



**THE COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE
ST. GEORGE AND ST. RUEISS CHURCH
SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM**

GRADE TEN

Revised Edition 2021

PREPARATION AND WRITING

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Παποστολος

πιάσιος

Μαρκος





THE THRICE-BLESSED POPE SHENOUDA III
OF BLESSED MEMORY



Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate

FROM H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

Deir Anba Ruciss, Ramses Avenue, ABBASSIYA,

CAIRO, EGYPT.

CABLE : ELANBARUEISS, CAIRO.

ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ
ΝΟΡΘΟΖΟΤΟΣ

بطريركيسة الاقباط الارثوذكسيين

Date | / / 19
| / / 17

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الى الدبنيه المباركيه القديس مرقس الياس عبد المسيح
والذين تادرس بتقريب ملحي

سلام رحيمة وبعد ،

زارني ابننا د. محفوظ وسعه المنهج القترح لدارس
التربية الكنسية بالمهجر. وقد درست معه الخطوط الاساسية
للمنهج، ودره الدخول في التفاصيل. وابدت له بعض ملاحظات
من جهة مناهج العقيدة والحق : وفي الواقع انه الجهد المبذول
جهد كبير جداً يتقنه الشك. ومع ذلك تحتاج دروس الكتاب
المقدس الى زيادة. وماسرسل لكم ملاحظات اخري بالتفصيل بمشيئة
الرب .

فليبارك الرب كل ما قام به ابننا محفوظ من جهود في اعداد
المنهج ، وفي جميع المادة ، وفي عمل الترجمة . وليبارك الرب
ايضاً كل من اشتركوا في العمل ، وفي المراجعة
وليكنه هدفنا هو ما نلتجئ اليه من كان على قدر
الامكاناتنا . ويمكنه تزويد المنهج ايضاً بالصورة المناسبة والتي
تقرها كنيتنا من النواحي العقيدية والحقوقية والتاريخية
الرب معكم . كوننا بخير

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سيد القديس اغناطيوس

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate

FROM H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

Deir Anba Ruciss, Ramses Avenue, ABBASSIYA,

CAIRO, EGYPT.

CABLE : ELANBARUEISS, CAIRO.



To my blessed two sons: Hegomain Fr. Marcous Elias Abdel Massih and Hegomain Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty.

Peace and love be with you.

Dr. Mahfouz has visited me and brought with him the suggested Sunday school curriculum for the land of immigration. I have studied with him the basic topics of the curriculum without getting into details. Although that I have pointed out some concerns on the doctrine and dogma curriculum, it is clear that the amount of work spent on preparing the curriculum is huge and worth thanking. Nonetheless, the Bible study part of the curriculum needs to be increased. God willing, I will also send you additional details on this curriculum.

May the Lord bless all the effort that our son Mahfouz has done in preparing the Sunday school curriculum, in collecting the relevant topics, and in performing the translation of subjects. May the Lord also bless all those who have joined him in preparing this project and those who revised the topics.

Let our goal be performing our best to try and arrive at perfection given what we have from abilities. Lastly, I would also suggest the addition of different recognized pictures according to our doctrine, dogma and history to the Sunday school curriculum.

May the Lord be with you. Be in peace.

Signed

Pope Shenouda III

22 August 1986

The feast of St. Mary





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IMPORTANT RULES

FOR TEACHING

IMPORTANT RULES FOR TEACHING THE YOUTH IN THE LAND OF IMMIGRATION

Our youth in the land of immigration are influenced by the society and the culture they live in, this is considered perfectly normal and inevitable.

Despite the similarities in the content of the Sunday school curriculum and the youth meeting topics across all the churches in the world, the difference lies in the presentation of the topic and the ability to tailor the content to fit the audience's background, culture and spiritual needs. This would greatly increase the topic's comprehension and its receptiveness.

In Saint Paul's sermon to the Jews (Acts 13: 16-41) he spoke to them regarding Moses the arch-prophet and gave an account of their experiences with our Lord throughout their history. Moreover, in another instance, he spoke to the Greek philosophers (Acts 17: 18-33) in a manner that suits their cultural background. In both cases the content is equivalent, both sermons aim to convey the message of salvation that our Lord Jesus Christ granted us on the cross.

Therefore, whether the Sunday school / youth servants are first generation immigrants or are born in the land of immigration, it is important to observe the following guidelines in conveying the topic:

1. Correctness of the language and its clarity...the servant must prepare the topic in an accurate, clear & coherent language. This language should be the audience's preferred first language
2. Organization...Our children live in a society where organization and punctuality are governing characteristics, hence, it is imperative to adopt those characteristics to portray to our children that our services and our churches are adhering to the norms of the society.
3. Respect...mutual respect is the prevailing trait in the western societies, as a result respect ought to be maintained at all times between the servant and those being served. This is manifested in good communication skills such as listening without interjecting and using appropriate words depicting respect.

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4. Dialogue...constructive discussions and valuing each other's opinions are fundamental in the western societies. Dialogue often leads to persuasion and mutual love as opposed to just giving orders.
5. Give pertinent examples from the children's day to day life...during the topic we must reference examples that are suitable and related for emphasis and clarification.
6. Questioning everything said or heard...Due to all the strong intellectual movements in the society, we as servants must be cognizant of any new infiltrating thoughts, this is achieved through research and analysis to be in a position to answer our youth's questions in a convincing intellectual dialogue.
7. Love between the servant and the children...our children often yearn for compassion and love in our fast pace materialistic society. Thus, it is extremely important that the servant uses expressions of love, affection and harmony.
8. Establish and maintain the bond between the children and the mother church...this is essential to our unity and there ought not to be any division or separation of any sort from the mother church nor its beliefs, holiness, saints, organization or any other matter.
9. We ask all Sunday school / youth servants to abide by the orthodox faith and dogma in all the topics and to use ample biblical examples and references.
10. We ask all Sunday school / youth servants to establish a good spiritual relationship with all those being served.

INTRODUCTION TO

THE Sunday SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Principal Goal of Christian Up-Bringing.

A child, first as a person and second as a youngster, has a special importance to our Lord Jesus Christ. He called the children and considered them models of perfection, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:3-5).

Therefore, children are beloved ones of Christ, and are His friends with their simplicity and purity of heart. Christ called the children and blessed them; and asked His Disciples and Apostles to continue to take care of their upbringing, and to prepare a suitable environment for their spiritual growth, just as He has done.

St. Paul advises parents saying, "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged", (Colossians 3:21). From a Christian point of view, the general principal goal of religious upbringing is the formation of the perfect man of God who follows the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Also, our Lord said, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

Hence, a Christian up bringing is not merely an education to be given or a curriculum to be taught, but it is rather a life that is given through example and behavior through teaching and discipleship. The saintly Fathers of the church have emphasized this fact. St. John said about his practice of life with the Lord "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life – the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us – that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1-3).

The same fact was emphasized by St. Paul when he was talking to his disciple Timothy "But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at

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Antioch, at Iconium ... But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:10-15). Also in the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians 3:17, "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern". Therefore, the principal goal of the Christian up-bringing is to change the life of our children to the life of Christ in them, i.e. to a life based on the work of Christ in them as true Christians and not just religious persons who fear God but deny Him.

The Starting Point in Achieving the Goal of Religious Upbringing.

The teacher should not start with the student from power Zero. The student comes equipped with many social and religious experiences. His religious experience, although it is limited, it has a strong basis that is ready for spiritual growth. In the Sacrament of Baptism, the student has already obtained the spiritual birth i.e. he became spiritually re-born. After his baptism he was anointed with the Holy Myroun (Chrism) and the Holy Spirit dwelt in him. St. John said "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you; and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him" (1 John 2:27).

Therefore, by obtaining these two Holy Sacraments and the Sacrament of Eucharist, the student becomes a member in the body of the Lord and a living part of the body of the Holy Church. This means that religious up-bringing is not something foreign with respect to the student. The student is a temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in him. This means that it is not the teacher who makes the student live a life for Christ, but it is the inside work of the Holy Spirit that makes the whole difference. The role of the teacher is to make the student aware of the effect and the work of the Spirit. In this sense the student becomes aware of the secret grace inside him and as a result the divine word inside him grows as the seed grows inside the earth.

The Difference Between Religious Education and Religious Upbringing.

We should not aim at providing lessons in the form of giving information, i.e. a mere religious education. In this case religious experience will never exceed the circle of the mind and will never affect the heart and practice of the student. If we consider religious education as an element in religious bringing-up, we are in this case

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following Christ's plan in the development and building of the Christian personality. Christ with His example and His perfection gave us a model which should be followed and achieved. As for His teachings, they are meant to clear the way for us in order to follow them as examples and models.

The Need of our Church for a Coptic Orthodox Sunday School Program.

There is one basic difference between Eastern and Western theology; the latter depends on study, analysis and using scientific means, whereas Eastern theology is based on experience and depth which is mainly lead to true Christian life. The Eastern Church respects the role of the mind but it works under the supervision of faith.

The majority of recent Western Sunday School programs follow a pure analytical way of explaining the Bible. For example, miracles are explained through psychological and scientific factors. The man of God must accept miracles and believe them as they are. St. Athanasius said, "Our knowledge must not control (or have authority over) the word, but the word itself must have the control and authority over the mind".

Another basic difference is that our traditional Church uses the rites in education as a key in the process of living what is being taught.

Over and above what was mentioned before in relation to the basic differences in religious education between Eastern and Western churches, there are also basic differences in the various beliefs and the way Christianity is lived by in actual life.

We, as parents, teachers and clergy, are responsible in front of God to bring up our children according to the same spiritual Orthodox principles that we received from our saintly Fathers who shed their blood to perpetuate the perfect Orthodox faith . Therefore, our children must learn from the same source from which we learned before them.

The Sunday School program in your hands is a fruit of love granted by our Lord Jesus Christ to our children and a gift from Him to them. This program is purely Coptic Orthodox. All its references without exception are Coptic Orthodox (please review the reference list at the end of the book. In this manner all the information that is in this book (as well as all the books in this series) can be used with total

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confidence as it is devised according to our glorified church. The spirit of the lessons is indeed the same spirit of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

About the Books in Your Hands.

These books in your hands are integrated series of books which were written for children from age 4 to 18. With the grace of the Holy Spirit, if the child at age 4 follows this series of lessons until age 18, he will obtain an all-rounded spiritual background. The books (covering the teachings from pre-schoolers to grade 12) cover a study of most of the major Biblical subjects of the Old and New Testaments, the celebrations of the church of our Master's feasts, the life of the Saints and their feasts, the divine liturgy with its rites and spirituality, the true Christian life and Christian behavior, church sacraments, fasting, prayers, the creed and its explanation, the Ecumenical Councils, the difference between the various major Christian sects, the Christian family, the history of our church, the major personalities in the Holy Bible, ... etc. The program is indeed comprehensive and it covers all the key areas of our Orthodox church. If these lessons were given in the spiritual way that was emphasized before, great results will be expected with the work of the Holy Spirit.

General Rules and Principles to be Followed by the Sunday School Teachers.

- 1) The teacher must know the stage and the characteristics of growth of the children that he or she is teaching. A child who is 12 years old is different than a child who is 8 years old. The teacher must know the level of his/her students, their abilities to receive information that he/she is giving and the differences between the various abilities in the same class.
- 2) The positive participation of the students is very important during the lesson and the effectiveness of teaching. One of the key incentives for the student is to give importance to the lesson and have an effective communication with the teacher and, above all, to define clearly the purpose behind it and present the lesson in the form of problems that attract their attention.
- 3) The teacher must follow a psychological order of the facts he is presenting. Our Lord Jesus Christ used effectively the psychological method of teaching through His parables. The parables in their simplicity are drawn from the daily life of the people. We must emphasize here that the psychological method is not the only method of spiritual teaching. We should mention this

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method as one of the methods used. It is quite important to note that spiritual teaching must be imparted with certain goals in mind which are connected with the life of the children and related to the problems they face. We should provide guidance that is mostly needed for them.

- 4) The teacher must present the lesson and illustrate it with relevant information and present it as a coherent unity without ambiguity or contradiction. He may use illustrations to help him explain what he means.
- 5) Application of Christian principles to the actual social life must be emphasized in every lesson. The teacher should use stories (from the Old or New Testaments or from church history or church books) to attract the attention of the students and show the Christian principle in an applied manner. The teacher also may divide the subject into stages or small subjects. A good practice is to summarize the lesson or better still, ask the students themselves to summarize it.
- 6) The manner of expressing the lesson to the students is also very important. A teacher who is living by what he/she teaches will definitely be more effective in giving his/her message across. A teacher who is teaching under spiritual influence with compatible emotions to what he/she teaches will be definitely more effective than a teacher who is giving information.

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From someone who is not capable, and does not know anything, was taken and lead by hand, step by step, from the smallest to the largest thing for this work to be done.

“He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength.” Isaiah 40:29

“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” John 1:3

On behalf of the Coptic Orthodox children and youth, who are going to benefit a great deal from this revised Sunday School Program, I would like to express a word of appreciation and gratitude to:

The Thrice-Blessed Pope Shenouda III of Blessed Memory

This program leans quite heavily on the writings of His Holiness the Late Pope Shenouda III. The majority of the contents of the lessons and their attachments are based on His Holiness' writings. This is a very bright and important aspect of this program. In 1986, during the time in which there was no Coptic Orthodox Sunday School program in the land of immigration, His Holiness reviewed the general contents of the program, commented and modified many key subjects, and then authorized the use of this program in all churches outside of Egypt, on a preliminary basis.

I can safely say that, if it was not for His Holiness the Late Pope Shenouda III's support, wisdom, and writings, these series of books would not exist. The whole generation is in debt to His Holiness the Late Pope Shenouda III, not only because of his great teachings and writings, but also because of his love and leadership.

His Holiness Pope Tawadros II

I had the blessing of meeting His Holiness in 2013 in Austria and I suggested to him about updating and revising the previous version of the Sunday School Program. His encouragement, wisdom, and follow up were key to the development and completion of this program.

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His Grace Bishop Reweiss has been behind us all the way with his love and guidance. He wrote the forward for our previous version of the program in 1986.

His Grace Bishop Moussa

His Grace Bishop Moussa has provided constant support and encouragement in the completion of the previous program. Of course, His Grace's writings for the youth have been utilized in all the subjects directed towards the youth, in this book.

Fr. Tadros Malaty and Fr. Marcos Marcos

These Beloved Fathers reviewed thoroughly all of the contents of the first six books of the earliest version of the program. Their dedication, experience, and wisdom have been an important factor in the quality of all the material. They contributed greatly towards setting up the lessons, in that sense. Father Tadros Malaty's deep writings, without any doubt, have been a key reference in the majority of the lessons.

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Dr. Fayek Ishak (head of the English Department at Lakehead University) reviewed the first six books of the earliest version of the program. He contributed, immensely, towards the setup of the lessons.

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This beloved father's computer skills were utilized in many functions related to this Sunday School Program. His love and encouragement were key factors to the progress of this program.

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The continuous support and encouragement of Tassoni Ragaa played an essential role in the write-up of the previous version of the program, as well as in this revision. One of the aspects that kept this program centered and on track was her continuous reminder that this program is for generations to come and every effort is worthwhile for the sake of the upbringing of the children and youth.

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The Youth of St. George and St. Rueiss Coptic Orthodox Church

A main contributor to this project was Monica Gad, who valued and recognized the importance of having a Sunday School program.

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**TEACHER'S GUIDELINES:
HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM?**

1. The teacher should realize that each lesson has been prepared to cover a specific point; starting from the title of the lesson to the end of it.
2. The teacher should read all the materials referred to in the lesson (i.e. the Holy Bible as well as any articles attached to the lesson), and then proceed by emphasizing all the points.
3. The teacher should enlarge the picture ahead of each lesson and use it as a visual aid as he or she is teaching the lesson.
4. The teacher should discuss the practical applications as he or she proceeds with the lesson.
5. The teacher should summarize the main points of the lesson with the students and give prizes.

Effective teaching in Sunday School:
by Fr Rueiss Awad

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbf9zEPULdU>

FEATURES OF THIS

Sunday SCHOOL

FEATURES OF THIS SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

A COMPREHENSIVE SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

1. This Sunday School program was the very first program to be written in the lands of immigration. This work was initiated in 1974, and the first version was published in 1986. We thank our heavenly Father, Who has given us the opportunity to extensively revise and improve it, in 2005.
2. In this version of the program, any repetition that was in the previous program, has been removed, all lessons were upgraded in both coverage and depth. Moreover, a whole new book, on contemporary issues, has been added.
3. The contemporary issues book covers subjects that are important for children and youth in today's world. These lessons are optional. For churches with regular youth group meetings, these issues would best be discussed during those meetings. On the other hand, for churches that do not hold regular youth group meetings, those issues could be discussed as part of the Sunday School program.
4. This version of the program also includes lessons, which form a basis for a missionary service, a service that should in the ideal situation be practiced by every member of our congregation. The objective is that each child, every youth, and in the long run each Coptic individual can behave and act in a way, which is an embodiment of the teaching and tradition of the Coptic Orthodox Church. In other words, our congregation would become role models in their communities, who attract people to our Lord Jesus Christ through their good practices: sincerity, commitment, hard work and dedication, tolerance, forgiveness, and all the other good qualities that differentiate a good practicing Christian from those who merely have a Christian education.
5. In this Sunday School Program, we depended heavily on the writings of H.H. Pope Shenouda III as a reference for most of the presented material.

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6. The lessons in this version of the program have already been tried in Sunday School classes, reviewed, improved and tried again. This ensures that the lessons are relevant and suit the level of the students.

7. In this version of the program, efforts were put forth to ensure that every aspect of the Christian life in the Coptic Orthodox Church is covered.

8. This Sunday School Program is not merely about giving specific education on Christianity to our children and youth but it is rather an attempt to deeply affect their feelings and spirituality. It is believed that such an approach will facilitate the practical application of the various aspects involved so that Christianity becomes a way of life for the individual, with deeply rooted Christian values, that are manifested as behavior and attitude.

9. All copyrights of other Sunday School programs, and other writers, have been fully respected.

10. In this version, each lesson comes complete with pictures and songs that are suitable for the lesson.

11. This Sunday School program comes in various formats, for convenience. In addition to being available on this website for widespread use, it is also available, upon request, in hard copy format or on CD.

12. It is our strong belief that this Sunday School program will play a vital role in the spiritual upbringing of our children. May the Lord bless this Sunday School program and all other programs, for the growth of His Kingdom in us.

THE PREPARATION OF

Sunday SCHOOL

THE PREPARATION OF SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

A. What is a Sunday School Lesson?

1. It is not a record of events that we convey to the students with the hopes of appearing to satisfy the required preparation process in front of other people. Neither is it a lecture that we deliver to our audience or student regardless of their interest in the matter.

2. However, it is, on one hand, a fruit of the live reaction between the servant and the lesson and, on the other hand, between the servant and the students. The Holy Spirit matures this fruit and directs this service towards the salvation of the students and towards the glory of God.

For if the servant who teaches the people does not teach himself, the voice of the Lord rebukes him saying, " You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself ? " (Romans 2:21), and again in James 3: 1: "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."

Therefore, the servant should engage himself in the lesson through prayers, relevant spiritual readings, and practical application, so that when the servant speaks with his students from experience and true knowledge, he says, with St. John the Beloved, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-" (1 John 1:1)

If a servant is not aware of the spiritual level of his students, he may burden them with instructions and lessons which they cannot handle nor apply and this, in turn, may cause the students to go astray and lose their eternal life. Therefore, it is crucial for the servant to establish a healthy, trustworthy, and fruitful relationship with his students, as well as to share in their joys and cheers, and their sadness and fears, all towards Jesus Christ. This is what St. Paul refers to in his epistle to the Galatians when he says, "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you..." (Galatians 4:19). This close relationship with the students allows the servant to choose the most appropriate lesson that applies to their needs.

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Hence a Sunday School lesson is:

A live mixture between the personal lives of the servants and the students through the lesson; the Holy Spirit creates this mixture and allows it to result in the bearing of fruit.

B. The Requirements for Sunday School Lessons

1. Humility in prayer before God.

God said, "...for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

My beloved brethren, sit down in peace and tranquility with the Lord and talk to Him about your personal need for Him in your service. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and pray saying, " Guide me dear God. What would you like my students and I to learn this week ? " Be obedient to His voice. It would be suitable to maintain a prayer time which equals that of the lesson.

2. Accurate knowledge of the meanings contained within the lesson.

This is achieved through:

a) Occupying yourself throughout the week with understanding the new lesson, beginning from the end of the previous lesson until the beginning of the new one. It is wise to use your free time, time before sleep, and time with fellow servants to increase and enhance your understanding of the lesson.

b) Resorting to spiritual and religious references and literature to help you develop the right understanding and concepts behind the lines.

c) Resorting to general educational references and literature to embody this understanding and these concepts, making them clear in the minds of your students.

3. Aids of presentation.

It is important that you transform your understanding of the lesson into a simple and clear presentation. It has been stated and proved that 85% of knowledge acquired is acquired through the sense of sight and visual learning

THE PREPARATION OF

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as opposed to the 10% that is acquired through the sense of hearing. The rest of the knowledge acquired is done so through the other three senses.

