## You ask and Bishop Moussa answers:

## 1- Youth: What happens when we reach a certain level of spirituality, but every so often we all?

#### Bishop Moussa:

Even though we may see our spiritual life as progressing in a zigzag, this zigzag is on an upward trend. But each time we realize. We are falling, we must call out to the Lord to deliver us, and we must repent. We may look at our spiritual life as being up and down, but God sees that we are improving. Each time I fall, I experience three things: \* the realization that I am weak so I must be humble, \* The fact that Satan is always attacking, so I must be careful, \* How much God is always loving and caring and forgiving. Therefore never feel despair or frustration because of weaknesses. If your spiritual life is up all the time, it will lead to much pride. For this reason, we do not want people to exaggerate in their spiritual lives by increasing the fasting and prostration's and so on without the guidance of their spiritual father, for if this happens they will be exaggerating out of ego centrism

to prove to themselves and to others that they are a hero, and not out of love and sincerity to God. In the Paradise of the Fathers it is written, "If you see a young man moving rapidly towards spiritual levels, pull him down lest he suffer from the danger of pride." So in this sense, weaknesses are helpful because they keep one humble, even St Paul the Apostle said that he had a thorn in his flesh in order to keep him humble.

"St. Anthony the Great once said, 'This is the great work of man: always to take the blame for his own sins before God and to expect temptation to his last breath, for whoever has not experienced temptation cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, for without temptation no one can be saved" (Sayings of the Desert Fathers).

## 1. Youth asking: Why are the icons in the church anointed with the Myron oil?

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Bishop Moussa Answers:

The Myron gives the icon a spirit; it is a declaration that this saint is living and is among us. The icon of Jesus Christ is also anointed with the holy Myron oil. It keeps the mystery

of the presence of the saint inside the church with us. We even

consecrate the curtains and the walls and the vessels of the church in order to spiritualize them, because SPIRIT means life.

When we ask this saint to intercede on our behalf, they can surely hear us, and they can pray on our behalf.

### 2. Youth: Is all the turmoil and violence and sin in the world today a sign of the Second Coming?

Bishop Moussa Answer:: You may consider it a sign, for there are many signs; but the coming of the Lord will be a total

surprise. We do not have the capacity to determine an exact date. There is one sign that has not occurred yet, and this is the conversion of the Jews to Christianity (Romans 11). We are not sure how this will happen. Another sign is the coming of the Antichrist; whether this be a religion, a person, or otherwise is not clear. What is required of me is that I be ready and alert and repentant.

### 3. Youth: What is your opinion (if the Incident which happened here recently of the woman whose

#### hand was dripping oil and claimed she had conversations with St. Mary?

Bishop Moussa Answer HG:

Our church is not fond of these types of conversations with the saints. In our Coptic Orthodox concept and spirit, whenever we experience a miracle we hide it, or keep it restricted to only a few people, because we are always cautious of the intervention of Satan in these types of situations. He can deceive us and even appear as an angel of light. Once we begin to advertise the miracle, Satan comes inside and tries to pull us outside the goal of the miracle. Situations like this may start out correct, but end up Satanic because Satan comes to spoil everything. We tell, for example, of the miracles of the late Pope Kyrollos in order to strengthen the people, but there is a big difference between this and advertising a miracle for no clear benefit except self pride.

### 4. Youth: Are we to socialize only with Christian people?

HG: Your spiritual love must be given to all people, and not be isolated to just Christians. There is a big difference between

friends and colleagues (acquaintances). Your friends

should be Christian, to help you build your spiritual life, but you can have many colleagues in society at school, at university, at work, etc. When I say 'socialize with them', I mean be on good terms with them, have pure Christian love for them, caring and sharing with them. If they are sick you must visit them, if a family member or friend has passed away, you must go and give your condolences, if they are celebrating a feast, such as Ramadan, you must give them your best wishes. Therefore you must have pure Christian love towards them, but do not have an intimate relationship with them because they differ in their thoughts, their principles, their ideas, their philosophies and their practices. Have friends from within the church, and have as many colleagues as you like in society. Express your Christian love to them; go with them when it is right, and withdraw from them when they do wrong.

