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| **The Coptic Mission to North America, Where Are We?*****The following is a long discussion among the Coptic Evangelism Fellowship of North America group in year 2009. It was freely open to all, so everyone expresses freely his/her opinion. Please don’t consider any single response as the final opinion, but rather, read through all responses to know the final opinion of the group.******Since the topics mentioned here are very sensitive and touch our emotions sometimes, we urge you to have an open mind and open heart and to allow yourself time to think, as we did during this long discussion.***

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**Patrick** sent the following opinion, which we need to discuss:Do you have any ideas about what a Coptic missionary church America would look like?  My wife and I started to attend the Coptic Orthodox Church in June 08 and it has been both wonderful and difficult at the same time.  Wonderful, because the Orthodox Christian faith exists pure and unadulterated as it was handed from the Lord and to the apostles and then to men whom the Lord had chosen to Sheppard His flock.  Difficult, because of two reasons: first, the demands of the Orthodox faith help to teach a person grow in the Lord & in holiness (for example, we fast on Wednesday & Fridays, which was and is a learning curb and lifestyle change for my wife and I.  The fasting, however, is not a "religious" thing we do to please the Lord.  Quite the contrary – the Lord has freely given His love to us first…thus, we fast, not for the Lord's sake but for our sake – to teach us to discipline ourselves so that we can learn to resist sin and live a life that is pure and holy in this world).  The second reason it has been difficult is due to cultural differences – this is a hard part ("aye, there is the rub" as Shakespeare's Macbeth would say!) – how do you differentiate between the pure Orthodox Faith and the cultural encapsulation that it has been brought to this country in?  I would say this: by distinguishing between Holy Tradition and cultural tradition.  Holy Tradition is the constant "thing" that under-girds the orthodox faith around the world; it is the one faith that has been preached since the time of the apostles.  Cultural tradition, however, is that which each ethnic group has adopted in order to keep social order/stability and allow them to interact with their environment; this, of course, can change (each culture has both good and bad in it).  Okay, to keep this succinct: What would an American Coptic Orthodox Church look like?  I think like this:  The Liturgy would be in English from beginning to end.  The hymns & psalms would be the same words (since they recount salvation history) but the tune & tempo could be changed from Middle Eastern to an American tune/tempo (Holy Tradition is, in my opinion, the psalms & hymns that recount God's salvific works in the history of His people but cultural tradition would be the tune and tempo the psalms/hymns are sung in).  I also think that husbands and wives should be allowed to sit together since the American culture is a very individualistic culture and the nuclear family is not nearly as extended in the American culture as the Egyptian-American culture.  Thus, for Americans, it is important – I think – to allow them to sit with their spouse since that would help to make them feel more comfortable.  I do not think sitting separate is Holy Tradition but I may be wrong.  As far as head coverings for the women: St. Paul said they do this "for the angels" so I would say to keep this but allow them to get comfortable with the idea since this a totally foreign concept to American women.  So, what would a missionary church look like: It would have the liturgy (in English), the priesthood, the hymns/psalms (but in an American tune/tempo), the sacraments, the people would sit inter-mixed but the women would still wear the head coverings.  I am not saying I am correct on this but these are some of my thoughts. =====================================================

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| I totally and partially agree with Patrick:+ Sitting separate is an Islamic intrusion. I even heard that in somechurches in upper Egypt nowadays, they draw a curtain between men &women, this is completely nonsense/non-Christian.+ although we love Coptic hymns, and our spirits are fed by them, butthese inspiring hymns are just boring for non-Egyptians. Lebanesedon't feel it, while Egyptians, even Muslims, interact with it.+ It doesn't make any sense to pray in any language other thanEnglish, since English IS the common language in US, which isbasically a multi-ethnic society. And if we want to serve those whoare temporarily in US, or elder generations, we can have separateservice (Liturgy) for them on Sat morning All in Egyptian.In our Churches in Africa, this is already slightly adopted, that theyclap their hands and dance in the Church (specially during Holycommunion)...HOWEVER, this will help keep people who already came or got invited,but to call/invite people, I see a big difference between Evangelismin Africa & North America:The major difference is that in Africa, there are 2 sorts of servants:1) those servants who live there for service, families, individuals,etc., they moved there to serve and to evangelize, and 2) those whodedicate a week or couple of weeks to visit and serve. The first typeof servants guarantee continuation and unity of service goals andattitudes. The second type gives a refreshing strong pulses to theservice.In North America, where people moved in to live, seeking better life,we find only the second type of servants. To the best of my knowledge,if there are people dedicated for evangelism, these are individualtrials.I guess our hope is in St. Shenouda Monastery, which is a missionarymonastery. We need more such monasteries, and more dedicated servantsaround North America.Yet, God can save using a lot and using few, it is indifferent to God,as it is God who works, not us. We just think how to improve as ourduty, but it is God who will actually improve.This is my in-experienced humble opinion. remember my weakness in yourprayers.=====================================================Therese  |

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I totally disagree with your first few points.There are no churches in Egypt that have a curtain between men and women. I am lebanese Coptic Orthodox Christian. I, among MANY others that I know love the coptic language and find it enriching. It relates us back to our ancestors who DIED to keep this language in use. It is such a holy and blessed language and the fact that we can sing Hymns and use it in our liturgies in our century is INCREDIBLE. If you ever took away the coptic language form the church, it would strip away its meaning, its existance. You call the US a multi-ethnic society?? Then why would you strip away the language of our church? If you took the time to learn and appreciate the beauty of the Coptic Language, I assure you, you would agree with me.I mean, how could you say coptic hymns are boring? I cannot stress the fact that oyu need to take the time and effort to learn and appreciate those who suffered to write these hymns. I mean look at the hymn tenen, golgotha, oran enshosho, e-parthenos... a simple hymn like tai shori that we say in every liturgy of the word. I don't see how they're boring. Our problem is that we don't cherish and appreciate what the hymns really mean. Appreciating it!! That's all you need! To think that one day we will stop singing in coptic, the language the hymns were originally written in, would be such a shame.And we do have liturgies that are all english, all arabic and all coptic. But most people go to church on Sunday so the priests have to say it in 3 languages, to accomodate all. Thank youTherese============================================================

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Dear Family,As I wrote before, this is a discussion where everyone expresses his/her point of view freely.  However, keep in mind that **some answers will not reflect except the writer's view.**  Again, to get into this dialogue, we need to have: patience, open heart, open mind, willingness to learn from each other, and above all respect for each person.I just like to say a few words about **the Coptic Language.** As children of the Coptic Orthodox Church, we all love the Coptic language and we all appreciate the Coptic hymns since we raised in the Coptic Church and nourished by her hymns.  Little by little these hymns started to express our feelings and became as ladders of spirituality.  **As Copts raised in the Coptic Church, we will not accept an alternative to our heritage of hymns.** Remember, **there is no sacred language in Christianity;** otherwise, why God on Pentecost descended the Holy Spirit on the apostles and gave them the ability to speak in different languages?  Language is just a mean to understand and to communicate-nothing sacred about it.  However, **the words of God when they are spoken or written in any language, they sanctify the language and the hearer/writer/speaker of that language.**  Therefore, the word of God are sacred but not the language.  The rule set up by the Bible regarding the language is clearly stated: "Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, ***how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?***(1 Corinthians 14:16) Briefly, music expresses the feelings of people in a certain culture.  Then, each culture has its own music.  This was the reason why the Coptic Orthodox Church did not impose the Coptic hymns and the Coptic Language on the Ethiopians, when she started the Ethiopian Church in the Fourth century.   Another example, some Western hymns were written by saintly people such as St. Ambrose of Milan.  These music moves the Western people spiritually, but not Eastern people, such as the Coptic people. Although these hymns are very spiritual, but we, as Copts, can not relate spiritually or emotionally to them. I listened to Gregorian hymns and felt their spirituality but I never attached to, simply because they do not echo with my eastern culture.   If you live for years in the Coptic Orthodox Church, then the tunes already have been penetrated deeply into your emotions and system and it would be hard for you to live without them.  But, it is totally different for covert to the Coptic Orthodox Church; they need tunes that express their inner soul and reach the deepest of their hearts.  While you, as a person raised in the Coptic Church,  feel in heaven when you listen to the Tenen hymn, convert get lost in the web of the endless "O O OO OO." Therefore, if we like to have a mission to America, we have to allow the the convert to use their tunes while keeping the Coptic hymns tunes.  The result would be a great number of short Coptic hymns in English and a few American, or Canadian, tunes using the same words of the Coptic hymns after translating them into English.Finally, the power and the treasure of the Orthodox church are in the salvation she offers, the mysteries of the church-no matter what language is used-the spirituality, and the holding of the faith and worship as they were handed from our Lord Christ and His disciple in so many language and in so many hymns and tunes that relate to each heart and each culture.   As Christ when He wanted to save us Kept His divinity but united with our humanity, the church need to keep all her treasures but clothed them with the culture of the evangelized people.   In Christ,Victor ===========================================================For a Western person, he/she feels the spirituality of our hymns but they can not express his/her feelings https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif============================================================

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| Dear Saints, I appreciate the responses that have been offered but am concerned that, instead of dialog taking place, monologues are - instead of solutions being offered, positions are being stated.  Of course, that is why this is so difficult a subject to talk about - something like this that is held, and should be held, so dearly by people - but is is, nevertheless, a dialog that needs to take place.  Why?  Because evangelism and making disciples is not something that would be a nice thing to do but actually a dispatch given by the Lord.   Didn't St. Mark accommodate (somewhat) to the local Egyptian population when he explained the gospel to them?  If he did not, why isn't the liturgy in Hebrew or Aramaic or, at the least, Koine Greek?  Also, I have heard that the tunes to the hymns were taken from Pharonic songs - that is an accommodation (if that is, in fact, the case).  When St. Paul preached to the Greeks, why did he do it in their language and not Hebrew or Aramaic?.  Why, on the day of Pentecost, did God have the disciples speak in foreign languages that could be understood by the various people there?  Finally, The incarnation itself is the biggest accommodation to speak to people in a way they could understand.  All this is to say that we NEED to look at how we can reach this North American continent; the stakes of failure are too high - the souls of human beings for whom Christ died. Okay, I would like comment on a few things in order to keep this discussion going so that it does not stop: **Language**: every culture is extremely proud of their language and heritage and no one is trying to take that away from anyone.  When I lived in Hawaii, the native Hawaiians were reviving their ancient language and their ancient dance (Hula).  So, if you took the gospel to the Hawaiians, do you make them speak in Coptic or let them speak to God in their native language which, they too, are proud of and almost lost due to a dominant power taking their country (which was America)?  The point to saying an outreach to Americans by using only English is not to dismiss the Coptic language but to speak to the people in their native tongue (remember, we are talking about **a missionary Church** with the objective of planting the Orthodox faith amongst Caucasian-Americans, African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, etc...).  How well do you think St. Mark would have done if he would have refused to speak in a language understood by the local Egyptians of the time?  St. Paul had to deal with the Jewish people who wanted to insist that the gentiles (which are you and me) had to be circumcised in order to be saved.  Why did they insist on this?  Because is was their heritage and deeply treasured by them (for theological reasons).  So, we must be very careful to distinguish between the core elements of the orthodox faith and that which is cultural - not because the the cultural elements are bad (by no means!) but because the cultural elements may put an unnecessary barrier between a person becoming a Christian and them not becoming a Christian. **Fasting:**  I agree with the fasts and agree it is from ancient times - it is a strong form of ascesis.  I may have not stated myself clear but was only stating that it is difficult to get used to doing this after not being accustomed to fasting after 43 years (but I definitely agree with you that fasting is a core part of Orthodoxy). **Separate seating**: I would like to hear more on this.  Do the other Oriental Orthodox Churches do this?  Do the Eastern Orthodox do this?  I am not disagreeing but just trying to understand.  Could people who are not Christians and visiting be allowed to sit together?   Please, I ask everyone - try and look at this from an objective point of view and state how **we can** reach these two countries called America & Canada - doesn't God love Americans and Canadians too?  The goal is to make disciples - but how can we do that if we cannot speak to them in ways, styles, and cultural accommodations that they can relate to while (and this is the difficult part) not compromising one iota of the Orthodox faith?  The Coptic Orthodox Faith is beautiful because it has kept the Ancient Faith so faithfully - and the world needs this ancient faith - but how do we get it to them?  How did St. Mark cross the faith over from a Jewish context into the Egyptian context (which, at least linguistically, he did do since the liturgy is not in Hebrew/Aramaic). Please share your thoughts on how we can reach this culture - is there anyway? Or do we just pack-up our bags and keep within our ethnic circles and enjoy what St. Mark gave us?  I am glad St. Mark decided to take the effort to share it with other cultures, aren't you?  He did it, how can we? I am the least of all and would appreciate your insights on how we can reach this people. Thank you for your thoughts on this,Your brother,Patrick==================================================== |

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In terms of language, I would like to mention that many of the hymnsand replies we pray in the liturgy & mid night praise (tasbeha) areactually Greek, the liturgy were originally put in Greek thentranslated. Example of such hymns:+ Teneen (midnight praise in Kiahk, it is also said to be Roman piece,not Greek)+ Arepsaleen (midnight praise - this one is actually a mix of Coptic &Greek)+ Agios Otheos (liturgy)+ O kery ios meta so (liturgy, communion hymn)+ Irini Passi - Ke to-pnevmati sou+ Evlogimenos (Palm Sunday)+ Keryalaysoon+ Zoxapatrie Ke Io ke Age-io+ Khristos Anesti+ Ton-sina narkhon logon patrietc.So, these are hymns and replies that we Copts interacted with andkept.. so, when translating everything to English, we would keepeverything that North Americans can interact with.I am so glad to hear that Therese loves the Coptic language that much,me too & I love my identity as Egyptian. But why don't we offer both?Coptic hymns for those like Therese & myself who can not accept butCoptic hymns? And English one for those who need it?Seating separate: Thanks Br. Antonios for the correction. However, Ifind it shocking! I don't see any Christian spirit in separation..could it be the case that the apostles, being middle eastern, adoptedthis system from Jewish middle eastern traditions? You know, orthodoxjews today ask women to cover their hair & body, and they do... I findit hard to accept that separation is inspired by the Holy Spirit...In other Orthodox Churches I been to, they don't separate, but I amnot sure if this is only in US or also in their original countries...==============================================================