In reality, the least effective way of transmitting knowledge to others is by merely talking; this has the weakest influence on the students. In contrast, the most effective way to teach is to use the "Learning by Doing" method, which requires enough time as well as sound experience.

What differentiate between the effectiveness of the two means of presentation are the tools used in the presentation. These tools aid the students in effectively understanding and retaining the purpose of the lesson by engaging both senses of sight and sound. These tools may include audio-visual devices such as pictures and movies, spiritual trips and outings, role playing during class, intellectually stimulating games, etc.

C. Recording the lesson.

It is recommended that the servant records the following during the preparation of the lesson:

- Date of the preparation of the lesson.
- Date of the delivery of the lesson.
- Title of the lesson.
- Purpose of the lesson.
- References.
- Preface.
- Lesson.
- Inference.
- Bible verse.
- Homework.
- Aids of presentation.
- Other points for memory.
- Songs.
- Personal reflections of the servant.

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Purpose of the lesson:

It is necessary for the servant to clearly understand the purpose of the lesson at the beginning of his preparation. It is also necessary that the purpose of the lesson should agree with the maturity level of the students. For example, it is more appropriate for children to learn about God's love; on the other hand, learning about the power of God in their lives and in the lives of the saints is more appropriate subject matter for youth. As for young adults, learning about Christian virtues and spiritual practices is most appropriate.

Most importantly, the purpose of the lessons should agree with Coptic Orthodox Christian teachings, whether in specific occasions or in general.

References:

References could include:

- a. Stories, examples, verses, etc. from the Holy Bible.
- b. Spiritual books and literature.
- c. General educational books and literature.

Recording the references is very useful for the servant because it helps the servant to refer back to them, if forgotten.

Preface:

The preface is the background of the lesson. It cultivates the thoughts of the students and directs their thoughts towards the lesson. This allows the lesson to be implanted in their minds and to, eventually, bear fruit.

It is important that the preface remain simple, short, and concise. The introduction could be in the form of focused questions, but should not be in the form of stories. Several stories in one lesson may deteriorate its effectiveness.

The Lesson:

The lesson could be divided into the following sections:

1. Introduction - it should be quick and concise and related to the preface. It should introduce the lesson smoothly without interrupting the chain of thoughts.

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2. Body of the lesson - it contains the principle subject of the lesson, and follows these guidelines:

- a. You must be accurate and careful when explaining theological concepts.
- b. You must be careful when relating events and examples to elucidate the subject of the lesson, in order to properly guide the students' imagination without restricting it.
- c. You must diligently expose the Coptic Orthodox doctrine in the lesson.
- d. You should not use more than one story during the lesson and the story used should be relevant to the subject matter.

3. Focal Point - the point during the lesson at which the purpose of the lesson is clearly defined. (Examples: The Lord responds to the prayers of a needy person, or the angels come to give the saints their heavenly crowns and take them to heaven after many trials and persecutions.)

4. Conclusion - it should be, like the introduction, short and concise. It can summarize the purpose of the lesson, without introducing any new concepts.

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Inferences:

Inference is a method used to determine how much the students have absorbed and retained from the lesson. It should be in the form of questions with the following guidelines:

- a. They should clearly show the purpose of the lesson.
- b. They should suit the maturity of the students.
- c. They should be simple and direct.
- d. They should link to each other.
- e. They should not be 'Yes' or 'No' questions.
- f. They should each have one correct answer.

Bible Verse:

The memorization of a Bible verse is an excellent way to help the students remember the purpose of the lesson. The chosen Bible verse should meet the following guidelines:

- a. It should show the purpose of the lesson clearly.
- b. It should be short which allows it to be easily memorized.
- c. Children can easily memorize, as well as understand it.

Homework:

The height of your diligence in preparing the lesson is in choosing the proper and effective homework or application. The homework should have the following characteristics:

- a. It should contain practical applications that apply to everyday life.
- b. It should suit the maturity level of the students.
- c. It should help in mastering the comprehension and retention of the lesson.
- d. It should not include more than one instruction, in order to simplify the application of the lesson.

INTRODUCTION

AGE 15 TO 16 YEARS

INTRODUCTION

Teaching Grade10 (Adolescence: Age 15 to 16)

- 1) By definition adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. The potential intellectual ability reached during this period is equal to that of adults. Adolescents go very rapidly through a period of physical changes, which causes awkwardness, self-consciousness and increased emotional instability.
- 2) One of the main characteristics of this period is the young people's **sensitivity** and dissatisfaction. They are dissatisfied with themselves, with their families, with their own appearance (wherein lies the cause of infatuation with any fashion of the day). Adolescents go through a period of painful dissatisfaction with their social life too. All these traits, though they often seem negative and painful, are part of a positive process. What adolescents are trying to do, is to discover themselves, and to discover their relationship to others - to adults, to their peers of their own sex as well as of the opposite one.
- 3) The rapid growth of technological civilization during the last decades has made our children much more knowledgeable about sex, about social problems, race, crime, violence, science and technology. They are not more mature than adolescents used to be, but they know more, even though they often lack the maturity to digest this knowledge.
- 4) What then is the task of the Church in dealing with our adolescents? Basically, the Church has to offer them **meaningful values** that young people can consciously accept out of their own free choice at this special level of maturity and insecurity. The Church has to give them an image, a taste of what life should be, of what is meant by holiness, what is truth, faith and loyalty. The Church is where they can find forgiveness, understanding and love when they have done wrong and are confused and mixed-up. Adolescents need security-in-freedom.
- 5) Our adolescents need urgently two aspects of religious education in

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order to help them gain maturity. They need the opportunity to make religion a part of their own experience of life, their own thinking, and their own motivation, through very informal free discussions, through participation in church work and through friendship. They also need to acquire information that will allow them to think intelligently, and will, at the same time, provide some material for evaluation and judgment.

- 6) All the teaching they need to acquire about the Bible and about the Church will be better assimilated if they feel a need for it. Thus teaching should be structured around questions and problems that are real to young people. The information must be presented as a means of finding answers. This kind of approach is very demanding on the leader, not only because he must be well informed, and must know where he can find information, but also because he must be flexible and sensitive to what takes place in the students' minds.
Basically adolescents need information in the same areas that shaped our program for younger grades .doctrine, liturgies, Bible study, church history, spirituality and ethics.
- 7) Most important of all is the kind of relationship that is established between the adult leader and the young people. The leader should earn their trust as a friend, with understanding and sympathy, yet with firmness in his own convictions and genuine interest in their adolescent problems.

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For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the students
in the class

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**SEPTEMBER
FIRST SUNDAY**

WHAT IS ZEAL?

Please read(Luke 7:28-35), (Nehemiah Chapter 2), (James 3:13-17), the attached article entitled, “What is the Meaning of Zeal?”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To study why St. John the Baptist was called the greatest man among those born of women. Some of his major characteristics were zeal and courage to declare the truth. We would like to define and differentiate between holy zeal and bad zeal.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Because zeal for your house has eaten me up.”Ps.69: 9

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) The life of St. John the Baptist (as a model of Holy Zeal):

✙ St. John the Baptist was a great man. We would like to mention two observations, on his greatness:

- (1) Many people were declared great by other people, but St. John the Baptist was declared great, from heaven, ***“For he will be***

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great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15) and "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matthew 11:11). Please read in the class. He was not only great, but the greatest man. This is by the declaration of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 11:7-11). The greatness of John was in the sight of God (Luke 1:15) "*great man in the sight of the Lord.*"

(2) Why was St. John so great? (Luke 1:15-17)

- ✠ Because he was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. He is the only regular person to be filled with the Holy Spirit before he was born.
- ✠ Because of his mission "*He will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God*", "*He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*".
- ✠ St. John the Baptist completed his great mission in a very short time, around 6 months. His mission was to declare to the world that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God.

How did St. John the Baptist achieve the goals of his mission?

He achieved the goals of his mission by the action of the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of truth.

So John declared the complete truth in a very strong way:

- (1) When he was asked, "*who are you?*" he confessed, and did not deny, "*I am not the Christ*". Please read (John 1:19-28).

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- (2) Please read John's testimony about the personality of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:28-36).

(B) The Character of Holy Zeal

✝ One of the main characteristics in the life of the Saints and the martyrs is "holy zeal". St. James talked about the holy zeal and the bad zeal, *"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."* (James 3:13-17). The source of the holy zeal is the action of the Holy Spirit in the individual. The holy zeal is then based on Divine love without partiality. It is found in the fire about which the Lord said: I came to cast fire upon the earth so that the Divine love will drive man to be jealous for the Glory of God and the salvation of all people. The holy zeal accompanies him or her. Whereas the bad zeal comes from lack of love, lack of knowledge about the truth of things, personal desires and competition.

✝ Examples of the Holy Zeal

(1) St. John the Baptist

Please read Mark 6:17-29 about the position that St. John the Baptist took towards King Herod. St. John the Baptist was then martyred and gained the heavenly crown.

(2) St. Paul the Apostle

His zeal is an excellent example for the holy zeal that all of us, as Christians, must have. Please read (Acts 20:17-34) and

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(Cor.6: 4-8).

(3) Nehemiah from the Old Testament

Nehemiah is a model of the holy zeal that does not favor forces or fear people or enjoy the comfort of the palace but was ready to sacrifice his comfort for his zeal. Please read Nehemiah Chapter 2 (and tell the story). *“So I answered them, and said to them ‘the God of Heaven Himself will prosper us, therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem’”* (Nehemiah 2:20).

(C) The Character of Bad Zeal

Please see examples of the bad zeal as mentioned in the attached article entitled, “What is Zeal?”

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) The greatness of an individual is determined according to the action of the Holy Spirit inside him or her and his or her mission in life. The Holy Spirit of course acts in humble people.
- (2) We always have to tell the truth as St. John the Baptist did.
- (3) The holy zeal, as a result of our true faith, must be shown in all our actions. We must be careful not to fall in the bad zeal that is always destructive.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

FEAST OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST: VERSES OF THE CYMBALS

Hiten ni epresveya ente
pisengenees en
Emmanueel Youannis
epshiri en Zakhareyas,
Epchois..

Through the intercessions
Of the kinsman of Emmanuel
John the son of Zachariah
O Lord grant us the
forgiveness of our sins.

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WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ZEAL

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Zeal is kindling the heart and the will, as if with fire, to do what one believes to be good... One might become enthusiastic and taken over by zeal, for something wrong, like St. Paul when he said about his past, *"concerning zeal, persecuting the Church."* (Phil 3:6)

While there is a holy zeal, as the Psalmist talked about, *"Because zeal for your house has eaten me up,"* (Ps 69:9), there is also a sinful zeal as in Gal 5:20, and, *"jealousy as cruel as the grave"* (Songs 8:6). Therefore the Apostle said, *"But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always."* (Gal 4:18)

There is a zeal that is not good, like what the Apostle talked about to the Romans, *"For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."* (Rom 10:2)

+ One might ignorantly become zealous, enthusiastic to fight something without knowledge or investigation; without accuracy, just for what is heard, as Jesus said, *"Yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service."* (J n.16:2). This zeal is not associated with knowledge, like the zeal of Saul of Tarsus, about which he said, *"... but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."* (1 Tim 1:13)

Therefore, do not become zealous hastily, but mix your zeal with knowledge...

Do not believe everything said to you about others' faults or requirements of reform...

Think, study and investigate everything, stick to the good attributes.

+ Jealousy could be wrong in its means and way of expression...

For example, Peter's zeal for the Lord, which made him raise his sword and cut off the ear of the slave. Also John and James who, when one of the Samaritan cities rejected the Lord, said to Him, *"Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them?"* (Lk. 9:54)

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One could be filled with zeal which makes one fall in abusing and defaming or hurting and bashing or rebelling and ruining. Such a person changes into a tool of destruction, ruining whatever stands in his way in a non-spiritual manner.

This is also a kind of jealousy which is not according to knowledge because the person does not know the right spiritual way to express his zeal.

It happened that forty Jewish persons vowed not to eat and drink, till they kill Paul...

+ There is a wrong zeal which is mixed with selfishness and bias...

An example of this is Joshua's zeal for the sake of Moses, when he saw two persons prophesying, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets..." (Num 11:29)



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**SEPTEMBER
SECOND SUNDAY
THE WORD “I”**

Please read Luke 9:23-26, the attached article entitled, “The self-centered love”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

We must not concentrate on our achievements and ourselves. We must glorify the name of God, who helps us. To be winners in life, on earth and in heaven, we have to practice in all our actions, not to be self-centered.

MEMORY VERSE:

“I live not I, but Christ lives in me” Gal. 2:20

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✝ There is nothing that can hurt a person more than the concentration on the word “I”. When a person concentrates only on himself, his future, his career, his appearance and his benefits, then he loses his relationship with God and with other people. In losing God and people, the person destroys himself.

✝ St. Paul said “So that I live, not I, but Christ lives in me”. We all have

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received the status of “I live, not I” when we were baptized. We were buried in the baptism and our old person who was born with sin and being self-centered died.

- ✠ The expression “Not I” means not my will but God’s will. So, a Christian individual will follow God’s will, according to the Holy Bible, not his own. If I am truly a son or a daughter of God, I like to wait to hear His voice in my life and follow it. Remember Lot “chose for himself” when he was talking to Abraham about dividing the land between them. But Abraham let God choose for him. (Please tell the story from Genesis 13).
- ✠ Therefore the basic principle of life in Christ is to deny ourselves. This is why Jesus said, “***If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me***” (Luke 9:23)
- ✠ The majority of problems between people occur because of the word “I”. Remember the prodigal son when he came back to his father, the older brother complained saying “***I have been with you all these years.***” The older son was self-centered because he concentrated on himself and forgot his brother. (Please tell the story from Luke 15). Similarly, Martha said to Jesus “***My sister Mary is leaving me to work alone...***” She concentrated on her efforts and the need for her sister’s help. (Please tell the story from John).

On the other hand, people who do not concentrate on “I” win everything and are at peace with God and people. When Abraham started his relationship with God, he left the concentration on himself. God told him “***Leave your family, your homeland and your father’s house and go to the land, which I show you***”. Abraham followed God’s will and he gained all the blessings.

With concentration on one’s self come several sins and spiritual problems. Adam wanted to give a justification for his actions and said to God, “***The woman you gave me told me to eat***”. Eve communicated

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with the serpent because she thought of herself when the devil said through the serpent ***“You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”*** (Genesis 3:4-5).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) In our daily life, we should base our actions on what is good, beneficial to all and according to God’s will. We must stop being self-centered.
- (2) We should cooperate at home, in the church, at school and in all our dealings with people.

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SONGS 🎵

HOW NICE IT IS TO GATHER

How nice it is to gather today
When two of you gather in My name

in love as our God did say
know I am there just the same

REFRAIN

Oh Lord come now and hear us
Give us the peace that comes from within

we call on You to be with us
and keep us from the harm of sin

The Lord is the One that makes us sure
And a friend when no one is there

in all the ways that we endure
who keeps our hearts with loving care

The Lord is always by our side
He hears us when we call His name

and in His care we're satisfied
and by our side He will remain

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THE LOVE OF ONESELF

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III



The true love of oneself comes by training ourselves to love God, His permanent dwelling in us and our submission to the work of His Spirit...

There is no way for the self to enjoy God's dwelling in it except through purity and humility so it would not resist the work of the Spirit or prefer its own ignorance to the wisdom of God.

In that way, self-love truly shows, in self-denial.

Self-denial in working, where you say, *"... yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. " (1 Cor 15:10)* Self-denial means also abandoning self-praise and honour, *"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us. But to your name give Glory. " (Ps 115:1)* Self-denial in striving, where the faithful person sacrifices his comfort and all his wealth to build the Kingdom of God...

Self-denial also shows in dealing with God and with people.

Here, one prefers others to himself in everything, *"... in honour giving preference to one another. " (Rom 12:10)*

This is the basis of practical love to all others, not only in honour but also in giving, sacrificing and labouring for the sake of others. One sacrifices for others' sake to the extent of sacrificing oneself. One would not even object to carrying others' sins and relating them to himself, depriving himself from everything to give others..

But some love themselves in a wrong worldly way. While trying to build, they will destroy it and instead of lifting it up, they will lose it.

The Lord Jesus Christ said, *"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it." (Mt. 10:39)*

Those who left worldly pleasures for the sake of God are considered lost by people of the world, although they have actually found the real way to build the self. Among such people are the monks, the spirit-borne and all those who consecrated themselves to serve the Lord. They are all those who said with Peter, *".. we have left all and followed You. " (Mt. 19:27)*





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SECOND Sunday

The one who loves himself walks in the narrow path for the sake of God, carrying the Cross every day...

This person does actually love himself...

As for the one who satisfies all his worldly and physical desires, he does not love himself but loves the world and its desires...

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Third Sunday



**SEPTEMBER
THIRD SUNDAY**

**EL-NAYROUZ (I):
AN EXHORTATION TO MARTYRDOM**

Please read the attached materials entitled “Exercises on Self-Control”, “An exhortation to Martyrdom”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson one in a series of two lessons on the above subject. What does Martyrdom mean to us? Commitment to Christ, our church, and our values is a must for us as Christians no matter what pains and sufferings we go through. The Lord will help us to endure. The rewards are great here on earth and in heaven.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me” Mark 8:34

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✠ Martyrdom may be taken by an individual against any of the forms of temptation, persecution, impious words and reproach. Not only are these examples of outward martyrdom that others can witness,

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but also secret martyrdom that involves the devils attacks on our thoughts and feelings.

✠ **What about secret martyrdom?**

- ✠ We should fight the evil inclination of our hearts and thoughts that are coming towards us from the devil and all his evil powers. We must struggle to control ourselves supported by God's help, controlling ourselves in lusts, anger, hatred, and judgment of others. We must control our tongues, be slow to speak and carefully consider what we are to say. Can we train ourselves to train our eyes, our ears and our thoughts? Can we train ourselves in controlling our time? We must pray for help and do our best.

✠ **Endurance**

- ✠ We are called to endure, "*In stripes, in imprisonment, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fasting*" (2Cor. 6:5).
- ✠ We must pray constantly that our soul will be guarded by the peace of God, which passes all understandings. "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanks giving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*" (Phil 4:6-7).

✠ **The Reward:**

- ✠ Eternal life.
Please read (Matthew 19:27-29)
and (2Cor. 1:5)
and (Songs 2:10-11)

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WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) We must stick to the commandment of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ and resist all temptations from society. In this process we must never lose our love, respect and tolerance for others. But ultimately not everything is correct and we have to be honest in our opinion and express it carefully.
- (2) We must exercise self-control and endurance. Fasting, kneeling down in front of God in our prayers, controlling our tongues, controlling our thoughts and being very slow in getting angered; all this will help us to grow spiritually and follow the footsteps of the martyrs who followed God's commandments literally.

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SONGS

THE MARTYRE AND NAIROUZ

Come, Ye faithful people, come
Where there is eternal life

Nairouz is the beginning of the year
Who defended faith without fear

Our ancestors were brave
Now in Heaven they are crowned

Our martyrs won their crowns
And they opened Heaven's doors

Never flinched they from the flame
They shed their blood for His Name

By their faith they saw the land
They put their souls in His hand

If Satan comes to divide us
And His peace will be with us

Lord, deliver us from all sin
And lead us to Thy Kingdom

to the heavenly Jerusalem
and we'll live in peace with our Saviour

when we remember our martyrs
and lived in peace with our Saviour

for their faith their lives they gave
And lived in peace with our Saviour

when they laid their lives down
now live in peace with our Saviour

nor from the tyrant's sharpest aim
Now live in peace with our Saviour

where triumphant now they stand
And lived in peace with our Saviour

the voice of God will gather us
And we'll live in peace with our Saviour

that eternal life we may win
O our King, and our Saviour

(a)

SEPTEMBER

THIRD Sunday

EXERCISES ON SELF-CONTROL

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

During the period of fasting it is appropriate that you practice self-control and body restraint.

+ Self-control clearly appears when you keep yourself from something you desire or is affected by, you do not submit to a certain feeling or internal motive but you control yourself. And Solomon the Wise said, *"he who rules over himself is better than he who rules over a city."*

+ For example try to control yourself at the time of anger... to control your heart from spite, rage and hatred, and your tongue from condemning others, from fury, nervousness and harsh words...

+ Also try to control yourself against excitement, hastiness and rashness and calm down yourself; do not hasten to speak or give a quick opinion. Do not interrupt others or judge them unless you are sure you are right...

+ You can control yourself against any desire that comes to your heart and you long to fulfill. Do not submit to every desire but restrain your feelings, instincts, wishes, and yearning. Do not make your desires dominate over you but you rule over them and bring them under the power of the mind and soul...

+ Also control yourself in defending your honour or revenging for yourself and remember the words of the Apostle, *"We then who are strong ought to bear the scruples of the weak."* (Rom. 15:1)

+ Control yourself with regard to your thoughts; if you are thinking improperly or in trivialities, try to stop such thoughts or change their course.

+ Control your senses especially your hearing and looks, do not allow yourself to hear or see something indecent.

