

*A Delicious Fruit from the Tree of the Church in
The Land of Immigration*

Deacon
Rowis Abdelsayed
A model and an icon

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INTRODUCTION

Every great artist uses contrasts in paintings. He must have a dark background and a bright foreground. This foreground contains a focal point which is the main character. Likewise, the great artist, our Lord and God, painted a world that was “without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen.1:2). Similarly, “the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8). This is the background which contrasts to the foreground. Matthew 13:43 states that, “the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”. In between Genesis and Revelation, the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ contrasted with His glorious resurrection. Likewise, His hand painted a beautiful picture of the life of a boy with his family in the burning furnace. The burning furnace was merrily the dark background which contrasted with the shining Face of our Lord Jesus in the middle of it.

This is not a literal narration of the life of a young boy who lived in the midst of a society which knows no limit to sin. It is a meditation on his life which was driven by the spirit of prayer to show how he succeeded in keeping his purity. His life was a source of blessing to many of the youth in Saint George’s Church in Vancouver B.C. by proving that chastity does not depend on time or place as much as it depends on the willingness and purity of the heart. He gave peace and comfort to every parent that was worried about the future of his children growing up in a western society.

At the age of ten, after he had finished praying the morning doxologies with his fellow deacons, he expressed his desires and said, “why do we waste time living on this

earth since heaven is beautiful and living with the saints should be a dream come true?"

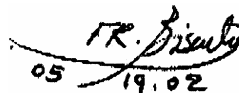
Such were the delicate feelings of this young boy.

Rowis Fawzy Israel Abdelsayed was born on August 15, 1987 in Alexandria, Egypt. On May 30, 1996, he immigrated with his family to Vancouver, Canada. He lived his teen years in the midst of a secular society filled with lusts and desires. However, he was aware of his surroundings and kept himself pure with the aid of God's grace. He intermingled with his friends in school and society without losing his morals or being affected by their behaviors. Moreover, the Church remained his true home. When he found out that he had a fatal tumor at the base of his skull, he was not disturbed but was a source of peace and comfort to those around him. These hard circumstances revealed his true nature and confirmed his honest desires towards heaven. We testify with what we have seen with our eyes and what we have touched with our hands, that this great boy lead a holy and sacred life. His short time on earth, that ended on February 13, 2002, touched many souls and was exemplary of the life of the saints and martyrs of our Church since the first century.

In your life, my beloved Rowis, we had a blessing.

In your death we had a role model.

May we follow your footsteps to the glorious end.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Bisenty" with a flourish underneath. Below the signature, the date "05/19/02" is written.

Father Bisenty Abdel Messih Gerges

As the priest stood beside the pure body of Rowis, placed before the altar of St. George's Church in Vancouver, he could not restrain his tears. The joyous hymns of the feast day of our Lord Jesus entering the temple, mixed with the tears of the deacons. The priest's sorrowful heart desired to say how we wished so much that the children of the Coptic Church in the whole world would know of deacon Rowis, the saint who lived among us. He was a living example to our youth, boys and girls, in the church of immigration and a source of peacefulness and calmness to our beloved mother church in Egypt.

“Get out of your country... To a land that I will show you” (Gen 12:1).

Six years ago, a small family immigrated to Vancouver in Western Canada, as they had hopes and dreams of a joyful life in the new home. However, the heavenly kingdom, spiritual and righteous life was the real goal of this blessed family. They used to attend regularly all the spiritual activities of the church. It is the doxology (Tasbeha) that never ceased to be sung by the lips of the young deacon Rowis, and its tunes echoed among his fellow deacons. It was not difficult for people with transparent souls to discover the treasures hidden within the heart of this sweet young man. He was a very special kind that could be called a heavenly angel in the form of a human. As all his interests were purely spiritual and his thoughts were concentrated solely on the word of God and teachings of the Church. His parents together with his father of confession were the guardians for such a precious treasure. His actions mirrored his way of life, not as one who is performing an obligation or submitting to circumstances for his family is of the same religious type, but out of faith and assurance that his share within his family is in the care of the hand of God who prepares for the salvation of his soul and his place in the heavenly

home. He was fully content, full of joy and peace to whomever he encountered. Even though he was going through adolescence in a society that is drunk with sin, he felt no traces of rebellion. We could only praise God Whom gave Rowis, such enormous spiritual maturity which is out of characteristics of a fourteen year old boy. What more can we say, God is able to grant the wisdom which is hidden from the wise and prudent, to the children.

