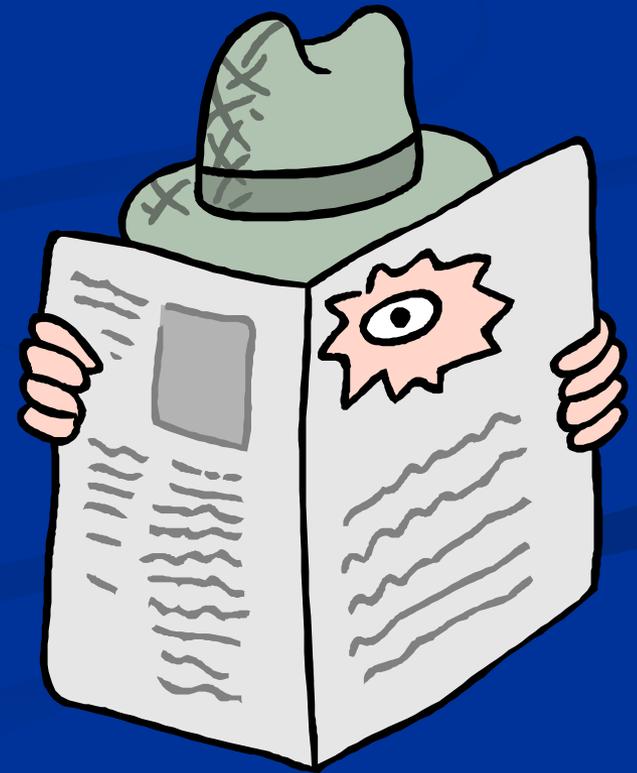


The Holy Nayourz

Are you a
Soldier or a Spy?



Soldier vs Spy

Spy

- His true identity is hidden from everyone
 - Not even His “friends” know who he is
- Will avoid the truth at any cost



Soldier

- His identity is clear
 - He is in uniform
 - Wears dog-tags
 - His allegiance is clear
- Not ashamed of his country
 - His flag is clearly displayed
- Always ready & alert
- Obedient to his leader
- Ready to die for the cause



St Paul calls Christians “Soldiers”



- *Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, (Philip 2:25)*
- *Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: (Philemon 1:1-2)*
- *You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. (2 Timothy 2:3-4)*

Characteristics of the Good Soldier

- He has to always be ready for war. Courageous, ready to fight in order to win or to die, and in both cases he is honoured: ***“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21).***
- His primary concern is heaven – for himself and others. St Paul says, ***“No one engaged in warfare, entangles himself with the affairs of this life” (2 Timothy 2:4).***
- A good soldier learns to fight in order to win, and in this St Paul says: ***“Anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.” (2 Tim 2:5);***



The good soldier obeys his leaders even up till death

The good soldier always gets training for the tactics of war, as written in ***“Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.”***

Persecution WILL come when we raise the flag of our LORD.

We need to be Ready for Battle



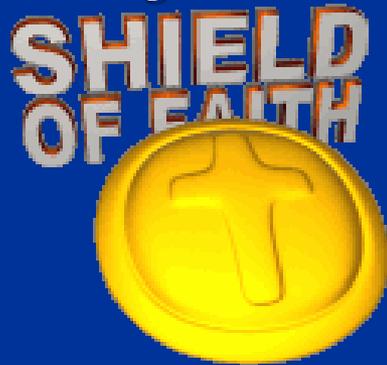
13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.



14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth,



having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;



16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.



17 And take the helmet of salvation,



and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; (Eph 6:13-17)

The WHOLE Armour

not just a couple of pieces...

- 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
- 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
- 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints
 - *pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17)*
 - *Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. (Matt 26:41)*



**Less than the
WHOLE Armour is
not adequate!**

**Unless we are always praying
and always watchful, the
Armour is of no effect!**

The WHOLE Armour

not just a couple of pieces...

■ How many pieces of armour are there?

1. Belt
2. Breastplate
3. Shoes
4. Shield
5. Helmet
6. Sword



The Belt of Truth

14 “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth”

- What is meant by the girdle or the belt of truth?
 - The function of the belt is to hold the whole armour together.
 - Without the truth the armour will fall apart.
- You need to have the right understanding of the word of God.
- Our Mother Eve sinned because she doubted the truth of God... and then everything fell apart.