+ Control yourself at the time of prayer so that your mind might not wander or stand without reverence before God.

+ Try to control yourself with regard to time; do not waste it in pleasures, for your time is too valuable to be wasted in this way.

If you have controlled yourself completely, then you can say you have succeeded in your fasting.





An Exhortation to Martyrdom

This article is a condensed abstract to one of Origin's writings on Martyrdom in the third century.

✠ Introduction

Martyrdom is a part of the covenant that we make with God when we undertake the Christian life. Jesus Christ said:

“Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me” Mark. 8:34

Origin wrote: “If we wish to save our soul in order to get it back better than a soul, let us lose it by our martyrdom”.

Origin writes that martyrdom may take the form of temptation, persecution, impious word, and reproach. Not only is there outward martyrdom that others can witness, but also secret martyrdom that involves demonic attacks on our thoughts and feelings. Origin writes that the devil is present at every trial wishing to defile us with evil thoughts of denial or of doubt or of any plausible argument urging us to behave hostile to our martyrdom and our perfection.

Many afflictions come in the form of temptations. Origin states, “We must suppose that the present temptation has come about as a testing and trying of our love for God”. Thus Moses wrote in the Torah: “For the Lord is tempting you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

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Adversity comes so that our attention will be drawn away from the material and towards God. Thus God said: "I THE LORD, YOUR GOD, AM A JEALOUS GOD" (Ex. 20:5).

Those who reject martyrdom desert the easy and light burden of God:

"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" Matt. 11:30

And they subject their souls to the yoke of demons and to bear the burden of the heaviest sins. Even if they are physically comfortable their souls are in constant anguish.

King David wrote: *"I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord"* (Ps. 116:13). Origin explains that the cup of salvation in the Psalms, is the death of the martyrs. Origin writes that the death does not refer to the common physical death, but rather death to one's own sinful nature, death to one's desires, lust and pride, "a special kind of death, Christian, religious and holy."

Origin wrote to Ambrosia and Protoctetus, his followers, that their afflictions were permitted by Jesus ***"to go with you and to give you speech, wisdom..., and to complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. He is with you to show you the way to the paradise of God and how you may pass through the Cherubim and the flowing sword that turns every way and guards the way to the tree of life"***, (Gen. 3:24).

Martyrdom is of great benefit to the soul. ***"We glory in tribulations also"***, wrote St. Paul, ***"knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance, character, and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint"***, (Rom. 5:3-5).

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✠ Endurance

✠ We are called to endure, “*In stripes, in imprisonment, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fasting*” (2Cor. 6:5).

✠ How are we to deal with afflictions?

Origin writes: “We turn our governing mind from our sufferings and look not at the present sufferings, but at the prizes kept for athletes who by their endurance of these tests compete according to the rules in Christ by the grace of God”.

✠ **What shall we do when we “perceive our soul drawing back”?**

Origin tells us to let the mind of Christ which is in you say “*why are you cast down O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God for I shall yet praise Him*” (Ps. 42:11).

✠ We must pray constantly that our souls be guarded by the peace of God, which passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7).

✠ **What are we to do when we hear impious words said against us or against God?**

(3) We are to follow the example of King David who wrote “*But I, like a deaf man, do not hear and I am like a mute who does not open his mouth. Thus I was as a man that hears not.*” (Ps. 38:13-14).

✠ **If we are reproached, and scorned and rebuked, what are we to do?**

(4) We must allow no one and nothing to turn our hearts away from Jesus. We are to do as King David said “*All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten you, neither have we dealt falsely in back*” (Ps. 44:17-18).

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✠ We are not alone in affliction. St. Paul writes “*We have been made a spectacle unto the world and to angels and to men*” (1Cor. 4:9).

Origin explains “The whole world and all the angels of the right and the left and all men those from God’s portion and those from the other portion will attend to us when we contest for Christianity.” If we endure, the holy angels will further assist us, and men of unbelief, seeing our courage will be converted while men of belief will have their faith strengthened by witnessing our example.

What of secret martyrdom?

✠ We should fight the evil inclination of our hearts and the thoughts that the evil one throws at us.

Origin exhorts us to “let the fire of the Holy Spirit be kindled also in you to destroy every one of your thoughts that is earthly and drawn toward the body.”

From where does endurance come?

Origin writes that it is “the conviction that the eye of God is present with those who endure”. The seven brothers in the second book of Maccabees, after enduring great suffering, said “The Lord God is watching over us and in truth has compassion on us”.

If we are willing to endure and ask God to inflame our hearts with His love then we will have what Origin calls “the spell of love for God which is immensely more powerful than any other love spell. Human weakness does not live in the same city with this spell of love for God”. It is this power that made King David say, “*The Lord is my strength and song*” (Ps. 118:14). Jesus Christ said “...*But he who endures to the end shall be saved*” (Mark 13:13).

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We must fight the denial of God during Martyrdom and not to be ashamed of temptations, misfortunes and evils directed against us, even if the world looks on them as shameful. “We must neither deny the Son of God nor be ashamed of Him or His word,” writes Origin “Jesus once endured the cross, despising the shame and those who imitate Him by despising the shame will be seated with Him and will rule in heaven.”

King Solomon wrote, “***He who is slow to wrath has great understanding but he who is impulsive exalts folly***” (Prov. 14:29).

Origin writes “Let us endure a hard struggle with sufferings being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction and joyfully accepting the plundering of our property.”

The Rewards

St. Paul wrote, “***the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us***” (Rom. 8:18). He called hardships “***light affliction***” (2 Cor. 4:17) because they were light when compared with the weight of Eternal glory. To follow Jesus Christ means to expect suffering as part of His commandment: “If you do not shrink from what following Him means”, writes Origin, “you will pass through the heavens climbing above the heavens and their mysteries”.

St. Peter said to Jesus Christ “***See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?***” So Jesus said unto them, “***Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me, will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel***” (Matt. 19:27-28).

Jesus asked “... ***Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?***” (Matt. 20:22). Origin claims, “He means cup by martyrdom and cites as reference to the verse:

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“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will but as You will” Matt. 26:39

- ✠ The person who drinks the cup, which Jesus Christ drank, will sit with Him and rule and judge with Him.
- ✠ We must go through winters of adversity in our life but we must remember that God will one day say to us *“Rise up my love my fair one and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone”* (Song. 2:10-11).

Origin writes “you cannot hear the winter is past any other way than by entering the contest of this present winter with all your strength and might”.

- ✠ We are never alone in suffering. Jesus the Afflicted One is always with us and our souls are comforted by the sweet presence of His Spirit as it is written ***“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.”*** (2Cor. 1:5).

Origin wrote “Those who share in sufferings will share also in the comfort in proportion to the suffering they share with Christ”. This comfort is with us even when we have no physical comfort, as Origin writes “We are persuaded we have a better possession that is not earthly or corporeal but one that is invisible and incorporeal and we look not to the things that are seen since we realize things that they are transient while the others are Eternal”.

“All of us have built ourselves a house,” writes Origin. This house is our spiritual soul and when the winter comes, it will be severe. There will also be rain from the spiritual wickedness of our enemies, the principalities and powers and harsh winds from the world’s rulers of this darkness. These will break themselves upon our house. “If we have founded the house on a rock, the house will not fall”. This rock is Jesus and Origin

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writes.

“By Him we shall be nourished, in Him we shall receive manifold wisdom.... By the true and unceasing light of knowledge our minds will be enlightened to gaze upon what is by nature to be seen in the Light with.... Eyes illuminated by the Lord’s commandment.”

Reference:

“Origin, An Exhortation to Martyrdom Prayer and selected works”
Translated by Rowan A. Greer, The Classics of Western Spirituality.

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**SEPTEMBER
FOURTH SUNDAY**

**EL - NAYROUZ (II):
FEAST OF MARTYRDOM, ST. POTAMIAENA, THE
PURE VIRGIN**

Please read the attached materials entitled “Feasts of the Martyrs and “Potamiaena, the pure virgin,” “Christianity is a religion of Strength”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To try to understand the life and the feeling of a martyr moments before martyrdom. Martyrs were strong to the last breath. They never lost their love, they never lost their faith and they never lost sight of heaven. Being a humble Christian does not mean that the individual is not strong.

MEMORY VERSE:

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain “Phil 1:21

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✝ It is very hard to know the feeling of a martyr. This is why the fathers of our church say that martyrdom by blood shedding is one of the mysteries of the church equal to baptism. The martyr bears all sorts of tortures without any complaint or objection. At that time he

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actually experiences the conquering of death and sees the crown of eternity. The memory verse *“For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain”*.

- ✚ Because the martyr is looking up to heaven and to the happy life waiting for him, he cannot stay on this earth anymore.
- ✚ The book of Acts describes to us the last moments in St. Stephen’s martyrdom; which may be an example of other martyrs. His face was shining, he prayed for the people who were stoning him, he looked up to heaven and saw Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father and gave up his soul in the hands of the Lord Jesus.
(Acts 7:55-60)
- ✚ Discuss the life of St. Potamiaena:
 - * St. Potamiaena loved God more than anything in the world.
 - * She wanted to dedicate her life to God.
 - * She insisted on her principles by asking not to have her clothes taken off and to be inserted in boiling oil instead of water.
 - * She gained the crown of martyrdom and also gave the officer “Basilides”, who treated her with dignity, a good example of our loving God. Basilides also gained the crown of martyrdom.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) We must be strong in our struggles against the devil and declare our Christianity to all people and never hide it.
- (2) Be a leader, not a follower. Stick to your values and what you believe in.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

THE MARTYRE AND NAIROUZ

Come, Ye faithful people, come
Where there is eternal life

to the heavenly Jerusalem
and we'll live in peace with our Saviour

Nairouz is the beginning of the year
Who defended faith without fear

when we remember our martyrs
and lived in peace with our Saviour

Our ancestors were brave
Now in Heaven they are crowned

for their faith their lives they gave
And lived in peace with our Saviour

Our martyrs won their crowns
And they opened Heaven's doors

when they laid their lives down
now live in peace with our Saviour

Never flinched they from the flame
They shed their blood for His Name

nor from the tyrant's sharpest aim
Now live in peace with our Saviour

By their faith they saw the land
They put their souls in His hand

where triumphant now they stand
And lived in peace with our Saviour

If Satan comes to divide us
And His peace will be with us

the voice of God will gather us
And we'll live in peace with our Saviour

Lord, deliver us from all sin
And lead us to Thy Kingdom

that eternal life we may win
O our King, and our Saviour

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CHRISTIANITY, RELEGION OF STRENGTH

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

The gentleness and humility, that Christianity calls for, are no indication whatsoever that it is a religion of weakness, but it is a religion of strength. The Bible describes the faithful as, "*sharp arrows of the warrior.*" (Ps 120:4). And about the Church, the Bible says that it is, "*Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners.*" (Song 6:10).

This power is what the Holy Spirit gives to the faithful.

Therefore, God said to them, "*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me.*" (Act 1:8)

The Bible also says, "*And with great power the Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all,*" (Act 4:33) as if "...the Kingdom of God present with power." (Mk 9:1)

The summit of power, in Christianity is shown in the Apostle's saying, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*" (Phil 4:13)

He also says about the strength in serving "...*I also labour, striving according to his working in me mightily.*" (Col. 1:29) It is power, inspite of obstacles, as the Lord said to Paul, "*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.*" (Act 18:9,10).

It is power with authority over all devils...When the Lord Jesus sent His Disciples, He "...*gave them power and authority over all demons.*" (Lk 9:11). We also thank Him in our prayers as He has, "...*given us the authority to trample on serpents, corptions and over all the power of the enemy.*" (Lk 10:19).

The Christians are strong because they are an image of God and God is powerful...

The Lord Jesus, despite His gentleness and humility, was powerful. It was said about Him, "*Gird your sword upon your thigh, O Mighty One.*" (Ps 45:3). He was powerful, "...*for power went out from Him.*" (Lk 6:19).

"The Lord is clothed, He has girded himself with strength." (Ps 93:1). "*He has shown strength with his arm.*" (Lk 1:51). He showed His power through signs and wonders, "*God's arm has made strength.*"

Power in Christianity has a spiritual nature... It is the power to overcome sin, the world and the devils; the power of endurance, the power of working and serving; the power of personality and how it affects and leads others; the power to defend faith. This power is far from faults, violence, attacking or defeating others.

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Feast of the Martyrs

Martyrdom by blood shedding is one of the mysteries of the church equal to baptism. Testifying for Christ by the shedding of blood is an actual renewal of the cross, because in Martyrdom, Christ is present in the martyr's heart, thoughts and soul supporting him/her till the last breath, extending His body and placing His wounds on the martyr's wounds.

Thus the martyrs bore all sorts of torture without any complaint or objection because at that time they actually experienced the conquering of death and saw the crown of eternity. Together with pain and suffering the martyr gets a taste of Christ's glory through a tangible vision.

Blessing the martyrs is certainly a definite order of God and their martyrdom is a great joy and Godly glory. The glory received in martyrdom does not mean that the martyr or martyrdom is higher in rank than faith, but that the martyr as a human being proclaims his/her faith on the basis of the verse, "***For me to live is Christ and to die is gain***" (Phil. 1:21) revealing that the martyr actually lives by faith and by Christ.

The true proof is in his readiness to die believing that death is the door to everlasting life and eternity with Christ since any person who is not ready to suffer and die with Christ or for Christ is not considered to be in the state of perfect faith.

When the martyr reaches the point in sensing the call to this happy journey, which can come in any one of the moments of love, that martyr cannot bear to remain on this earth and no longer worries about torture of any form.

Christians used to surround the martyrs during their last moments to breathe their fragrance, to receive their advice and to be enriched with their supplications. They also crowded to touch their bodies and dip their most treasured belongings in the drops of their blood. The bodies of the martyrs were wrapped in the most valuable shrouds and placed in the

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most holy places. The crown of martyrdom, which the church insists is one of the rights of the martyrs, always appears around their head.

One of the church's rituals, inherited from the first centuries, is the commemoration of the saints by singing hymns and praises all night for every Sunday and for the rest of the feasts. In Egypt, the church used to (and still does) make an agape feast after the Mass to feed the congregation and the poor. It used to be called "Agape amanuensis" i.e. "love for memory").

Commemoration of the martyr has an overwhelming influence on the thoughts of the people because it strengthens them in their struggles against the devil, fortifies them against evil thoughts and imaginations and gives them great peace.

In conclusion, many have witnessed that the martyr's blood had an aroma that excelled beyond all worldly fragrance. As for those who were martyred through burning, their burning bodies gave out an aroma filled with perfume.

✠ St. Potamiaena

As a beautiful slave, her master tried to seduce her but that went in vain. He accused her of being a Christian and bribed the ruler to torture her. She was tortured severely, and then ordered to be cast naked in boiling bitumen. St. Potamiaena begged to keep her clothes on but be tortured longer.

Basilides, the officer who escorted her to her death sentence declared Christianity shortly after. He was sentenced to imprisonment where he was baptized; he was also beheaded.

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For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the students
in the class

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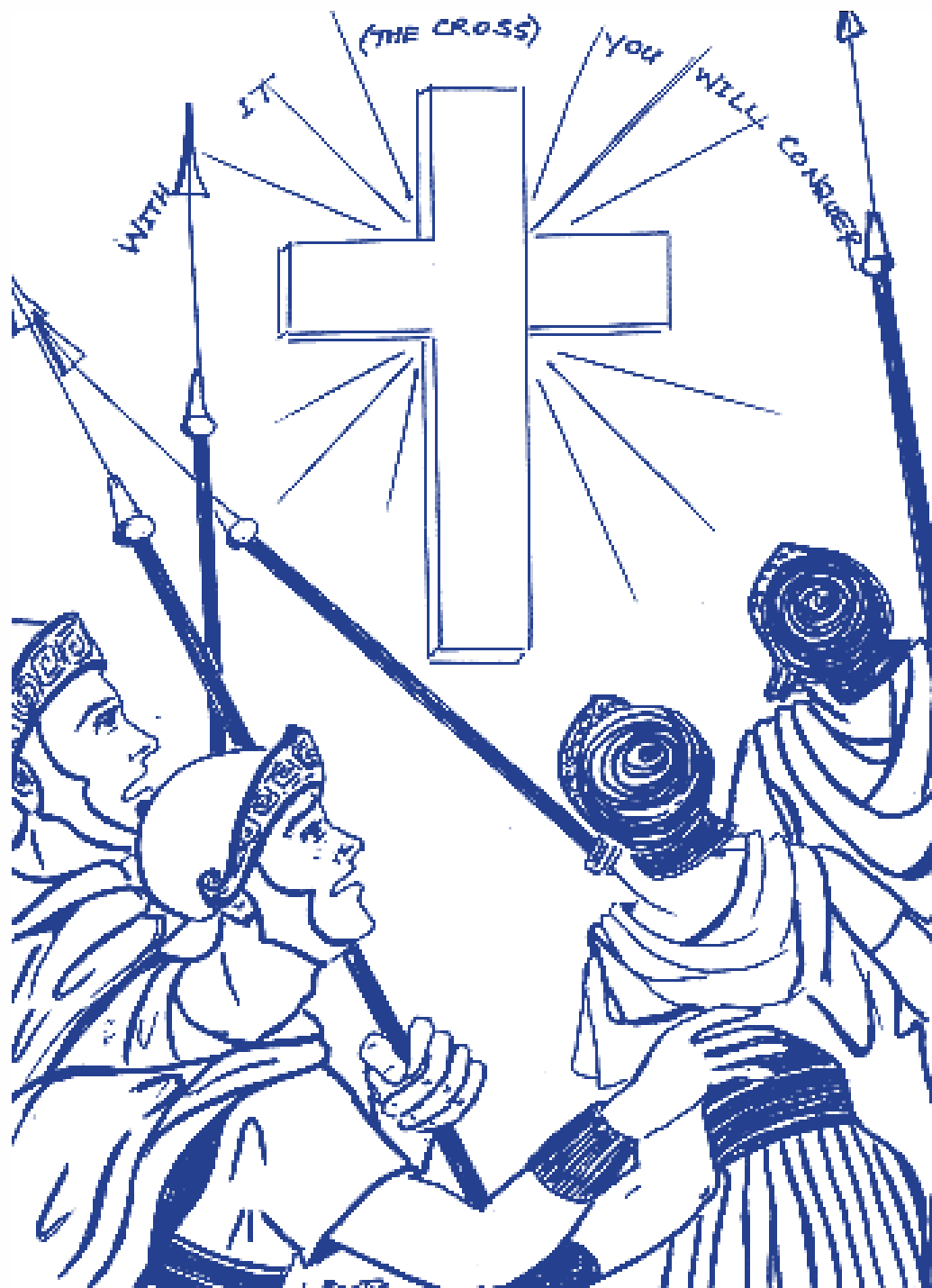
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**SEPTEMBER
FIFTH SUNDAY**

THE CROSS-DAY FEAST “THE LIFE OF GROWTH”

Please read the attached materials entitled “The Cross”, “Crossing yourself”, and “Growth”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

The importance of the Cross in our lives.

MEMORY VERSE:

“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me” Matthew 10:38

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✝ The cross was the worst device of execution known in history among the Romans. It was used for torturing the worst criminals to death. But now, in Christianity, the Cross became a symbol of dignity, blessing, and pride. The Cross is now located at the highest point outside our churches (at the top of domes or towers) and inside our churches (at the top of the iconostasis). Many of us have the Cross stamped permanently on our hands and many of us wear a chained Cross. It now became that Christianity without a Cross is not Christianity at all. What are the reasons for this dramatic change?

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- (1) Our Lord Jesus Christ completed our salvation by dying on the Cross. When He did that, He proved His love for us; He defeated Satan and tied him up in Hades. He fulfilled all the prophecies about the suffering of the Messiah on our behalf; and the Cross, since His crucifixion, became a symbol of victory, glory, and pride rather than being a sign of shame.
- (2) Through the Cross, all our previous debts have been paid.
“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Col. 2:13-14).

✚ The Cross in the Seven Sacraments of our Church:

In performing all the Sacraments of our Church, the priest uses the sign of the Cross for sanctification, blessing, and for the glory of God. The purpose of this action in the Sacrament is to give a heavenly gift through the Sacrament.

✚ The Cross in our daily life:

- * When an individual crosses himself or herself, the devil will flee away because he remembers that he was defeated by the Cross. Thus, crossing ourselves while mentioning the Holy Trinity will give us great power.
- * When we resist temptation of the world, we dare to be different from others, to stick to our values, to take any sickness or suffering without complaints, and thank God even at times of trouble, all these actions are example of carrying the Cross in our daily lives. Then we are true Christians.

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* Remember that behind carrying the Cross and suffering in our daily lives there is also the inner happiness and the glory of God and all of our works.

✝ Carrying the Cross would lead to our growth.