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” (Ps 119:9).

“For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man” (Roman 7:22). This was apparent in Rowis’ daily actions. Ever since childhood, he learned how to pray, and memorized the psalms. He always used to come out first in the recital competitions in Sunday school. Even during the time of sickness when Rowis could not stand up, we noticed that he did not use the Agpeya when praying the hourly prayers with the family. He used to pray whichever psalm that was given to him in silence as he knew it by heart.

On Saturday, this heavenly boy, used to leave the church last after finishing the midnight praise, which he mostly used to lead. I perceive that he did not sleep deeply as he learned from the Shulamite how to sleep with an awakened heart (Song 5:2), as he evidently was the first to arrive at the church early Sunday morning. Even during the time of sickness, his frail body could not restrain his active spirit from rushing early to that spiritual riverbank. The least of all jobs was in his eyes the best. He used to fill the pitcher of water, the wine flask, and prepare the coal for the shouria in preparation for the feast of the Holy Eucharist. Beyond this he did only what was asked of him, he never interfered in any matter that did not pertain to him, nor did he slack or grumble in doing what is needed even cleaning the church’s floor. As for his place among the deacons, he

was always in the second row preferring the younger deacons over him, happy to see his younger brother Mina before him in the service. Even though, Rowis was the one that taught him the Alhan, and handed down to him its secrets. Saying with Saint John the Baptist “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:18). Jealousy found no place in a heart that was filled and absorbed by so much love. The love of showing off and selfishness disappears wherever the King Jesus Christ appears to Whom is due all glory.

Follow in the footsteps of the flock (Song 1:18)

The feast of the Saints carried a different meaning for Rowis. Their icons did not only fill the walls of his room, but also the walls of his heart. He himself became an icon, having the saints’ meekness in which you could smell the aroma of their purity, and seeing in him their courage and strength of their witness. A power of endurance, peace, and patience had sprung within him during the days of his cruel sickness. There could be no other source of these strengths other than the Holy Spirit Himself and the aid of the saints.

It was not possible for Rowis to celebrate the feast of Saint Mercurius on December 4, 2001 with us as his sickness crippled him, and demolished every physical power in his frail body. While the reading of the Gospel vespers, its word touched the heart of the priest who read: “Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, Lord my servant is lying home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented. And Jesus said to him I will come heal him” (Mt. 8:5-7). At the end of vesper after everyone had gone home, the priest took the tube that holds the relics of the Saint to Rowis’ house, who was happy at the visit of Saint Mercurius. He held the tube in great reverence. In honor of the guest, he asked all that were in the house to do nothing except prayer and praise.

This was a lesson to Mina, his younger brother, to lower his voice to the point of whispering as a sign of respect to the remains of the Saint that spent the night within the arms of the blessed boy.

“How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of Hosts” (Ps 83:1)

The church to Rowis was everything, his love for her could not be compared to anything else. For his sickness was not as painful as not being able to go to church. All the treasures in the word could not be compared to the eves of Kiahk which he could not attend. The deacons during Christmas eve who sang a hymn that they had just learned, made him feel of the great loss for he could not attend and sing with them.

His love for the church was not a passing feeling or emotion that he felt from time to time. As his mother tells, even at the age of three, how he used to obediently respond to his mother’s calling to get out of bed to go to church on Sunday mornings. He never murmured or grumbled to sleep an extra couple of minutes. He, accompanied by his mother, used to walk for 30 minutes to go to church to attend the Holy Liturgy. Once at the church, he stood beside her never moving or getting bored.

