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EGYPT:EXORCISM AND VIRGIN MARY APPARITIONS, MISTERY IN CAIRO



(ANSAmEd) - CAIRO - Exorcisms and alleged apparitions of the Virgin Mary are occurring in Cairo, in two of the city's poorest neighbourhoods, and the two phenomena are drawing in throngs of the faithful, mostly Christian Copts but Muslims as well. The most recent event is the one which occurred last Friday in the El Waaraq neighbourhood, located in the Giza area. The Egyptian Gazette reports that many claim to have personally witnessed the Virgin Mary on the roof of St. Michaels church with her arms opening in their direction, while the smell of incense and a flock of doves surrounded the area. This event allegedly occurred at least twice, but a Church appointee was unable to capture it on video. People are now awaiting for the return of Copt pope Shenouda III to return to Cairo from the USA on the day after tomorrow. He is expected to set up a committee that will look into the alleged apparitions, and to decide on the now sizeable amount of money offered by the faithful. Independent newspaper Al Masri El Yom reports that the hundreds of people that gather in front of the church every night have now been joined by street vendors who sell food, drinks and cigarettes, while a nearby bar has taken advantage of the situation to offer its chairs for the price of five liras (slightly more than 50 cents). Some people are even lighting fires for warmth, seeing that the temperature at night drops down to 9 degrees. Another independent paper, Al Dostour (which speaks of thousands of Copts drawn in by the alleged apparitions) pointed out that even Muslims worship the Virgin Mary insofar as mother of the prophet Jesus. It also revealed that president Nasser, coming out of the heavy defeat during the 1967 Six-Day War, personally showed up to witness another apparition of the Virgin Mary that occurred in the Heliopolis area the following year. Daily News Egypt reported that exorcisms have instead been taking place for some time every Thursday in the Copt monastery of St. Simon on Moqattam Hill, in the squatter settlements area of Mansheryet Nasser. The exorcisms are carried out by father Ibrahim, who draws in many Christians and Muslims who are eager to receive his help. The ritual is apparently similar to the classic one

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provided by the Catholic church in such cases, and the possessed apparently behave as stated by tradition: forceful attempts to escape exorcism, screams and inhuman sounds, loathing of the holy, words spoken in other languages. In other words, the repertoire which repeatedly occurred through the centuries in the West until positivist psychiatry made its appearance, and which still occurs and is certainly not foreign to the Muslim culture.(ANSAMED).

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