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| Brother Antonios and all, Thank you for your inputs - they are insightful and true (I also benefitted from your input on the Psalm)! I apologize to everyone for pushing this topic but when we do our outreach missions, we have had people ask about visiting our church so this is causing this to come to the forefront here in Orlando (and we are doing another outreach on February 8th).  You have said many, many good things.  If anyone has insight to share, please share it - what is a good basis and structure from which to build upon? Thank you again, Brother Antonios, your insights were edifying - please share more as the Lord brings things to your heart.  I will meditate on the things you have said, pray, and continue to engage in this worthwhile discussion. Yours in Christ,Patrick ==============================================================   |

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Dear Brother Antonios and fellow brothers and sisters in Christ,I am the least to offer direction in this Dialogue concerning “The Coptic Mission to North America, Where Are We”.  Many of those who offered their opinion touched basis on what we are lacking.  And I agree with Brother Antonios that, first, it is “important to agree on a structure and basis”.  I believe that is what we have learned from the Outreach Missions, we have learned how to offer “…Christianity as an entire package with wisdom, love, and understanding” (Brother Antonios).  We recognize the need for God’s true Love that we have learned from our Orthodox Church. The question here is when are we going to start serving and offering Christ to the great Nation of North America?  When will we change our vision from just sustaining the original Coptic Orthodox Church that is practiced in Egypt and approach this great nation as a nation that needs to know the True Christ, such as we have done in Kenya, and South Africa.  We must agree that our father’s intentions when they came to this nation were not to evangelize or bring people to the knowledge of His true love.  It was to have a better life, and with this the Church was tasked with sustaining an immigrate nation, not a nation that needs to be enlightened or evangelized.  We have been blessed to live in this nation for over 30 years and have established many churches for our native people.  Its time to task our church with evangelizing this nation, with establishing churches for them, with the same mind set we had in Kenya and South Africa.  This is what I believe is the question that is being asked from our group: how should this church exist, how would it look, how would it be governed?  The need exists in abundance and the cry for us to start is getting louder and louder.  We can not ignore it, nor begin learning; we have been here for over 30 years.  I pray that our hierarchy will come to knowledge of this and have a sense of urgency of the situation.  Please do not misunderstand me, I am not saying we have not done anything, the fact that we can discuss this question proves we are heading the right direction.  I know I did not offer any answers to the question, but hope I aided in understanding the question. Forgive me for my ignorance, Your brother in Christ, Rida

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Dear Blessed Family,I would like to first apologize for my reaction to the e-mails. I was giving the wrong approach. Forgive me. I agree 100% with what you said Brother Antonios:"What we are to present to people is not the details of language, fasting, how or where we stand in church, whether cultural or Apostolic Tradition – but rather Christianity as an entire package with wisdom, love, and understanding.  We are supposed to be vessels of God’s love without which we aren’t supposed to do any of these other things:  “Let all that you do be done with love” (*1Cor*. 16:14).  In fact, the first rite and canon in the Church is love and humility.  But as a result of the love of God, all the other commandments and teachings – that entire Holy Tradition – come along with it."Approach with Love and Humility is what we need to focus on way before explaining the rites of the church. Introducing Christ's love for us and the kingdom that awaits us. Because in the end, when you approach someone and introduce them to Christ, what are you going to say? : "Oh, by the way, you'll be sititing on that side of the church.." or "Learn the coptic language cause you'll need it to understand the hymns." No, we will be teaching them the love that God has for us, because as God said and as Brother Antonios mentionned it, God is love.Actually, come to think of it, when we had our homeless dinner at our church here in Manchester and I told you guys about how 3 of them returning for saturday night's Kiahk Praises, they didn't come back because they wanted a tour of the church, or wanted deeper explanation of our rites, they came back because they experienced some king of spark of his love. They came because they felt something they've never felt before. They came back because they felt like people cared for them and there was some kind of obligation to return. It wasn't until after the tasbeha, when we were filled with love and joy that they asked us questions about the actual Coptic Church and why we have tasbeha and such. And we explained to them in brief, "PRAISE GOD"! When one of the girls asked me why it was long, I then sat down with her and explained each Hoos and its revelance to why we pray it and how its lyrics reflect Praising God! But they were introduced to His love first.That was just my input, and once again, I'm sorry for the reaction I gave before.Remember me in your prayers, and the church of St. Mary and St. Mina in Manchester, UKThereseFrom: br\_antonious@frontiernet.netTo: Coptic-Evangelism-In-North-America@googlegroups.comSubject: RE: The Coptic Mission to North America, Where Are We (2) ?Date: Fri, 16 Jan 2009 12:12:06 -0500Dear All,Peace and grace. First of all, Blessed Feast of the Epiphany to all (coming this Monday, God willing, with the Paramoun beginning today). I am somewhat concerned that this dialogue has not continued since the reasons that everyone is in this group are the questions that are being raised here – how to approach the people we are living around for the sake of their salvation?  My initial email was only to address a couple questions that were raised and not really the issue being discussed.  But I would like to bring up a couple of general points here in relation to what has already been said and I would like your input. The Biblical way and the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles (which has been practiced in the history of our Coptic Orthodox Church), is always to practice and teach with the balanced approach.  The Bible is full of examples related to this.  For example, at the same time that our Lord Jesus Christ rebuked the Pharisees and scribes for their hypocrisy, he also said about them in that same chapter:  “Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do” (*Matt*. 23:3).  So the issue here was not being meticulous about practicing God’s teaching, it was how they were practicing.  We are supposed to take everything that God says seriously, very seriously, but I have to have the right understanding (the whole picture) and practice it the right way.  “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (*John* 14:15). Another example is how the cornerstone of Christianity is love, because God is love.  And St. Paul dedicates 1Cor. 13 about this issue in some detail in addition to many other verses and chapters in the Holy Bible like 1John.  However, right in the middle of all this teaching are verses about love that give the balanced understanding of what love really is – God is love and wants us to be with Him forever, but the sin is not acceptable and will keep us away from Him.  So His love for us is to repent in order to be united with Him.  Love “does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth” (*1Cor*. 13:6).  This is so that neither extreme becomes the understanding of what God’s love really is – neither those who test God’s love and do as they please saying that God is forgiving and merciful, nor those who are rigorists and give no room for God’s mercy and chance for repentance. So how should this apply in evangelism? – The balanced approach is doing exactly what our Lord Jesus Christ told the apostles when He gave them the great commission:“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (*Matt*. 28:19-20).  Christianity is discipleship – discipleship to whatever our Lord Jesus Christ taught the apostles.  What does this include?  This is really the question at hand.  As was brought up in a couple of emails before, this is the Holy Tradition, as distinguished from the cultural tradition.  The Holy Tradition is what our Lord Jesus Christ delivered to the apostles and they delivered to those after them, etc…  The purpose of the cultural tradition was to use the spirituality of the culture at hand in order to be able to better deliver that Holy Tradition to them.  If there was something in that culture that was not agreeable to that Holy Tradition, then it was rejected.  If any particular cultural tradition was spiritually acceptable and agreeable to that Holy Tradition, then it was used.  And of course every culture has their traditions, some acceptable, some not acceptable. So what does the Holy Tradition include? – as was said, it includes everything that our Lord Jesus Christ delivered to the apostles and they in turn delivered to the generations after them until today.  The “everything” here is not just details of the doctrine and the rites (which are all very important).  The disciples learned all the elements of what Christianity is from our Lord Jesus Christ for the sake of salvation – they were with him continuously night and day for more than 3 years seeing all of the things that He did, hearing His teachings, seeing His miracles, learning from their own mistakes, having their questions answered, experiencing His love, mercy, and how He dealt with different situations, even if it meant rebuking those who needed rebuking and showing His anger at those who were inappropriately using His house.  The Christianity that they learned is the Holy Tradition which they received by discipleship, i.e. spending time with Christ and fulfilling His commandments out of love.What we are to present to people is not the details of language, fasting, how or where we stand in church, whether cultural or Apostolic Tradition – but rather Christianity as an entire package with wisdom, love, and understanding.  We are supposed to be vessels of God’s love without which we aren’t supposed to do any of these other things:  “Let all that you do be done with love” (*1Cor*. 16:14).  In fact, the first rite and canon in the Church is love and humility.  But as a result of the love of God, all the other commandments and teachings – that entire Holy Tradition – come along with it.   This is what I believe is the balanced approach.  The way to reach people is by showing them genuine, authentic Christianity – all of that Holy Tradition that Christ delivered to us through the Apostles and Holy Fathers of the Church.  Using the useful parts of the culture that can enhance the spirituality and reaching people is fine, but it should not be an obstacle.  But I have to first study very well in order to understand the difference between the two and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and my spiritual father/father of confession for discernment.Forgive me for this long monologue which was somewhat general and does not discuss specific details.  But before discussing details, it is first important to agree on a structure and basis.  I appreciate your thoughts and comments.Remember me in your prayers.In Christ,Antonios

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Hello family, GOD BLESS YOU ALL! First of all, I like to wish you all a blessed epiphany! NOFRI SHAY (happy feast in coptic)! Over the past 2 weeks I have been carefully reading  everyones opinions on this issue...many opinions I agreed with. Thank you to all who put their thoughts, I learnt so much and I appreciate the honesty! I believe the last email Brother Antonios wrote was very very accurate and I agreed with all he said: What we are to present to people is not the details of language, fasting, how or where we stand in church, whether cultural or Apostolic Tradition – but rather Christianity as an entire package with wisdom, love, and understanding.  We are supposed to be vessels of God’s love without which we aren’t supposed to do any of these other things:  “Let all that you do be done with love” (*1Cor*. 16:14).  From my humble experience in evangelism, Christ's love is the only thing that matters and the only thing that will transcend ethnic, cultural and language differences! Therefore, to reach others, I believe...FIRST AND FOREMOST ITS BY LOVE. With love comes, patience and understanding and humility. We JUST celebrated Christ's birth, he came in all His humbleness to our world...He did not change Himself to accomodate others...but He loved us, He taught us and He listened to us in His authenticity and righteousness...He knew what we needed to be able to SEE AND TASTE Him through His love. For each person these needs are different thats why by loving the individual person, whether north american, quebecer or european or african or whatever we need to love THAT INDIVIDUAL through Christ to help that individual to SEE and TASTE our lord.  That being said, we can NOT change the traditions/rites of our Coptic Church ie fasting, seperate seating, coptic language to accomodate others as it would break the authenticity of our Lord and our CHurch. I love our church for so many reasons...and I believe I can really understand where convertors are coming from... I was born in canada and lived in Montreal,Quebec for 20 years, a place where language barriers are a very prevalent problem. Not only is there coptic and arabic but add french and english to this mix as well! Personally, my arabic is very very limited and upto 2 years ago I didn't understand nor was able to read coptic (Thank God thats changed :)). So I can understand throughly how frustrating it is to stand in an arabic-coptic liturgy and not understand a word (if I didnt have a liturgy book in front of me)! I get it, it is not pleasant. I'm sure MANY north americans (who dont know coptic or arabic)  feel the same way I felt...as everyone around you seemed to be able to respond and chant in these 2 languages and as much as you want to open your mouth and praise the lord (as your heart is) you simply couldn't because you didn't know the language. This can be discouraging to many north americans and can turn them away from our church. Our church is so full and rich and at times can be very overwhelming to new commers...I hear this often among convertors: I  feel like these language barriers are stopping me  from getting close to God.OR There is so much to learn, so much tradition, where do I begin, its too much to learn!? We have been part of this church for years, decades...so we may not understand this point of view...thats why understanding and love is essential in evangelising to north americans.  I can see how many convertors or people willing to convert may be discouraged from our BEAUTIFUL AND AUTHENTIC church...language barriers. But what is the solution to the language issue? Here is my thoughts: these barriers can be overcome with the Lord's strength and wisdom...these barriers can be transformed into challenges and motivation to learn coptic and all the traditions of our church.      .1. No one denies the beauty of the coptic language, it is an integral and essential part of our church...but also remember it takes time to learn. I dont believe the solution is to cut it out to accomodate those that dont know it..I DONT THINK THIS IS WHAT JESUS WOULD DO OR WANTS...I believe the solution is to be AVAILABLE and to seek out those who dont understand and help them! To give classes, to offer help, to simply stand by a convertor during a liturgy and guide them through the coptic language (ie as therese did explaing what each Hoo's menat during kiahk praises), to share websites ie [tasbeha.org](http://tasbeha.org) etc to help teach them, to introduce them to a coptic instructor...to LISTEN TO THEIR NEEDS AND OFFER LOVE AND HELP IN A PATIENT WAY. To encourage them to learn and to love the language. I have been so fortunate over my life of people who helped guide me to learn coptic. I will never forget them and the effort they put in. THATS WHAT I CALL LOVE! It is too easy to just take out the coptic hymns, thats not a solution... 2. As many churches in montreal do: Have liturgies in all languages. In my church we alternate:  one week there are 2 liturgies at the same time, one french and english and the other in arabic-coptic and the next week we have one liturgy in Arabic-english-Coptic. This way all languages are covered :) Finally, the coptic church is sooo rich with history and traditions, there are many traditions that seem hard to follow in our society BUT no one said being a christian would be easy! We are commanded to go AGAINST the current, To take the narrow gate. So let us not get lost! Our apostolic fathers had it even harder! They struggled and many were MARTYRED to preserve the authenticity of our Lord's teachings and our church. and thats what I love most about it....everything has a source and wasn't just changed and influenced because someone thought it was easier. Fasting on wednesdays and fridays and all of the fasts is part of our church...it may be difficult but its essential to help build spiritual maturity.  Th answer is not to change certain aspects ie take out coptic language, seperate seating, fasting . Our church is AUTHENTIC, lets keep it that way. The solution, I believe is to Love, listen and transform ourselves to the mind of Christ.  mind of patience, understanding and love. FIND SOLUTIONS, BE CREATIVE, BE PROACTIVE....Find solutions based on the individual to help him SEE and TASTE the LORD and guide them in doscovering the beauty of our church! Help convertors to firstly love Christ and with patience, humility and love learn the traditions and languages of our church. I apologize for the lengthy response. Pray for me. Your sister in Christ, Amanda