After their immigration to Vancouver, it happened after the prayers of Good Friday the family returned to their home and agreed to rest for a while to be able to attend the eve of Apocalypse in church. When the father woke up in the middle of the night, he had pity on his son, who was not even 10 years old, and left him to sleep and rest, for the previous day would have been tiring on a young boy. However, Rowis knew not what rest was away from the true source, his mother, the church. He woke up suddenly asking what time it was. When he found that his father had left him, he started to phone some of his friends and neighbors, at this late hour, asking them to awake

spiritually, hoping that one of them will take him to church. He was successful, and later went to church and praised happily.

Beyond Reality

Truly, there was no obstacle big enough for Rowis to restrain him from going to church. However, he was hindered by his paralyzed body, unable to move and forced to stay in his bed on the first night of Kiyahk. He felt a great loss to the point of depression. He told his mother of his sadness that remained with him until the second night of Kiyahk, to which also he was not able to go. However, nothing can stand against the hand of God, for Rowis' cousin, Rifka Magdi Awad, testified that she saw Rowis in person among the deacons in Saint Mary's church in Ghobrial, Alexandria on the same night. My God, is it possible that in Your kindness you have carried the boy to the church where he grew up, to allow him to enjoy the praises of Kiyahk? Does this also explain his peace and joy during the next week of Kiyahk when he stayed with his father and started singing praises for Saint Mary? His sadness was converted into joy and his depression to overwhelming happiness, what was the secret? We believe in spiritual travel (spiritual pilgrims) as in the case of Philip the preacher when the Spirit of the Lord caught him (Acts 8:39). Also the many stories of the desert Fathers who were spiritual pilgrims are true facts. Did God's compassion reach to the point to allow our young boy to taste this level of spirituality? I know not, for the secrets of the Spirit are many and we can not comprehend them.

Your Lips, O my spouse, drip as the honeycomb (Song 4:11).

God used Rowis as a witness without him ever having to speak a word. On a Saturday night when the church was empty, someone was sitting beside me, the priest, arguing

and disputing against the Tasbeha and the Coptic language. How could the priest convince this person with what they could not feel in their heart or what they did not practice spiritually? For the Tasbeha is the language of heaven, we understand it when our heart is linked to heaven. I kept quiet not knowing how to answer, until Rowis entered the church. I do not know if he had seen me in the corner. He limped while walking because the sickness had affected his right leg. He held his Epsalmodia book in his trembling hand. Then he started saying the Tasbeha alone, in a voice that clearly demonstrated the effect of his sickness, for half his face was paralyzed. I looked at him in astonishment, and the words of him who was talking to me did not make it into my ears. My heart was there, with the Holy Spirit who was playing a spiritual harp between the hands of the blessed boy.

**You are all fair, my love, and there is no blemish in you
(Song 4:7)**

The Holy Spirit Himself is the one that beautifies our souls. Many of the saints and fathers worked hard to gain spiritual virtues, yet here the young boy without effort or struggle attains them. Rowis knew when to talk and when to be silent. When he talked it was as if his words are seasoned with salt. He gave short and to the point answers to everyone who asked him. Also, he knew how to respect the elders, and how to be gentle with the younger. Most of all his respect for the priests of the church was beyond all measures, all he could see in them was the priesthood of our Lord Christ. How he rejoiced when one of them would go and visit him during his time of sickness. Once during a visit by one of the bishops, his mother asked him to go and sit next to the bishop to receive a blessing. He looked at her, but he said nothing. Then the bishop himself asked him again to sit next to him, but he simply sat on the floor in the corner smiling. Afterwards, when his mother asked him

about it, his answer revealed a deep spiritual meaning of a great spirit of humility. "How can I sit beside the bishop when I am but a simple young deacon". During his later days, when he was lying in bed without moving his arms and legs, he used to plea for someone to help him to get up, for he could not bear to greet the priest while he was lying in bed. He had a very sensitive spirit in dealing with his priest. His father remembers, what hurt Rowis the most was that he was forced to elevate his leg in the presence of his parents. His right leg was paralyzed and swollen to the point that the doctors ordered that his leg be lifted up. However, Rowis was always repeating "I am sorry", "excuse me", "forgive me", "I am sorry".

The cross that Rowis had to bear was the last in a series of preparations that were prepared by the hand of God, the Lover of mankind, for his loved one. The boy had a simple soul that did not ask for much. He did not have the same interests as most boys his own age. He used to refuse to celebrate his birthday, while giving a great attention to celebrating his younger brother's birthday.