# 5. Youth: If you have a dream about killing someone you really hate, is that the same as committing murder?

HG: Dreams make inner feelings more explicit, and what you cannot fulfill during the day in actions, is fulfilled in dreams at night. Therefore this dream about killing someone

shows that there is something incorrect in your heart towards that person. So instead of 'killing' him in your heart, serve him and win him as a friend by asking the Lord to help in the situation, and try to come into contact with them; speak to them, and communicate with them so that the two of you may be reconciled.

6. Youth: You mentioned in your talk that while the Orthodox continued straight ahead, the Catholics deviated to the right and the Protestants deviated to the left. Does that mean that they won't go to heaven?



HG: No. When we say they deviated, we are not condemning them. There are two levels firstly, the Christians - those who

believe in the divinity and incarnation and redemption of Christ - basically, those who believe in the Christian creed. Secondly, there are those Christians who are Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. Each differs in details concerning doctrines, the sacraments and priesthood and fellowship with the saints, but we agree on the major concept of Christianity which is the creed, and therefore we are ALL Christians. But the orthodox way to the Kingdom of Heaven is the straightest and

the shortest, while the others are a little zigzag. Therefore we must NEVER condemn other Christian denomi- nations that believe in the Lord, saying that they are not going to heaven. This is not our capacity and is completely illogical, because they believe in the creed which is the essence of Christianity.

#### 7. Youth: How can we choose our partner in life?

HG: \*Pray a lot, \* Think a lot, \* Feel a bit, \* Ask for spiritual guidance. We are asking you to feel a bit' because the sound of the emotions can be very loud, and it can hide the spirit and the mind. For example, because of emotions, one may enter into a relationship with a non- Christian person because they are intelligent, good-looking, etc., but they do not think about the future of living with and raising a family with a non Christian partner. Therefore if we rely on our emotions, it may cause our thinking to stop and our spiritual life to be minimum.

#### 8. Youth: Why are men given Holy Communion before women?

HG: Simply because women are more humble than men! So I ask you to Please stay humble and accept this regulation. Out of humility we do not think about

who is first, but we prefer who is last.

#### 9. Youth: Are these the last days?

HG: It is not important for us to concentrate on when the last days will be, but it is necessary for us to be ready at all times, by always repenting and preparing ourselves spiritually, so let us leave the dates for the Lord.

### 10. Youth: I am under so much pressure and I cannot stand it any it any more. What can I do?

HG: For sure we have pressure coming from the outside- through the instincts, from the world and from Satan. But why do you forget that through the Holy Spirit and divine grace and the Lord residing in you that you can have power over this power that power that you are feeling? The power which surrounds us in the world is limited and the power of God is unlimited. The problem occurs when we are not regular in taking this spiritual power from God, then we feel weak. If you, being limited, come into contact with Unlimited, who is God, you will feel strong and victorious over these pressures around you.

## 11. Youth: Is the Holy Communion 100% Body and Blood of Christ? And if it is, why can't we see it as such?

HG: Because we are not infallible, it is expected that we may commit the same sins again, especially during certain stages of life. But you must always struggle against this sin by nourishing yourself spiritually in order to be victorious, and you must confess your sins to the priest so that he may help overcome this sin by praying for you and giving you quidance.

### 12. Youth: What should I do when constantly the same sins over again?

HG: Because we are not infallible, it is expected that we may commit the same sins again, especially during Certain stages of life. But you must always struggle against this sin by nourishing yourself spiritually in order to be victorious, and you must cofess your sins to the priest so that he may help you overcome this sin by praying for you and giving for you guidance.

#### 13. Youth: I have tried to talk to my non-Christian friends about God, but they never seem interested. What can I do?

HG: It is better to talk to them through your example and not through words. If you are holy and you pray for them and you genuinely like them and care for them, a time will come for talking to them. But first you must start by being a good example, and then the Lord will open the door for them, on a certain day and in a certain way.

# 14. Youth: Sometimes I feel pressured to have a boyfriend. Is it okay to have a boyfriend if I don't do anything wrong?