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I am afraid we went off-topic.Of course to evangelize is to love, and all what Br. Antonios said,but this is ONLY FIRST PHASE. Who wants to build a tower, he/sheshould calculate the cost to FINISH first.When we present Love and Christianity, we do so to attache the personto Christ, that is God becomes his/her father, and the early fatherssaid: "whomever the Church is not his/her mother, God is not his/herfather", so we need to attache the person to the church; a church.As what happened with Therese and the 3 blessed homeless, May God leadthem, the touched hearts - after receiving love - will start attendingthe Church where they will face the great obstacle: Culture. Thequestion at hand is not how to evangelize, but rather how to handlethis cultural problem? I personally witnessed some cases that wereapproached, attended, then stumbled with culture and disappeared. Whatare we going to do with that?In my opinion, we should do as in Kenya, South Africa & G. Britain,have you heard of the British Orthodox Church? (http://[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British\_Orthodox\_Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Orthodox_Church) ) It is Coptic church infaith, but British in culture.Since love is what matters, let us remove the cultural stumblingstones.With love in Christ.https://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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Dear Shenoda,Thank you for getting into the whole picture and the main problems we face in evangelism in North America.  The first lessons I teach in the evangelism class are: acceptance and love.  There is no disagreement on those approaches to evangelism; they are the ABC of spiritual life and evangelism.  Now, we need to concentrate on what happen next. For over thirty years so many Copts tried to evangelize and bring people to the Coptic Church in North America, but sadly they failed time and again not because of lacking love or zeal but because of the obstacles they faced.  These obstacles are not new, they are so obvious to anyone studies the history of mission or  knows about the many attempts of individual Copts in North America to open up our churches to others.  I can tell you tens of sad stories about hard working to get people to the church and then after a few weeks or months they leave.  Of course there are a few exceptions of converts who remained in the church.  So, as a group of evangelism we need to be aware of these obstacles and study them, then submit our findings to our beloved their graces the bishops.  After that it is up to them to take the necessary steps.  Over the last ten years, I worked with so many youth who had great love and zeal for evangelism, but after attempting a lot, they were faced with the sad reality and quit.  So, the question is: are we going to study the problems, get into a good faithful dialogue with open heart and open mind, or we will try to close our eyes?  Let me tell you my envision of the "Coptic Mission in North America."  Of course this should come at end, but I have to say it now because some people might get confused.  Here is my envision:1- The Coptic Church having immigrants from Egypt and most of the second generations who were raised in the church, would continue in current Coptic churches enjoying the Egyptian culture, the Arabic, Coptic, and some English or French languages.  They would continue enjoying a full blown of all the Coptic heritage.  These churches do not have to change a bit from what it is now.   2- At the same time, there is a need to start having special days or special divine liturgies or in the future special churches that follow the guidelines of every new church established during the long history of Christianity.   People in these churches would be either converts or Coptic youth.  The culture would not be Egyptian but American or Canadian (of course what is acceptable to God from these cultures).  Languages should be the local language, English or French, while keeping a few prats in Coptic.  These churches should keep the Orthodox faith, worship, and spiritual life, applying them with a clear understanding and acceptance of their essence.  Having said that,  you realize I am not talking about changing our Egyptian-culture churches, but to the contrary I am calling to keep them with their fullness. But our dialogue here is about the new indigenous churches or new indigenous groups.  Now back to the dialogue. I think a good starting point is to study how the  apostles started churches? How churches started other churches.  For example: how St. Paul started all these churches? Did he impose on them the Jewish cultural aspects? Did he impose on them using Hebrew in prayers? Did he impose on them the Jewish tunes and hymns (think about both Christians and Jews use the psalms)?Then think about St. Mark, what he imposed on Egyptians or the churches in North Africa?We need to learn from the apostles how they dealt with new converts.  Did they feed them with milk first or with meat (as St. Paul said, keeping in mind that we have a tendency to apply everything at once saying this is our church and we don't want to change it)?  Then coming to history after the apostolic era, we have examples of starting the Ethiopian  Church by the Coptic Church in the fourth century.  What did Copts deliver to Ethiopians (think of faith, language, hymns, tunes, musical instruments, culture, divine liturgies, ..etc.)?  Another example is the starting of the Russian Orthodox Church in the eleventh century by the Greek Orthodox, what did the Greek deliver and what they did not?  I believe a comparison between the Ethiopian Church and the Coptic Church now, would reveal a lot.  Similarly, a comparison between the Greek Church and Russian Church will tell you the whole story.  Also, even comparing the Egyptian Coptic Church to the British Coptic Church or to the French Coptic Diocese in France or to our new Coptic churches in Africa would help us building a good envision of the future "Coptic Mission." This was just a beginning for our dialogue and let's continue.  In Christ,Victor Beshirhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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Hi Uncle,I know that we already have a missionary church in Canada (St. Maurice and St. Verena). This church was opened specifically to serve people of many different ethnical backgrounds. Father Pishoy Salama (the priest of that church) had come to talk to us once in Ottawa about evangelism and missionary work, and about why he felt it was important to have a multicultural church.  I think this would make it much easier for converts (having new churches that are missionary in nature), since I think that our church congregation is not necessarily ready to accept western converts in the church. Here are a few things I read on the church website: **The church of St. Maurice & St. Verena Toronto, Canada**Fr. Pishoy Salama is serving this church which is multicultural in nature.  He has organized a class for the catechumens who desire to join the Coptic Church.  **Our Mission at St. Maurice & St. Verena**A ministry of love, integration, and outreach * This ministry is for the glory of God the Father, His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit the Comforter.
* A Coptic Orthodox Church in its faith, doctrine, traditions, and teachings. It is under the direct leadership of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church.
* A faithful community to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, eager and enthusiastic to grow spiritually and to be a positive influence in its surrounding.
* A worshipping community which offers praise and glory to God.
* Ministering to diverse members of the body of Christ from every nation, tongue, and tribe.
* Missionary in nature; spreading the Good News to the world.

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|  On May 31st, our beloved father H.H. Pope Shenouda III spent quality time with our congregation listening to our greetings by 15 members who spoke mainly in their mother tongues, giving us a deep spiritual word about making the Church live in us, as well as answering our questions. His Holiness, in his heart felt love, uttered a very unique statement to the church members saying: “I want to be a member in your congregation”. Here is their website:  <http://www.smsv.ca/index.shtml> Please pray for meMarina ===================================================== Victor Beshir <beshirv@gmail.com>  |

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Hi Marina,I am glad you give us this details about the **The church of St. Maurice & St. Verena Toronto, Canada**.  In addition, we have another Coptic Church for Americans in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, then the church served by Fr. Athanasius Iskander in Canada, and there are news about starting one in California.  So, thanks to God.  If you or someone else close to the church of St. Maurice or any of these churches, please try to enrich the group with their works.  I believe this is the right direction and I wrote about it ten years ago in my evangelism lessons that were reviewed by one bishop and read by other bishops, preists and others.  Thanks Marina.In Christ,Victor Beshir=============================================================================

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**H. H. Pope Shenouda III has also blessed Fr. Angelos and the congregation of Mississauga to start the 2nd. Missionary Coptic Orthodox Church in Ontario, Canada, St. Maximos and St. Domadios. I was blessed to share in its first liturgy celebrated on New Year’s Eve served by Father Maximos Rizkalla. The church is part of the many churches served by Fr. Angelos and the 8 priests that help him.****We pray that H. H. Pope Shenouda III will continue to grant his approval for many more Missionary Coptic Orthodox Churches all over the world. Please pray for these badly needed churches.****In Christ****Laurence Henry**

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Dear all, Peace and grace,We have been following the dialouge, and discussing it amongst the three of us here at home since it started, and we thought that the best thing would be for us to pay a visit to st. Maurice and st. Verena Church in Toronto and find out more about this evangelism oriented church and share our findings with the group, and we planned, God willing, to go tomorrow and attend the Holy Liturgy there. So, since Marina and Uncle Victor also thought of the same thing, we wanted to let you know that God willing we will visit the church tomorrow , and if abouna Bishoy has some time after the liturgy we will also talk to him and then update you on this service. Please pray for us,In Christ,Ashraf, Suzy and Peter

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Having churches like the church of st Maurice&St. Verena Toronto need a lot preparation and a lot of time , till then why we can't have this idea in our present churches by doing especial services in different time than our normal services for serve the people from different ethnical backgrounds. Hananhttps://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif

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Dear All,Happy Epiphany,I just want to comment briefly on what has been said so far. In my humble opinion, to call an evangelistic or missionary church a Coptic Church is wrong. For attaching Coptic to the Church, means it follows the rites and the heritage of the Coptic Church. And if we do and strip the heritage off that missionary Church, then we open the door to stripping the rest of our churches from the Coptic heritage just to accomodate converts. I believe that either approach are totally the wrong way.What we need, I believe, is to do what Uncle Victor advocated. That is start new churches for the converts that have the Orthodox faith but have its own culture. I will take the British Orthodox faith as an example as it was mentioned in this discussion. That Church does not have the word "Coptic" attached to it for it does not follow the Coptic heritage but the Alexandrian belief. That means it recognized the Coptic saints, follow the Aleandian Holy See and any canons that its council dictate. Yet in prayer, she has her own melody, her own tunes and her own liturgy (St Jacob's).Also, if we look at the Catholic Churches in Egypt they call themselves the Coptic Catholic, that means they follow the Coptic heritage, they use Coptic language, Coptic hymns exactly like the Coptic Orthodox. In fact if you hear on of their liturgies, you will not recognize the difference unless in very very few parts (like the Creed). Yet these churches follow the Roman See; meaning they have the same faith, do not recognize the Orthodox saints and only the Catholic ones.Again, if we look at St Paul, he established the Churches and named them after their cities; i.e the Church of Corinth, the Church of Phillipi, and so on. In my view, the idea of accommodating the converts on account of our beloved Coptic Church is sad and unacceptable. So, to sum it up the idea of having a missionary Coptic Church is technically wrong as you will be imposing the Coptic heritage on the new converts. Instead, the idea is to share the Orthodox faith, the Coptic Church received from Christ and then let the culture, heritage, language take over (as long as it agrees with the Holy Tradition as Br Antonios discussed earlier. Thanks and God Bless.https://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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| Ashraf, Suzy, & Peter, Thank you very much - We will be eager to hear what you have to report back to us! Your brother,Patrick============================================================= |
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 Ihab wrote:> In my view, the idea of accommodating the converts on account of our beloved Coptic Church is sad and unacceptable.To accommodate beloved cultural issues, Egyptian or else, at theexpense of some God's children eternal lives does not sound likeevangelistic spirit.To call a church Coptic or not does not matter... but their and oursalvation does matter.your weak brother, a sinner,  +Sh============================================================

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Shenouda,I appreciate your viewpoint, but you either missed my point or I did not make myself clear. Not everyone understands or appreciated the power of evangelism especially among the simple minded people who do not look at the 'global' shepherdhood of Christ. By forcing changes in language, melody, ... in existing parishes or churches to have an inviting environment for potential converts, existing congregation will be affected and will get lost in the process. So, if yoy have read my whole email, you will notice that the best approach, in my view, and that is followed by many Churches even the Coptic Church, is to establish new churches that only "cater" to the new converts. The Catholic Church had difficulty in attracting Copts, what did they do? They allowed the converts to use the Coptic culture so as to speak to them emotionally, psychologically, .. and the converts would not feel that they have lost their identity. Whether this is right or wrong is not the question here but the whether the approach is successful.When the Coptic Church esablished the Church of Ethipia and Eritria and other places in Africa, she followed the same approach.So, the sad part about stripping culture and identity from the Coptic churches in order to attract converts is not, in my view, the right opne as already members will be lost.Thanks and God Bless

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Dear Shenouda,In last email, I missed to address your comment "To call a church Coptic or not does not matter...". It definitely does matter to whether to call a Church Coptic, Russian, ... just as it is important to call a Church Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant.For a Church without an identity is no Church. When I call a Church Coptic, I know where that Church comes from and the basis on which it had received it faith. Also, the identity allows one to know what are the rites, language, culture of a Church and by so doing s/he can choose to participate in that Church tradition. I assume you do not go to an Eritrean Church just because it is Orthodox and follow the  same faith as the Coptic Church. For its identity is different  than yours and its culture is foreign to you. In America, there are Catholic Churches that are called Roman Catholic and those that are called American Catholic. What is the difference, the former follow the Roman or Latin rite, the latter follows the American one.That brings us to the point of how important it is to:First not impose the Church culture on others and secondly not to strip the Church of its identity for by doing so the Church looses its identity and the believers get lost.Thanks and God bless.

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| Ihab, I think what you said is very insightful and good!! I may be wrong, but I think you hit the nail on the head (as the expression goes). An "American Orthodox Church", a British Orthodox Church, and a "Canadian Orthodox Church" (ABC : - ) would all be daughters of the Coptic Orthodox Church (and as such, have her "DNA", spirituality, and be attached to the See of Alexandria) and yet each one could develop within the Holy Tradition according to their unique culture & language without interfering or detracting from anothers while all being in fellowship with all the other miaphysite Orthodox Churches - very insightful (in my opinion).   That would be the "blueprint", right,  the British Orthodox Church? Would others please share your thoughts on this? Personally - and I am just sharing my feelings - I found this thought very appealing: an **American Orthodox Church** (Or Canadian Orthodox, Mexican Orthodox, Japanese Orthodox,  etc..) where the ancient songs and the ancient liturgies would be conducted within the cultural settings that would allow each indigenous group to understand, feel, and appreciate the ancient worship and faith of the One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Anyway, Thanks, Ihab, very insightful.   Patrick  =============================================================  |
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Dear Family,Thanks to Ihab for his technical definition. The names of churches or missions is beyond the scope of this discussion.  Also, The e-mail titled, "Coptic Mission to North America," does not imply a name but rather a topic of discussion.  However, to clarify the name issue-without any intention to get into determination of names or jurisdictions-let me share with you the following facts:1-  On June 2, 1974, a group of french people joined the Coptic Orthodox Church.  H.H. Pope Shenouda III ordained their leader a metropolitan, H.E. MARCOS.  On June 18, 1994, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III raised the French Coptic Orthodox Eparchy to the full status of **French Coptic Orthodox Church.** (See: <http://eocf.free.fr/eglisep_eng.htm> & <http://orthodoxwiki.orgThe_French_Coptic_Orthodox_Church>)2-  Our two dioceses in Africa named as : 'Cotpic Orthodox Bishopric of African Affairs,' and 'Coptic Mission.'  All our churches, monasteries, and hospitals in Africa named as 'Coptic,' although they serve different African nationalities.  To give you some examples: St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church, Johannesburg, South Africa; all our churches in Kenya are registered under the name 'Coptic Orthodox Church'; the certificate of incorporation of our church in Ghana, West Africa, is registered as, "Coptic Orthodox Church of Ghana."(see: Come Across And Help Us, book 1,2, 3, by H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos, 1993, 1996, 2003), (See: <http://www.copticmission.org/>)3- As a rule-except for the British Orthodox Church-all other churches, built by Coptic missionaries, for other nationalities and attended by congregations from different cultures are called Coptic Orthodox.(<http://www.britishorthodox.org/>)4- This is similar to naming all Catholic churches in USA-with a few exception- 'Roman Catholic Church', even though they represent American culture and not Roman culture.  However, they called 'Roman' because they are under the jursidiction of Pope of Rome and they follow the Roman Catholic tradition.  After this quick clarification, I just like to say what is important to us is the understanding of our mission:  its methods, its obstacles, and the ways to overcome these obstacles.  In addition, it is also imperative to study what happened to our mission, here in North America, in the last 30 years and to listen to the outcry of the converts.  In summary, we need to live the reality of the Coptic mission and to work together, with the grace of God, to make it more fruitful and more stable.        In Christ,Victor https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif==============================================================