The Breastplate of Righteousness

14 having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

- What is meant by “the breastplate of righteousness”?
 - The breastplate protects the heart
- What will protect your heart...
 - Righteousness
- We receive this from God by His grace when He died on the cross and from our good works
- When our deeds and behaviour are righteous we can be strong



Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. (Matt .

shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

*15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the
gospel of peace;*

■ What does this mean?

- Our shoes determine how we walk.
- Our walk must be a walk of peace.
- We must preach the gospel of peace. As the Angels did to the shepherds... *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:13-14)*
- Also we must travel from place to place to preach. *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 (Matt 28:19)*
- We must be peacemakers no matter how much we are persecuted.



***Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called
sons of God. (Matt 5:9)***

Shield of faith

16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked

- **Q16** What is meant by the shield of faith?
 - The shield is carried in the soldiers left hand to protect him from the fiery darts of the enemy.
 - The fiery darts are the darts of doubt. We doubt His:
 - love
 - protection
 - word
 - promises
 - forgiveness
 - We quench these dart by faith.

SHIELD
OF FAITH

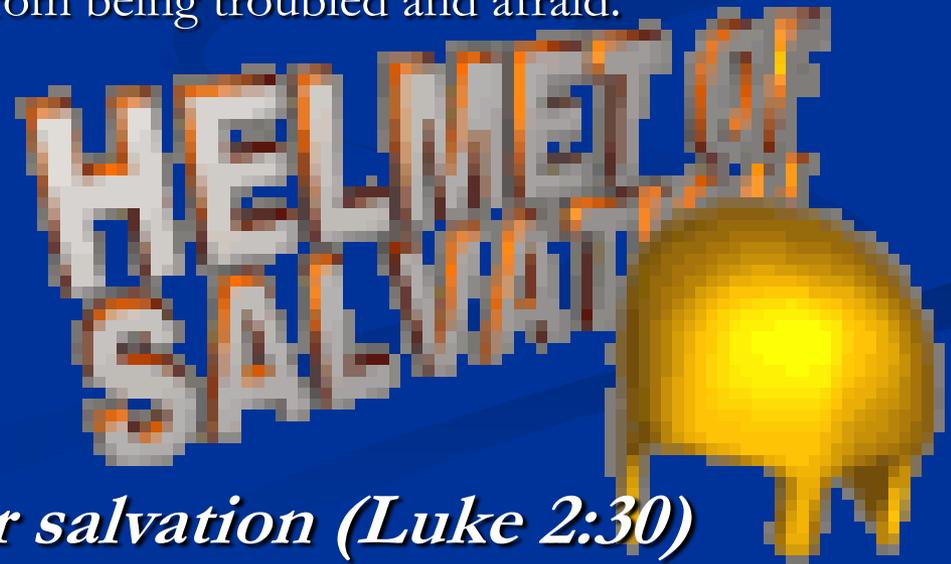


As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him. (Ps

Helmet of Salvation

17 And take the helmet of salvation,

- What is meant by the helmet of salvation?
 - the helmet protects the head and mind.
- God has completed our salvation by His death on the cross... but will we accept it?
 - if we do this will give us peace of mind during the battle.
 - If we do we protect our minds from being troubled and afraid.



For my eyes have seen Your salvation (Luke 2:30)

Sword of the Spirit

17 and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of

God:

- What is meant by the Sword of the Spirit?
 - The Bible is the Sword of the Spirit.
 - because it is written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
- We can defend ourselves from Satan using the word of God.
 - The Lord kept saying to Satan “it is written...”.
 - *But He answered and said, It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. (Matt 4:4)*
 - *Jesus said to him, It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’ (Matt 4:7)*
 - *Then Jesus said to him, Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ (Matt 4:10)*



All TRUE Christians will Suffer

not necessarily physically

- Why did the prophets, Apostles, Coptic Christians and other Christians from the dawn of Christianity get persecuted?
 - Because they spoke the word of God
 - *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Tim 3:12)*
 - *For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake... (Phil 1:29)*
- But why does the word of God cause suffering?
 - Because people do not want to change their lives to accommodate Christ... and the retaliate!



My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. (James 5:10-11)

Why do Christians suffer?