He was also the peaceful and forgiving kind that could bear many insults. Many times some of his friends bothered him, and his returned reaction was love. He was always thankful and repeated words of love towards others. For this I say that he was ready for that which is much more burdensome. He never murmured during his sickness. Nothing brought him more pain than the fact that he could not go to church.

Faithful over a few things (Mt. 25: 21)

The priest of Saint George's church remembers the time the church used to be assembled in New Westminster. Rowis was a young and a happy boy, eight years of age, helping the other deacons fill the baptismal basin with water to prepare for a baptism. He went down to the basement to fill a container in order that he would fill the

baptismal basin. When he entered, he found the priest, facing westwards toward the congregation, ending the morning raising of incense and praying the absolution prayer in preparation for the Holy Eucharist. When Rowis saw this, he froze in his place and lowered his head to the ground. He took no pity on himself and did not put the container of water on the floor. He stood in place holding the large burdening container and waiting for the priest, whom had pity on the child and rushed the prayer.

The righteous Lord, was looking from heaven above and preparing for his young boy a much heavier burden to carry than this container that he carried faithfully. He was faithful over the few. Therefore, You have given him a heavier load, knowing how faithful he would be in carrying it.

Faith in the fiery furnace

Without a doubt, the faith of the parents is one of the major elements of the construction of the personality of the child. Here we see his mother Mrs. Magda Awad recount to us the period of pregnancy of her first child Rowis. The late Pope St. Kirolos the VI appeared to her in a vision foretelling her of her two children Rowis and Mena. She was full of hope but she recalls the times she used to pray the hourly prayers from the Agpeya, she used to burst into tears for no apparent reason unable to control her feeling, when she read the part from the ninth hour that says, “when the mother saw the lamb and the shepherd, the Savior of the world, hanging on the cross, she said as she wept; as for the world let it rejoice in receiving salvation, but as for me, my inward parts are burning with pain within me, when I behold your crucifixion which you are patiently enduring, for the sake of all, O my son and my God”. Was it the case that she felt in her heart the temptation that she was going through before even seeing her son? With a spiritual insight was she able to foresee that was to happen 14 years later?

Who knows? For such is the spiritual world, it is full of mysteries.

The journey of Rowis' agonizing sickness started in the year 2000 during the Great Lent. He used to suffer from double vision and heavy migraine attacks. His mother advised him to break his fast, for she thought that the lack of food was the cause of all of his pain. However, he insisted to continue fasting so that he might be able to attend the Holy Liturgy.

When his condition deteriorated, and after various investigations, MRI, and CT scans, the doctors discovered that he had a brain stem glioma. They did not have a glimpse of hope, but said that the illness was incurable and terminal. The shocking truth was unbearable for all the members of the church. It was even more unbearable for the mother and father to see their son, the apple of their eyes gradually wither away. The news of Rowis was spread throughout the world via telephone calls and through the internet. As a result, many priests prayed liturgies for him, and many people fasted for him. He received many letters of encouragement from many places around the world. The peace of the family was wondrous during this time of tribulation. Heaven dealt with the simple mother with revelations and dreams. This was a source of hope and joy for her. She believed that everything was for their benefit and considered anything from the hand of God to be good.

One day early in the morning the mother, full of joy, phoned the priest of the church to tell him about a dream that she had. She saw Pope Shenouda coming to their house and blessing Rowis, her son, and then leaving them with a warm smile. At this point, the priest had just told her that he had just sent a letter to the Pope, by fax, asking him to pray for Rowis. Is it possible for thoughts and dreams to coincide with reality? After hearing this, she was full of peace and joy, for she knew that the Almighty God and Father, was in control of her life, and her son's life.