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The reason that the British orthodox have that is because they are not of the lands of immigration. They are pure british people. For the immigrants, we have our bishop his grace bishop angelos. They have metropolitan seraphim because they are their own denominations. so i believe that to change the names of the churches is to complicated and could eventualy cause problems. We in canada have a chapel for the missions and it is a coptic chapel. For liturgical serviecs, we follow coptic rights. for getherings we use a completely non orthodox method. The only reason we should be breakeing apart the churches is for traditional things. I dont think it would be a good idea to change the liturgys(personal opinon) and therefor, if the meetings like bible study and all that are not coptic style, that is fine.My humble 2 centsRayO ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!  (Ezekiel 37:4)   ===========================================================

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Dear Family,I say again and again that **this discussion is not about changing the Divine Liturgy or our praises or our Coptic heritage at all.**  In fact, **we all against changes to the Tradition t**hat we received from the Lord and His apostles; **we're preservers and guards of this holy Tradition.** **Our discussion, by all means, is not about the current Coptic Churches in North America.** **Our discussion is about the new converts and how we overcome obstacles** that stand in their adherence to the Coptic Church.  Overcoming these obstacles is for the sake of their salvation, for the sake of reaching out to North America, and by no means, it’s to change our Coptic Orthodox Tradition.  **All the discussion is about this group of converts only and it does not affect anybody else in the church.** At the end, it is an act of love from the church to the converts.   We all, including converts, love our Coptic Church, our priests, and our beloved bishops.   We will continue to pray for our beloved church and her Pope. bishops, priests, and servants. In Christ,Victor Please remember that Nobody dares to change the Holy Tradition.  https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif=============================================================

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Dear all,Let me clarify one thing. The name is not the issue, rather the rite, the culture, the language, the music, ...etc. I will pick on the music or the melody of the Coptic hymns.It was said, and I agree, that converts more than likely will not be attuned to the long Coptic hymns and will likely not adapt to it. We all agree that faith is more important than music. However, music allows the soul to "submerge" in that faith and grow in it. For just as food is necessary for the body to grow, so is music necessary for the soul.Now, let's explore the idea of using the same Coptic churches, as we know it today, in the land of immigration (i.e. North America) as a missionary churches. Let us also for argument sake, we will dedicate some services just for the new converts, and in those services we will not use those long hymns because they are not part of the converts' culture. Instead we will use some Western melodies and hymns that suit the new culture. I personally find a huge problem with this. Here is my thought process and please correct me if I am wrong:First Argument: **The same church that serves the ethnic Copts serves another ethnic group in two different ways.** Concerning the faith nothing wrong with that but the confusion this will create for the whole congregation is huge and the integration between the two ethnic groups will never materialize. Eventually the two groups will be separated.Second Argument: **The same church that serves the ethnic Copts serves another ethnic group in the same way.** This is the optimum solution. But from experience, we already know that this is not possible as we will be imposing a culture on another group. Someone would ask, why not make our churches more accomodating to the converts by changing our way of worship such as use only English, or use short hymns and forget the "ooooo" and the "eeeeee". I do not accept that and the ethnic Copts wont and we will end up with the result we reached in the first argument. Or yet worse, either the new converts would leave, or the ethni Copts do.The real solution that has been experimented and was a success is really to have a totally seprate church for a particular ethnic group. In Africa, we have the Ethipian, the Eritrean Churches which were served by the Coptic Church. Also, we have the other missionaries churches served by Bishop Antonios. These were established primarily to serve a particular ethnic group using the language and the culture, when appropriate, of that group. In Figi, the same story as in Africa. In Japan, the priest is ethnic Japanese and serves the Japanese people. In France, two french bishops were ordained to serve the French people and so on.It is not just the Coptic Church that uses that model, but was and is used by the Catholics, Russians and Greeks. For the record, these Churches have tried what is proposed under the Second Argument and failed. In fact in my town, there is a Russian Church that was trying to serve the ethnic Russiand along with the American converts. Culture clash was the result; the ethnic Russians wanted to use the authentic Russisan music and the American converts did not like it and the Church split.So why go through a failing process when we can avoid it? Please, share your thoughts  ....Thanks a nd God BlessIhab

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Dear all,Peace and Grace,As promised, on Sunday evening we went on our first visit to the Church of Saint Maurice and Saint Verena in North York, Ontario, to attend the prayers for the Feast of the Theophany. below is a description and (not an opinion) of what we saw.The congregation currently does not own a physical church location, and accordingly they rent a banquet hall that is in a Greek Orthodox Center in the area. The hall is very large, clean and well organized. The setting of course inside the hall is that of a church, with rows of seating and the icons placed at the front against the wall, and a temporary altar.Prayers started around 6:00 pm with the "Vesper Prayer", followed by the "Lakkan Prayers" at 6:45pm, ending with the Holy Liturgy 8:00 pm - 10:30 pm.That night, the congregation was composed of approximately 85% Egyptians and 15% none Egyptians. (We don't know if this is the normal composition, since this was a Sunday night service that was preceded by a Sunday morning liturgy, but the photos on the church website suggest a larger percent of none Egyptians).The none Egyptian congregation encompassed different ethnic backgrounds: Afro-American, Asian (Pilipino and Chinese), Hispanic, Caucasian.Among the 10 or so deacons, there were 3 none Egyptian deacons, all wearing the Coptic deacons' Tonya and Padrasheen. Two of the three none Egyptian deacons were serving in the altar.Upon entering the church (hall) we were greeted at the door by 3 young ladiesBoth during and after the service, we haven't heard any Arabic spoken in the church, we noticed that even the Egyptian congregation were communicating in English, which seemed to be the agreed upon setting of the church.Observations and comments:The entire service (vesper, Lakkan and Liturgy) I would say, was 90-95 % English and 5-10 % Coptic (hymns like Ti Shory, Epouro, Zoksapatry,Kyryalisone) and the liturgy was prayed the exact same way you would find it in a regular Coptic orthodox church, same tunes, same music, only in English.some families sat together (Egyptian families), but seating was mostly women on one side and men on the other side.Even though the majority of the congregation were Egyptian, and even though the liturgy was prayed in the exact same way as in our churches, however, we felt we were in an English Canadian Orthodox Church, that is accommodation to both none Egyptians and Egyptians, rather than being in an Egyptian Church that is accommodating to none Egyptians.On the huge Projector screen used to display the service for the congregation so that they can read and follow, they didn't use the same 3 column (Arabic/English/Coptic) format we have in our church, instead an English only book was displayed, except for parts that had Coptic hymns and deacon responses, and these were displayed in English, Coptic, and Coptic written in English.The none Egyptian congregation were all taking part in the prayers and responses, using the same tunes, hymns, etc... and we believe they must have been members of this church for a long time because they knew the hymns and sang with passion. Two of the three deacons knew by heart all the responses, and were praying them in harmony.Throughout the service, Father Pishoy would pause, and explain what's going on.. he would comment on the next service and explain the reason why we do it this way. Before the readings, (which were from The Gospel of St. John and the epistle of St. John) he commented on the nature and characteristics of St. John's writings and words always found in his writings (Love, Life, and Light). Before the Lakkan prayer Father Pishoy also explained the meaning of (Epiphany Vs Theophany, the difference, and the use of the word in the Orthodox Church).At the time of the sermon, Abouna Pishoy did something interesting and different. The sermon was not actually a sermon, but an exchange between him and the congregation, he would present a point or a question and a young deacon passed among the congregation with a Microphone, for them to comment, respond, and express their opinion. It was an interesting Text based discussion (the gospel reading was displayed on the screen and the discussion went around it).We thought that Father Pishoy meant to have the sermon in this format to create a sort of a break taking into consideration the length of the service for none Egyptians (6:00 - 10:30), as he ended the discussion by saying, now we had a break, let's get serious and start focusing on the sacredness of the Theophany events and contemplate during the liturgy on the spirituality, etc.The Liturgy continued the same in English, with some Coptic, until the fraction and communion. At this time, after the prayer of the fraction, a choir of four ladies came to the front, at the right hand side, across from the deacons chorus, and they started chanting English Christian songs (none Coptic, using western melodies) that were displayed also on the screen. One of the ladies had a small musical instrument that was like a "rattle" that she used with the singing. they sang about 4 songs in beautiful harmony, and finished when Abouna was done and ready for the sprinkling of the water.During the announcements after the service, Father Pishoy announced a number of ministries, activities, a spiritual day, and a trip. They have different ministries and activities, and are very involved with homeless services, and other missionary services within the community, that are run on frequent and regular basis.Father Pishoy also directed the congregation to the book display at the back of the church and toldthem we received a collection of new books that you can choose from on your way out. All books were English (mostly Pope Shenouda translated books). We noticed that the liturgy was exactly the same as the liturgies what attended in our Coptic orthodox church in Mexico : same hymns, tunes, sung in a different language, with a different sermon format, and in Mexico the ladies also sing their traditional songs at the time after the fraction and during communion.We spoke with father Pishoy briefly after the liturgy and will go back soon for a better understanding of this service, as we didn't get a chance to discuss with Abouna, but would love to attend more services there.As mentioned above, these are our observations and not opinions. The only other comment to be added, is that there was something that showed in everything that Father Pishoy did during the service, and that was extreme patience, love and respect, and somehow this was felt in a very tangible way. He was also very deliberate and articulate in everything he says during the service, to make it understood by all. It is needles of course to say that his English is fluent (I believe Father Pishoy lived in canada since his childhood).In Christ,Ashraf, Suzy and Peter==============================================================

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Irini nem 'hmotWith all due respect mr Ihab, i have an opposing viewpoint. You said the following quoted."Let me clarify one thing. The name is not the issue, rather the rite, the culture, the language, the music, ...etc. I will pick on the music or the melody of the Coptic hymns."I on the other hand speak of the exact opposit. I belive that the right and the traditions of the COC(coptic Orthodox Church) is crucial and esential when copts are evangelizing to non copots. It was in this coptic faith the St. Mark our first preacher came to egypt and spread his jesus. It was this right that the church has set for us and that the fathers who are full of the holy spirit had organized. While definatley it was the faith of the coptic fathers that preserved the holy faith, make no mmistake, the rights and traditions were esential. It was the many years of COPTIC monasticism that lead st. Antony into the knowledge of god that he would later share with the world as he went to battle Arius alongside St. Athanasius. from that example we can  clearly sea that the tradition of the church is important. while doctirin is the most important, tradition is very important.    You mentioned changing the hymns in the church. Particularly the melody. My personal opinion on this is that the hymns that our church have presented are much different than any other culture. Im sorry for my strong generalization here, but the hymns in protestantinism are targeted at the emotions. Yes they praise God but it is an emotional praise. It is a shallow effect. The coptic hymns Target the soul and therefor while they may take time to "penetrate"(if you will) they have a much more long term and they have a much greater effect. The hymns that have been handed down are very specil and therefore, i believe that this is the exact thing that should not change. In regards to the language, we could for these people use only english and even try translating the hymns into coptic. However completely removing these hymns would be a loss. This is just my opinion. Fogive me if anything i said was wrong or offending. I have utmost respect for those who discuss but i have listed my opinionForgive meRayO ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!  (Ezekiel 37:4)   ============================================================

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+Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,This discussion has already brought fruits to my heart as well as manyother hearts who have been following the opinions of everyone.  In ourchurch St-Mary in Montreal, we have a mass every second Sunday in thechapel (200 persons) for English and French speakers, new converts andyouth.  The youth of the church manage all, the singing, the hymns,the organization and the services.While this mass is on, there's another mass inside the church inArabic only.  The following Sunday, the mass is inside the big churchin English, French, Arabic and Coptic.The youth meeting is every Friday from 7 pm to 11 pm and it's all inEnglish from 17 and up and in French from 12to 16 years old.The newly married from non Egyptians stand next to each other insidethe Church on Sundays.We keep it simple as there Chinese, French, Italians, Lebanese, Greek,Ethiopians and many others.Just wanted to share what we do in our Church.God bless,Mary ==============================================================

