

And the Medal of Courage Goes toâ€¦!

Contributed by Nora Brathol
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by Nora Brathol

Every year around Thanksgiving, one of my favorite traditions is that the cable stations run the 1939 version of "The Wizard of Oz," a movie beloved by many children. And, as with many children's movies, the basic premise and plot lines also can be great lessons for adults.

"The Wizard of Oz" is a classic story of an innocent girl (Dorothy) who finds herself far away from home, and while trying to return, meets others who are on similar quests. Of course there is the evil foe — aka the Wicked Witch — who tries to foil Dorothy's plans, and there is also a fix-it-all wizard who embodies the travelers' dreams and hope. As the journey down the "yellow brick road" continues, Dorothy's group of travelers seeking the wizard's help grows, and the trials and tribulations the group faces grows and grows. In the end, it is only through teamwork and dedication to what is right that Dorothy and others are able to get their heart's desires; and it is at the end that the travelers realize they already had what they were looking for. Dorothy and her companions also learn that the Wizard cannot magically fix their problems — it is up to each individual to enact the change they seek.

One of the partners Dorothy finds along her way is the "Cowardly Lion." The lion, the King of the Jungle, tries to scare Dorothy and her friends while they are walking through the jungle. When the Lion crosses a line and almost bites Toto, Dorothy's dog, Dorothy stands up to him and discovers that he is really more of a scaredy cat than an all-powerful lion. The lion then joins Dorothy and her friends on their journey, hoping that the Wizard of Oz will be able to give him some courage.

As the movie continues, the Lion displays courage at multiple points, the climax of his story being when he stands up to the Wicked Witch in order to save Dorothy and to do the right thing for his friends. During his final visit to the Wizard, the Wizard tells the Lion that he does not lack courage, but rather confuses courage with wisdom:

"As for you, my fine friend, you're a victim of disorganized thinking. You are under the unfortunate delusion that simply because you run away from danger you have no courage. You're confusing courage with wisdom. Back where I come from, we have men who are called heroes. Once a year, they take their fortitude out of moth balls and parade it down the main street of the city and they have no more courage than you have. But they have one thing that you haven't got - a medal. Therefore, for meritorious conduct, extraordinary valor, conspicuous bravery against Wicked Witches, I award you the Triple Cross. You are now a member of the Legion of Courage."

The "Medal of Courage" given to the Cowardly Lion is actually very similar to a Coptic Cross (see picture at right).

How appropriate that a movie made in 1939 has such poignancy today — there are many parallels between the Cowardly Lion's journey and the plight of the Copts of Egypt.

In the movie, the Lion already has the ability to create the change he seeks in himself, but lacks the confidence to do so. Even before getting the medal of courage, the Lion takes drastic steps in order to save his friends and do what is right. What he sought — courage — is what he realizes he already had, and in the end, what he really needed was the recognition of his accomplishment in order to boost his confidence so that he may act again.

Copts all around the world – and especially those in Egypt – have the ability and the power to enact change. We cannot count on a magical wizard to come in and fix the situation, and we must continue down our “yellow brick road” and courageously face all the evil and dangers that try to block the path.

Just as the Lion could not complete his journey alone, neither can the Copts – nor are they alone. There is widespread support for the Coptic cause among human rights activists and organizations worldwide. The Coptic issue has never been more attended to in countries around the world, as evidenced by the resolutions in the European Union and the US Congress; and the demonstrations taking place all around the world in the name of Coptic rights.

All of us, adults and children, Coptic or non-Coptic, can learn from the lessons shown in “The Wizard of Oz.” But in the end, the medal of courage does truly belong to the Coptic people.

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