She, herself, became a source of peace and comfort to others around her. For heaven has abolished sadness and despair from her heart, and replaced it with happiness. At one point, she saw heaven open and multitude of saints surrounding one that is dressed as an officer (maybe Saint George) as a beautiful dove flew in the midst of heavenly songs. Then a saint with a tall stature came to her in her room and prayed for her. Accepting her request to pray for Rowis he went into Rowis' room. In the morning, she was surprised to hear from Mina that during the night, he saw a tall man, surrounded by light, leaving her room, and entering into Rowis' room, and praying for him. With simplicity of heart Mina asked the Saint when Rowis was to be healed. The Saint replied on the feast of Saint George. According to his mother, Saint George's feast was the last feast that Rowis attended in church before his departure into the heavenly kingdom.

Potentials of the resurrection

In 1977, the late priest Father Bishoy Kamel returned from a medical treatment trip. He was full of joy, waiting to tell everyone of God's work with him. As I accompanied him in his car, He asked me: "My good doctor, do you find any logical explanation for this incident? I used to be able to feel the swelling in my stomach, for you could see it with the naked eye, it could not be hidden. Then when the doctors decided to operate to remove it, they found no trace. Yet, here I am fully cured. As a doctor do you have a medical explanation for what I have told you?"

I was astonished when I heard what he said. He did not expect an answer from me, he was simply talking for the glorification of God. Then added: "Do you know the meaning of this? This is the potential of the resurrection. Yes the potential that we carry in our mortal bodies". Twenty-five years have passed since this conversation took place. I remembered as we experienced the potential of the

resurrection in the body of Rowis. The doctors left the choice in the hands of his parents. The choice was not only over two different treatments, but whether to start the treatment or not. Either case the result is the same, no cure and death is certain within two or three weeks at the most. This was the analysis of Dr. Parthon, the radiotherapist. Rowis was now in a wheelchair, and his face was paralyzed affecting his eyes and tongue. He would not be able to finish the daily sessions required for the next weeks. Surprisingly enough, it happened that within a short period of time and after a few sessions, there were considerable improvements, and he was able to get off his wheelchair and walk normally. The swelling shrank enormously, to a point that astonished the doctors, for one whole year thereafter, the blessed boy with his family and all who knew him reaped the potentials of the resurrection.

You would be surprised to know that the blessed young boy's favorite chapter is the gospel of the resurrection (John 20:1-18). He used to sing it daily for the last three years. His mother asked him, "is there no other chapter in the Bible to read?" However, he only answered with more repetition, for he treasured that chapter. Do you have any explanation for this, except for that he enjoyed the taste of the potential of the resurrection? These are the same potentials that Father Bishoy used to tell us about.

Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord (1 Sam. 1:28)

This was Ana's response to Eli the priest when she brought her son Samuel to him (1 Sam. 1). As for Rowis' family, they felt that God had lent them the boy. He trusted them with the boy for one more year, this was just a taste of the potential of the resurrection. It was a blessed year full of activities that Rowis spent learning more hymns and teaching them to his young brother, Mina. He used to encourage Mina saying: "God has given you a powerful voice, do not neglect this talent". Although, Mina was not

very enthusiastic at first, as a child he preferred to play than study hymns. However, his attitude changed completely after Rowis's departure to heaven. It was as if he took twice of his masters spirit similar to Elisha taking twice of Elijah's spirit (2Kings 2:9). It was a blessed year when Pope Shenouda III blessed Rowis in August 2000 and prayed for him. It was also an opportunity for the whole family to be blessed by the saints, as they spent the summer going from monastery to monastery, where many of the fathers prayed for Rowis. Even though everything was going fine, the thought that Rowis was going to depart from this world kept repeating in his mother's head, chasing her wherever she went. As much as she could not bear the thought, she felt God's gentle hands comforting her and preparing her for accepting what is about to happen. As much as heaven knew how sensitive she was to her dreams, it did not withhold from her any kind of comfort. A saint holding three fishes meant that Rowis was the fourth and that he was going to depart. Also, when she saw three palm trees, the fourth she considered to be the righteous who flowered like a palm tree (Ps 92:12) whose roots are there in the new land (Rev 21:1) where the dwelling place never perishes. When she saw the burial icon, she asked God so that she might see next to it the icon of the Ascension, and so she enjoyed peace.