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 **"I on the other hand speak of the exact opposit. I belive that the right and the traditions of the COC(coptic Orthodox Church) is crucial and esential when copts are evangelizing to non copots. It was in this coptic faith the St. Mark our first preacher came to egypt and spread his jesus. It was this right that the church has set for us and that the fathers who are full of the holy spirit had organized."** May I speak as someone from a Western evangelical background who became part of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate nearly 15 years ago. St Mark did NOT bring the Coptic Orthodox rites and liturgical traditions to Egypt. He was not Coptic, he was a Jewish missionary. His native languages were some sort of Aramaic, some Hebrew perhaps and maybe some Greek. When he evangelised there was no Liturgy of St Basil and no Coptic hymns, indeed for centuries most of the church life in Egypt was conducted in Greek. When the other Apostolic missionaries went to places like Armenia, India and Persia, or even to Rome, they also went as Jewish people whose native languages were not Armenian, or Indian, or Persian or even Latin and Greek. And when they arrived they introduced a Church which took account of the culture of the place where it was being planted. Therefore the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is also ancient, does not use Hebrew or Aramaic or Coptic, it used Armenian. And the great Father of our Oriental Orthodox communion, the successor of St Cyril - who seems himself only to have used Greek - was St Severus, who seems only to have used Greek - perhaps he knew some Syrian. If it was important for St Mark to preserve the original language of the faith then why were the Egyptians not told that they must use Aramaic? Why is the chant based on ancient Egyptian forms and not ancient Jewish ones? Why are the rites of the Armenian Church rooted in the Armenian culture? Why are the rites of the Syrian Orthodox Church rooted in Syrian culture.Why are the rites of the Indian and the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches rooted in their own cultures. Indeed when missionaries went to Ethiopia why did they not insist that the Ethiopian Christians merely use the Coptic rites? As a British Christian I am proud to be a member of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate. I am so often inspired by the lives of other Coptic Orthodox. I am committed to the faith of the Coptic Orthodox tradition and the wider Oriental Orthodox communion and I have written quite a few papers which prove that commitment. I pray from the Agpeya each day, I wear Coptic vestments while I stand next to my priest at the altar each Sunday. Our iconostasis has very high quality Coptic icons on it. I am even trying to study Coptic so that I can have access to the ancient theological texts. I have visited Egypt and enjoyed the sense of communion which I found there. But...Coptic chant is hard for English ears to appreciate. Of course I can appreciate it on one level, but it does not sound musical. This has nothing to do with Protestantism, it is to do with the long history of musical culture in England. Most English people, if played some Coptic chant, especially if it is more Arabicised, would find it difficult to enjoy. Equally, if the language of worship is not English then it will be very hard for English people to discover the riches of our Orthodox faith. When I was learning about Orthodoxy I could have attended a local Greek Church, but I did not think it right at that time that I should have to learn another language to worship God. I still don't. When St Mark came to Egypt he did not insist that the Egyptians use his own language, but their own, which was generally Greek in the main Christian centres. When the Coptic Church evangelised Ethiopia the missionaries did not insist that the Ethiopians use the Coptic language nor did they teach that it was only the Coptic rites which were properly Orthodox. It is entirely commendable that ethnically Coptic Orthodox Christians should seek to preserve the musical and linguistic culture in which the Orthodox faith has borne fruit. But it is also bearing fruit here in England in the English language and with an English musical tradition, as is the practice throughout Orthodox history. Mission will be almost impossible if it is necessary for the person who wants to find Christ to also take on another local national culture. I will never pass as an Egyptian, but I am not called to do so, indeed Pope Shenouda insisted that this was not the mission of the British Orthodox Diocese, but that we were to reach British people with the Orthodox faith in our own culture. Almost entirely this means making use of the Coptic tradition, but language and music are the roots of who we are, and it is necessary for English people to become Orthodox in our own language and musical tradition. I do think you generalise a little too much. Many English hymns are translations of ancient Greek and Latin hymns. It should be entirely possible to translate Coptic hymns into English and set them to English tunes which are related to the Coptic but which are according to Western understanding of music. An Western Orthodoxy does not mean Protestantism. It means simply an Orthodoxy which belongs culturally in the West. It may well be a Spanish language Coptic Orthodoxy, a French language Coptic Orthodoxy or an English language Coptic Orthodoxy. The faith is the same but the cultural expression takes account of the identity of each culture. There were British Orthodox Christians when St Cyril was on the throne of St Mark. This shows that it is not necessary for the Coptic language and music to be used to be Orthodox. I do not wish this to taken as an argument. But as a British person who is committed to Orthodoxy and mission I must express my own opinion as someone who has converted. In Christ Jesus our Lordhttps://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif=============================================================

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Thanks so much Peter for this viewpoint. The dilemma I see we are faced with here in North America is that the Coptic Church is still relatively young and immigrants are still coming in great numbers and need to be served. How can we serve and evangelize?My thinking is there has to be separate mission with dedicated priests and "separate" churches whose sole purpose is to serve the non ethnic Copts. Of course this would not be possible since there are no great number of converts who would necessitate the establishment of such churches. However, we have a good number of youths who want to reach out and a missionary Church would start with these youths or such persons who want to evangelize. In my view, these missionary churches would have a complete liturgical hymns and praises suited for the Western culture.A good start is the St Maurice church in Canada. This model needs to be duplicated and take a more formal shape. With that being said, I have to add that the reason we are unable to reach out to the Western culture, is because we are using the same church establishments that serve the ethnic Copts as evangelical churches. But, there is a big difference in culture, attitudes, ....etc and the converts feel lost ant really part of the community, which is the essence of the Church to be one body.Thanks and God Bless.

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Dear Peter,Thanks for your message, your input is very enriching as it comes fromactual experience. It also echoes what Patrick offered earlier.I agree with you that language should not and can not be an obstacle or aprerequisite for someone to accept the faith... when we were discussingthis I felt a similarity between this and the Jews, at the time of theapostles, who insisted that new converts to Christianity must go throughthe Jewish circumcision, etc,  first before becoming Christians.6  Now  the  apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.   7And when there had been much dispute,Peter  rose  up  and  said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a goodwhile ago God chose among us,that  by  my  mouth  the  Gentiles  should  hear the word of the gospel andbelieve.   8 "So God, who knows the heart,acknowledged  them  by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as [He did] to us,9 "and made no distinction between us and them,purifying  their  hearts by faith.   10 "Now therefore, why do you test Godby putting a yoke on the neck ofthe disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?   11 "Butwe believe that through thegrace  of  the  Lord  Jesus  Christ we shall be saved in the same manner asthey."When we joined the last two missionary trips to Mexico, I started to learnthat without fluently speaking the people's language, I can't really carrythe message I went there to carry. It is true that love and deeds areimportant, but they alone in an evangelism setting are still limited. Ifelt the great need for me to learn Spanish if I was to truly be of benefitto the Mexican people we evangelized... it didn't cross my mind that theyneed to learn English or Arabic to be able to learn the faith.. that is myrole if I were genuinely concerned about carrying the message of salvationto them.... and that's why I am eagerly learning Spanish now.I believe that Language and music are not something that jeopardize thefoundations of our faith... otherwise, we would be like the Muslims aroundthe world, for whom Arabic could be a language they don't speak, yet theystill need to read and recite the Quran in Arabic, which leads tomultitudes of people who live their lives believing in what they don't evenunderstand... and we can't do thisPatrick, your story carried this meaning when a voice came from amidst thecrowd saying let's talk to the dying man in his language which we havelearned, but people were busy doing other things, trying to rescue himinstead of talking to him to understand where he was hurting..My message here doesn't imply that I don't love and cherish our Copticheritage, hymns, and language.  I personally consider our weekly "tasbeha"a time spent in heaven.... I started, recently, to develop a sincerefondness of this heritage and the Coptic language , which led me to joiningthe Coptic convention in the saint Shenouda Monastery, and I am still in myfirst steps towards uncovering the beauty of this heritage.... but I alsounderstand that even when I didn't speak the language or fully understandit, it was deeply rooted in me through years of Coptic liturgies, praises,etc, which is not the case for others....And again, my message is about the language and the music and not aboutfactors that could compromise our faith or dilute it in any way.This is just my opinion as I really don't know a lot, specially with thewealth of knowledge and contributions already offered on this discussion soplease forgive me if the examples i used above sounded irrelevant...In ChristSuzy===========================================================

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Thanks to God Who accepted us, sinners, to share in His service, although not worthy.I followed all the discussions with an open heart and an open mind praying that God shows us the right path.Everyone shared in the discussion reflecting his/her background, emotions, and thoughts, but all in all each person was sincere and faithful to himself/herself and to the group, which is a true Christian spirit.Everyone added something to this discussion; therefore thank you due to all.Are we close to what my beloved brother Rida asked for?  I say close, but we need more:+ We need to know details on how the mission Coptic Churches pray?+ What divine liturgy they use? What tune they utilize?  What language they preach in?+ We need to have videos to show divine liturgy, Vesper, Praises, & sermons in these churches+ Then we need to support our initiative with vivid examples from the history of Christian mission, and more specifically from the history of Orthodox missions. More importantly, **we need to start an evangelistic revival in our local Coptic Churches**.  Yesterday I sent an e-mail explaining one of the most powerful methods to attract people to our churches, using **church open-house**.  **We need to start this program in every church**.  If every open house attracts seven new  comers to the English or French Bible Study that you invite visitors to attend during the open house,  then we could have a good number of indigenous who are in need to have their own Divine Liturgy (please note that Orthodox do not use the word 'mass'), their own praises, and activities.  **Please keep in mind we are not asking or looking for starting a new church, or changing our beloved precious current divine liturgy, Tasbeha (praises), or anything related to our holy Tradition.  Again, we are not talking about the current Coptic Churches, but we are only talking about having special divine liturgy and other prayers and activities for the new converts.  Even when converts number grow enough to have a devoted church or churches for them, they would continue to be under the auspice of our beloved Coptic bishops.** Lastly, no matter what is your opinion, this is a discussion, and we'll continue to love, respect, and work with each other in this group.  Thanks to all.In Christ,Victor Beshir https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif===========================================================

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Deal All,I think we are missing the boat in discussing how to evangelize. We have to realize that different people have different cultures and different tastes. We have to respect those differences and as St Paul said, "I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;  and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law***;*** to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ+), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (Corinthians 9:20-22).So, to impose a culture, like the Coptic Music, on another is not the right approach, for every culture has its own taste of music. Even in the Coptic hymns, we have borrowed Greek hymns which is so different, musically, than the Coptic music to the extent we added our own signature on it. For example, compare the way the Greeks sing Agios, khristoc anesti, E parthenos with the way we sing them. Though the words are the same, but the musical note differs.I agree that the liturgy should have the same spirit, but the music should come from the people praying not imposed on by another culture. All the Traditional liturgies have the same spirit, sections, and almost the same words. Yet, when sung by different cultures, they are sung differently.The idea here, is how can we reach others with what we currently have? and how can I speak to others about my faith without requiring them to conform to my culture? I know that we are all engrained in the Coptic culture that we adore, but how can I remove my Coptic hat and do as St Paul did?Thanks and God Bless.Ihab

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I have nothing here to be offensive in any way, and no email has required an apology. Though if I have offended I also wish to apologise. I am very sure indeed that all of us here have the same aim, which is the glory of God and the salvation of souls. If we have different opinions then these are all worth hearing. Forgive me if I have spoken out of turn.https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif==========================================================

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Hi Raymond Nothing in your posts requires forgiveness, but perhaps we are misunderstanding each other? I hope it was not thought by anyone that I dismiss the Coptic musical tradition as not being musical. Far from it. But I do believe that it is not music which is appealing to British ears. And I am not sure it could ever become naturally appealing to British ears unless they were those minority of British people who were willing to try and become culturally Coptic. I have worshipped with the Ethiopians and Eritreans and though there music is interesting and moving at times, it is again, not naturally appealing, and after a while the interest wears off. On the contrary, some Russian Orthodox music is both interesting and appealing because it is based on the same musical language as that used in Britain. Greek Orthodox music on the other hand also sounds rather dissonant to British ears. The meaning of the hymn is not really the issue, because the words can be translated into English hymns. I have tried this with some Coptic friends. But then there is still the issue of the music.  I certainly don't want to take away your own Coptic musical heritage and tradition, but it is not mine, and I am not sure it can ever be mine in a natural sense.  You do say that the spirit is what counts, and I agree with you 100%. But it seems to me that Orthodox native people in Britain worshipping in English but being rooted in the Coptic Orthodox tradition bears this spirit better than Orthodox native people in Britain trying to become culturally Coptic. For myself I know that I would not have become Orthodox in the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate if I had had to learn Coptic or Arabic to do so. That is just a fact of life. It is the same reason I was not attracted by the Greek Church here worshipping in Greek and when I mentally look around the people I worship with on a Sunday I am not sure that more than one or two would remain if we worshipped in Coptic or Arabic. In Christhttps://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif=======================================================

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As I think about my service here in the UK in my own mission we are planning that we will have a monthly, English language study evening where some aspect of the Orthodox faith will be presented and then there will be time for questions and discussion while we have coffee and a biscuit. This means that we need to choose topics which will interest non-Orthodox rather than the subjects that interest us, or at least we must present these topics in a way that will engage with non-Orthodox. My own special interest is in the Christological controversies of the 5th and 6th centuries, and these could perhaps be the subject of an evening for people undergoing catechesis, but I doubt they would be generally interesting to a non-Orthodox who just wants to learn about Orthodoxy. What I also think we need is an introduction to Orthodoxy that exactly suits our mission, and that means I need to knuckle down and get writing one. There are other introductions but most are American - and there is a cultural difference between even the US and the UK, or are more focussed on the Coptic heritage. For the mission I am engaged in with others I think we need to stress the universality of Orthodoxy, that it is rooted in the history of the British Isles, and that our own mission is part of one of the most ancient of Orthodox communities. In the particular circumstances we are working in it is not so useful to stress the Egyptian-ness of Coptic Orthodoxy, it is more important to stress the Orthodoxy of  Coptic Orthodoxy. Things will be different in different places. But it is hard even for my colleagues at work to understand how I am part of an Egyptian Church - why? what has that got to do with the UK? that sounds really odd and alien? etc Indeed that is why we use the name the British Orthodox Church within the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, because people are fairly open to the idea that it is possible to be Orthodox and British, less understanding of how to be British and Egyptian. That is just the way it is. We are fortunate that all of our services are in English, but I think that there is still some imagination needed to put ourselves in the shoes of a visitor. Some things will be strange - can we have some information about these strange things so people can be prepared and have an explanation. Vestments? Icons? Incense? No shoes? Candles? Sit or Stand? Why such a long service? How does the liturgy fit together? Do I need to leave when the Deacon tells non-members to leave? Perhaps a short (15min?) video which explains these things using video from a liturgy with a welcome from our priest? That could be on the website and made into a DVD. I am just thinking out loud about things we might do this year if the Lord wills. But I think it is a good principle to put ourselves in the shoes of a visitor. We could imagine visiting a liturgy in a different Orthodox communion - how would we feel in an Armenian liturgy? How would we follow along? What would seem strange? Or perhaps there is too much which is familiar to us in even an Armenian liturgy. So what would it be like at a Hindu ceremony? (I am not suggesting we attend one). For many protestants an Orthodox liturgy is THAT different to what they are used to, and many protestants do have a sense that Orthodoxy is pagan. I very much enjoy everyones comments here. It is good that despite our different opinions and ideas we have the same aim. In Christhttps://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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In misissauga we currently have a chapel that is called the Orthodox Cahepel of St. Maximous and St. Domadious. It is a chapel dedicated to non egyptians. It is a growing service where we have meetings and masses and bible studies which i find very beinificial. Im a personaly one of the planners of this project and we are planning on starting alot of activities. If you woud like to send us ideas, i would really welcom them. Mr. Peter, i understand that you have a good knowledge of missionary as you knew christ through it. would you like to share? we need your inputIn XC-sinnerO ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!  (Ezekiel 37:4)

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Thanks to Ashraf & Suzzy & Paul for the detailed report of your visitto St. Maurice & St. Verena.Based on the discussion, and on the report Ashraf sent and theinformation Mary Youssef, thankfully, shared about the service in St-Mary in Montreal, there is the following proposal of the OrientalOrthodox Church, that serves & Evangelizes:+ We follow the model of St. Mary in Montreal that one Sunday allcongregation get together, and the other Sunday we have an Egyptianservice, and on parallel another North American service.+ The North American service follows the model of St. Maurice 7 St.Verena service, with melody customization .Thus, we have the 2 options available (actually 3), with an emphasisthat we are one in Christ (no divisions), and I can list many benifitsthat I am omitting for beverty.

