stick which if anyone touched, would make her lose balance and fall.

She recounted, "When I suffered paralysis, the doctors lost hope in my recovery and the medical report revealed that the illness was due to a blood clot and high blood pressure of 200/160. The treatment was tablets to control the blood circulation, relax the nerves, lower the blood pressure and ease the pain.

"Despite this, I had strong faith in the power of God and I endured the pain patiently, saying, 'Thank You, God.' I never groaned or moaned. I could not move my fingers or toes and lost sensation in them entirely. Every so often I said, 'Thank God'. The diagnosis and the medical reports confirmed the impossibility of my recovery.

"When I heard the news of the apparitions of the Virgin Saint Mary, I went straightaway to the Church at Zeitoun but did not see her. Yet I did not lose hope of seeing her and I had a feeling of comfort when I thought of going to see her again which I did at five o'clock in the evening of her feast. It was a Wednesday and my little

son Sherief accompanied me. My driver carried a chair for me as I could not stand for long. I remained sitting there until four o'clock in the morning. At that moment I saw two doves hovering over the dome of the church. I did not know from where they came. Their bodies were illuminated, so a shiver went through my body. My son Sherief was sitting beside me. He shook and fell to the ground.

“At 4:30am I saw a cloud of light over the large dome of the church. At that moment the light in the garage opposite the church went off and the cloud took form and the Virgin Lady appeared. Her body was illuminated, and her features were very clear. On seeing this I could not hold myself but shouted. ‘Allah Wakbar’ and I started to raise my hand towards the Virgin Saint Mary and then put it back on my paralyzed leg whilst repeating: ‘I have come to you, O Mother of Light, to cure my leg.’ The Virgin Saint Mary at that moment was moving and walking softly on top of the dome and continued doing so for one hour.

“I said to myself whilst going to my car: ‘It was enough for me to see her.’ I do not know how at that moment I forgot all about my illness. I stood up from my seat without leaning on my stick or on my son’s arm. I jumped over the fence of the garden where I had been sitting. Then I held my son’s hand with one hand and the chair with the other and went through the crowds feeling as if I was flying like a bird. The ground was muddy, but I did not slip.

“When I returned to my car, the driver tried to start the engine but it would not ignite. It needed a push from the back to help it run. I found myself pushing the car

with my hands for a long distance whilst my son and the driver were looking at me in amazement, not believing what they saw. It was as if I was in a dream. I did not realize the miracle that had happened to me until the engine started. I sat in the car and started to think of my illness which had accompanied me for years and had left me only a few seconds ago. I began to glorify God and thank our Lady the Virgin Saint Mary.”

After her healing, Mrs. Ensherah was examined by the medical committee for investigating the miracles, which was headed by Dr. Shafeeq Abdel-Malek. The committee found that her blood pressure was 145/90, her pulse 82, her temperature normal, her heart and respiration normal and the nerves and muscles of the left and right limbs normal. Her face and tongue confirmed the healing of the advanced hemiplegia.

Healing a Damaged Eye

This is one of the thousands of miracles which occurred during the Virgin Saint Mary’s apparitions in the Church of Saint Dimiana, in Shoubra, Cairo, which commenced on Tuesday the 25th of March, 1986.

The mother of six year old Theresa Soliman Yousef recounted, “On 17th November 1984, my daughter lost the sight of her right eye when a knitting needle pierced it and made a hole in the cornea and lens. On 5th December, 1984, she underwent an operation to replace the damaged lens, but the condition of the eye grew worse because of puss and inflammation.

“On 18th May 1986, I took her to the Church of Saint Dimiana in Shoubra. After partaking of the Holy

Communion, we went up to the gallery and stood among the crowds. A strong light suddenly shone from the right side of the altar. My daughter stretched out her hand towards the source of light and touched the affected eye. Then she shouted with great joy, 'I can see, Mum! I can see, Mum!' She covered her left eye and found that she was able to see with her right eye."

Theresa was examined by doctors who confirmed the miraculous healing and the miracle was published in ***Al Watani Newspaper***, issue of 1st June 1986.

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