He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son (Rev. 21:7)

One year had passed and Rowis's condition was deteriorating as the illness regained its strength in his body. At this time Rowis started his chemotherapy treatment, one dose per mouth. He was very eager to take dosage hoping it would make him better so that he might go to church, which he had missed so much. With every dose, he used to fast with his family for three days. He would break his fast with a small piece of bread dipped in tea. This happened

for seven months... and how much has His Heavenly Bridegroom revealed to him during that time. His spirituality was elevated to limits that we could not comprehend, and he was made much more pure. I do not doubt for a moment that the boy used to see and learn many things that he contemplated in his heart. His enthusiasm and eagerness diminished with the last dose of the treatment. He did not care about the test result, but he said to his father: "Let us fast for the salvation of our souls, for the peace of the church and for Abouna, and let this dose be the dose for healing" (it was indeed the healing dose for the bodily pains, healing to the heavenly kingdom). It was so and he asked that they intercede to Saint Mary, Saint Mina and Pope Kirolos, for these were very dear to him. Afterwards, he said that he had seen the Lord Jesus Christ, His face full of light. He also told of a black ugly army fighting a white heavenly army, and how the heavenly army won. Then he started reciting the psalm "For a day in Your court is better than a thousand" (Ps. 84:10). This was the verse that kept repeating until his departure. He had no more desire in living and wished to depart. To him cure had a different meaning that is why he called his last medical dose "the healing dose". He received a bottle full of holy oil from Abouna Feltaos the Syrian and he called it the healing oil. This was indeed the last oil that he was anointed with. Two days prior to his departure, on Monday February 11, his father received a letter from Abouna Raphael Ava Mina with a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. His father was very hopeful and commented "the Lord Jesus Christ was Rowis today and came and visited us today with a letter from Abouna Raphael". The back of the picture read: "I believe, therefore I spoke,... Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. 116). He then understood the meaning of the verse and the intended message, but he did not say anything. However, Mina said to his ill brother "now your crown is complete". What a

great surprise that a nine year old boy should say something like that. On Wednesday February 13, 2002, the priest was praying a liturgy when Rowis' father phoned and asked that Abouna should not come and give communion to Rowis for his condition is very critical. When Rowis heard this he said: "no, I want to have communion. Let Abouna come with the sacrament". The priest rushed with the sacrament that the blessed boy received joyfully in the midst of his pain. He was in tremendous pain to even take his breath. The priest testifies that when he was receiving communion that this agonized face had the beauty of saints. Truly he was crowned, as the Holy Spirit has testified on the mouth of the young Mina two days in advance.

The same night on Wednesday February 13, 2002, the young boy Rowis gave up his pure spirit within the hands of the One he loved. His mother said: "This is all I want, that I give him to the Lord Jesus". Similarly his father said: "For a day in Your courts is better than thousands elsewhere".



He obtained witness that he was righteous... he being dead still speaks (Heb. 11:4)

It was the 8th of Amsheer. The feast of our Lord Jesus Christ entering the temple, the church was filled with joyous hymns, yet tears were in the deacons' eyes. He was a loved person. Every father considered him a son, and every mother felt a motherly love towards him. With the pure love, he was considered a brother to every youth. Relationships with the young boy have grown deeper in the last two years of his sickness, everyone feels his absence.

- + A young girl was standing in the church to attend a funeral of the dear friend. It was her first time to experience the loss of any one or to attend the funeral

prayers. Her eyes were full of tears as she cried bitterly for the loss of her friend. Another young girl who has standing next to her noticed that her body was shivering. Not long after she stopped shivering, she walked away and sat calmly in the back of the church. Soon after, the girl came and asked her if she was alright. She told her that she had seen Rowis in person standing before her. His face was beautiful and did not have any signs of sickness. He told her in a quiet voice “Why do you cry? I am in a very beautiful place and I am very happy. I wish that you would be happy for me. I wish, also, that you tell my mother not to cry”. The change was evident on the girl’s face. With a fatherly compassion, I came to her asking if she was simply delusional because of her sadness. Her reply made me believe her when she said: “It is a holy day, in it we can only say the truth”.