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May the peace of the Lord be with you allI would like to make a small comment about the "language" issue. I was raised in the Catholic Church, before and after Vatican 11.   Before as in the Coptic Orthodox Churches now, the Liturgies were said in two languages, the vernacular of the  people, and Latin.  Just like the Coptic, the Latin was used for the most sacred parts of the Liturgy, the beauty was that everyone, no matter where in the world one would travel, the Latin was used for the Holiest parts of the Liturgy.  Everyone learned the Latin, not because they really had to, but because of their holy love for God.  Just as we do for the Coptic, learned  in  Sunday schools, and hymn classes.THEN, Vatican 2, the Liturgy had to be prayed in the  language of the people, sans Latin.. Well, there was an initial out -cry, but also a larger hurrah, the people were so happy. But what did this do?  Several years ago, maybe 10-15, or 20,  a new faction of the Catholic Church started to emerge, those of the "Latin Rite"  Some churches started to re-implement the Latin into the Liturgy.  They saw that by removing the Latin, it also had a domino effect on other  **Traditions as well.** **The** church in the same light of bringing the church to the masses of the people to make it more accessible, started to  "add too much water to the concentrate",hence different things started to change.....I will not go into it now. Now we have some Latin Rite Catholic churches, and others that are not. This past generation or two, do not know the Latin!  A forgotten tradition.  Do we want this to happen within our Coptic Churches?   **I pray not**.  For me, coming into the Holy Coptic Orthodox Church, yes has been work, however hard, it was as more than beautiful and holy. I was determined to learn this language, that is a blessed holy Antiquity of the church. Yes, I believe that the Liturgy should be sung/prayed in the vernacular and Coptic. It is OUR IDENTITY!    I have my Psalmodea with the three languages, so that as I sing, though I now know most by memory,  I use my Psalmodea, to read the English to keep ingrained in me the conceptual meaning of what is being sung. This is my most humble opinion from someone who has "been there" and do not want the same split to happen in  OUR CHURCH.   I say OUR CHURCH, because as you probably all now know, I am a  Coptic Orthodox Christian, nowadays.   :-)God bless you allpray for me Most of all pray for the light and love of Christ to be imbued into the hearts of those who don't know Him, so that only His love exists.  His most unworthy servant and yours   +Tasoni Demiana Mar Yohanna al Habib  :-)https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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| Peter and all, Thank you for the things you have written. I believe Peter is correct in his observations.  When I was a Protestant, many of us did not know anything about the Orthodox faith except that it was "dead religion" and had departed from the historic Christian faith (how ironic, don't you think?). When I told my friend from seminary that I was going to visit an Orthodox Church he said, "aren't they ethnically centered?" to which I answered "I don't know".  He then told me that in Clearwater (Florida) he knew of a Orthodox Church but thought they were very "ethnocentric" (if my memory serves me right, that was the word he described it with). So, what was it like for my wife and I to visit an Orthodox Church?  First, I must say that I read about Orthodoxy before I ever stepped foot in an Orthodox Church so I could try and understand it.  The first Orthodox Church we ever visited was an Eastern Orthodox Church that was part of the Orthodox Church of America (OCA).  It was both beautiful and foreign at the same time.  First, everyone stood up where ever they choose (there were no seats except for against the walls) and, during the sermon, everyone sat on the floor.  The people were very friendly (in my experience, I have found Orthodox people - whether Eastern or Oriental - to be, by and large, some of the most gentle and friendly people I have met).  The liturgy they use is that of St. John Chrysostom and they "sing" the whole liturgy.  It was a church full of former Protestant believers (and Russian-Americans).  It was beautiful but different from what I was used to - but I appreciated the "God-centeredness" of the liturgy as opposed to the "man-centeredness" of the Protestant churches.   My wife, however, felt very uncomfortable.  One day, on the way home from the service we got into an argument and she, being frustrated, blurted out that I was taking her to a "foreign religion" (and this was the OCA - a church full of American born Americans!).  Anyway, we worked through it but it was tenuous - at times - in the beginning. As time went on, I learned about the Oriental Orthodox and, for various reasons, wanted to visit it so I did what I always did - studied it first from a safe distance to see what it was.  I e-mailed H.H. the Pope but, of course, never received a reply back! : - )  I watched a portion of a liturgy on-line and talked to my wife.  I gently approached the issue.  I told her I would like to visit and she said that was fine.  Then I ventured to let her know that she would have to sit on one side and I on the other...and cover her head in Church (and she thought the OCA was a foreign experience! : - ).  I waited for her reply and she said okay.  With that "green light" I e-mailed the priest and asked if it would be okay if we visited.  He e-mailed back and we went to church our first Sunday at 8am.  Honestly, we had absolutely no idea what was going on.  The priest's wife was extremely helpful - may God remember her great kindness on that great day.  That first service was beautiful, long, and wearing on us all at the same time.  The average Protestant service is 1 to 1 1/2 hours max - we were there in church from 8 am until almost 11:30 (and then Sunday School after that)!  Had it not been for Suzie, it would have been an extremely bewildering experience.  So, for that first time, here were the things that are "different" from what Americans are expecting to encounter in Church: 1. For Protestants, the whole liturgy (you really have no idea what is transpiring before you)2. The Language (what is an "Abouna"? : - )3. The length 4. the separate seating (it is very intimidating to visit in the first place and then you're separated - so your only form of comfort is taken from you)5. You feel like a minority (and the more blond your hair, the more you feel you stand out!)6. Head covering for women The number one thing that helped us that first visit was the love and welcoming arms that the people showed to us - had they been cold, we probably would not have even tried to get over some of the obstacles we faced. Of course, these thing are not a problem for me now (I know what an "abouna" is!) but I am only trying to relay what a first time visitor experiences - how very foreign it seems to an American.  Most people won't take the effort to try and make sense of it all and will just not come back - I don't say that to be discouraging but to just state a cold, hard fact. I don't know if this helps or not, but I just wanted to share with you the view from an American visitor as we think our outreach strategy through to reach the indigenous people of the country that we happen to find ourselves living in. May the Lord bless our efforts and guide us,Yours in Christ,PatrickP.S. Please do not think I am saying the 6 items identified above should be changed - because **I am not** (well, except for the language and seating - in a missionary church).  I am ONLY stating the things that will be obstacles to non-Egyptians who visit the first time. |

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Dear Tasoni Demiana Thank you for yoru insights. I would have to say that the issue with the Roman Catholic Church as far as I can see was not so much with the language, it was the fact that there was and is a liberal wing within Catholicism that wants to see a great many traditions and doctrines modified and even abandoned.  This is not the same situation as with Coptic Orthodoxy, which is by and large very conservative in all regards. A great many Catholics did not know what was going on in the Mass and had not done so for centuries. Certainly in England one of the reasons that the Protestant movement was successful was that even people who were sympathetic to Catholicism realised that it was important to their spiritual growth that they be able to worship in their own language. And a great many of the laity never understood Latin and had to pray their own prayers during the mass. My local Anglican priest is very sympathetic to Orthodoxy, and it was in a chapel in his church that my own mission community started praying. He regularly visits Russian and the Ukraine and finds it very hard to understand that so few people know what is being said in Church because it is not in their own language but in a special Church language. I would not want this to be the case for anyone, let alone someone that we wanted to reach with the Gospel. I don't think there is any prospect of the baby being thrown out with the bathwater in Coptic Orthodoxy. There is no movement for women priests, for guitars in the liiturgy, for lay people distributing the holy mysteries, or for the abandonment of monasticism, for allowing homosexual relationships, or for the criticism of the Bible and our doctrines. These were all present in Roman Catholicism before Vatican II and simply used that council as the means to push their own agendas. All that is being considered here is that the language be that of the people. I do not believe I should ask a single British person to learn a single word of Coptic or Arabic to be able to worship God. If they later choose to show an interest in the Coptic language then that would be great, but I would not feel right placing the Coptic language, or any language, as an obstacle to people being able to worship God. Indeed I would have to learn Coptic first before I could evangelise people and ask them also to learn Coptic. It will not happen in the UK where I think people are even more conservative than in the US and even more distrustful of what is 'foreign'. The multitude of languages at Pentecost is surely the theological justification for preaching to people in their own language? Had I had to learn Coptic to discover Orthodoxy within the Coptic Orthodox tradition I very much doubt I would be where I am now, and I say that as someone who tries to be 110% committed to our Church. It seems to me that it is necessary that we have English language liturgies for mission (as others have described that does not mean abandoning the Coptic language or Arabic for those who are from Egypt or wish to worship in those languages, indeed mission to Arab speakers in the US would be most easily conducted in an Arabic liturgy) and that those liturgies be part of a package of activities such as English language Bible Study and Teaching. These should be part of the organisation of the Coptic Church, perhaps with a specialised English mission priest, and there should be efforts made to make sure that neither group become separatist. So every now and again there could be a combined liturgy with English, Coptic and Arabic, and there could be other events where everyone got together as long as everyone was able to participate. It would be wrong to have an elderly Egyptian left isolated without very good English in an English meeting, as it would be to have an English speaker left feelig isolated with everyone speaking Arabic. I don't sense that anyone is suggesting diminishing the Coptic tradition, but it cannot be necessary for people to learn Coptic to become Orthodox. Otherwise our Armenian, Indian, Syrian, Ethiopian and Eritrean brethren could not be Orthodox. For quite a while I have been thinking that the liturgy is not a Gospel Service, it is not designed for evangelism. Indeed in the past non-Orthodox would not have been allowed to attend most of it. I wonder then if we should not use an evening Raising of Incense in a more evangelistic manner. It is shorter for instance, it has scope for a sermon which could be used for teaching, and there is time for fellowship and discussion afterwards. Or even beginning with an Agpeya prayer group to begin to introduce the Coptic Orthodox spiritual tradition in a way that is not overwhelming. This could also be used in the context of prayer, study and fellowship. It is authentically Coptic Orthodox but offers some degree of flexibility which is not appropriate in the Liturgy. I wonder even in churches with the facilities and resources about enquirers leaving at the dismissal of the catechumens for instruction and coming back for the blessing at the end. That is what they used to do in all Orthodox Churches. In Christhttps://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://mail.google.com/mail/c/photos/public/AIbEiAIAAABDCJu1ns2UnLvLeyILdmNhcmRfcGhvdG8qKGQxZjhlNTAxYzc4NWNlODk5MjMxOTQxMWQ0N2Q0YzY5Y2Q1MDJkYzgwAXoE-HHH-vs06PghaHS9Y8ROz9eK?sz=24

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Dear PeterPeace and graceThank you for your reply and insights also.  I  understand where you are coming from. We must  wear the shoes of the others to know from where they are coming from to have true understanding and then to react to this knowing...I invited my brother and his wife to a Coptic Orthodox church where they were living.  This was after they met two Coptic Orthodox priests who came to their house. They were impressed with them and their service and care.  So, they did not mind coming to the morning Liturgy.  To my dismay, after the Liturgy, he looked at me bewildered and said,  "I don't know how you do it, how did you pray? I didn't understand a thing." Well, the whole Liturgy was in Arabic and Coptic.  They loved the  people, but needed milk and nourishment.   They are not me and I am not them.  I felt bad and will never forget the look on his face. About the languages, if we look around us at the other churches, they offer their prayer services, Catholics or Protestants, , in the languages of the immigrants, in addition to English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, etc. The people come to church thirsty to pray and to receive spiritual blessings and a certain awareness.  With some of our Orthodox churches that have two altars, we could offer one for the Egyptian immigrant and one for the immigrant from other countries, which includes English. Then the people will have the free will of either going to the Arabic/Coptic Liturgy if they wished as well as to one which "speaks" their language.  However as many Orthodox churches are doing, as you have mentioned, we cannot stop with the Liturgy only.  There are many other services that must be offered in order to provide continual nourishment.  I guess God was preparing me for my service now....and so I  HADR'd . I must always remember to be able to fulfill the other...to empty myself and to meet their needs. We are all different and have different needs.  Thank God for now we have  the St. Basil Liturgy book in the three languages, so that there isn't a problem to follow the Liturgy, until we have enough priests and churches to serve the other languages.  There is a St. Basil Liturgy Book as well as Agpeya in Spanish that is being used in Mexico and Bolivia, we perhaps could us them for our Spanish speaking population in the USA! I have always believed that where there is a will, there is a way, and We can do all things through God who strengthens us. As for the Latin, many many school children  and adults,  knew what  et cum spiri too too o.  was  (Ke to pneumati soo )( Coptic)  For those who cared to  pray, we learned what the Latin meant.  It is all relative to the person, situation and spirituality.   Thank you again for your well written thoughts.  They are much appreciated :-) In Christhttps://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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Dear Tasoni Thank you for this interesting and helpful post. I think that is shows that many responses to mission are required, and you are clearly gifted in a variety of languages and cultures and are being used by God to be a bridge between people. Do not think that I dismiss the study of Coptic. I will be making an effort to learn Coptic this year myself, and I would like to pick up some conversational Arabic. What you say about your brother is what I want to avoid. I want to avoid anyone gaining a negative view of the Coptic Orthodox Church because of the language issue. Rather I want all the riches of the Coptic Orthodox tradition to be made available to them so that they come in their own time to be able to feel at home even in a Coptic language liturgy. But it cannot be the first experience of Coptic Orthodoxy or it may make it harder for people to dig deeper. In Christhttps://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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Since history of missions is a great teacher, I am going to briefly mention some of its great events.  Here is the first one:  "Another great effort was done by the monk ***Marcarius Gloukharev***, who worked asa missionary worker in **Siberia** for fourteen years. However, his greatest marks onevangelism were in his working hard in formulating an Orthodox theology ofmissions. He was also the person who dreamed of instilling a missionaryconsciousness among all Russians and of **establishing a missionary centerfor training missionaries."** I consider his dream is essential, especially for our Coptic Orthodox Church. We need to **instill a missionary consciousness among all Copts.** An understanding of evangelism as an objective set by the Lord Himself for the church is very essential for any success in evangelism in our Church.   Humbly, I like to share with you that I have the dream of instilling a missionary consciousness among Copts. I like you also to have this dream too and work toward make it a reality, with the grace of God.In Christ,Victor Beshirhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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Another example from the modern history of mission:"Ten monks from the Russian Orthodox Church evangelized in **Alaska.**Tens of thousands were baptized by the close of the 19th century.However, evangelism of Alaska in history books is always associated with a poormonk named **Herman**, who neither baptized anyone nor translated any books. Heturned down the honor of becoming a priest to stay as a humble monk. His great"**passive evangelism**" was in **living a holy life** and allowing the light of God to shinethrough him and thus attracting many to see the essence of the Christian life."I am adding Herman to our discussion to remind us with the importance of living a holy life.  Noticed that the ten monks baptized tens of thousands; yet, the example of Herman helped more in attracting people to Christ.  In fact, the best evangelists in the history were those who lived saintly life, starting from John the Baptist, to our Lord, to St. Paul and the rest of the apostles, to contemporary saint such as Pope Kyrillos who through his holy life attracted tens of thousands-if not more-to live with God.  Amazingly, now after thirty six years of his departure to heaven, Pope Kyrillos continued to enlighten people's life and guide them to Christ.  In Christ,Victor Beshirhttps://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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| Uncle victor, i agree 1221% whith what you are saying. I think it is important that we start a missionary center for training missionaries. We need to have the right attitude towards being true evanglists. Maybe, in your local church or in our local church we could start missionarymeeting where we actually LEARN how to be missionaries. This would probably help the situation alot. In any case, i believe what Rida said was ver correct. We are here, now, and ready. Its time to alk to our bishop and do this. Maybe these issues that were discussing here should be brought to the attention iof the bishops. In XC-sinnerO ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!  (Ezekiel 37:4)  |