Story: A teacher asked the students: “I told you that carrying the Cross means you take sufferings and do not complain about it, would you carry it? Raise your hand please.” No one raised their hand. Nobody wants to suffer. Then the teacher asked: “Can you plant a big tree inside a building?” The students struggled a bit with the question, but then arrived to acknowledge the importance of the wind to shake up the tree so that the roots would go deeper, get more nutrition for the tree and the tree would then grow. Similarly, the Cross and suffering have an effect like the wind on the tree. The person will grow, become stronger, more experienced, and victorious. When he carries responsibilities and endures suffering, then he will enjoy the rewards.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) In all our actions, let us follow the Lord Jesus’ footsteps. We must carry all our duties and endure pain without complaining and enjoy the growth in our life.
- (2) Let us stick to our values, traditions, faith, and carry our Cross, and its mystery of happiness.

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Fifth Sunday

SONGS 🎵

NEAR THE CROSS

Jesus keep me near the cross
Free to all, a healing stream

there a precious fountain
flows from Calvary's mountain

REFRAIN

In the cross, in the cross
Till my ruptured soul shall find

by my glory ever
rest beyond the river

Near the cross, a trembling soul
There the bright and morning Star

love and mercy found me
sheds His beams around me

Near the cross, O Lamb of God
Help me walk from day to day

bring its scenes before me
with its shadows over me

Near the cross, I'll watch and wait
Till I reach the golden strand

hoping trusting ever
just beyond the river



CROSSING YOURSELF

- ✝ We cross ourselves in our personal prayers. In the Holy Sacraments of our Church the priest uses the sign of the Cross: In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- ✝ The Lord Christ emphasized very much the importance of the Cross; at the beginning of His service, in His teachings, in His lifestyle and at His death on the Cross.
- ✝ Matthew (10:38) ***“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me”.***
- ✝ Matthew (16:24) ***“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me”.***
- ✝ Jesus concentrated on mentioning the cross because His crucifixion is the source of salvation. Everything that Christians enjoy in the New Testament: Salvation and Forgiveness, was completed on the Cross.
- ✝ On the Cross, Jesus paid the price of our sins and died for us so that we might live.
- ✝ The Cross is the subject of Glory:

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”. (Galations 6:14)

- ✝ The Cross is the subject of Preaching of the Apostles:

“But we preach Christ crucified to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.” (1 Corinthians 1:23).

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assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2:3 6).

✙ The Cross is the subject of Strength:

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”. (1 Corinthians 1:18).

St. Paul mentioned here that only “The word of the Cross” is the “power of God”. Therefore when we mention the word of the Cross or when we make the sign of the Cross, we are filled with strength.

✙ The devil is very scared from the sign of the Cross:

Every time we cross ourselves the devil becomes afraid because he remembers that with the Cross Jesus Christ defeated him and gave salvation to His people. The devil then escapes from the sign of the Cross.

✙ **The Cross – Day Feast in the Coptic Church**

✙ The Coptic Church observes two feasts in honor of the Holy Cross of Christ:

* **The First**

On 17th Tout (about 28th Sept.) commemoration of the consecration of the Church of the Holy Cross, which is built by the empress Helena the mother of king Constantine.

* **The Second**

On 10th Baramhaat (about 19th March) in commemoration of the discovery of the Holy Cross by the same empress.

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✠ From the Sayings of the Church Fathers:

- ✠ Hail to the Cross that Jesus was crucified on and stretched his hands to bring everybody to him.
- ✠ Adam was dismissed from Paradise because of one tree, and because of the Holy Cross he regained his original rank.

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GROWTH

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

One of the characteristics of the spiritual life is continual growth...

Man starts his relationship with God through repentance then he grows from the fear of God to His love. The growth in love continues till it reaches holiness, as it is said in the Bible,.. *".. you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, Be holy for I am holy. " (1 Pet 1:15-16)*

Would one stop after reaching holiness?

No he has to strive for perfection.

The Bible says, *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. " (Matt 5:48)*

The one who endeavours on the road to perfection never reaches its end, no matter how far he gets, perfection has no limits...

There are levels of perfection, each level is, higher than the other...

Look at St. Paul, who was a saint. He was caught up to the third heaven and he made wonders and miracles. In spite of all that, he says, *"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on... I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. " (Phil 3:12-13)*

The Apostle concludes his saying about this growth, *"Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind. "*

We can see that even the righteous must always strive, "to reach forward. "

God has compared the faithful to a grain of wheat that becomes a seedling and grows. He said, *"... and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself, first the blade, then the head and after that the full grain in the head. " (Mk 4:27-28).*

Are you like the wheat that grows continually, starting as a seedling becoming an ear of corn then full grains of wheat?...

Try to grow as growth gives continual warmth. To stop growing means no warmth in the heart which leads to one's lukewarmness.

If you feel you are unable to grow, try at least to stop where you are. Bewared of going backwards.

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THE CROSS

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

The Cross is a symbol of suffering and three crosses symbolize three cases:

The Cross of Christ is a symbol of suffering for righteousness' sake, While the other two crosses refer to suffering as a penalty for sin. These are divided into two kinds: one suffers because of his sins then repents and returns while the other suffers because of his sins but complains and grumbles, then dies in his sins...

The Cross which is for righteousness' sake is also of different kinds:

The cross of love and sacrifice is like the Cross of Christ who endured suffering to save us, "Greater love has no one than this, to lay down his life for his friends. " (Jn 15:13)

There is another cross in offering. And the greatest offering is that given from the needs where you prefer others to yourself. You become in need to let others take, like the widow who gave all that she had, her whole livelihood.

Another Cross is that of endurance: turning the other cheek and walking the second mile. It is not only bearing people's abuses, but being good to those who spitefully use you and also loving them!...

Who can do that?... It is a cross...

There is another cross in the Spiritual Struggle: in the victory of the spirit over the body, in enduring the hard ships and wars of the world, the body and the devil... It is also in crucifying the body and its desires,... having victory over oneself,... entering through the narrow gate...

It is a Cross to suffer for righteousness' sake. This is only for beginners... As for the perfect, the cross turns into joy and pleasure...

We feel the narrowness of the gate at the beginning of the way. But later on, we find pleasure in carrying out the commandment and love it. By then the way would not be distressful and what at first was a cross becomes a pleasure...

Martyrdom used to be a Cross, then it turned to be a joy. Saints began to desire martyrdom and long for death, and rejoice in it...

Labouring and suffering for God's sake became a pleasure and an enjoyment.

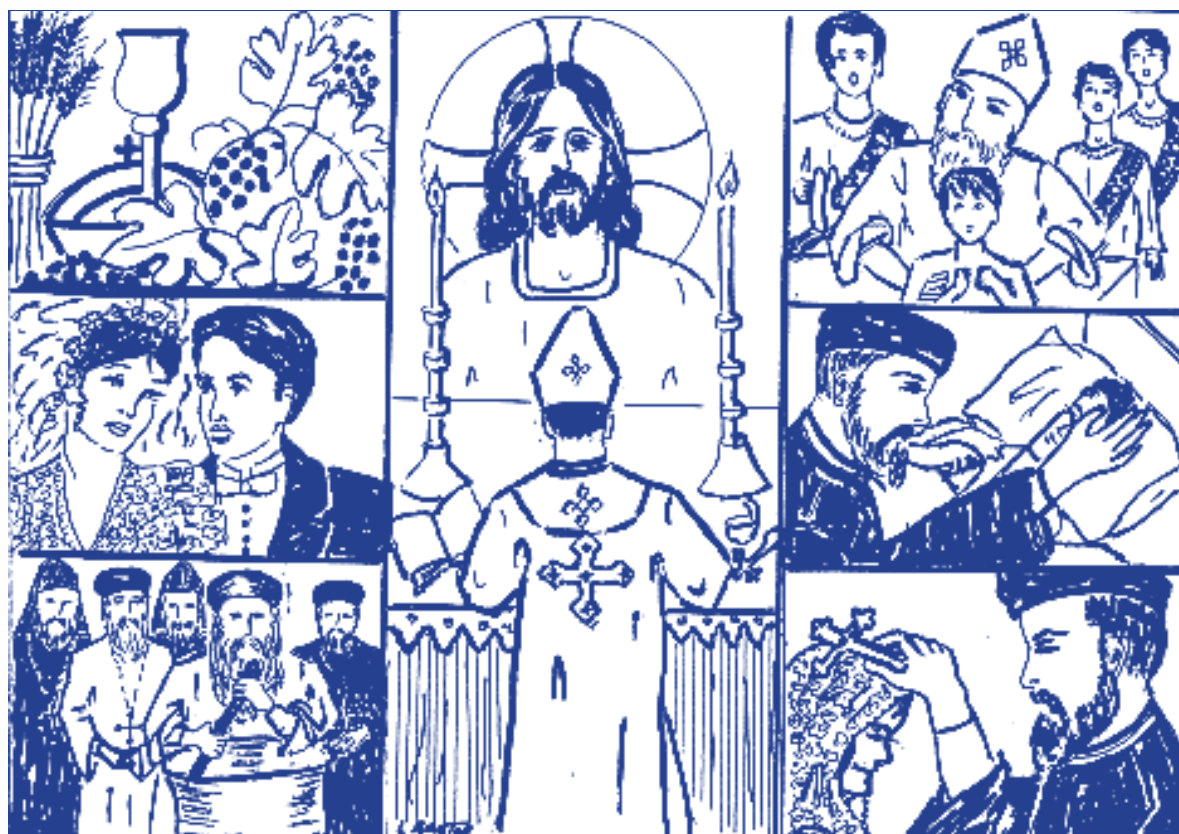
Therefore, the Bible considers suffering a gift from God...

"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)

When will the cross be a joy in our life?

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**OCTOBER
FIRST SUNDAY**

**CHURCH SACRAMENTS (I):
INTRODUCTION TO THE SACRAMENTS AND THE
SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

Please read the attached materials entitled “Introduction to Church Sacraments”, “The Sacrament of Baptism”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To study the Holy Sacraments of our Church. This is a series of 7 lessons. In this first lesson we will focus on two types of gifts and talents: heavenly and earthly. We get the heavenly gifts and talents in the Sacraments. In the Sacrament of Baptism we get a new life in Christ Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE:

***“The Secret of the Lord is with those who fear him “Psalm
25:14***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) Introduction to Church Sacraments:

✙ What is the definition of a Sacrament?

A Sacrament is a spiritual talent that brings invisible graces to the

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believers by the Holy Spirit.

- ✠ The invisible graces, that we get in the Sacrament, are obtained through performing visible rites by a priest or a bishop.
- ✠ Our Church has 7 Sacraments:
The first 4 are necessary for every believer and the other 3 are necessary only for some people.
- ✠ Every Sacrament is founded in the Bible.
- ✠ The writings of the Fathers in the early centuries made it clear that there are seven Sacraments.
- ✠ The seven Sacraments are: **Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, Holy Communion, The Unction of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders.**
- ✠ A Bishop can perform all Sacraments. A priest can only perform 6 Sacraments (i.e. all except Holy Orders). A deacon can only help the bishop or the priest in celebrating the seven Sacraments.
- ✠ Do the blessings of Sacraments depend on the life of the priest or Bishop performing them? **No.** (see the attachment for the reasons.)

(B) The Sacrament of Baptism

- ✠ No one is born Christian because every newborn baby is born with the original sin of Adam and Eve. But the person becomes Christian after Baptism (getting rid of the inherited sin).
“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a man is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” (John 3:5).
- ✠ The Baptism is the Sacrament through which a person is born again and accepted into the membership of the Church. Therefore, believers must receive baptism before they can receive any other Sacrament.
- ✠ Jesus established this Sacrament after his resurrection when he said to his disciples ***“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing***

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them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”
(Matthew 28:18-19).

- ✝ The word “baptism” comes from a Greek word which means “to dye” or to dip into water.

(C) The Visible signs (Institutions of the Sacrament)

Read to students from the attachment.

(D) The Invisible Grace

Read to students from the attachment.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) It is through the Holy Sacraments of the Church that all the gifts, talents and blessings of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ are transferred to us i.e. without the Blood of the Lord Jesus nothing can be given to us in any Sacrament but all the Holy Sacraments are granted to us because of the everlasting sacrifice that was given on our behalf.
- (2) It is a good practice during the year, to celebrate two birthdays; one is our biological birthday and the other (which is more important) is our Baptismal birthday to remember always our new life with the Lord.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

THE PRIME DOXOLOGY

We worship the Father,
Hail to the Church

Hail to the Virgin
Hail to Gabriel

Hail to Cherubim
Hail to all

Hail to John
Hail to the

Hail to our father
The destroyer

Hail to Stephen
Hail to George

Hail to all the choirs
Hail to Abba Anthony

Hail to all the choirs
Hail to all the saints

Through their prayers
Accord to us mercy

the Son and the Holy Spirit
the house of the angels

who brought forth our Saviour
who brought her good news.

Hail to Seraphim
the heavenly orders

the great fore-runner
twelve Apostles.

Mark the Evangelist
of the idols.

the first martyr.
the morning star.

of the martyrs.
and the three Macarii.

of the cross-bearers
who have pleased the Lord

O Christ our king
in thy kingdom.



INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH SACRAMENTS

✠ Definition

A Church Sacrament is a holy ordinance through which the believer receives an invisible grace under the form of an outward sign, visible or audible.

It is instituted by Christ, Himself.

Some Protestants say that the Sacraments are mere symbols and “signs of the new covenant”. They also believe that they are mere outward rituals through the observance of which “the church of Christ confesses her Lord and is visibly distinguished from the world”.

But our Church believes that there is a real efficacy in the Sacraments themselves and that they truly bring invisible graces to the believers.

✠ For instance it is said that Baptism brings salvation.
“When once the Divine long suffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us.” (1Pet. 3: 20-21).

✠ And the Holy Communion brings true life in this world:
“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53).

“Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day”.

“He who eats this bread will live forever.” (John 6:54 - 58).

The same can be said of the other sacraments.

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✠ Number of Church Sacraments

- ✠ There are seven Sacraments: Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, Penance, Holy Communion, Unction for the Sick, Matrimony and Holy Orders.
- ✠ The first four Sacraments are necessary for every believer and the other three are not necessary for everyone.

✠ Who has the Right to Perform Church Sacraments?

- ✠ A bishop may perform any Church Sacrament but there must be at least three bishops for the consecration of a bishop in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. A priest cannot confer Holy Orders but he can perform the other six Sacraments; a deacon can only help the bishop or the priest in celebrating the seven Sacraments.
- ✠ Some Protestants say that Sacraments and all church ordinances can be celebrated by anyone of the laity and that there is no need for the clergy, supposing that all Christians are of the same standing and Christ did not distinguish anyone in His Church.

In reply please turn to what is mentioned in this connection in the Sacrament of the Holy Orders.

- ✠ Others think that the Sacraments lose their efficacy if the minister's life is evil. But our Church teaches that the blessings gotten through the Sacraments do not depend on the life of the minister because of the following reasons:
 - * The Apostle Paul asserts that the word of grace in the heart does not depend on any human effort but absolutely on God. ***“Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase”***(1Cor.3: 7).

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- * Though the Lord did not baptize and baptism was left to the disciples, yet was said that it was He who baptized. (John 1:33; 4:12).

In the same manner we can say that it is not the minister who performs the Sacraments but God who works in him, with him and through him. ***“For it is God who works in you”***(Phil. 2:13).

“We then, as workers together with Him, also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain”(2Cor. 6:1).

“I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” (1Cor. 15:10). ***We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”*** (2Cor. 5:20).

- * When Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses and against God, took their censers and offered incense in them, they were severely punished but God ordered ***“The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the Lord, therefore they are holy.”*** (Numbers 16:38).

- * The Lord ordered us to accept the teaching even of wicked teachers and not to imitate their bad example (Matt. 23:1-3).

- * St. John Chrysostom said; “It happens that the leaders are wicked and the laity are righteous. But the grace does not depend upon the life of the clergy. This I say in order that no one should doubt of the legality of ordinances celebrated if he examines the priest’s life because everything depends upon the power of God who alone grants the grace through the sacrament performed”.

- * And St. Athanasius said; “The priest does not consecrate the



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water (of baptism) but merely performs the due service for which he obtains grace from God”.

He also said; “If we baptize, confirm and forgive everything is due to Christ who performs it.”

It was also said, “It makes no difference whether the Sacraments are given at the hands of righteous or wicked ministers because sacraments resemble the seeds which are scattered on the earth by the farmer and which will produce the due crop whether the hands of the farmer are clean or dirty and because if the efficacy of the sacraments depends upon the life of the ministers, it follows that our salvation depends upon their desire”.



THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

✠ Definition

Baptism is the Sacrament through which a person is born again and accepted into the membership of the Church after being dipped into water three times in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Of all the Sacraments it is the first because it is considered as the door through which the believer enters the Church and the kingdom of grace according to what was said by the Lord ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.”*** (John 3:5).

Therefore, baptism must be received by believers before they can receive any other Sacrament.

✠ Symbols in the Old Testament

- ✠ The Ark of Noah, ***“When once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, baptism”*** (1 Pet. 3:20, 21).
- ✠ The circumcision ***“In Him, you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ buried with Him in baptism”*** (Col. 2:11, 12).
- ✠ Crossing the Red Sea ***“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our Fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea”*** (1Cor. 10:1, 2).

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✠ **Baptism of John the Baptist:**

Although it was from heaven yet it was “... *a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*” (Luke 3:3) and had no power of rebirth. It was to prepare the Jews to accept Christ and was at the same time a sign or preparation for Christian baptism.

✠ **Baptism by the Disciples before the Death of Christ**

It was said that the disciples used to baptize during the days of our Lord on earth (John 4:2). But this baptism was also to prepare the Jews to accept Christ. St. John Chrysostom says that it was exactly the same as the baptism of John the Baptist.

✠ **Institution of the Sacrament**

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted this Sacrament after His resurrection when He said, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” (Matt. 28:18-19)

✠ The use of water is because Christ was baptized into water (Matt. 3:13-16).

Christ said, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God*” (John 3:5).

It was thus used by the Apostles and the early Church in the Apostolic age, “*Then Peter answered, can anyone forbid water that these should not be baptized?*” (Act 10:46, 47). “*And both Philip and the eunuch went down both into the Water, and he baptized him*” (Acts 8:3 8).

It has been used since the very beginning of the Church. Water cleans

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the dirt of the body and baptism cleans the dirt of the soul.

✝ The dipping into water is because:

Christ was thus baptized ***“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the Water.”*** (Matt.3:16).

And the early Church in the Apostolic Age thus baptized too.

“And both Philip and the eunuch went down both into the water and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38). No doubt the eunuch had some water with him in his chariot and Philip could have used some of it for sprinkling him had it been allowed to baptize with sprinkling.

The word “Baptism” comes from a Greek word, which means “to dye” or to dip into water.

Baptism resembles death and burial with Christ and to bury a dead body is to put it down into the grave ***“... do you not know, that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”*** (Rom. 6:34).

Therefore it is not right to baptize with the sprinkling of water as others do.

✝ The Invisible Grace

✝ **Rebirth**: ***“Jesus answered and said unto him, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*** Nicodemus said to Him ***“How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”*** Jesus answered: ***“Most assuredly, I say to you: “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”*** (John 3:3-5).

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For this reason the Apostle Paul calls baptism regeneration, *“not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy. He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”* (Titus 3:5).

- † **Remission of sins**: *“Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”* (Acts 2:38).
- † **Purification and sanctification**: *“There is also an antitype which now saves us, baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)”* (1 Pet. 3:21). *“..Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word”* (Eph. 5:25-26).
- † **Salvation**: *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved”* (Mark 16:16). *“There is also an antitype which now saves us-baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God).”* (1 Pet. 3:21).
- † **Adoption**: *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:26-27).

✠ **ONE BAPTISM**

Our Church teaches that those who have been validly baptized must not be baptized again. This is what St. Paul affirmed *“One Lord, one faith, one baptism”* (Eph.4: 5).

- † Baptism is the rebirth or regeneration. As man is born bodily only once so we cannot be spiritually born more than once.
- † Baptism is the partaking of Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom. 6:4,

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Col. 2:12). And Christ died and arose only once.

Even when Christians reject the faith and come back again to the church they will not be baptized again. In this case it is sufficient that they perform the two sacraments of penance and Holy Communion.

✠ **Baptism of Infants**

Some Churches say that Baptism should be given only to grown up persons. But our Church believes that babies too should be baptized for the following reasons:

- ✠ Babies are inheritors of Adam's sin and it is necessary for them to be purified of it through baptism.
- ✠ In the Old Testament babies had to be circumcised in order to be accepted into God's covenant. And since circumcision was a type of baptism, therefore, babies should now be baptized in order to be accepted as members in the Church. It should be kept in mind that circumcision, which was a seal of faith (Rom. 4:11), was applied to children who were incapable of faith. This sign marked them out as recipients of the convenient blessings of God.
- ✠ God did not prevent babies from accepting some of the great graces, e.g. Jeremiah was sanctified before coming forth out of the womb (Jer. 1:5). John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. (Luke 1:5).
- ✠ In the Apostolic Age whole families were baptized and there must have been some babies among those families like the families of Cornelius (Acts 10:48), Lydia (Acts 16:14 - 15), the keeper of the prison (Act 16:33), Stephanas (1Cor. 1:16), etc.
- ✠ This was the custom in the Church since the early centuries as is shown in history and the writings of the fathers.