The wonders did not cease, but kept on happening

- ❖ After the prayers, Mrs. Jeanette Georgy the wife of the deacon Ihab Wilson, went to the parking lot while she was being supported by others, because she was very exhausted from crying. As she looked up to heaven asking for a sign of comfort, she cried out saying: “Heaven is drawing a cross!” Many men and women that were around her looked up and saw one big cross, it extended from one end of the church to the other, and was made of white cloud. However, the sky was clear with no clouds in sight. The cross was decorating the sky towards the Altar of the church.

- ❖ Another lady tells her story. After the burial was finished, and after most of the people had left. She returned to the casket hanging inside the grave to add some flowers. As she leaned down, she smelled a strong smell of incense coming from inside the grave.

She was very sure that the priest did not have the Shouria with him and he did not offer any incense at the burial site. Then she notified Mr. Rafeek who was standing beside her, and he also confirmed that he could smell the incense. His wife reminded him that he lost his sense of smell and that medically he can not smell anything. However, he insisted that he could smell the incense.

- ❖ One woman was also touched by Rowis' death, she also had built a relation with him while praying the midnight praise with him several times on Saturday nights. She went into her room to pray, then she felt his presence in the room as if he is an angel appearing on the ceiling, and a voice inside of her telling her: "What is the great glory. I am so joyful that if I was given a chance to return and be cured of all illness, I would not return".
- ❖ Mr. Adel Barsoum witnessed in a letter that he wrote:
It was around 4 pm on Friday February 15, 2002 when I returned home from the church after the prayers on the body of the blessed boy. I went to sleep. I thank God for giving me this deep sleep. While I was sleeping, I saw a saint dressed in a Tonia coming to me in a dream as if it was real. I was crying at the church's entrance. So he asked me: "Why do you cry uncle?"
I replied: "Because I am sad for you"
He said: "Why are you sad?"
I replied: "I am sad because you died"
He said: "Who told you that I died, I am not dead, I am in heaven. Oh how beautiful is heaven. By the way, they greeted me in heaven saying 'Welcome Rowis the beloved'"
I told him: "I am sad because you died young"
Having the same smile that I always saw on his face, he replied "You know, if you have seen heaven, you

would never be sad. I wish that I would have died when I was only one day old. I am going to be sad if you mourn for me again”.

Mr. Adel also comments that on May 5, 2002, on Easter eve, he saw Rowis for a few seconds. He explains, as he was exiting the small church heading towards the altar of the big church, he saw Rowis standing joyfully in his usual spot (second row) among his fellow deacons.

- ✦ Three months prior to his departure, another lady tells her story. She saw Rowis wearing his “Tonia” and standing in front of the altar waving a white cloth. He appeared as the angels. However, there was no liturgy being held. She only heard quiet voices speaking in a language that she did not understand and Rowis singing along. Nevertheless, she understood the meaning of what was said “You before whom, stands the Angels, the Archangels, the Principalities, the Dominions, the Thrones, the Lordships and the Powers.”

She went on to say: “I used to ask Saint Abanoub to strengthen Rowis during his sickness, especially since they were both of similar age. It is hard to describe the suffering that a young man of his age has to endure, whether psychological or physical. However, Rowis was always thankful and the words ‘Thank God’ were always at the tip of his tongue. It is no wonder that during his final illness I saw Abanoub next to his bed strengthening him”.

- ✦ In the parking lot of the church, I was stopped astonished by Mr. Onsi Bissada who told me the following: “Truly Abouna, Rowis is a saint. A few days ago I prayed asking for his prayers as many as testifying to his spirituality. I said to myself, if he is truly a saint then let him find me a job since I am

currently unemployed. Then a government institution contacted me for an interview. The strange thing is that I never applied to it. The following day I was then asked to go in for a personal interview. Is this not astonishing?” Through Rowis’ intercession, the institution was able to contact Mr. Onsi through the internet to find him a job. God has granted him success at work for his simplicity of faith and Rowis’ prayers.