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Dear Raymond,+  Thanks to God, we are closer to having a missionary training center.  Last year, we had three missions to Rochester, where they learned about missions.  This year we have another three missions in Rochester.  Thanks to H.G. Bishop Youssef in his support for applying a new curriculum to teach principles of urban missions through attending three levels of study while working on mission: beginner, intermediate, and advanced.  As a matter of fact the firs one would be held March 13-16. We still working on it. Thanks to Fr. Shenouda Maher and Brother Antonios.  +  Yes, we need to have evangelism groups in each church not only to evangelize but also to work among Copts to instill the mission consciousness among Copts.**I repeat my call to all, please first take the blessing of the priest of your church and then start an evangelism group.** Make prayer meetings as a regular part of your activity to see fruits.+  H.G. Bishop Youssef is the spiritual leader of this group and all our activities are done under his auspice. So, he is aware of what we do.  +  As I mentioned before, we need to start church open-houses to attract people to the church, then to bible study meeting.  When we have a number of converts then we can ask for special divine liturgy.  +  Please keep in mind, **we need to go in steps:** **First**, work to attract enough people to a bible study**Second**: teach them about Orthodoxy during the course of bible study.**Third**, when they're ready to embrace Orthodoxy, then talk to your priest to have special divine liturgy for them.**Fourth**, when the numbers of converts increased, then you may talk to your priest to have the converts coming on a different day for a divine liturgy and activities.**Fifth**, when you have enough number of converts to start a church, then we talk to the bishop of the area or the Pope about having a new church for the converts, based on the factual numbers and activities.In Christ,Victor Beshir    https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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In Canada here, we are working very well on mission. A group of servants from my church go out every friday and we go downtown from like 7-12 at night and we just do whatever we can. We go to the downtown streets, give out cloths, hats, food and such.Id like to share an amazing story with me that happened with a man named Geoffrey.My Friend Robby and i had gone downtown with the group. we split from the group in 2s so that we can get as mush as we can done. Me and Robby had some hats to give away. So were were walking and we saw a man. I offered him a hat. He smiled and accepted. He then asked for some gloves. I didn't have any, but robby had the ones that were on his hands, so he gave them to Geoffrey. He was touched and he began to cry. He asked us the following,"Why would you care about a poor useless worthless black guy lack me." I said"who said your "useless?"He said, "why would you say im Useful?" i said Jesus Christ never said you were useless, he loves you, why would i then say your useless. He then changed his whole attitude into a very defensive one. He said, "Hey man, you want to know something about Jesus? He killed my dad" LOMG STROTY SHORT-his dad was a missionary in ivory coast, he used to travel with h is kids and spread the word until one day, some men hung his father and Geoffrey was forced to watch. So we talked to him about the blessings of christ, My friend Robby then gave him his personal bible and agpeya. I now see Geoffrey on a regular bases and he is doing quite well. Soon i plan on bringing him to the missionary church and have him meet with us. Pray for Jeff.So the services in canada are really growing, we opened up a food kitchen, a church and many mission groups. Take a look at the following website <http://all-4-christ.com/aboutus.aspx> . That is just one of our many groups. The church down here need s your prayers. Please pray for us. In regards to the Rochester missions, i have many friends just waiting to go. The are very interested in mission and are very goood servants. When updates come up, please lett us know.IN XC-sinnerO ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!  (Ezekiel 37:4)   https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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**As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.** **Acts 13:2-3**Dear beloved Family Serving GOD name is the duty of every one who had the LORD in his life and in the place JESUS want him.In the parable of the Minas GOD didn’t worry about the ( how many) but that they ( work, obey).  We are not only trying to teach others about our LORD, but also, before any thing, we need to grow in our love to our CHRIST.As we get closer to JESUS CHRIST, we also work as a light to others, to let them see and know about our faith.  With this knowledge, GOD works in their hearts, in every one as his need.The problem every one has faced was that we used our limited resources, forgetting that our FATHER is unlimited and that we doing all this for him. That is His work; that is His desire that every one comes to Him. He knows every one by his/her name and what is in each one's heart.We are different but we all are in the One Who saved us.Thank you all and please remember me and my family in your prayers.https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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Blessed family, we have several concerns about this topic....  1st - about the coptic languageI hope we agree that we do not need to enforce people to learn coptic. This is a personal choice once people have understood the rites and traditions of our church. They can then become interested in their original form OF THE HYMNS and relate the meanings. Coptic is a necessity in every coptic/missionary church to maintain the heritage that was given to us and it is our identity as coptic believers. The majority of copts do not speak on a regular basis but we appreciate it because it is the origin of our beautiful hymns and history. It must be even partially implemented to be maintained but explanations to the language are ALWAYS provided when IT IS used in any liturgy, vesper or lesson. However, it is not a necessity to becoming a believer. IT IS AS GREEK IS TO THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH etc.   For example, we cannot enfore a "battered wife" that we preach to, to learn coptic to become a believer.  However once she is in the church and has believed she herself may seek to learn more about our heritage. We should not emphasize so much on learning coptic because we have explanations to everthing in coptic but our church is dintinguised by the tune of coptic hymns, which leads to our second concern.  2nd the coptic hymns/music To those that went to Rochester or other mission trips, we saw how North Americans we served fell in lllove with the coptic tune hymns!! The coptic hymns have many up and down tunes to reflect the waves and storms that we go through in life,  and if you realise alot of them have repetition of  the Lord's name/forgiveness for our sins. And even better they set the mood of the church. For Passion week, we live the sadness of our sin through the tone of the hymns and the appearance of the church dressed in black. Through ressurection we live the joy of our Salvation by the tunes of joy ...and lights and whie apparel of the church. These same tones are also changed in the tasbeha and any vespers or praise to reflect the mood. Our church hymns is not only a tradition but it is a DYNAMIC life that we live with Christ. Our church is a complete church, it works in unity of hymns, appearence, traditions and ritals, AS WELL as the bible and saint lives readings, to give the Ultimate spirituality we feel when we enter it. So even if at first, it is not in tune to the western ear, with time, they will become habituated with the Spirit of the coptic church and start to live it as it was given to us.  Thats all for now, so in preserving the rights of our church, we are reminding you all to have a blessed weekend!  May God bless and protect you all !! Your sisters in Christ, Amanda and Maryam  https://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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I wonder, if it is so hard for us, who already care about thesalvation of others and evangelism, to agree on a scheme where we canserve "FOBs" (me one of them) and to accomodate new believers, howwould it be with those who do not yet see the necessity of evangelismas Christian duty?Anyway, I would add my voice to Amanda and Maryam.Although I don't see Coptic hymns as a must, but to let the languageobstacle go is a good startd.Copts mistakenly thinks they don't speak Coptic (while Egyptians, evenMuslims, speak Coptic/Arabic dialect, it is not spoken Arabic, it isCoptic mixed with Arabic into a new dialect), yet, because many Coptsthinks it is an obstacle, they would be willing to let language goright away. This part would be easy to convince people, who yet do notsee the importance of evangelism, due to the brain wash we Coptssuffered for 14 century.At the end, we all ought to evangelize, at the least through being alived Bible, each according to her/his gifts. So, to accomodate newbelievers should not actually be a plus, or optional, it is a must,even if at the cost of our identity (being Egyptians), because itought that he increases while I decrease [John the Baptist].https://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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Dear Shenouda"Can you give ideas of how we can serve FOBs while accomodating new believers?" If we have enough a number of believers, I say let's start a missionary church so we do not need to impose on any group or to strip any group of its dear heritage.If we dont and have to use the same facility for both grous, then let's have a separate liturgy (that if we have convert believers). This way, we also are not imposing on any group (FOBs or others)If we do not have converts and just mere interested party, then let us have separate meetings (i.e prayer meeting, Bible Study). Then we when we have converts we can have separate liturgies, separate churches and so on. I am all for preserving our heritage and at the same time reaching out, none of these should impose on the other, but both work together in tandem. If I strip my heritage, I am afraid to say I will strip my faith along the process by striping the richness of my heritage that gave the faith its strong meaning and ultimately I will loose my identity and the capability of reaching out. What I call heritage is the music, the language (Coptic/Arabic), the rites, and the rich history of the Church."*So, to accomodate new believers should not actually be a plus, or optional, it is a must, even if at the cost of our identity (being Egyptians*"This is a very dangerous concept, because loosing one's identity is one without roots. Imagine evangelizing one about Christ and you just say, I am Orthodox. If asked what Church you belong to? You answer, this is not important, identity of the Church is not not important, what is important is that I am Orthodox. This is what the protestants and the non denomenation churches do. Is that what we are aiming for. The identity is a cornerstone in preaching and reaching out and frankly is behind the Bible's message. The whole Bible revolves around ascertaining Jesus' identity. Imagine Jesus apeared and just said "I came out of the Father and thus you have to believe me" with no identity or roots, who would have believed. But the the Holy Spirit goes in great length affirming Jesus' identity and proving His roots. The discussion on this identity issue needs volumes. But I will not go in great length, except to say again and again identity gives a message authenticity and without identity a message has no meaning.Thanks and God Bless

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To help understand the different aspects of what we are discussing, please open the attachment.  In Christ,Victor Beshirhttps://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif

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| Dear Ihab, I agree with much of what you say in your e-mails but I think you may have misunderstood Shenoda.  Please see my comments below in blue... |

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| Victor Beshir <beshirv@gmail.com>  |

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Dear Patrick,I agree with what you said about Christ, He is the center of everything, even our life is not ours but His life in us, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).  He is the bridegroom and He is the Alpha and Omega. **Back to history**, the golden age of the church was during the time of the apostles, because at that time there were no divisions among churches, as St. Paul wrote referring to the God's churches, "Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring" (2 Thessalonians 1:4). Cities' names or regions' names used only to refer to where churches were located.  Then the church lived for five centuries as One Catholic Apostolic Church of God without division or boasting of nationalities or regions.  In fact, at this time, there were only five mother-churches known to the world: Church of Jerusalem, Church of Antioch, Church of Alexandria, Church of Rome, and later the Church of Constantinople was added to the list.  We did not hear during that time about nationalities associated with a church. For example, we did not hear about a Roman church but a church of Rome- just a reference to location.  ***Were the Early Liturgies One or Different?***Having said that, I added each church has its own culture.  A very interesting study done by Hugh Riley titled, "A comparative Study of the Interpretation of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Mystagogical Writings of Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Theodor of Mopsuestia, and Ambrose of Milan."  He concluded his study by affirming that the liturgy was one in all these churches and that was so clear in all the writings of these Fathers.  He added, however, but these litrgies were different since they were practiced among different nations with different cultures. (See Studies of Christian Antiquity 17, Catholic University of America, 1974).  Think about what kind of lesson should we learn from the early Fathers. It is the lesson of **unity of the core, but differences in the expression.** ***How Should We Introduce the Coptic Orthodox Church?***Today, we introduce the Orthodox Church to the world as the church that kept the apostolic faith, the holy tradition, and the rich spiritual hertiage, in other words, as **the Church of Christ,** as He meant it. **Our boasting is in Christ** Who preserved the church. Meanwhile, **we praise our ancestors** who kept the church as it was handed down to us throught their preservance and even through **the blood of millions of martyrs**.  **We offer the world the richness of our church in Christ.** ***What Are the Source of Power?*** Think of a great melody was given to a group of musicians, asking them to keep the melody. Someone will play it with a guitar, another with a harmonica, a third one with a piano, and so on.  The main thing is to keep the great melody.  But it is not imporatant what kind of musical instrument the person uses.  Similarly, **we handed this treasure to the others to keep, but it is not important which language they use or which tune they utilize.**  **The power is not on the language, but is in God's words used in the liturgy or in the hymns.**  What is so powerful tune in one culture is so foregin in another culture and sometimes it is even not acceptable to the ears. **The power is not, then, in the kind of tune, but in the word of God and the spiritual treasure that runs thuough the hymns' words**.  The Lord once said to the Jews, "**Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred?** (Matthew 23:18-20).   **The power of the Divine Liturgy is not driven from the language or the tune it used but from the power of the holy sacrament (mystery).** Tunes are only ladders to help the spirit to be lifted up.  As the ladder could be made of wood or aluminum or plastic or other material and you can effectly use to climb, the same apply to the tune as a ladder for the spirit.  In Christ,Victor Beshir     https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif

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+Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,If the proposal is to follow the example of St-Mary;s Church inMontreal, then it is important to mention that are using a PowerPointon a big screen in 4 languages.Every slide is in 4 columns:  English French, Coptic and Arabic.  Wehave 1 in the big Church and another in the Chapel.Although our Church is quiet big, everyone standing can read andfollow the mass in the 4 languages.I think we got this presentation from New Jersey and I am sure many ofyou are using it too....it really helps everyone to stay focused onthe Mass.God Bless this discussion for the glory of His name :)Please pray for me,Maryhttps://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://mail.google.com/mail/c/photos/public/AIbEiAIAAABECICvxNPdvaqlpwEiC3ZjYXJkX3Bob3RvKig0NTA1ZjFmZDRhZDE0NTE0M2NmZGQzMjVkYjViMjJkYmQyYTRkYWU1MAFAKkwt3g-3Clp8wQO6TvqNzOW97Q?sz=24