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Origin said “The Apostles handed over to the church the tradition of baptizing; Babies are baptized for the remission of sins to be washed of the inherited sin”.

It was said “Baptizing babies is an Apostolic tradition”.

In the Apostolic traditions we read, “They shall baptize the little children first. If they can answer for themselves let them answer. But if they cannot let their parents answer or someone from their family”.

Christ’s Church on earth is composed of all those who profess faith in Him and obedience to His laws together with their children.

✠ Baptism of Blood

Martyrs who shed their blood for the sake of Christ before being baptized are considered to have received this kind of baptism according to the statement of our Lord ***“Therefore whoever confess Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.”*** (Matt.10:32). Again ***“...But whoever loses his life for My sake will find it”*** (Matt. 16:25).

✠ Obligations of the Baptized

Before receiving baptism, one must publicly declare:

✠ Repentance ***“Then Peter said to them: Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ”*** (Acts 2:3 8).

✠ His Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved”*** (Mark 16:16). In his/her confession of faith he/she must say the Creed.

But in the case of babies who are of course unable to declare repentance or faith before baptism, their parents, godfathers or godmothers should give that declaration instead of them and should promise to raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

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For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the students
in the class

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CHURCH SACRAMENTS (II): THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

October

Second Sunday

- ✝ Our church baptizes the infants.
- ✝ Baptism of blood: for martyrs who shed their blood before baptism.
- ✝ Only a priest or a Bishop can perform baptism.
- ✝ The baptized (or his parents or godparents) must first repent and reject Satan and declares his faith in Jesus Christ.

(B) The Sacrament of Confirmation:

- ✝ Confirmation is the Sacrament through which the believer is granted the gift of the Holy Spirit, Who alone can confirm him in the new life given to him through Baptism.
- ✝ Confirmation is administered directly after baptism.
- ✝ The Holy oil (called Mairoun Oil or Chrisma Oil) was first made by the Apostles, out of the spices and ointments that were prepared for the Body of the Lord at the time of burial and after burial (Luke 23:56). St. Mark brought part of it to Egypt and since that time fresh oil used to be made and added to the rest of it.
- ✝ The Holy oil (Mairoun) is currently prepared by the Pope, assisted by the bishops, using the oil that St. Mark brought to Egypt.
- ✝ Please read in the classroom the highlighted paragraphs in the attached material.
- ✝ Through this Sacrament the believer receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20 - 21).
- ✝ The priest or a bishop can administer this Sacrament. He would anoint the Baptized person 36 times at his or her joints and openings lay his hands on him or her and breathe on him or her the breath of the Holy Spirit. Thus he or she becomes an altar of the Holy Spirit and the

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Holy Spirit resides in him or her.

- ✝ This Sacrament cannot be repeated.
- ✝ This Sacrament is a different Sacrament from Baptism and must not be considered as part of Baptism.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Christianity is a heavenly religion. It imparts to the Christians a precious set of heavenly gifts above all the comprehension of the world. We glorify and thank God for this. Our role is to fully maintain our purity, become like candles in the world we live in and be attached to heaven at all times.
- (2) As we have the Holy Spirit in us, we must realize that we are different from the non-Christians around us; not only in name but in nature, attitude and life.
- (3) We must not work alone in our life. But rather work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in us.

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Second Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

O OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

O our Lord Jesus Christ
Count us with Thy sheep

And in Thy second coming
May never hear Thee say

Rather may we be worthy
Which is full of joy

Come ye unto Me
And inherit the life

All the martyrs shall come
And the righteous shall come

The Son of God shall also come
To reward everyone

O Christ, Logos of the Father
Grant us Thy peace

As Thou has said unto
Likewise say unto us

My peace, which I have taken
I leave unto you

O angel of the day/evening
Remember us before the Lord

The sick, O Lord, heal them
And all our brethren in distress

May God bless us
And may His praise be

Blessed be the Father
The perfect Trinity

who carries the sin of the world
who shall stand upon Thy right

awesome and full of glory
I know ye not

to hear Thy tender voice
proclaiming and saying:

O blessed of My Father
that endures forever

bearing their afflictions
bearing all their virtues.

in His Father's glory
according to his works

the Only-Begotten God
which is full of joy.

Thine holy Apostles
My peace I give to you.

from My Good Father
now and forever

flying up high with this hymn
that He may forgive us our sins

those who slept, repose them
help us, O Lord, and all of them

and let us bless His Holy name
always on our lips

and Son and the Holy spirit
we worship Him and glorify Him.



THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

✠ **Definition**

Confirmation is the Sacrament through which the believer is granted the gifts of the Holy Spirit Who alone can confirm him or her in the new life given to him or her through Baptism. Like the Sacrament of Baptism this Sacrament can never be repeated on the same person.

✠ **Institution of the Sacrament**

It was instituted through the various promises, which the Lord gave for granting the Holy Spirit. (John: Chapters 7, 14, 15, 16 etc).

✠ **Time of Administration**

Since the believer, through this Sacrament, is confirmed in the new life given to him or to her after Baptism, it should be administered directly after Baptism. Some Churches say that it should be delayed till the babies grow to the age of maturity. In reply it may be sufficient to state the following:

- ✠ The Holy Spirit descended upon our Lord directly after Baptism (Matt. 3:16).
- ✠ The Apostles used to celebrate this Sacrament by the laying on of hands, directly after Baptism (Acts 8:14, 17, 19:5, 6).
- ✠ Since babies are worthy of receiving the grace of Baptism, there is no reason for preventing them from receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- ✠ The Bible declares that some babies were filled with the Holy Spirit even from their mothers' womb (e.g. St. John the Baptist (Luke 1:15)).

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✠ The Visible Sign

In the early days the Church used to celebrate this Sacrament by the laying on of hands. *“then they laid (Peter and John) hands in them and they received the Holy Spirit”*. (Acts 8:17) *“when they (the Ephesians) heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them the Holy Spirit came upon them”* (Acts 19:5, 6).

The laying on of hands was afterwards replaced by the unction of the holy oil (Mairoun). *“But you have an anointing from the Holy One and you know all things. But the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you, but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him”* (1 John 2:20,27).

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2Cor. 1:21, 22).

Certain parts of the body have to be anointed with Mairoun after saying certain prayers.

It is related that the holy oil was first made by the Apostles of the spices and ointments that were prepared for the body of the Lord at the time of burial and after burial (Luke 23:56,24:1).

St. Mark brought part of it to Egypt and since that time fresh oil used to be made and added to the rest of it.

It is now made of olive oil and certain spices and consecrated by the Patriarch, assisted by the bishops through long prayers.

✠ The Invisible Grace

Through this Sacrament the believer receives the gift of the Holy Spirit who confirms him or her in the new life given to him or her in baptism. The Holy Spirit gives the power of growing in that new life enlightens and

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teaches all things, *“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.”* (1John 2:20-21) and keeps the individual firm in the way of truth.

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Might, Knowledge, Godliness, and the Fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2) are given to the believers through this Sacrament.

✠ Who has the Right to Anoint?

This right was primarily confined to the Apostles. From them it was conveyed to the bishops, their successors. But owing to the difficulties of travel and the impossibility of the bishops being able to confirm all over large dioceses, the custom arose of the bishops blessing the oil and then allowing the priests to anoint with the oil and so convey the blessing of the bishops.

✠ Anointing of Kings

Christian Kings in Christian countries are anointed with holy oil in order that they may receive special blessing of the Holy Spirit to help them with the wisdom and guidance of God in performing their duties. This was also the custom in the Old Testament when Kings of Israel had to be anointed by the hands of the prophets.

When anointing David as king of Israel it was said that he has been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. *“Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward”* (1Sam 16:13).

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THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOUR LIFE

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

What is your relationship with the Holy Spirit since you were anointed with the Holy Chrism (Myron) after your baptism?

Do you feel your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit of God dwells and works in you?

Did you enter into communion with the Holy Spirit which the priest mentions in the blessing prayer?

Does the Spirit of God partake in every deed you perform?

Or you work alone without the Spirit of God independent with your opinion, will management and personal desires?

Does the work of the Spirit give you special warmth, either in your prayers or contemplations, in your service or your love to God, His church and kingdom?

Are you able to carry out the commandment of the Apostle which says, "... *be filled with the Spirit.* " (Eph. 5:18).

Does the Spirit of God speak on your tongue as it was said, "*For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*" (Matt. 10:20). If it is so, certainly your words will have power and effect on the hearts of your listeners...

Or do you talk by yourself and the Spirit does not open your mouth?

Do you have the fruits of the Spirit about which the Apostle St. Paul talked in (Gal. 5:22) when he said, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control.* " Or does your life bear no fruit or you wish for the gifts of the Holy Spirit without having the fruit of the Spirit?!

Do you sometimes feel that you "*grieve the Holy Spirit of God.* " (Eph. 4:30) with certain conduct which does not agree with the Holy Spirit who dwells in you.

Do you "*quench the Spirit.* " (1 Thess. 5:19). with the life of lukewarmness and lack of response to the work of the Spirit in you?!

Would you re-consider the extent of your relationship with the Holy spirit and then ask:

Is your life a spiritual life? Are your words spiritual?



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**OCTOBER
THIRD SUNDAY**

**CHURCH SACRAMENTS (III):
THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE**

Please read the attached materials entitled “The Sacrament of Penance”, “Confession and Repentance”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is the third lesson in a series of 7 lessons about Church Sacraments. In this lesson we learn that everyone needs to repent and confess. Confession is a declaration of true repentance. The person must be convinced of his or her mistakes and become very willing to stop and correct their actions.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Repent therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out”
Acts 3:19

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✙ Through the Sacrament of Penance, the sinner can return to God after confessing his or her sins to the priest.
- ✙ Firstly, the individual first should be sorry for his or her sins, repent and confess his or her sins to God. Then he or she should come to

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the priest and confess in front of the priest. After taking the guidance and absolution from the priest then he or she can proceed to take the Holy Communion.

✠ Conditions of True Repentance:

- ✠ Sorrow from the heart for the sins committed.
- ✠ Resolution not to return.
- ✠ Faith in the mercy and forgiveness of God.
- ✠ Confessing sins to God and then to the priest.
- ✠ Treat as much as possible the result of the sinful actions.

✠ Conditions of True Confession:

- ✠ To tell all the facts to the priest without blaming other people for any mistakes.
- ✠ Listen to and obey the guidance of the priest.
- ✠ There is a great difference between a true confession and an untrue one. The latter is a mockery of the Sacrament.

✠ The Invisible Grace which is Granted in this Sacrament

- ✠ Remission of sins.
- ✠ Reconciliation with God.
- ✠ As His Holiness Pope Shenouda III said, “confession gives solution and absolution.”

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- ✝ God is ready to accept us if we come back to him. So let us be quick to repent and confess. Please tell the students the following, as examples for repentance:
- ✝ The prodigal son. He said, “Now, *I go back ...*”.
- ✝ The tax collector who went to the altar saying “*God have mercy on me, I am a sinner.*”
- ✝ Peter when he repented after denying the Lord Jesus.
- ✝ The woman who was known to be sinner in the city, who repented in the house of the Simeon the Pharisee. She did not speak a word and she taught us all that repentance and confession are not about words but rather a commitment from the heart.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

Let us practice daily repentance to God. Then practice regular confession to the priest. We then can be ready to partake of the Holy Communion and cleanse ourselves. Without regular confession we cannot partake of the Holy Communion.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

FORGIVE ME MY REDEEMER

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” (Ps 32:1)

REFRAIN

Forgive me my redeemer
My eyes are filled with tears

You are the living God
You'll come and forgive us

With all the world's temptations
O strengthen us, Lord Jesus

Lord overlook our sins
And place your hands upon us

We are Your Hands creation
All sinners and believers

O lord we are not worthy
Your love is overwhelming

Our hearts you are seeking
With all his heart repenting

and bless me O Lord Jesus
pleading for forgiveness.

very soon You will come
and wipe away our tears.

we fall into tribulations
we are pleading O Lord.

be gracious unto us
please bless us one and all.

Your servants and Your children
lead us to still waters.

Your gifts we're not deserving
in reverence we bow down.

and blessed is the one listening
and with no turning back.



THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

✠ Definition

Although believers are reborn through the Sacrament of Baptism and receive the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament of Confirmation yet, this does not mean that they have obtained immunity against sin. The Bible teaches us that even the best saint is liable to sin. (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David etc. in the Old Testament; Peter, John, etc. in the New Testament). All these Saints committed sin, even when they were at the pinnacle of their holiness. For this the Sacrament of Penance was instituted in order that through it the sinner can return to God after confessing his sins to the priest. According to the power given by Christ to his ministers to absolve all sinners, repent and believe in Him, the penitent receives, through the mediation of the priest, forgiveness of sins when he is repenting and confessing them.

Because it is very necessary that everyone should examine himself before accepting the Holy Communion, this Sacrament of Penance is therefore administered generally before accepting the Holy Communion. ***“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body”.*** (1Cor. 11:28, 29).

✠ The Institution of The Sacrament

It was instituted by the three-fold promise of the Lord:

- ✠ When Christ said to Peter after declaring that He is the Son of God: ***“...whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”***(Matt. 18:18).
- ✠ When He promised all the disciples saying: ***“Assuredly I say to you. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you Loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*** (Matt.18: 18).

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- † When, after resurrection, He showed them their great commission to the world. ***“As my Father has sent Me, I also send you. And when he had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them. Receive the Holy Spirit: If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”*** (John 20:21 -23).

✠ **The Outward Sign**

There are two audible signs in this Sacrament:

- † In the confession of the penitent to the priest, the confessor stands in:

* Repentance and sorrow for the sins committed. ***“Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out”*** (Acts 3:19).

* Resolution not to return to those sins. When the prodigal son returned to his father he was at once pardoned and accepted because the father was sure that he would not return to that far country.

* Faith in the mercy and forgiveness of God. Everyone that came to the Lord while on earth asking for mercy used to hear this cheerful phrase: “their sins be forgiven them” because of his faith in Him, or least, the faith of those who brought him to the Lord.

* Confessing sins to the priest, especially those that have mastery over the sinner. The reasons for confessing sins, to a Father of Confession, are:

✧ To get absolved from all sins

✧ Advice on how to deal with the temptations and lead a holy life

- † The words of absolution spoken by the priest over the penitent

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The Sacrament of Penance is referred to as *spiritual medicine*. The priest is considered a *spiritual physician*, treating all the diseases of the penitents. Therefore he should treat every case as carefully as possible.

It should be well known that the “seal of confession” is the obligation of secrecy imposed upon the priest with regard to everything made known to him in confession. The obligation is absolute, and admits no exception.

✠ **The Invisible Grace**

✠ The invisible graces granted through this Sacrament are:

- ✠ Remission of sins
- ✠ Reconciliation with God

✠ **The Kind of Sin that Can Be Forgiven:**

✠ The Bible teaches us that every sin can be forgiven however grave it may be, provided that the sinner should return to God in repentance.

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“Therefore I say to you all, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men .” (Matt. 12:31)

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Is 1:18)

✝ It also teaches that God is ready to pardon and accept everyone.

*“... the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out;”
(John 6:37)*

*“..God our savior Who desires all men to be saved
and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”
(1 Tim. 2:3-4)*

David, who committed two grave sins, was pardoned. Peter, who denied the Lord three times in a very shameful way, was pardoned. Also the woman who was taken in adultery was pardoned, *“She said, ‘No one, Lord,’ and Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more,’”* (John 8:11). Christ asked for pardon even to those who committed the greatest crime of crucifying Him.

✝ In (Matt. 12:31) we find that *“the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven men.”* This means that those who reject and oppose the work of the Holy Spirit, and refuse to accept God’s salvation until they pass away from this world, will not be pardoned.

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✠ Ecclesiastical Discipline

In some cases, the priest finds it necessary to enforce a type of discipline on the sinner when he commits a great sin (e.g. he can rebuke him, ask him to fast for a number of days, spend longer time in daily prayer, tell him to give some money to the poor, prevent him from receiving the Holy Communion for some time, or impose some other kind of discipline).

✠ Christ granted this authority to the minsters. He gave them the authority not only to lose, but also to bind (Matt. 16:19), and not only to remit sins, but also to retain them (John 20:23).

✠ The Apostles used this authority

“...deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”(1Cor. 5:5)

See also (2Cor. 2:6,7 and 1 Tim. 5:20).

✠ This discipline is imposed...

* ... in order for the sinner to realize how grave his sin is

* ... in order for it to serve as a cure for his soul. When the sinner of Corinth was punished, he repented and St. Paul wrote to the Church to accept him. ***“This punishment, which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow”.***(2Cor. 2:6,7)

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* ... in order for others to fear and refrain from committing the same or similar sins. *“Those who are sinning, rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear”* (1 Tim 5:20).

✠ The minister should be very careful in using this correctly. He should recognize that, as a physician, he must be very careful in applying the various kinds of medicine. A slight disease is not in need of the same drug, which is needed in serious cases.

“Treat -as a kind physician- the sick person. Use some medicines for his salvation. Do not use severe remedies, but use gentle remedies. Clean his wounds and make him firm through the words of consolation. If the wound is deep, use the medicine to build up the flesh. If it is filled with puss, clean it with a disinfectant medicine, (i.e. with rebuking words and afterwards with comforting words). If the wound becomes wider, use a severe unguent (*ointment*) (i.e. terrify him with the day of judgment). If it becomes wider, burn it and order him to fast for some days. If you find that there is no use of any kind of treatment, consult very experienced physicians and cautiously cut the corrupted. But do not hasten to cut any member.”

✠ But the Church of Rome thinks that these punishments are meant to pacify the justice of God. This is utterly wrong, because nothing can pacify His justice except the blood of Christ, which was shed for our redemption (Rom 3:25; Col. 1:20; 1 Pet 2:24 etc.).

✠ Who has the Right to Administer this Sacrament?

This right was primarily given to the Apostles, as shown above. Afterwards it was transferred to their successors, the bishops. Afterwards, to the priests who are in direct contact with the people.

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CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

The Sacrament of Confession without the Sacrament of Repentance, in the Coptic Orthodox Church, would not be true confession...

Repentance is an utter conviction from the heart that you have sinned.

Repentance is to judge and convict yourself...

So confession, is just an admittance of your own... condemnation...

Then it is not the phrase, *"I have sinned,"* or reciting your sins. The true confession starts in the heart, with one rejecting his own deeds and despising his behaviour.

The one who condemns himself accepts any punishment that befalls him either from God or people, considering that he deserves it

To grumble about the punishment proves that there has been no repentance...

Repentance also includes trying your best to remedy the consequences resulting from sin... and retribute any injustice that occurred to others.

Therefore, Zacchaeus, in his repentance, stood and said to the Lord, *"... and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four fold."* (Lk. 19:8) As for you, restore at least the same thing. Repentance without restoration is not sufficient...

Repentance needs a humble heart. The one who persists in his pride and dignity would not be able to repent.

The one who always defends himself and justifies his deed and words is not a repentant person. His pride stops him from repentance.

The Priest is supposed to say to the confessor, *"May God absolve you,"* when he sees that the person has repented. The absolution is not to be said to the unrepentant. When one hears the phrase, *"May God absolve you,"* it refers to the sins that this person has repented...

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The confessor who is absolutely sure that he has sinned, and his conscience is harshly rebuking him, could change his behaviour and repent. On the other hand, the one who justifies himself could easily continue in his sins as he does not feel their weight and they do not internally disturb him.

How could one repent while he is not convinced that he is wrong!! The first step is one's conviction that he has sinned.

Therefore, confession is the second step, not the starting point. There is a big difference between a true confession and another without conviction.

NOTES

[illegible]

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For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the students
in the class

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**OCTOBER
FOURTH SUNDAY**

**CHURCH SACRAMENTS (IV):
THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY COMMUNION**

Please read the attached materials entitled “The Sacrament of Holy Communion”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is the fourth lesson in a series of 7 lessons on the Holy Sacraments. Abiding with Christ and having real life is obtained in the Sacrament of the Holy Communion.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself not discerning the Lord’s Body”

1Cor. 11:28-29

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✙ Through this Sacrament, we eat the true Blessed Flesh of our Lord and drink His true Precious Blood under the form of bread and wine. The Lord Christ insisted that what we take in the Holy Communion is a true Body and Blood of Him, “My Body is food indeed and My Blood is drink indeed” (John 6:55).

✙ **Symbols in the Old Testament**

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- ✙ The offering of Melchizedek
- ✙ The Passover
- ✙ The “manna”

✙ Institution of the Sacrament

- ✙ By the Lord Jesus Himself in the Last Supper. Then the Lord gave the Apostles the right to celebrate this Sacrament when He said, ***“Do this in remembrance of me”*** (Luke 22:19). The Apostles handed the rite of this sacrament to their successors, the Bishops and the Priests.

✙ The Visible Sign

- ✙ The bread and the wine
- ✙ The service of the Divine Liturgy (which includes prayers and reading the Holy Words of God from the Bible)

✙ The Invisible Graces

- ✙ We partake of the Flesh and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
- ✙ We get the spiritual food to grow
- ✙ We receive the remission of sin
- ✙ We abide with Christ and Christ abides in us
- ✙ We are given true life

✙ The Change of Bread and Wine

We believe that, with the prayer of the Liturgy and the action of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Note for the Teacher:

You may prefer not to mention the different opinion that the Protestant Church has about communion in order to avoid confusion.