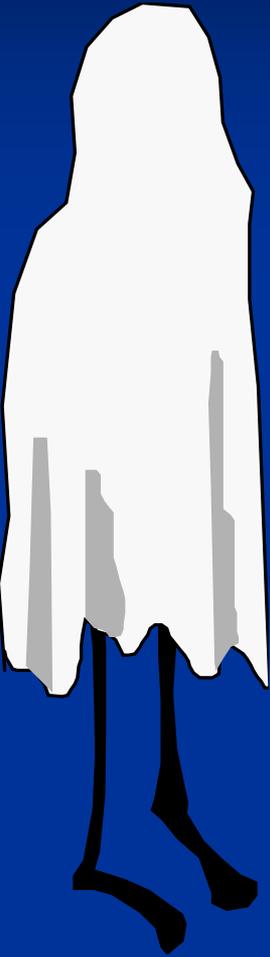
- Why must we be persecuted?
 - Because without persecution we cannot know what it is like to be delivered by God!
 - Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.
 - If you mourn then God can comfort you and the comfort is better than the mourning



But some Christians never suffer...

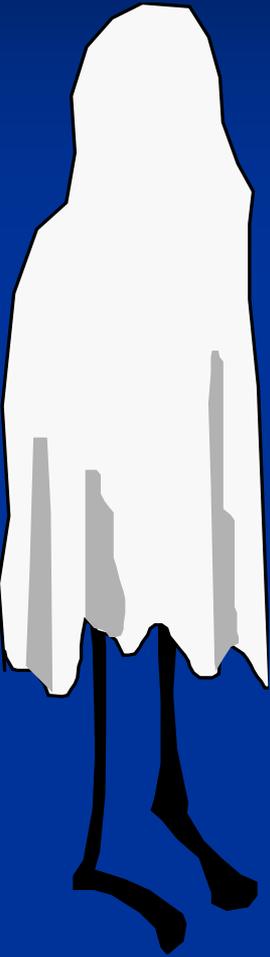
WHY?

- Because we don't speak the word of God!
 - *Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city. (Acts 18:9-10)*
 - are we willing to go through some mocking?
- Does God love me enough to protect me?
- Do I love Him enough to be willing to be persecuted for Him?
- Amen, Amen, Amen we preach your death O Lord. Your holy resurrection and ascension we acknowledge
 - Do we really preach His name? To whom?



Are we ashamed to be called Christians?

- *For whoever is **ashamed of Me** and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. (Mark 8:38)*
- *For whoever is **ashamed of Me** and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. (Luke 9:26)*
- *For **I am not ashamed** of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes (Rom 1:16)*
- *Therefore **do not be ashamed** of the testimony of our Lord (2 Tim 1:8)*
- *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him **not be ashamed**, but let him glorify God in this matter. (1 Peter 4:16)*



Be Joyful when you suffer for Christ

- Be Joyful when you suffer

- *Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. **Rejoice and be exceedingly glad**, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matt 5:12)*

- *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but **be of good cheer**, I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)*



MARTYRDOM



Nayrouz

- **The Nayrouz Feast** (1st of Tout, c. September 11): The word "Nayrouz" is Persian, meaning "the beginning of the year." The Egyptian calendar goes back to 4240 B.C. Copts restored the calendar with the beginning of Diocletian's reign in A.D 284, to commemorate the millions of Coptic martyrs. His reign is considered a golden era in which the church offered true witnesses to Christ, when the souls of martyrs departed to paradise and kept shining as living stars therein.
- This feast, with its joyful hymns, continues until the feast of the Cross (Tout 17, c. 27 September). Thus the church announces her joy and gladness with the martyrs through bearing the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, the sufferings and martyrdom were turned into a source of joy.



What is a Martyr?

- The word “Martyr” is defined as “a witness”
- Martyrdom is the story of the Coptic Church from its inception.
- The witness of the martyr’s blood was greater than any teaching or preaching.
- The Coptic church flourished most in times of increased persecution & martyrdom.
- The suffering Cross has become a symbol of conquering and victory. Whenever there is the Cross there is love. Love does not care for pain or ridicule.
- The Christian is a stranger in a temporary world looking forward to his eternal home in heaven.
- The Moto of the Christian Martyr’s:



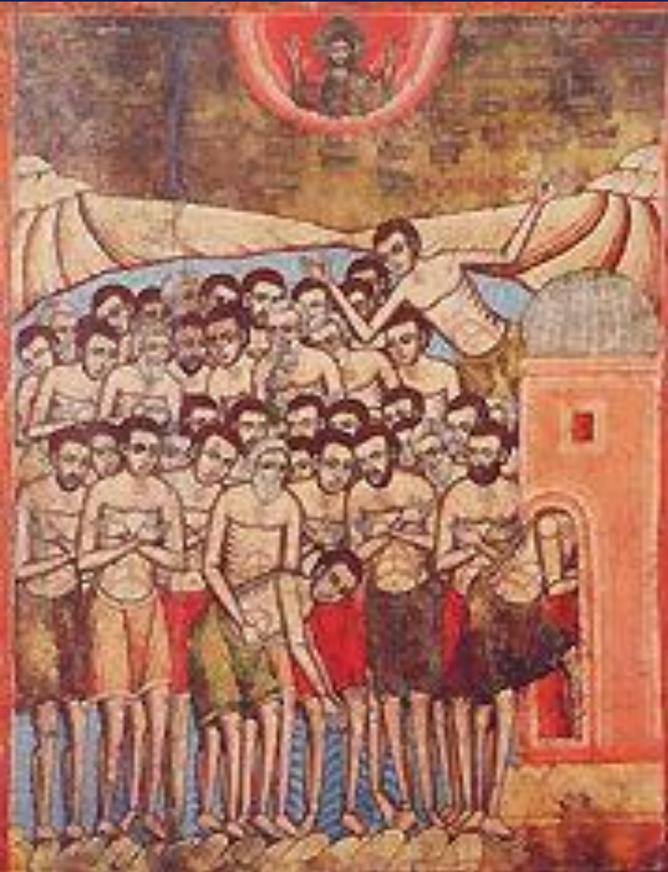
“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

Suffering without fear

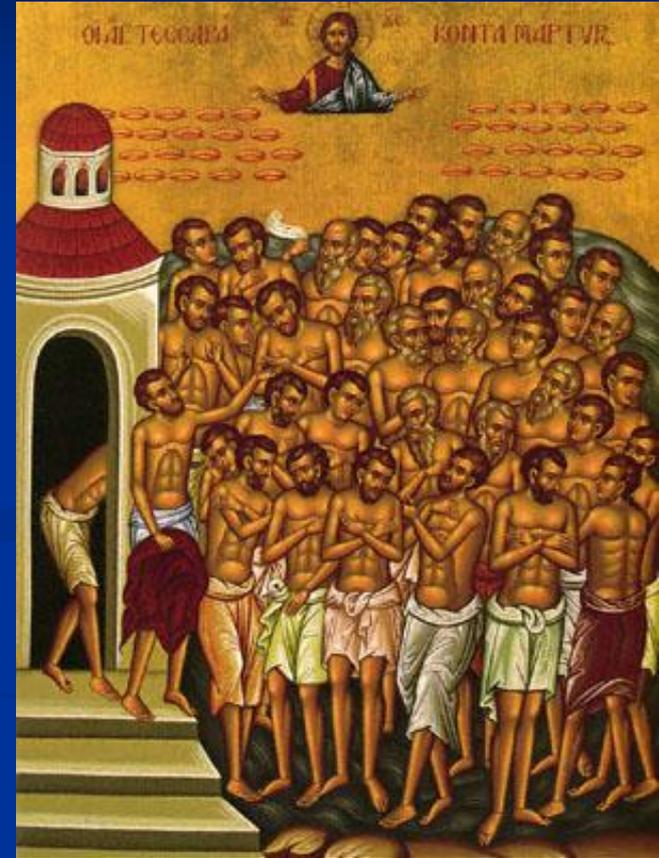
- Our martyrs went to their death with joy, calmness and meekness that caused their persecutors to wonder. What were their motives?
- To the believer, the world is limited as compared to eternity:
- *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Corinthians 4:17)*



Early Church Martyrs



The Martyrdom
of the Forty
Martyrs of
Sebastia.



Our Lord led by example!

Martyrdom started with Jesus Christ Himself, and then His followers.