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+Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,We just had the servants convention in Montreal.  Our great blessingwas Bishop Youssef who came to talk to the servants of Montreal andOttawa about "Duality"....what an amazing topic!We lived in Heaven this weekend.  You can find the topic soon on thesite of St-Mary in Montreal (<http://www.virginmarymtl.org/>).Coptic Language:Our great Bishop Youssef told us the following story:  Copts losttheir tongues if they would have talked in Coptic.Right openly,  the persecutors would gather the cut-tongues in barrelsto scare the Copts and show them the consequences of talking inCoptic.Nevertheless, our grand parents, fathers and saints kept the languagewhich we should appreciate very much.However, for the non Coptic and new converts, it should not be a mustfor them to learn Coptic as it should come from within as a naturalresult of their maturity within the Church.We should not put this burden on them nor an obligation as it'salready difficult in the beginning.For the Activities of Evangelism in our Church:The person responsible of Evangelism in our Church is Mr. TalatAtalla, I think you know him.  He started in 2005.We pray every Friday from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm in the Chapel forEvangelism.  We have many projects and ideas to share and Dr. VictorBeshir is aware of all of them.Now, we are planning for an "Open Day" in our Church to the public.Also, twice a year in Christmas and Easter, we invite all of theChurches for a singing night.Close to 10 Churches would come and each bring their choir to sing 2-3songs.  It takes about 2-3 hours with a free buffet in the break.  Itis very successful.God Bless and keep me in your prayers,Mary Youssef+++++++++++++++++++++++++++

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Dear Family,I sent you a few lines about the famous missionary Macarius Gloukharev who evangelized in Siberia.  His approach to missionary work concentrates in offering himself as a servant to others to let them see the light of Christ.  In addition, he practiced a long catechism before allowing baptism.  He told his catechumen that baptism is just a beginning, and not the end of their new Christian life.  In his opinion, baptism is a beginning to go from glory to glory in the kingdom of God.  From there, he went on to establish Christian communities to guard and encourage spiritual growth.  These communities became like a light to those who lived in darkness and helped in converting more than half of the native.  In conclusion, Macarius succeeded in establishing quality and depth of faith, and in giving an example of a missionary who lived as ascetic person, giving himself as an example of a true Christian. His vision was outstanding.  Nikita Struve, a historian, wrote about him: "He remains one of the most memorable incarnations of the Orthodox apostolic ideal.  In the beginning he knew the desert, the call to silence and contemplation, the affirmation of the transcendence of Christianity; then, in work, he lived in poverty, sharing the needs of the most humble and bringing the wealth of the Orthodox liturgy within the scope of elementary dialect.  And finally, there came the return to a praying community, to the life that once glimpsed in the desert, a life devoted to the worship and praise of God." Note:Now you see other dimensions of the mission that you need to keep in your heart and mind: life of holiness, long enough catechism, sharing the glory of Christianity with converts, showing the wealth of Orthodox liturgy through making it in simple understandable words, prayer communities, and total devotion to God. In Christ,Victor Beshirhttps://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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                   ***An Important Evangelism Meeting in USA:***July 7, 2002, Atlanta, Georgia, USA========================== Special meeting was held to discuss the future of evangelism in USA.  Participants:1-     H. Metropolitan Pakhomious (a former missionary who evangelized among tribes and slept in jungles of Africa).2-     H.G. Bishop Youssef, Southern Coptic Orthodox Diocese of USA, first bishop to recognize the need for evangelism and lead the evangelism efforts.3-     H.G. Bishop Serapion, Los Angelis Coptic Bishop, a leader of the efforts of evangelizing people of Nubia (North of Sudan and South of Egypt)4-     Fr. Tadros Malaty: a theologian and famous Coptic writer5-     Fr. Luka Wassef, the priest of St. Mary COC, Atlanta, professor of New Testament6-     Fr. Eleia Eskander, the priest of St. Mary COC, Atlanta  7-     Deacon Victor Beshir Conclusions:1-     It is recommended that the new comers instead of starting with attending the Divine Liturgy,  begin participating in a service similar to the old historical catechumen liturgy (liturgy of the word).2-     This service might be done in evenings or whenever it is suitable for the converts and the church.3-     The service includes the following:o      The thanksgiving prayero      "Hitenees" (Through the Intercession) hymn in Englisho      Readings from: St. Paul's epistles, other epistles (Catholic epistles), and the Book of Actso      The Litany of the Gospelo      Reading from the Gospelo      Sermono      Discussiono      Coffee hour     4-       The service is performed in English5-     The sermons would introduce the Coptic Orthodox Church faith, Tradition, Divine Liturgy, mysteries, spirituality, martyrs & saints, and the rest.6- St. Mary Church of Atlanta would prepare a booklet contains this service.  Note:You see the Coptic Orthodox Church, represented by one metropolitan, two bishops, two priests, and a deacon, recognized the need to have a special worship for the converts and s special gathering for them.  In addition, it recognized the need to use the local language, in this case English.We need to revive this service when we have converts by suggesting it to your priest in humbleness.  In Christ,Victor Beshir  https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://mail.google.com/mail/c/photos/public/AIbEiAIAAABDCJu1ns2UnLvLeyILdmNhcmRfcGhvdG8qKGQxZjhlNTAxYzc4NWNlODk5MjMxOTQxMWQ0N2Q0YzY5Y2Q1MDJkYzgwAXoE-HHH-vs06PghaHS9Y8ROz9eK?sz=24

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May the peace of the Lord be with you VictorI attended this meeting and it was one of the BEST ONES that I attended. Here we have a formula, a kind of decree, if you will, that should be sent out, **maybe was** to all Diocese' Churches. I believe that some of our churches, as it is evident with the responses that we receive have implemented some of the below.  I believe that for example Peter in the UK, as well as the churches in Montreal, and in Mexico, have given us examples meeting the needs of the people.  We must realize that it is not easy, for we are an immigrant church in many parts of the globe, with thousands of people immigrating to the USA for example, and the priests are not many to meet the needs of these people. Therefore what is needed is more organization within the churches, departments to take care of the needs of the "newcomers (immigrants), those who have been in the USA for more than half their life, and the converts.  There are Churches within cities who have done so and are very successful.  I don't want to mention one or two, just in case I leave someone out.     "  A  house united will not fall"       We should through these discussions and conferences learn from each other, instead of re-inventing the wheel.  Let us look to those whom have implemented good programs, have them as mentors, and then replicate according to the culture of the people where the church is. Remember even in the USA, culture is regional.I did not mean to lecture, just thinking in response to Uncle Victors marvelous notes that he feeds us with.  Thank you in the name of the Lord.https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gifhttps://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/profile_mask2.png

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| Dear family, In the beginning of this discussion, I had a story that I asked you to finish writing and I believe you have done just that.  Maybe the story isn't finished but the trajectory has been established and we can, somewhat, plot the course of where the story is going and, hopefully, predict the ending. The discussions we had are already producing fruit: In the Southern Diocese, a new evangelism committee has been established by HG Bishop Youssef and in Rochester with Brother Antonios, the Urban Mission now has three levels of study - and, God willing, as people graduate from Rochester they will take what they learn back to there churches and start local outreach of various types to reach their communities.  Maybe both of these events would have occurred without the discussion but the discussion, if nothing else, has highlighted for all of us the deep need to reach out to the lost with the eternal message of God's salvation in Christ.  ***I would encourage each of you to continue pursuing ways to reach your community while maintianing the purity and beauty of the Ancient Faith.*** Okay, thank you again for all that you are doing and your willingness to "go into all the world and make disciples". Below follows the full story with the ending that you wrote. Your Brother,Patrick  A Story of the Citizens of Goodhearted City  Once there was a city in the north named "Goodhearted" and many people came from far and wide to live in this city because of the abundance of jobs and wealth it offered due to an extremely wealthy business man who conducted his business there.   One evening, on a very cold winter day, this wealthy man was walking on the sidewalk and suddenly began to clutch his chest.  He stopped walking and, confused, started sweating profusely.  Pain began to radiate throughout his body.  He became dizzy and immediately collapsed on the sidewalk.   Many of the citizens of Goodhearted quickly gathered around him in astonishment and amazement – amazed to see their benefactor lying on the ground writhing in agony and in great pain.  Their hearts went out to him and they wondered what they should do - so they began to discuss amongst themselves what to do.   "We should try and ask him what is wrong" someone from the crowd offered.  Someone then replied, "yes, that is a good idea but he does not speak our language so we cannot ask him."  "Why can't we ask him in his language – we do business in the local tongue, why can't we ask him?" someone insisted from somewhere in the crowd; but the voice was drowned out by all the commotion.  "I know", someone close to the man offered, "why don't we teach him to speak our language and then we can ask him what hurts?".  Some thought this was a good idea while others questioned this and a debate ensued.   Meanwhile, the wealthy man's lips began to turn pale blue and he stopped moving.  The air was still and the sun was setting and no one was quite sure what to do.   A few of the Goodhearted citizens knew they had to do something so they propped his head up and loosened the tie around his neck while others prayed for him.   God heard their prayers and dispatched seven angels to help the Goodhearted citizens.  The first angel reached a person in the crowd and whispered into his mind one word: "Heart attack".  "Heart attack!", thought the man to himself, "why yes, he is dying from a heart attack!"  Like a flash of light this thought bolted through his mind and he yelled out: "heart attack, that is his problem, he is dying from a heart attack!".  At this, the six other angels whispered in six other minds and in one chorus many cried out: "yes, that is right – a heart attack!" And they rejoiced that they knew what the wealthy man's dilemma was.   Unfortunately, as they rejoiced, the man slipped closer and closer to death.  Noticing this, someone asked "we must act, what shall we do?"  Someone else in the crowd responded, "Someone get a difibulator!"  Upon hearing this, some younger men ran and got a difibulator to help the dying man.   Upon returning, the young men knelt beside the unconscious body and began to take the wealthy man's winter coat and shirt off so they could place the difibulator paddles on his chest to try and save him.  While they were doing this, someone asked "what are you doing?!".  And the young men replied: "we are removing his shirt so that we can help him!" But someone else replied: "But isn't it against the law to take off your shirt in public – we cannot do that – you must stop right now!".  This, of course, stirred quite a commotion in the crowd and people began to debate whether they could take the man's shirt off so they could use the difibulator on him (and it was no small debate).  Some said they could while others insisted that they could not.  All the while, the man's condition deteriorated rapidly.   By now, 10 minutes had passed and the day was done and the night had begun to settle in.  The man's condition was extremely precarious, at best, and the many compassionate citizens of Goodhearted wanted to help but were unsure and wondered to themselves, "What shall we do?...What shall we do?"...   As the people were wondering what to do and questioning among themselves, a young lady, moved with deep compassion, knelt down beside the man and gently whispered into his ear, “Hold on, dear man, help is on the way” and she spoke many other encouraging things such as this into his ear so that he could understand her.  And then, an amazing thing happened – no one was quite sure how it was happening because the man seemed quite unconscious – but it did happen: a tear rolled down from the unconscious man’s eye.  A silence descended upon the people as everyone stared, transfixed on what was occurring.  They watched the solitary tear as it made its way down his cheek and quietly fell onto the sidewalk.  Many became teary-eyed themselves – to see that simple love and compassion had reached so far into his heart while others stood silently and praised God for what they just witnessed.  All of them, however, upon seeing this, were greatly encouraged in their hearts because they knew that it was not too late to help him.   “Quick” someone said, “take his shirt off…” but upon hearing this, everyone paused.  Knowing their thoughts he continued, “…Get his shirts and coat off but leave his tee-shirt on – the difibulator will work through that thin material!”.  At hearing this solution, the young men quickly went to work and everyone rejoiced because they were able to keep the law and yet, working within the law, to also save the man’s life.   All the people started to pray to God in their native language but spoke encouraging words to the man in his native language.  As the people prayed, the young men worked.  “Clear!” yelled one of the men as he began to place the paddles upon the man’s chest.  Once he had them firmly on his chest he pressed the button and electricity flowed into the man’s body, but nothing happened.  So they tried again and got the same results.  They began to grow discouraged and paused to consider the situation.  Then, from the midst of the crowd, they heard a still, small voice singing, “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit…not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit…not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit…” and they looked and, there in the midst of the crowd stood a small child singing these words over and over again, oblivious to what all the commotion was about.   The older men and women then encouraged everyone, “Pray! Pray!, Pray!” and fervent prayers began to ascend before the throne of the Most High as a sweet incense before the altar.  God smelled the aroma of their prayers and was deeply pleased in His heart and thought to Himself, “If my people, who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray, I will hear their prayers, answer them, and heal their land!”  With that, the Lord stood up from His glorious throne and all the angels stood upright and sparkled brilliantly before Him waiting for His command, but no command came…not one word from the Lord.  Instead, smelling the sweet aroma that was continually coming before Him, the Lord smiled and gently blew His breath over the Goodhearted citizens and the unconscious man.   “Clear” yelled the young man one last time.  But before he got the paddles onto the man’s chest the man’s eyes opened and he took a in a deep, deep breath and began to gasp for air.  “Can you hear me?” asked one of the young men and the man, after getting his breath, managed to weakly say, “yes, thank you…”.  No one was concerned about the language but about the man and continued to encourage him in his language to “hang-in there” and told him that “help was on the way”.  While they were talking to him, the men and women all picked him up and carried him to the nearest hospital, bathed him, and tended to his sickness.  In due time, the man became better and better and his family members began to visit him in the hospital and all the citizens and the man, along with his family, rejoiced together while they were in the hospital.   The Goodhearted citizens learned from that incident and reported to their family members what to do in a similar circumstance.  Because of their new understanding, many people were saved and were taken to the various local hospitals where they recovered.  Of course, they were not able to rescue everyone – some just did not respond.  But the ones that were rescued – they were grateful to the citizens and thanked them time and time again for the love, mercy, and compassion that they had shown and for saving their very life!   And they sang a new song:    "You are worthy to take the scroll       and to open its seals,    because you were slain,       and with your blood you purchased men for God       from every tribe and language and people and nation.                                                - Revelation 5:9 (NIV)     |

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Such a beautiful ending Patrick...I loved it because the story has now transformed into a lesson that we havebeen/are learning together..Thank youIn ChristSuzy |  |  |