The Coptic Orthodox Church says:

- ✝ The Holy Communion is a sacrifice
- ✝ All baptized Coptic Orthodox believers have the right to practice the Holy Communion
- ✝ Every Christian must take Holy Communion regularly (i.e. at least once a month)
- ✝ The believer must prepare himself or herself before partaking of the Holy Communion

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) The most precious gift that God gave us is the Holy Communion. We have to attach ourselves to the regular preparation and partaking of the Holy Communion.
- (2) Two main things a true Christian must be attached to:
(a) The Holy Communion, and (b) the Word of God.
- (3) We have to spare no effort in making ourselves ready in all aspects before going forward to partake of the Holy Communion. The prayers before and after taking the Holy Communion that we can find in the Agpeya book are an excellent source of help for us.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

SONS OF GOD

REFRAIN

Sons of God hear His holy word
Eat His body, drink His blood
Alleluia , Alleluia

Brothers, sisters, we are one
In the spirit we are young

Shout together to the Lord
Happiness a hundred fold

Jesus gave a new command
Till we reach the promised land

If we want to live with Him
Die to selfishness and sin

Make the world a unity
Till we meet the trinity

With the church we celebrate
So we'll make a holiday

gather around the table of the Lord
and we'll sing a song of love
Alleluia , Alleluia

and our life has just begun
we can live forever

who has promised our reward
and we'll live forever

that we love our fellow man
where we'll live forever

we must also die with Him
and we'll live forever

make all men one family
and we'll live forever

Jesus coming we await
so we'll live forever



THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY COMMUNION

✠ Definition & Names

- ✠ This is the crowning service of the Christian Church, the culmination of Christian worship, the summit of Christian experience where devout believers hold intimate communion with their living Lord. The Church through the ages has regarded this Sacrament as the supreme act of communal worship.
- ✠ Through this Sacrament we eat the Blessed Flesh of our Lord and drink His Precious Blood in the form of bread and wine.
- ✠ It is called:
 - * The Holy Communion
 - * The Lord's Table
 - * The Flesh and Blood of Christ
 - * The Eucharist

✠ SYMBOLS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- ✠ The offerings, which Melchizedek offered, for the first and last time in the Old Testament, were said that there were offerings of bread and wine. ***“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High”*** (Gen. 14:18). For this reason it was said of our Lord ***“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”*** (Heb. 5:6, 10, 7:17).
- ✠ The Passover that the children of Israel offered on the night of their going out of Egypt and which they used to offer every year. ***“Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”*** (1Cor. 5:7). ***“The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said***

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Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"
(John 1:29)

- ✠ The “manna” which Israel ate in the wilderness for forty years. ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread (manna) from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.”*** (John 6:3 2). ***“This is the bread which came down from heaven not as your fathers ate the manna and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”*** (John 6:58)

✠ **Institution of the Sacrament**

It pleased our Lord to institute this Sacrament on a very momentous occasion. The Evangelist told us that He instituted it at the approach of the Passover Feast, which was considered as the greatest feast of the Jews and was a type of sacrifice of Himself. It was also instituted directly before His death and on the night of His passion when He was about to give Himself for the life of the world. ***“The Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. These do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”***(1Cor. 11:23-25)

✠ **The Visible Sign**

There are two visible signs in this Sacrament:

- * The bread & wine
- * The service of mass, especially those prayers through which the Holy Spirit descends upon the bread and wine changing them into the Body and Blood of the Lord.

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- ✝ The bread should be made of pure wheat and should be leavened because the Sacrament was instituted at a time when all the Jews were using leavened bread.

The law ordered that Israel should feast on the evening of the 14th day of the same month and begin to eat unleavened bread at the time of eating the Passover. ***“Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. In the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses since whoever eats what is leavened that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land”*** (Exodus 12:6, 18, 19). But the Sacrament was instituted on the 13th day of the month because of the following reasons: It is expressly said that it was ***“before the Feast of the Passover”*** (John 13:1).

- * The next morning after laying hands on Jesus, it was said the Jews were preparing themselves to keep the feast. ***“Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the praetorium lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover”***(John 18:28).

“When Pilate therefore heard that saying he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the preparation of the Passover and about the sixth hour, and he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your king’ (John 19:13, 14).

- * They were preparing themselves for the feast even after the death of Christ on the cross. ***“Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath day (For that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their***

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legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away” (John 19:31).

This shows that the preparation for the feast was on Friday and that the feast was on Saturday (the following day), which began, as is the custom of the Jews, on Friday evening. For this reason it was said of that Saturday that it was a high (great) day.

- * It was the custom that the governor should release unto the people at the feast time a prisoner whom they liked. And Barabas was released accordingly on Friday. The prisoner was generally released before the feast in order to celebrate it with his household.
- * It was said of Judas Iscariot that “... *after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly’.... For some thought because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, ‘Buy those things we need for the feast’ or that he should give something to the poor.*” (John 13:27-29).

This shows that on Thursday the feast had not yet begun because one has to buy things for the feast before and not on the same day or after.

But the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the bread should be unleavened because it was said “*Now on the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus saying to Him, ‘Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?’ And He said, ‘Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.’ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and they prepared the Passover.*” (Matt. 26:17-19).

As it is clear from the previous verses that the feast was on Saturday, it is impossible to find a verse contradicting another. The reason for this seeming contradiction is that the feast was on Saturday and the lamb

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was to be slain on the evening of Friday (the 14th day).

The 14th day was called the Passover and the unleavened seven days were to begin at the evening of this 14th day. The Jews used to consider the day beginning from the previous day; thus Friday begins at Thursday evening. When St. Matthew and St. Mark said that the Lord instituted this Sacrament on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread they meant that He instituted it on Friday (which began on the evening of Thursday) the feast of Passover which was to be followed by the seven days of unleavened bread and which was often called the first day of the unleavened bread. (Luke 22:7).

- *Moreover, most commentators affirm that this Sacrament was instituted on the 13th day of the month, (i.e. before the Passover or rather before the first day of the unleavened bread).
- ✦ John Chrysostom says: “The Evangelist in saying, ‘Then came the days of unleavened bread when the Passover must be killed’, does not mean that it had already come but that it was at hand and refers to the beginning of that day because every day begins at the previous evening.”
- ✦ In interpreting “***Now on the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus saying to Him, ‘Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?’ And He said, ‘Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.’ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and they prepared the Passover.***”(Matt. 26:17-19), the Pulpit Commentary states (P. 519): “we have arrived at the Thursday in the Holy week, Nisan 13th. The festival actually began at sunset of the 14th, which was called the day of preparation because the lambs of the feast were slain in the afternoon of that day preparatory to their being eaten before the morning of the 15th. Domestic preparation began on the 13th hence this was considered (the first day of unleavened bread).”

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- ✧ Adam Clarke in his commentary states: “As the feast of unleavened bread did not begin till the day after the Passover the 15th day of the month; this could not have been properly the first day of that feast but as the Jews began to eat unleavened bread on the 14th (Ex. 1:18). This day was often termed the first day of the unleavened bread. The Evangelists use it in this sense and call even the paschal day by this name. See (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7).
- * In addition to all this, it is worth mentioning that the Bible states in every place that our Lord **“took bread and blessed it”**(Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1Cor. 11:23 etc.). Whenever the word “bread” is used it, means leavened bread (i.e. ordinary bread). It was never said in the Bible that He took unleavened bread.
- ✝ And the wine should be:
- * Very pure
 - * The fruit of the vine

“Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave into them, saying, ‘Drink from it all of you for this My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’” (Matt. 26:27-29)

- * Mixed with water, because the Lord thus used it (Orders of the Apostles 8:22) and because it resembles in this way the blood and water that came out of the Lord’s side. (John 19:32)
- ✧ **The Invisible Graces**
- ✝ We partake the flesh and the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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✝ We get the spiritual food, which helps us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. And Jesus said unto them:

“I am the bread of life; he who comes to Meshall never hunger and he who believes in Meshall never thirst.” “For My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed.”(John 6:35, 55)

✝ We receive remission of sins. ***“Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it all of you for this My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’”***

(Matt. 26:27-29).

✝ We abide in Christ and Christ abides in us. ***“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.”*** (John 6:56).

✝ We get Holy Fellowship with Christ Himself with our fellow worshippers and with all the Church on earth. Likewise, we have fellowship with the saints around the throne of God, with the angels, archangels and all the orders of heaven. The Holy Communion tells us that God’s salvation comes to us in fellowship with our fellow men. This is not truly understood as an individual act of worship but the common meal of the family of God our Father.

✝ We are given true life in this world. Unless the branch abides in the vine, it cannot have life. Then Jesus said unto them, ***“Most assuredly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you... He who feeds on Me, will live because of Me.”*** (John 6:53, 57)

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† We are given eternal life.

“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood, has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ”He who eats this bread will live forever.”(John 6:54, 58)

✕ The Change of Bread and Wine

We believe that after prayer the bread and wine are spiritually changed to the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason we do not look at mere bread and mere wine on the altar, but we truly look at the Body and Blood of the Lord in the form of bread and wine.

† The Church Fathers said:

“We believe that our Lord Jesus is present in this Sacrament, not in type or by way of granting his grace as in the case of other Sacraments, but He is truly and actually present. For this reason, the bread is changed after prayer into the Lord’s Body, which was born in Bethlehem from the Virgin Mary, baptized at Jordan, suffered, buried and rose from the dead. Likewise, the wine is changed into the very Blood of the Lord, which was shed on the cross.

The way of the Lord’s presence is by changing the bread and wine into His blessed Body and precious Blood.

But some Protestants say that we take the bread and wine as a mere memorial service in remembrance of the Lord’s sufferings and death. In reply we have to refer to:

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❖ The Bible

All that is mentioned in the Bible regarding this Sacrament supports our doctrine.

- * The Jews, to whom the Lord was speaking about the living bread, took His words literally. When they heard Jesus saying...

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” (John 6:51)

They began to strive among themselves saying: ***“How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”***(John 6:52). Had they been mistaken in taking His words literally, the Lord would have told them the true sense, which He meant. But contrary to this, He began to repeat the same teaching more powerfully and more clearly:

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed.’” (John. 6:53-55)

- * The disciples also, taking the master’s words literally and being unable to understand the possibility of eating the Lord’s flesh and drinking His blood, began to murmur saying: ***“This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”*** But the Savior began to convince them of the reality of that teaching and said to them: ***“Does this offend you?”***

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What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?" (John 6:61-62)

- * When the Lord gave the Holy Communion to His Disciples, He *"took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, 'Drink from it all of you, for this is My blood of the new covenant.'"* (Matt. 26:26-28)

There was no need for the Lord to speak at that time in parables or proverbs, as it was His last day with them, and He had to open to them all heart, and speak to them very simple and clear words. *"His Disciples said to Him, 'See, now you are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech'."* (John 16:29)

- * St. Paul says: *"The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"* (1Cor. 10:16) Then he repeats the same words used by the Savior when He instituted the sacrament. *"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me.' Therefore whoever, eats this bread, or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."* (1Cor. 11:23-27)

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❖ To the decisions of the early synods

- * The Council of Nicea reported: “We should not look at the bread and cup on the holy table as if they were mere bread and wine, but we must lift up the mind beyond the senses and perceive, by faith, that the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world rests here, slain by the priests and that they are partaking of the very body of the Lord and His very blood.
- * The 3rd World Council held at Ephesus confirmed the message of St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, which ran as follows: “We admit that the only begotten Son of God our Lord Jesus Christ died in body; we confess His resurrection and ascension to heavens and we offer, in the churches, the bloodless sacrifice. Thus we approach the blessed sacraments and we are sanctified when we partake of the blessed body of Jesus Christ our Savior and His precious blood”.
- * One of the Church Councils asserts that “the bloodless sacrifice, which is offered in remembrance of the Savior and the blessed incarnation was never called by anyone of the Holy Apostles or the forefathers, the form of Christ’s body, neither were they taught to proclaim the same but they hear Him saying:

“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”(John 6:53)

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“He did not say the form of my body. Neither the Lord nor the Apostles spoke of the form of Christ’s body and blood but they spoke of the very body and the very blood. Whenever they are spoken of as bread and wine this is as concerning them before prayers.”

* The writing of the early Fathers:

Clement, Dionisius and Cyril of Alexandria; Macarius and Cyril of Jerusalem; John Chrysostom, Gregory, Basil and many others affirmed that the bread and wine are spiritually changed after prayer into the very body and the very blood of the Lord. Justin and Irenaeus attribute to the Logos the operative power by which the elements become the Body and Blood of Christ. Clement of Alexandria, Origin and Athanasius assert that the spiritual content of the Eucharist is identified with the Logos. This idea finds expression in one of the ancient Egyptian liturgies, when the Logos is invoked to come upon the bread that it becomes the Body of the Logos.”

❖ The Writings of the Protestants Themselves

* Calvin, one of their most prominent leaders said, “If any one inquire of me respecting the manner, I shall not be ashamed to acknowledge that it is a mystery too sublime for me to be able to express or even to comprehend and to be still more explicit I rather experience it than understand it. Here, therefore, without any controversy I embrace the truth of God on which I can safely rely. He pronounces His flesh to be the food and His blood the drink of my soul. I offer my soul to him to be nourished with such aliment”.

* Martin Luther, the great leader of the Protestants said: “Christ said: This is my flesh, and we can do nothing better than to respect His words.”

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* The Scottish Confession of 1560 of the Presbyterian Church, says: “So that we confess and undoubtedly believe that the faithful in the right use of the Lord’s Table do so eat the body and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus that He remains in them and they in Him; yea they are so made flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone”. (The “Holy communion” by David Cairns & others P.75).

✠ The Holy Communion as a Sacrifice

✠ We believe that this Sacrament is a bloodless sacrifice offered for our salvation. This, we can prove from the following:

* When instituting the Sacrament, our Lord said:

“This is My body which is given (sacrificed) for you. This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you.”(Luke 22:19,20)

* St Paul, in his comparison between the sacrifices and altar of the gentiles and the Christian sacrifices and their altar (1Cor. 10: 18-21) gives the proof that the Holy Communion is offered on the altar as a true sacrifice.

* In (Heb. 13:10) he refers also to the Christian altar.

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- * This sacrifice of the New Testament was foretold in the Old Testament:

“For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering;(or “sacrifice” as in other translation) for My name shall be great among the nations says the Lord of hosts.”(Mal. 1:11)

It is clear that the Prophet speaks here about a new sacrifice, which had to be offered in the Gospel time. When interpreting this verse, the Pulpit commentary says:

“The Fathers and mediaeval writers and many modern commentators see in this verse a prophecy of the Holy Eucharist the pure offering commemorative of Christ’s sacrifice, which is found in every nation under heaven where the name of Christ is adored.”

- * The Council of Nice called the Holy Communion, unbloodied sacrifice.

“Neither the Lord, nor the Apostles, nor the fathers called the holy unbloody sacrifice a sign but they always called it the very Flesh and the very Blood of the Lord”.

- * In Ch. 14 of the Didache or teachings of the Twelve Apostles it is said that the worship should be preceded by a confession of sins “that your sacrifice may be pure”. This sacrifice is identified with “the pure offering” of Malachi 1:11 (The Early History of the Liturgy by J.H. Srawley p. 21).

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* All Church Fathers called it sacrifice. For instance Irenaeus in his work “Adversus Haereses” written about A.D. 180 made several references to the Eucharist. The various titles under which he alludes to it are “Eucharist”, “the oblation of the Church”, “the new oblation of the new covenant”, “the pure sacrifice” (in reference to Mal. 1:11) (the early History of the Liturgy” by J. H. Srawley P. 35, 36).

* When speaking about the Holy Communion in the Anglican Church, one of her men said:

“The sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross is made present and contemporary by the consecration of the elements (bread and wine); this is wholly and entirely God’s gift of grace to man”. (“The Holy Communion” by David Cairns and others, P. 64)

* In “The Manual of Worship” of the “United Presbyterian Church of North America”, it is said (P. 81)

“It is a solemn moment when standing at the altar the minister says, Let us pray”.

If there is an altar, then there must be a sacrifice.

† This sacrifice is the same as that which was offered on the Cross. John Chrysostom says: “Our great High priest offered the sacrifice which purifies us. Since then we also offer this same sacrifice”.

There are some differences between this sacrifice and that which was offered on the Cross:

* Our Lord offered a visible sacrifice on the Cross, while in the Holy Communion, He offers an invisible one under the form of bread and wine.

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- * On the Cross He offered a bloody sacrifice through shedding His blood. In the Holy Communion He offers a bloodless sacrifice because *“knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.”* (Rom 6:9)
- * On the Cross the sacrifice was offered for all the race of man once only and in one place but the bloodless sacrifice is offered continuously in every place on earth and only for those who receive it in faith.

✠ **Who has the right to celebrate this Sacrament?**

Our Lord gave this right to the Apostles when He told them:

“Do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19)

And the Apostles gave it to their successors, the bishops. But because Christianity was soon spread, the Bishops could not go to all towns and villages to celebrate the Sacrament. For this reason they gave the right to the priests. The deacons can only help the bishops and priests. The laity are strictly forbidden to celebrate the sacrament.

✠ **Who has the Right to Partake of the Holy Communion?**

- ✠ All baptized persons have the right to partake.
- ✠ It was the custom in the previous centuries for all believers to take the Holy Communion every week, bearing in mind the words of the Lord:

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“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood, abides in Me and I in him”(John 6:53, 56)

For this reason it is very essential that every Christian should take the Holy Communion from time to time, at least once or twice or three times a year, if not every week.

- ✙ But before taking the Holy Communion the believer must prepare himself for it. ***“Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself not discerning the Lord’s body.”*** (1Cor. 11:28, 29).
- ✙ And as the babies are allowed to receive baptism they should also be allowed to take the Holy Communion in order not to be deprived of this food of the spirit.
- ✙ And we must take both the Body and the Blood. But the Church of Rome gives only the Body. In reply we state the following:
 - * When the Lord gave His disciples the Holy Communion, He gave them both the Body and the Blood. Moreover, when giving the cup, He expressly ordered that all of us should drink of it. ***“Drink from it all of you.”*** (Matt. 26:27).
 - * Whenever the Holy Communion is spoken of in the Bible, both the Body and the Blood are mentioned.
 - * All the Church fathers said that both the body and the blood were given to the believers since the first century.



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- * Even the Roman Church fathers say that believers used to take both the Body and the Blood till the 12th century.
- ✚ When the flesh is divided and given to the believers, we believe that every part of it, even the smallest part is the perfect body of the Lord and so also is the case with the blood.

We also believe that once the bread and wine are changed they remain the Flesh and the Blood till they are completely consumed. But some Protestants think that what is left over, after the Holy Communion has been received, can be dispensed with as something of no importance.

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For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the children
in the class

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NOVEMBER FIRST SUNDAY

CHURCH SACRAMENTS (V): THE SACRAMENT OF THE UNCTION OF THE SICK

Please read the attached material entitled “The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is the fifth lesson in a series of 7 lessons about the Sacraments of our Church. In this lesson we focus on Jesus Christ the “healer.” He came to cure all diseases of mankind. Through the Sacrament of the unction of the sick, the individual could be healed or accept his or her sickness and become at peace.

MEMORY VERSE:

“...Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord... And the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up” (James 5:14-1)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✚ In this Sacrament, the Church is asking for the sick person to be cured from his sickness both in body and in spirit through the heavenly grace.
- ✚ The Lord Jesus Christ establishes this Sacrament. See the memory verse. The Apostles practiced this sacrament as mentioned in St. Mark’s Gospel “... *and ruttet olive oil on many sick people and*

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healed them". (Mark 6:13).

* From the memory verse, we can see:

- ✝ The people who can benefit from this Sacrament are the "sick".
- ✝ The person who can perform this Sacrament is the priest.
- ✝ The method to perform the Sacrament is "prayer".
- ✝ The visible material used in the Sacrament is "oil".
- ✝ The effect of the Sacrament is "good health".

* The Eastern and Western Churches agree with and believe in the validity and effectiveness of this Sacrament.

* The Lord Jesus gave the authority to His disciples.
Please read Luke 10:1-9

* Why isn't this Sacrament effective in healing some people?

- ✝ It may be that they did not repent their sins completely.
- ✝ It may be that they do not have faith.
- ✝ It may be that this sickness was allowed from God either as a form of carrying the cross or as a warning for the person that their time has come to pass away.

* What is the first step we should take when we become ill?

- ✝ We must go to the priest (and repent) and ask him to anoint us with the Holy Oil and pray for us. If we are not healed then we should go to the doctor. When we are healed after visiting the doctor, we must know that it was God who healed us not the medicine or the doctor. Doctors do not know everything. Sometimes they make mistakes too. Hence, God heals us and shows the doctor and guides him to the medicine suitable for our treatment.