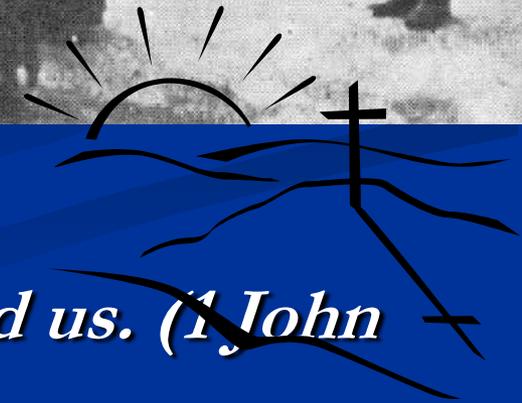
“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (1 Pet 2:21)

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.” (John 15:13)



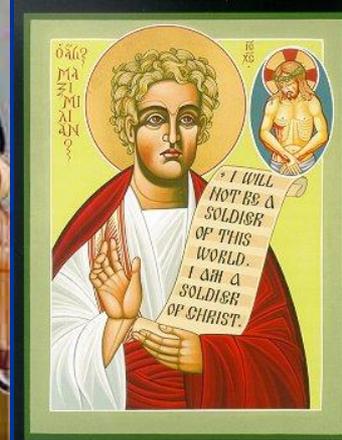
Modern day Martyrs in Russia!

- This is a Picture taken at the time when communism started to take over Russia in the early 20th century.
- Here is a Russian Bishop whose church was destroyed.
- Before this he had taken the plate and cup used for Holy Communion and hid them.
- During this trial he was asked to hand these precious items to the authorities or be killed.
- Out of his love for Christ he refused.
- A few minutes after this photo was taken he was shot dead.



We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:10)

BACKUP SLIDES



■ Now the Lord **spoke** to **Paul** in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city. (Acts 18:9-10)

- may be good to give the servants some points to talk about in the Modern day Martyrs slides.
- Also i think it would be good if we put a few more points on the last slide about the Coptic Church and its persecution over the years.
- May also be good to add a slide of how the kids can witness to the Lord in their life through non-physical martyrdom now a days.

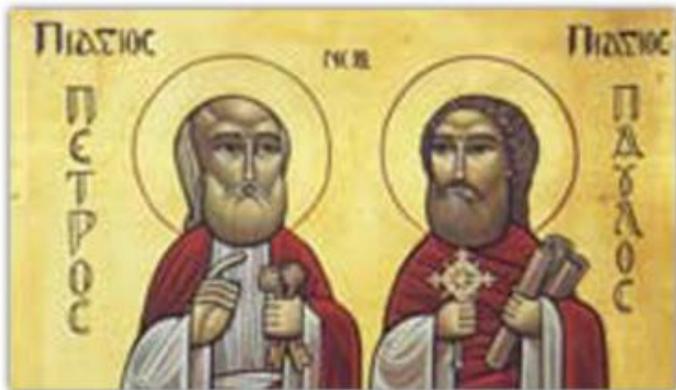
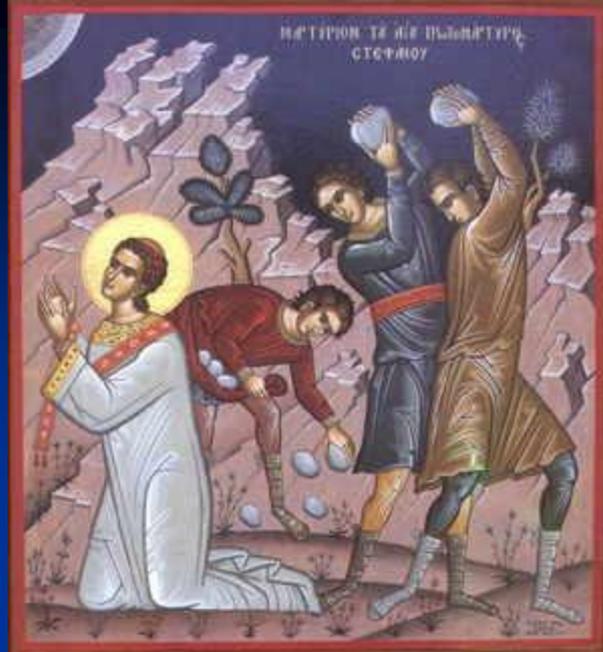
1. Martyrdom, in fact is a daily practice that which every believer should experience, even if there is no persecution, even if he lives in a monastery or lives alone as a hermit or pilgrim. For martyrdom is the continuous participation in Jesus' Crucifixion. St. Clement of Alexandria gives the name "martyr" to the Gnostic (the true Christian) who has achieved ordinary union with God.
2. Martyrdom is an entry into eternity. Oregan regarded the times of persecutions not as hard or sad times but as the true great ages of the church.
3. Martyrdom is a supreme conflict with Satan.