- ✧ A young lady says that as she closed her eyes and meditated during the processing of the cross on Good Friday (May 3, 2002) and when she opened her eyes she saw Rowis inside the altar among his fellow deacons. She goes on to say that she was thinking of him the whole day, as the Pascha, with all its songs and hymns, reminded her of him. The comforting vision is a confirmation that Rowis is among us in the church.
- ✧ Dr. Nabil Awad Rizk (Dental & Oral Surgeon) from California writes: “As my testimony could be interpreted as a result of my feelings, and nothing more a based opinion, I tried many times not to write because of my love and relationship with Rowis, which is well known by many. One night I was awakened by the following dream; It took place in Saint George’s church in Vancouver, I saw the priest sending a deacon to wake me up for I was sleeping where the deacons normally stand. The deacon then told me Abouna is telling you to get up and tell your testimony. As I woke up in the dream after being touched by Rowis’ hand, I saw Rowis standing in the air, but I only saw his upper body. After this dream I thought that it is my duty to testify to what I saw”.
- ✧ As I was coming to Vancouver to attend the 40th day Liturgy, the plane was encountering severe turbulence

to the point that we felt that it suddenly dropped. Everyone on the plane screamed and was in great fear. On the way back the plane started to shake, then I thought, “Oh my dear Rowis, I brought some of your cloth with me as a blessing. If you are really a saint and God listens to you, please do not let me go through this bad experience again”. At that moment the plane stopped shaking and stabilized, and I felt a wondrous peace. As I looked through the window I looked at God’s creation and meditated on how wonderful it is. Then I saw a sphere of light adjacent to me and it stayed there till we reached California. I repeatedly thanked God and kept the matter to myself meditating on the power of the intercessions of the saints.

- ❖ One of my assistants at the clinic was to blame for a mistake that he had done to one of my clients. This a very severe matter in the United States, and most times is pursued in court. The patient had a guaranteed case if he was to take the matter to court. I tried to talk to him and tried to settle the matter peacefully before going to court. He said that he would think about it. Several months later he came back to me, which is a wonder by itself, and asked for a large sum of money. I thought that the amount was too large, and raised my heart to God and asked for the intercessions of his saints and of Rowis because the person that made the mistake was known to him. I set an amount of money, significantly lower than what he had asked, that I would be willing to pay him in peace of mind. After negotiations he agreed and the matter was settled peacefully. God saved the guilty person from the possible consequence. Thanks be to our loving God who is glorified in his saints.

- ❖ I made a contract with a publishing company to advertise my clinic in a book that they were publishing.

Then I paid 25% of the amount and the rest was going to be paid monthly after the book was published. The book was to be distributed in January 1999, however it was not finished till November 1999. So I contacted the company and asked for a refund and to cancel the contract. The salesperson tried to delay the refund, but finally the money was returned to me. Then on May 2002. I was surprised to find that the company had sued me. They did not have any rights against me, but used some causes of the law and tried to twist the truth. For personal reasons it was difficult for me to attend the hearing on the date specified by the court, so asked for a delay. On the day prior to the hearing I received a notice denying my request for a delay. I had to go to court on the following day. I said to myself “Let it be according to God's will”. The time was very short to gather any defense materials. There was nothing for me to do except kneel before God and pray. I remembered Rowis and said “My dear Rowis help me find evidence that proves my innocence”. As soon as I finished prayers, I found many pieces of evidence, and I had many ideas in my head for the hearing. It was not too long after that I had a full file for my defense. On the following day when I arrived to court, the case was dropped and I did not even need to defend myself.

- ✦ Sameh Guindy, deacon and an engineer tells his story; A year priory to Rowis’ fatal illness, after they had finished the morning doxology, Rowis with a joyful face looked at Sameh and said: “If heaven is this beautiful why should we wait. Why can we not go now and enjoy the company of the saints?” Sameh answered; “We will certainly go to heaven after we have fulfilled our time here in earth. You still young and you have a long life ahead of you”.

Rowis said: “No, no, this a waste of time, heaven is much better and I wish to be there”.

May He grant you according to your heart’s desire, and fulfill all your purposes (Ps. 20:4).

His heart’s desires have painted his icon and placed it among the saints. His tongue described these true spiritual desires repeating till the last breath of his short lived life on earth.

For a day in Your court is better than a thousand.
(Psalm 84:10).

May the blessing of Rowis the beloved be with us. Amen.