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WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) The Lord is the true healer. Let us then be with Him, live in love with Him and we will be taken care of by Him.
- (2) The world cannot offer true healing. Only the Lord Jesus can heal us. This is why we can say that Christianity is a religion of joy. Even if we get very sick, we will never be in despair.
- (3) The word of God, the prayers, the Holy Communion, the anointing with the unction of the sick oil and even the mere attendance in the church, which is filled with Angels can heal the individual.

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SONGS 🎵

TO WHOM SHALL I GO?

When I feel worried
You comfort me, O Lord

When I feel sad
You make me glad, O Lord

When I feel hungry
You feed me, O Lord

When I feel sick
You cure me, O Lord

When I feel lost
You guide me, O Lord

When I feel oppressed
You defend me, O Lord

to whom shall I go?
I kneel and pray to Thee

to whom shall I go?
I kneel and pray to Thee

to whom shall I go?
I kneel and pray to Thee

to whom shall I go?
I kneel and pray to Thee

to whom shall I go?
I kneel and pray to Thee

to whom shall I go?
I kneel and pray to Thee

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THE SACRAMENT OF THE UNCTION OF THE SICK

✠ Definition

- ✠ Unction of the Sick is the Sacrament through which the priest anoints the body of the sick, asking for divine grace to cure both body and the soul.
- ✠ There are some who think that St. James mentioned this function as an ordinary means of healing diseases. In reply, state the following:
 - * Had it been an ordinary means of healing diseases, it should have been said that anyone could anoint with oil. But St. James says that it is the priests who should anoint.
 - * And the healing power is not attributed merely to the oil, but also to the prayer: ***“...Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick...”*** (James 5:14-15)
 - * Moreover, it is said, directly after that: ***“...And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him”*** (James 5:15). This forgiveness can never be granted merely through the oil, but also through the prayer.
- ✠ Others say that it was a healing gift given only to the Apostles. It is sufficient to say that St. James speaks of this unction not as a special gift given to the Apostles but as a Sacrament to be always administered by the priests.
- ✠ The Church of Rome calls this Sacrament “Extreme (or last) Unction”, on the basis that it is administered to the sick, only when they are at the point of death. Meanwhile the Bible speaks of it as means of healing and helping the sick not only at the point of death.

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✠ Institution of the Sacrament

The Lord Himself instituted this Sacrament:

- ✠ Because it was said of the Apostles ***“They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them”***. (Mark 6:13).

It is of course to be understood that they were sent out to do the same.

- ✠ St. James, in his Epistle, says (5:14, 15) ***“Anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders (priests) of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”***

It should not be taken for granted that the Apostles did not preach a gospel of their own, but that which they received from the Lord Himself. ***“But I make known to you brethren that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ”***(Gal. 1:11,12). Therefore, St. James must have received that teaching directly from the Lord.

- ✠ Moreover, the Disciples did not institute the church Sacrament (mysteries), but they merely called themselves ***“stewards of the mysteries of God”*** (1Cor. 4:1). If it was not clearly and definitely mentioned in the Bible that Christ instituted this Sacrament or some other Sacraments, it was because many things were done by Him and were not written (John 2 1:25).

- ✠ The fathers said that it was used as a Church Sacrament since the first centuries.

- ✠ Even the Protestant historians states that “when the early Christians were seriously sick, they used to call the priests of the church, and

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after confessing their sins, they were anointed with oil by them”.

✦ **The Visible Sign**

There are two outward signs in this Sacrament:

- ✦ The oil with which the sick person is anointed - Before using it for anointing the sick, it should be consecrated through certain prayers.
- ✦ The prayers, which are offered to God for healing the sick. There are certain prayers, seven in number, prepared by the church for this sacrament. In addition to these prayers, certain portions of the Bible are also read.

✦ **The Invisible Grace**

The invisible grace, which is granted through this Sacrament, is the healing of the body and soul.

✦ **Who has the right to celebrate the Sacrament?**

Although this authority was given to priests, but of course the bishops can celebrate the Sacrament if they like. But it was given to priests because they are in direct contact with the congregation.

NOTES

[illegible]

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For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the students
in the class

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**NOVEMBER
SECOND SUNDAY**

**CHURCH SACRAMENTS (VI):
THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY**

Please read the attached materials entitled “The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony”, “What is the meaning of Marriage?”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson 6 in a series of 7 lessons about Church Sacraments. In this lesson we learn that in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony the two become one. So, it is not a partnership that can be broken for any cause. It is unity in Christ, very honorable and should not be rushed into.

MEMORY VERSE:

“... they are no longer two but one flesh...” Matthew 19:6

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✙ Marriage is between a man and a woman. It is a natural law and is also a Sacrament:

✱ **As a natural law**

✧ In Genesis:

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and

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God said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth...’ (Genesis 1:27-28)

*** As a Sacrament:**

- ✧ The Lord Jesus blessed the marriage by attending the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee (John 2).
- ✧ From the teachings of the Lord Jesus, “... *Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.*” (Matthew 19:4-6)
- ✧ Marriage has three purposes
 - 1) Preservation and growth of mankind, “...*male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over....’*” (Gen. 1:27-28).
 - 2) Cooperation in life and help each other, “*And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’*” (Gen. 2:18)
 - 3) Avoiding fornication. (1Cor. 7:1-9)

✧ **The Sacrament of Matrimony:**

It is the sacrament through which the bridegroom and the bride are united together and given the Divine Grace.

✧ **Marriage is not to be broken:**

“What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6)

✧ **Duties of both wife and husband:**

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Please read Ephesians 5:22-32

✙ **Obligations of the man and woman before marriage:**

- * Both of them must be Christians
- * Both of them must be Coptic Orthodox
- * Both should not be previously connected together with a carnal or spiritual affinity.
- * They should be getting married with their complete desire and good intentions.

✙ **Two main characteristics of Christian Marriage:**

- * Unity
- * No separation except in case of adultery.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) With the help of God, every one of our youth should look forward to getting married in our Coptic Orthodox Church because of the unity that is obtained through the Sacrament, the love that the Holy Spirit would give to the bridegroom and the bride for each other and the solid foundation of the Christian family that is established by the Lord Christ Himself.
- (2) There are requirements, obligations and capabilities in marriage. One must be mature, financially capable and understands what Christian marriage is all about.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

THEY WILL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS

*“If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.”
(1 Jn 4:12)*

We are one in the spirit
And we pray that our unity

we are one in the Lord
will one day be restored.

REFRAIN

And they'll know we are Christians
Yes they'll know we are Christians

by our love, by our love
by our love.

We will walk with each other
And together we'll spread the news

we will walk hand in hand
that God is in our land

We will work with each other
And we'll guard each man's dignity

we will work side by side
and save each man's pride

Our praise to the Father
And our praise to Christ Jesus
And our praise to the Spirit

from whom all things come
His only Son
who makes us one

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WHAT IS THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE?

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Marriage, according to the Christian concept, is that a spiritual person, or a temple of the Holy Spirit, weds another spiritual person, who is also a temple of the Holy Spirit. Both are spiritually joined together through the sacrament of marriage, to become one...

Therefore, both must be of the same faith, the perfect faith, because the Holy Spirit should not join contradictory beliefs together.

That is how marriage succeeds and the Holy Spirit harmoniously and spiritually works in both.

To join together two who are not repentant, who are far from the Holy Spirit and its works, is not a spiritual action.

For this reason, the Church accepts the confession of the engaged couple, and they receive the Holy Communion before their marriage, so both would start a perfect spiritual life together, in co-operation.

Such a marriage would not be subject to the differences that usually happen when the spiritual life of the married couple is not perfect...

We are trying to set up rules for the personal statute. Some think of extending the reasons for divorce, when life becomes impossible for the married couple!... Why does it become impossible? Because they do not live in the spirit, according to the understanding of a Christian marriage...

Those people want a non-Christian marriage (non-spiritual) not ruled by the Law of Christ which does not permit divorce, except for a cause...

If the Christian married couple lived a spiritual life, the clause of divorce could be abolished completely, from the personal statute. There would be no need for it, as the great love that joins the married couple together would never allow divorce. On the contrary, instead of separation, the relationship between them will deepen day after day...



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The most beautiful analogy of the Christian marriage, and the relationship between the married couple, is the relationship between Christ and the Church. As the Apostle said, *"This is a great mystery. " (Eph 5:32).*

Is there a deeper similarity than that? Or a greater love than that? *"Nevertheless, let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself. " (Eph 5:33).*

Christian marriage is not just a passing relationship that eventually ends! It is a life-time relationship. The woman to the man is, *"... bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. " (Gen 2:23)* She is his body and he is her head. Both are one body. For her sake, he leaves his father and mother... What an amazing relationship!



THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

✠ Definition

The Sacrament of Matrimony is the holy service through which the bridegroom and the bride are united together and given the divine grace, which sanctifies their matrimonial union, makes it perfect and spiritual, like the unity of Christ with the Church.

This Sacrament is of very great importance. In it, is not only the life of two persons, because the home, the state, the Church and the Kingdom of God are deeply involved. It is not a Sacrament to be regarded lightly or performed thoughtlessly and indiscriminately.

✠ Institution Of The Sacrament

✠ There is no doubt that God Himself instituted Matrimony, at the creation of the world. ***“God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He them; male and female created He them, and God said to them: Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.”*** (Genesis 1:27, 28).

✠ In the New Testament Christ confirmed this Sacrament:

- * By attending the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee. (John 2).
- * By His teaching - When answering the questions of the Pharisees who came unto Him and said; “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”

His answer was, ***“Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female”*** and said ***“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are not more twain but one flesh. What***

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therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”
(Matt. 19: 4-6).

- * Some church fathers had the opinion that Christ instituted this Sacrament in the 40 days during which He used to appear to His disciples, after His resurrection and He spoke of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God (Acts: 1:3).

✠ Purpose Of Marriage

There are three purposes of marriage

- 1) Preservation and growth of mankind *“male and female He created them. And God blessed them and God said to them be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.”* (Gen. 1:27-28). The growth of mankind tends, of course, to the growth of the Church.
- 2) Mutual help between husband and wife *“And the Lord said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him and help meet comparable to him”.* (Gen. 2:18).
- 3) After the fall of man and the entering of sin to the world there arose another end, i.e. that marriage might help to keep man and woman from the temptation of carnal lusts. *“Now concerning the things whereof you wrote unto me; it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless to avoid fornication’ let every man have his own wife and let every woman have her own husband. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot, let them marry, for it is better to many than to burn”* (1Cor. 7:1-9).

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✠ The Outward Sign

There are three outward signs in this Sacrament:

- 1) The declaration of the bridegroom and the bride in front of the Church that they wish, by their own free will, to be married to each other and that each will be loyal to the other till the end of life.
- 2) The matrimonial service that the priest performs and through which he asks for the Divine Grace to the bridegroom and the bride.
- 3) The oil with which the bridegroom and the bride are anointed at the time of the matrimonial service.

✠ The Invisible Grace

The function of this Sacrament is:

- ✠ To sanctify the matrimonial union and make it a spiritual one. ***“Matrimony is honorable in all and the bed undefiled”***. (Heb. 13:4). ***“For this is the will of God even your sanctification that ye should abstain from fornication that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor.”*** (1 Thess. 4:3, 4)
- ✠ To help keep the husband and wife united together and inseparable, just as the unity of Christ with the Church is everlasting. ***“What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”*** (Matt. 19:6).
- ✠ To keep the husband and wife loyal and faithful to each other.

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✠ Obligations of the Husband & Wife

✠ Before marriage

- (1) Both should be Christians because Christ's grace cannot be given to non-Christians, whether in this Sacrament or other Sacraments.
- (2) Both should belong to the Orthodox Church. If any of them does not, he or she should first join that Church.
- (3) Both should not be previously connected together with a carnal or spiritual affinity, which prevents their marriage.
- (4) Each should be willing to get married to the other. The desire of parents is not sufficient. The priest should ask each of them privately and openly whether he or she agrees to be married to the other.

✠ At Marriage

- (1) Since Matrimony is one of the Church Sacraments, marriage should be through the church. It is the duty of the priests to teach their congregation that every marriage should be in the church and that the Church does not allow any marriage performed outside it.

✠ After Marriage

- (1) The husband should have only one wife and the wife should have only one husband. *“And He answered and said unto them: have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female and said: For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they twain shall become one flesh.”* (Matt.19: 4, 5).

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- (2) If either of them dies, the other can marry. *“The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord.”* (1Cor. 7:39).
- (3) They can never separate but for one reason, i.e. fornication *“They are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God joined together let no man put asunder whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication and shall marry another, commits adultery and whose marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”* (Matt.19:6, 9).

Therefore no one is allowed to leave his/her mate for any other reason.

✠ Who has the right to celebrate the Sacrament?

This right is given to priests. Bishops can also celebrate the Sacrament.

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DEACON...



PRIEST...



BISHOP...

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**NOVEMBER
THIRD SUNDAY**

**CHURCH SACRAMENTS (VII):
THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY ORDERS**

Please read the attached materials entitled “The Sacrament of the Holy Orders”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson 7 in a series of 7 lessons about the Church Sacraments. In this lesson we learn that the Lord chooses the people to serve in the church. He gives them special heavenly gifts to serve each according to his or her rank. We must respect all ranks in the Church.

MEMORY VERSE:

“... He chose twelve whom also he named Apostles” Luke 6:12-13

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✙ This sacrament and its authority is given from the Lord Jesus. He said ***“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and lo, I am with you all way, even until the end of the world.*** (Matthew

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28: 19-20).

✠ Then Jesus said to them again, ***“Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”*** “And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ***“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”*** (John 20:21-23.)

Hence the only one who has authority is the Lord Jesus. He gave this authority to selected people to perform certain actions.

✠ The Lord selected various categories of groups of people to serve Him. ***“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”*** (Ephesians 4:11-12)

✠ The people, who are chosen by God to serve the Church and to perform the Sacraments, take certain privilege by the putting of the hands on them i.e. Holy Order.

✠ The importance of this Sacrament of the Holy Orders is its capacity to possess unseen powers beyond the thinking of people; For example, it can offer the people the Body and Blood of Jesus.

✧ **Priesthood is a selection from God**

✠ Please read Luke 6:12-13 and John 15, 16

✠ The Bible mentions three degrees of Priesthood:

✱ Bishops: highest degree.

✱ Have the right to ordain clergy 2 Tim 1:6.

✱ Priests (1 Tim. 5:17): Perform 6 sacraments

✱ Deacons (Acts 6:3-6): Help in performing the sacraments.

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✠ The Visible Signs:

There are two visible signs:

- ✠ The laying of hands (1 Tim. 4:14, 1 Tim 5:22 and Acts 6:6)
- ✠ The prayers of consecration (Acts 6:6, 14:23)

✠ The Invisible Grace:

The ordained minister is given a Divine Gift appropriate to the service to which he is called, ***“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.”*** (1 Tim. 4:14.)

- ✠ Ordination can never be repeated for the same degree. No money is to be paid to obtain a rank in the church (read Acts 8:18-20).
- ✠ People who accept ordination must be sure that the call to them is coming from God. They must take ordination not only as a job, but as a dedication of their whole life to serve God.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) When an individual is called by God for any of the three ranks within the Sacrament of the Holy Orders, he is given the gift from God to perform his duties and is therefore considered to be working for God.
- (2) One must not seek to acquire any of the ranks by himself. He should be called in by God through a higher rank in the church.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

PAULINE EPISTLE RESPONSE

Pi ehmot ghar em pen
Chois Isos Pikherestos: ef
eshopi nem pek agion
epnevma: Pachois eniot
ettayot: en arshi erevs:
Papa Abba...

Nem peniot en-episkopos
(emmitropolititis) abba (...)

Nem neniotti en-episkopos
(emmitropolititis) ni etki
neman.

Mari pi ekliros nem pi laos
thirf: ougay khi epchois
je Amen: es eshopi.

The Grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ be with your
saintly spirit, my lord, the
honored fathers, the high
priest, Papa Abba...

And our father the bishop
(metropolitan) Abba (...)

And our fathers the
bishops (metropolitans)
who are with us.

May the clergy and all the
people be safe in the
Lord. Amen, so be it.



✠ THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY ORDERS

✠ Definition

“Holy Orders” is the sacrament through which the clergy are ordained to celebrate the various church services.

Some Protestants say that Christ did not distinguish any one in His church and that all the members are the same and that there is no need for setting apart special persons as ministers. This is untrue because of the following reasons:

- ✠ Christ set apart special persons as Apostles and spent a whole night before choosing them. *“And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God: And when it was day He called unto Him His disciples and of them He chose twelve whom also He named Apostles.”* (Luke 6:12, 13).
- ✠ He gave them special privileges that were not given to any others e.g. He said to them: *“Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* (Matt. 18:18).
- ✠ When sending them before His ascension He promised to always be with them *“even unto the end of the world”*. (Matt. 28:20). This promise is of course taken to be valid for their successors also.
- ✠ When Judas killed himself, the number of the Apostles dropped by one, so they met together, spent some time in discussion and prayer in order to choose another to fill this vacancy (Acts. 1:15-26). Had it not been necessary that there should be certain persons set apart for God’s services; they would not have taken the trouble of appointing another individual instead of Judas.
- ✠ If all Christians were of the same degree, they could perform the

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same services in the Church. But a careful study of the Bible, especially the “Acts”, shows that the clergy had their own duties, which the laity could not dare to perform, and that every category of the clergy had its own duties, which could not be performed by another category. For instance when Philip preached in Samaria, he, being a deacon, had not the right to lay on his hands for granting the gift of the Holy Spirit. For this reason the Church of Jerusalem ***“...sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.”*** (Acts 8:14-15).

- ✚ The Bible appointed certain conditions that should be observed when choosing the bishops, and other conditions when choosing the deacons (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1).
- ✚ The Bible also appointed certain procedures for the ordination of the clergy (e.g. the laying on of hands), ***“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership”***(1Tim. 4: 14).
- ✚ All historians agree that there have been certain ministers in the Church since the first century. All the Churches that were instituted at the first century keep lists of their bishops since their beginning.

✚ Institution of the Sacrament

- ✚ Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted this Sacrament.
 - ✱ It was He who appointed the twelve Apostles and the seventy disciples.
 - ✱ It was He who sent the Apostles into the world before His ascension.

“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the

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name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt.28: 19, 20).

- * St. Paul says that it was Christ Himself who appointed some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, *“And He himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.”* (Eph.4: 11).
- * And when giving advice to the ministers of the Church of Ephesus, he said to them: *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.”* (Acts.20: 28).
- * According to the power given to them by the Lord, those apostles appointed bishops, priests and deacons in the churches, which they established as will be seen afterwards.

✠ The Visible Sign

There are two visible signs:

- ✠ The laying on of hands - The Bible stated that this was performed in the case of bishops (1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6) and priests (1 Tim. 5:22) and deacons (Acts. 6:6).
- ✠ The prayers of consecration (Acts 6: 6, 14:23)

✠ The Invisible Grace

The ordained minister is given a divine gift appropriate to the service to which he is called. *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the*

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eldership.” (1Tim. 4: 14).

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.” (2 Tim. 1:6).

The Holy Spirit, who alone can help the minister to perform his duties, gives this gift.

✠ Degrees of the Holy Orders

✠ The Bible mentions three degrees:

1. The bishop
2. The priest
3. The deacon

2) The Bishops

✠ Ordination of the clergy - It was the Apostles who consecrated bishops, *“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands”* (2 Tim. 1:6) and ordained priests, *“So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”* (Acts 14:23) and deacons, *“Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.”* (Acts 6:3-6). The bishops, whom the Apostles consecrated, were given that right of ordination. St. Paul writing to Titus said: *“For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou should set in order the things that are waiting and ordain elders (priests) in every city as I had appointed thee*(Tit. 1:5).

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When writing to Timothy, he said: ***“Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins.”*** (1Tim. 5:22).

- * Trial of the clergy and rebuking them. ***“Against an elder (priest) receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all that others also may fear.”*** (1 Tim. 5:19,20).
- * Consecration of the holy oil used for the Sacrament of confirmation.
- * Consecration of the altar and the holy vessels in the case of building a new church or getting new vessels.
- * They also have the right to celebrate all Church Sacraments and enjoy all rites if they like.
- * Management of the general affairs of the Church.

✠ The Priests

✠ Priests are mentioned in many places of the Bible.
“They ordained them elders (priests) in every church” (Acts 14:23)

“For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou soundest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders (priests) in every city, as I had appointed thee.” (Tit. 1:5)

“Let the elders (priests) that rule be counted worthy of double honor.” (1 Tim 5:17)

“Is any sick man among you? Let him call for the elders (priests) of the church, and let them pray over him anointing him, with oil in the

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name of the Lord" (James 5:14)

The priest has the right to celebrate the six Sacraments mentioned earlier, and possesses many rites in the church. He has also the right to teach and preach.

✠ The Deacons:

Deacons are mentioned in the Bible in Acts 6:3.6, Phil. 1:1 and 1Tim. A deacon does not have the right to celebrate any of the Church Sacraments but only to help the priest and the bishop in celebrating them. They are also responsible to keep good order in the church, read the various portions of the Bible in the church, teach, preach, and perform any service, which the priest may ask them to do. It was said in the "Orders of the Apostles" that "the deacons are the bishop's eyes and ears". In the former times there was a degree of "deaconess." Her function was to serve the women in the Church, to keep good order in the place allotted for them in the church, and to anoint the bodies of women. At the Sacrament of Confirmation they are anointed by the priest only on their foreheads. (Didaskalia 34).