The general church readings are for the followings periods:

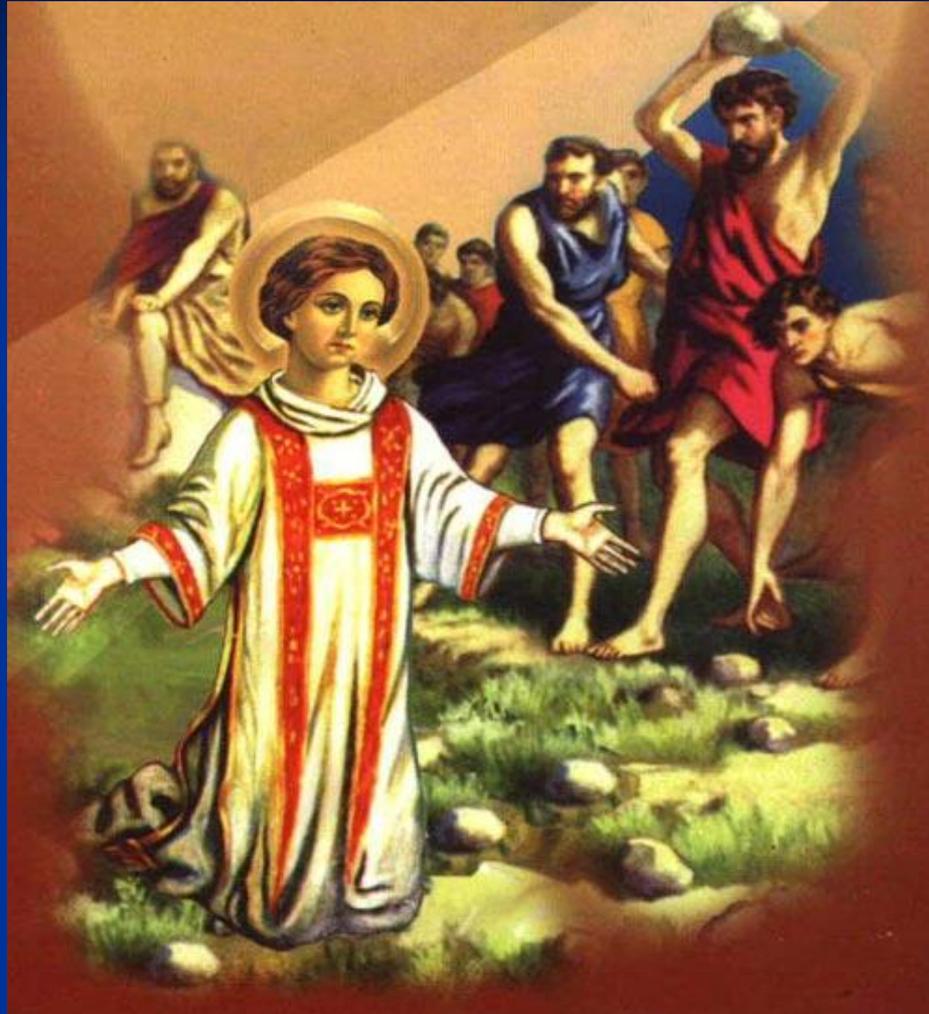
1) From El-Nayrouz feast (the beginning of the Coptic Year) to the feast of the Cross (1:17 Tout): The readings of this period concentrate on joy, chanting hymns and the constant renewal; the first verse that is read in the eve of El-Nayrouz is: "Sing to the Lord a new song." Truly, repentance is the way to the kingdom of God, but when repentance is mixed with hope, it is practised through perpetual inner joy.

The analogy between El-Nayrouz (Feast of Martyrs) and the feast of the Cross. Using a joyful (*Farayhi*) tone throughout this period confirms the joyful life of the suffering church, for she joyfully bears the cross together with her Heavenly Groom.

10) The preparation for El-Nayrouz: In the last two weeks of the Coptic year, church readings attract our sight and mind towards the events of the end of the world and Christ's last advent. Church readings prepare the believers to sing: "Yes; Come O Lord Jesus."



Martyrdom



And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. (Acts 7:59)

Are you a Soldier or a Spy?

The Holy Nayourz



■ But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. (Luke 6:27-29)