HG: As His Holiness Pope Shenouda says, Have many boyfriends and many girlfriends, but if you are a couple, you may start out clean and holy, but who can guarantee what may happen? Can you guarantee yourself, or your partner, or Satan? Each day we pray, "Lead us not into temptation..", but by having a boyfriend or a girlfriend we are leading ourselves into temptation. Let your relations be in groups from within the church until the time comes for you to select your partner for marriage.

#### 15. Youth: What is the church's viewpoint on certain haircuts?

HG: The church wants to cut the sins from your heart and mind and not the hairs of your head. But if you want to be

characterized, it is more preferable to be characterized and distinguished by your personality, rather than by a certain haircut.

#### 16. Youth: Can a priest tell others about a sin I confessed?

HG: NEVER! I assure you that a priest is not allowed to tell your secrets to anyone - this is just your imagination, because sins are more or less the same, especially in certain stages of life. Your secrets and your confessions are guaranteed, for if the priest mentions your sins to others, he would in fact be committing spiritual suicide. Please do not hesitate to confess, for these thoughts are just a war against confession from Satan.

### 17. Youth: I will only go to confession once 1 give up my particular sin. Is that okay?

HG: NO! simply because you are going to commit this particular sin forever, and you are also going to commit new sins. Please confess regularly, and never be discouraged when you repeat your sins, because through confessing, you will actually be improving, for the number of sins you commit will decrease. PLEASE, NEVER STOP CONFESSING!

18. Youth: Monks dedicate all their time to prayer, but in the world there is not much time for prayer. What.

Bishop Moussa Answer: In the world, it is not a matter of calculation, but of depth. As a monk, I may pray for five hours to take the blessing, but for one living in the world, they may only need to pray for five minutes for God to bless them because there is limited time because of responsibilities and so on. Therefore, depth is the measure and not length of time.

19. Youth: We hear in stories of the Wilderness
Fathers that they may go without Holy
Communion for a long time, even though our
church says that 40 days without Holy
Communion makes one spiritually dead. So what
becomes of these fathers?

#### Bishop Moussa Answer:

For these Desert Fathers, the rule would surely differ because they live in complete solitude for long periods of time. Some of these fathers may have a small church inside their cave and occasionally, other desert fathers gather together and celebrate the? Holy Mass. Yes, we must take the Holy Communion regularly so that we may abide in the Lord, however, these Wilderness Fathers are abiding constantly in the Lord, day and night, through prayer, praises, Bible reading, fasting, and contemplation. So this will definitely compensate them.

### 20. Youth: What is your opinion on near death experiences?

#### Bishop Moussa Answer:

There is a book called "Life After Life" which tells of the experiences of people who clinically die and then come back to life. They mention such things as traveling through tunnels and seeing bright lights and so on. We do not believe in the details of this book, but these experiences would definitely give the world and idea that there is another life after this life, and this is a good support for Christianity.

#### 21. Youth: What is the church's view on birth control within marriage?

Bishop Moussa Answer:

The church never stands against birth control within marriage as long as the means of achieving this purpose are not killing the embryo or hurting the wife or husband.

### 22. Youth: What happens when a girl is raped, but she is not ready to have the child?

Bishop Moussa Answer:

She can let someone adopt the child, for we as Christians do not accept abortion, because abortion means depriving the child of life and it is not in our capacity to do this; it is the embryo's right to live. And as for our precious Christian girls, surely they would not put themselves in an attitude or situation to have this bitter experience, you must be cautious because it is a very strange thing that in a world where there is complete sexual freedom, some still resort to rape, however, there is a saying, "whoever drinks of the salty water is always thirsty'. So take care, be cautious and do not give the green light to anyone. This does not mean that you must be always suspicious, but you

must be as simple as the dove, and as wise as the serpent.

#### 23. Youth: What is the importance of confession?

Bishop Moussa Answer:

In confession we receive two very important things: absolution for our sins and a solution to our problems through the direction and guidance of our spiritual father. Confession is not only beneficial spiritually, but it is also beneficial psychologically, because sometimes we just need someone to listen to us. Your spiritual father will listen to you in a spirit of fatherhood, and being guided by the Holy Spirit, he will give you comfort, because the Holy Spirit is the comforter, "the Paraclete". Confession is better known through experience and not through description. Be regular in confession, not because of dogmatic teaching, but because Of the experience.