"No woman is allowed to come to the bishop to ask for any things unless she is accompanied by the deaconess" (Didaskalia 6).

"If there is any need for, sending a deaconess, because it is not fit to send a deacon," (Didaskalia 6).

"If there is any need for the bishop to send anyone to the woman's houses, he should send a deaconess, because it is not fit to send a deacon" (Didaskalia 34). It seems that this degree existed in the church at the Apostolic time. St. Paul, writing to the Romans, said: "*I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant (or 'deaconess' as in other copies and other versions) of the church which is at Cenchrea*" (Romans 16:1). When writing to Timothy he said: "*Let not a widow be taken into the number (into the list) under threescore years old, having*

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been the wife of one man.” (1 Tim 5: 9).

Some things that the Apostle refers to, is the list of those who were deaconesses in the Church.

✠ Ordination of the Clergy

- ✠ A bishop is consecrated by the laying on of hands of at least three bishops, because one bishop alone cannot consecrate a bishop.
- ✠ A priest or a deacon is ordained by the laying on of hands of only one bishop.
- ✠ Ordination can never be repeated for the same degree if the bishop, priest or deacon was previously ordained in a legal way. In the Apostolic Canons (68) it is stated that, “if any bishop, priest or deacon is re-ordained for the same degree, he will become worthy of excommunication together with him who ordained him.”
- ✠ No money should be paid at all for the ordination of any one of the three degrees. When Simon offered money for the sake of obtaining one of God’s gifts, St. Peter rebuked him by saying “*thy money perish with thee because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.*” (Acts 8:18-20).

The Church teaches that every ordination performed as a result of any payment is illegal and that the bishop who accepts any money should be excommunicated.

✠ Obligations of the Clergy

✠ Before Ordination

Those who are chosen for the Holy Orders must be:

- * Sure that the call came to them from God. “*No man taketh this*

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honor (of the holy orders) unto himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron.” (Heb. 5:4).

- * Blameless, in order to be good examples to the congregation. St Paul wrote to Timothy saying: *“Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”* (1Tim. 4: 12). In (1 Tim. 3 and Tit. 1) St. Paul mentioned many conditions, which should be taken into consideration when choosing bishops and deacons.

- * Well acquainted with the Bible and Church teachings.

† After Ordination

- * They should serve not as hired men who work merely to get their wages. *“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”* (1 Pet. 5:2).

“He that is an hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth and the wolf catches them and scattereth the sheep.” (John 10: 12).

- * But they should be good shepherds, full of deep feelings: that the sheep are theirs and that they are responsible for feeding them and keeping them from beasts. They should also know that the good shepherd must be ready to offer any sacrifice that may be needed for the sake of the sheep. *“The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.”* (John 10:11)

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For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the students
in the class

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**NOVEMBER
FOURTH SUNDAY**

**REVIEW OF THE CHURCH SACRAMENTS
INCLUDED: THE LIFE OF ST. MENA IN
COMMEMORATION OF HIS MARTYRDOM FEAST**

Please read the attached materials entitled “The Egyptian Martyr St. Mena”, “The humility of God in glorifying His children”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

In this lesson we would like to focus on God’s love for us in giving us all these heavenly gifts through the Sacraments. These heavenly gifts can change the heart of man and make him live a heavenly life on earth. In the case of St. Mena God allowed many miracles and healings to be carried out through his prayers and intercessions.

MEMORY VERSE:

“... For My yoke is easy and My burden is light Matt. 11:30

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✙ St. Mena is considered to be the most well-known Saint in the East and West due to the many miracles that are performed through his prayers for us. That is evident from the numerous little clay bottles that got his

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picture and name engraved on it, which were found by the archeologists in many different countries around the world. For example: Heidelberg in Germany, Milan in Italy, Dalamata in Yugoslavia, Marceille in France, Dongola in Sudan and Jerusalem. Visitors from these cities and others would buy these bottles which usually contained oil or water for blessing, and take it back to their relatives.

- ✠ The Saint was born in the year 285 in the city of Niceous, which follows the provision of Myaph. His parents were real ascetic Christians, the father Audexios and the mother Aufimia. On the feast of St. Mary, Aufimia who did not have any children at that time, prayed in front of the Icon of the Virgin with tears that God may gift her a blessed son. A sound came to her ears saying “Amen” and thus she called her son Mena..
- ✠ His father was a ruler of one of the provisions of Egypt and he died when Mena was fourteen years old. At fifteen, Mena joined the army and was given a high rank because of his father’s reputation and was appointed in Algeria. Three years later he left the army, longing to devote his whole life to Christ and he headed towards the desert to live a different kind of life.
- ✠ After he spent five years as a hermit, he saw the angels crowning the Martyrs with glamorous crowns in a revelation and he longed to join them. While he was thinking about it, he heard a voice saying “blessed be you Abba Mena because you have been called for the pious life since your childhood. You shall be gifted three immortal crowns; one because of your virginity, the second because of your humility, and the third because of your martyrdom.”
- ✠ Immediately King Zinon ordered the Saint’s body to be dug out and a church to be founded on it. Not only that but he also ordered the building of a large city to be named after the Saint. Sick people from all over the world used to visit that city and were healed by the

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intercession of St. Mena, the miracle-maker.

- ✠ Destruction started to take place in the city and its inhabitants were degrading, after the conquer of the Arabs. During the period after Haroun El-Rashaed the Barbarians attacked it and burned a large portion of it. At the time of El-Mamoun, he ordered to pull the entire city down and use the thousands of its marble pillars to build his palace and some mosques. Only in the twentieth century, the international missions began to search for the city and the church. The remains of it, no doubt, demonstrate a great glory to the Copts.
- ✠ As soon as Pope Cyril the Sixth was crowned on St. Mark's Throne, he began to put the foundation of a very great Monastery close to the remains of the old city. Thus, in his blessed days God's will had permitted the old monastery of St. Mena to be resurrected again and for the Copts to visit it and to be blessed by the Saint. What is even more interesting is that the Pope has stated in his will that his body should not to be buried in the new famous Cathedral at Cairo but in the monastery of his personal friend and intercessor St. Mena the miracle-maker!!!

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM HIS LIFE?

- (1) We must start to give up something of our belongings in favor of and in dedication to God. St. Mena loved God and gave his life to God. In return God gave him peace here on earth and gave him an excellent place in heaven.
- (2) As children of Christ we must enjoy the heavenly gifts obtained in the Sacraments of the church, behave as good Christians, follow the footsteps of the Saints of the church and ask for their intercession.

NOVEMBER

Fourth Sunday

SONGS 🎵

ST. MENA

St. Mena the martyr
Always among us

Oh hero you were not afraid
You called with courage

Through the sufferings
You stood unyielding

Your happiness was great
Angels carried you

The martyrdom's crown
Intercede for us

beloved of Jesus
we truly love you

in front of the crowds
"Oh my Lord Jesus"

you kept our strong faith
Jesus gave you strength

when they killed you
to the eternal joy

you received from God
before our Lord

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GOD'S HUMILITY IN GLORIFYING HIS CHILDREN

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

God did not want to be alone, so He created the universe as a gift to other creatures which became existent according to His will. And it was through His humility that He created Man in glory, "... in His own image, according to His likeness. " (Gen 1:27)

God's image was Man's first glory...

Sonship to God was another glory given to Man...

The Bible says, *"For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son... Moreover whom he predestined, these he also called, whom he called, these he also justified ; and whom he justified, these he also glorified, " (Rom 8:29,30). "Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. " (Rom 8:21)*

We also read in the Bible about the crown of glory and about the forthcoming glory which shall be revealed in us... *"if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. " (Rom 8:17)*

The glories are many, waiting for Man in eternity, beside the glories that God grants Man in this world... *"Because he has set his love upon me, therefore I will deliver him, I will set him on high, because he knows my name, He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. " (Ps 91:14,15)*

God rejoices in giving glory to His children...

But people's glory is something and God's glory alone is something else... It is the glory of His divinity.

This glory of His Divinity is not given to others. It is the glory of God in the highest. It is the unlimited and unutterable glory about which we say, say, *"Thine is the glory and honour and worship., "*

Whatever the glory that Man receives, it will never affect the glory of God. You might light millions of candles from fire without this fire losing anything...

Blessed is God who glorified His children in various ways: such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit, performing miracles, having power over devils and all the forces of the enemy. God made His children temples of His Holy Spirit, "... to whom pertain the adoption and the glory... " (Rom 9:4).



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THE EGYPTIAN MARTYR ST. MENA

In an Ethiopian manuscript from the collection of Antoine & Abbadie, in the Bibliotheque Nationale de Paris, published in Paris in 1852, one finds a full description of the martyrdom of St. Mena.

In 1910 a Coptic manuscript containing the history of St. Mena and dating from the tenth century was found among the remains of an ancient monastery near El-Hamoul, Fayoum.

It was purchased by Pierpont Morgan who presented it to the Metropolitan Museum of New York. This museum sent a photocopy of the manuscript to the Coptic Museum in Cairo.

St. Mena is one of our most celebrated martyrs who for centuries enjoyed an immeasurable popularity. Since the day that the remains of this saint of Egypt were brought back to the motherland, his cult assumed extraordinary proportions. The memory of his name has been kept alive in the country which has witnessed his favors, and by the large numbers of pilgrims who flocked from all parts of the world.

Mena was born at Nikiou (Now Menouf in Lower Egypt) of Christian parents, in the later half of the third century. He volunteered at an early age in the Roman Army and was enrolled in the Rutilian legion. Mena stuck to his splendid principles of faith and virtue among his comrades at arms. After serving for some years in Egypt, he followed his detachment to Cotye, a little town of Phrygia. He kept to his pious daily practices until the day when an edict by the new masters of the Roman world, Diocletian and Maximian, was made public at the Town Square.

Mena then took the opportunity of putting into execution a project he has nurtured for a long time of retiring to the desert as a hermit as if the inspiration of the Egyptian principles of life of that period had accompanied and encouraged him in his new place of abode. By austerity

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and deprivation he was preparing himself for the terrible struggle, which was sooner or later, to put a premature end to his life.

After five years of absence, Mena, with the inspiration of the Grace of God, decided to strike a stunning blow. He left his place of retreat and re-entered Cotye during the day of the great festival, when all the inhabitants were assembled in the amphitheater. Mena then advanced in the arena, in the interval between two tournaments, and shouted reciting these two verses ***“I have been discovered by those who did not seek me and I have been manifested to those who never claimed me.”*** The prefect, Pirrus, ordered that the unknown person should be brought before him. After a long cross-examination, the courageous believer was tortured and finally Mena was beheaded. His body was brought back to Egypt when his contingent from Cotye was ordered to move to Cyrenaica where they had been transferred.

The remains of the Saintly martyr were loaded on a camel. At the extremity of Lake Mareotis, near Taposiris Magna (now Borg-El Arab) the camel stopped and would not move any further. This was taken as a sign and wish of the Saint to be allowed to rest at that spot, near a running spring of which the water immediately gained a miraculous healing virtue.

The cult of St. Mena spread throughout Egypt and before long it had passed overseas. Under the auspices of Pope Pelagius II a church was built in Rome in 589 A.D. in the name of the Saint, not far from the gate of Ostia.

The considerable number of jars with the effigy of the saint found in Egypt, Dalmatia, and Rome itself is an undeniable testimony of the faith the pilgrims placed in the saint and the intense development of his cult.

When Pope Cyril (Kirillus VI) was elected to the See of St. Mark in 1959, he lost no time in realizing a cherished wish which had been lingering in his heart for a long time, i.e. to draw the attention of his subjects and of

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archaeologists to this wonderful city long lying in forgetfulness under the desert sands. He succeeded in fulfilling one of his greatest ambitions. A monastery has been erected near the old site and a church has been constructed to receive the thousands of pilgrims. This has proved too small for the ever-increasing numbers of visitors and a far bigger one was built and Pope Shenouda III (who was ordained on Nov. 14, 1971) celebrated a first liturgy at that Cathedral on the blessed Friday, the 20th of November 1976, the 17th Hatur 1693 A.N.

NOTES

[illegible]

NOVEMBER

Fourth Sunday



For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the students
in the class

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**DECEMBER
FIRST SUNDAY**

THE MUSIC OF THE COPTIC CHURCH

Please Read The Attached Material Entitled “The Music Of The Coptic Church”, and Give The Lesson With Emphasis On The Points Below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To learn the historical origin of the music in our Church and its effects on the spiritual life. We must maintain our Coptic music without any distortions. When a spiritual individual is singing using the Coptic music it will greatly re-kindle Christendom.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Praise Him with the sound of trumpets, Praise Him with the lute and harp” Ps. 150:3

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✙ Music is one of the primary things in life. It helps one’s feelings to be affected in a certain way. Music in the Church helps people to become closer to God.
- ✙ Every demonstration has its own type of music. It is affected by its national tradition and its original (or earlier) religion. The Copts who are the direct descendants of the Ancient Egyptians, adopted the ancient Egyptian melodies.

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- ✝ Some of the Coptic hymns bear the name of towns, which have long since disappeared. For example, the hymn named after Singari, a town in the north of the Delta known in the time of Ramses II, and the hymn called Adribe from Atribis, a town which formerly extended in Upper Egypt.
- ✝ Research work has proved that the music of the Coptic Church is the most ancient ecclesiastical music. This music is entirely Coptic.
- ✝ What is the most ancient Coptic music (in hymns)?
The lowly chants for Lent, Holy Week, and funerals, having a tremendous effect on the human soul, are the most ancient Coptic tunes.
- ✝ Every country composed its own ecclesiastical music in accordance with its particular knowledge and taste of music. Hence, Byzantine ecclesiastical music is Byzantine by its nature; Egyptian ecclesiastical music is Egyptian in its nature... and so on.
- ✝ Coptic music is entirely vocal and must be sung without harmony. The early Apostolic Church took over the chant-system of the synagogue, which was entirely vocal.
- ✝ Music plays a very important part in the Coptic Church since all services are entirely chanted. There are hymns for all occasions and for all seasons. In the Marriage Service for example a very popular hymn called “Epouro Ente Ti Hirini,” is very joyful and it means “Oh King of Peace.” In the Funeral Service, for example, there is a very popular hymn “Aripamavi O Pachoice,” having a sad tune and it means, “Remember me O Lord...”

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✝ How many hymns are there in our Church?

We have 150 long hymns (Coptic) and several hundreds of short ones. This is, of course, in addition to all the Arabic songs.

- ✝ When you listen to the Coptic music, try to imagine yourself in one of the many Coptic churches, which still survive from ancient times in which so many generations of devoted people, mystics and Saints have lifted up their hearts to God.
- ✝ Who are the most influential persons who gave the music to various hymns? St. Athanasious the Apostolic, St. Clement of Alexandria, and Saint Mari-Afram the Syrian.
- ✝ When we sing hymns in the church, we must adhere to the proper tune of the hymn. We must not change the tune because these hymns and their tunes are part of our tradition, which we must maintain from generation to generation.
- ✝ Also when we sing hymns in the church, we must be in harmony with one another so that the whole hymn becomes very desirable to hear for the utmost effect on the whole congregation for the glory of the name of God.

What do we learn from this lesson?

- (1) Our youth should learn the hymns of our church and adhere to the proper tune.
- (2) This should become an excellent source of Spiritual uplifting to all youth and the congregation.
- (3) We must avoid any introduction of new music or new tunes in our church service since the Coptic music is part of our tradition. It is very useful in our spiritual life.

DECEMBER

First Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

THE CHERUBIM WORSHIP THEE

The Cherubim worship
Thee, and the Seraphim
glorify Thee, proclaiming
and saying:

Ni Sheroobim se oo-osht
emok, nem ni Serafim seti
o-oo nak, evosh evol evgo
emmos: je

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord
of Hosts, heaven and earth
are full of Thine holy glory.

Agios, Agios, Agios, kirios
Saba-oth, epliris ooranos,
ke ee gee tis agias soo doxis.



THE MUSIC OF THE COPTIC CHURCH

Music is the Divine and the Eternal Art, which leads us to the edge of the infinite and thus helps to unite man with His Creator. Music, indeed, is the oldest of all the arts and like speech is one of the primary things of life and everywhere since the beginning of the creation there has developed a national music.

In early times both in the East and West Christian Liturgies, rites and prayers were influenced by the nature and the characteristics of the various countries to which the Gospel spread. Thus every country composed its own ecclesiastical music in accordance with its particular knowledge and taste of music and hence it comes about that Byzantine ecclesiastical music is Byzantine by its nature, Egyptian ecclesiastical music is Egyptian and Jewish synagogue music is Jewish and as additional evidence we may note that Ethiopian ecclesiastical music is entirely Ethiopian, although the Ethiopian Church is a daughter Church of the Coptic Church and under its jurisdiction.

National traditions of music have considerably affected the formation of ecclesiastical music and many nations took over from their earlier religions, melodies that they found suitable for the new Faith. The Greeks certainly adopted such melodies and the Copts did the same thing. It should be remembered that the direct descendants of the Ancient Egyptians possessed a very ancient musical tradition and from early times worshipped their gods with hymns, music and elaborate rites.

Demetrius of Phaleron, the Librarian of the Library of Alexandria in 297 B.C., reports that the priests of Egypt used to praise their gods through the seven Greek vowels (1), which they used to sing one after the other and in place of the flute or the harp, the utterance of these vowels produced a very agreeable sound. The music of many of the Coptic hymns is still entirely chanted on one or the other of these seven vowels. The text of certain long chants may consist of only one verse, or merely a single word

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like Alleluia.

Scientific research has proved that the music of the Coptic Church is the most ancient ecclesiastical music, which exists, and it constitutes the oldest school of music, which the world now possesses. The Coptic Church owes the preservation of this monumental and priceless heritage of her ecclesiastical music to her conservative nature, which she has inherited from ancient times.

The great Egyptologist, the late Dr. E. Drioton, once wrote “The key to the mystery of Paranoiac music will be found, then, in a good edition of Coptic ecclesiastical music in use in our days” (2).

Another important point to be noted is that this music is not Greek, Arabic, Turkish or Western but entirely Coptic.

A slight connection may be traced between the genuine traditional Egyptian Folklore songs, which are still sung in remote country places, and the music of the Coptic Chant.

The most ancient and the most sublime part of the Coptic Church music is that of the pathetic chants for Lent, Holy Week and funerals. The pathetic side of Ancient Egyptian music, as Herodotus says, had been firmly established in the nation since the time when, on the death of the son of their first king, they composed special mourning tunes.

No other music however classical can be compared with the pathetic music of the Coptic Church, nor with the tremendous power it has on the human soul and the passions, which it awakens.

It was indeed a fascinating experiment, which I recently undertook with the Choir of the Institute of Coptic Studies (Cairo), in the great Temple of Horus at Edfu. . This temple is in a complete state of preservation, in spite of the fact that it was built by the Ptolemies over 2000 years ago. Our Choir chanted in Mezzo forte some pathetic hymns, in the inner sanctuary reserved for the high - priest. Although this temple occupies an area of

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about 7000 square meters, yet the acoustics were perfect; the solemn sounds of the voice being distributed with equal intensity or degree of tone over the whole temple from one end to the other as well as in the lateral chambers. The singing was distinctly heard even in the open courtyard between the Pylons and the Temple, which was reserved for the people. Indeed, this was a miracle of voice distribution, which is well worth serious study.

Coptic music is entirely vocal and must be sung without harmony since the keys of this music cannot be adapted to the harmonic system and if we were to try to harmonize this music, it would be necessary to find a special harmonic system so as not to alter its real expressions and its original spirit and this would not be an easy matter. It must also be strictly unaccompanied because the vocal cords are the only instrument, which can truly render the real character and special expression of this music.

The early Apostolic Church took over the chant-system of the synagogue, which was entirely vocal and the Church Fathers like Clement of Alexandria, etc. always emphasized that the ecclesiastical chant should be strictly vocal. Indeed the chant of the Greek Church and many other Churches remained so till now.

The late Professor Newlandsmith of the Royal Academy, London said, "Coptic Music is a great music and may be called one of the seven wonders of the world and indeed if a Caruso filled with the spirit of God were to sing some of the Coptic themes in the form of a great oratorio, it would be enough to re-kindle Christendom".

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First Sunday



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**DECEMBER
SECOND SUNDAY**

**HOW CAN MY SOUL BECOME THE BRIDE OF
CHRIST?**

Please Read The Attached Material Entitled “Sacrifice”, “The Bride Of Christ”, and Give The Lesson With Emphasis On The Points Below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To study how to have a meaningful Christmas celebration. It is not the celebration of a historical event. It is a celebration in which I go deeper in my level of intimacy with Jesus to reach the level in which my soul is the bride of Christ. How can this be?

MEMORY VERSE:

***“...For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I
may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” 2Cor. 11:2***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✝ The true meaning of the Christmas celebration is to celebrate God’s love for us and ensure that we in return love Him and He becomes everything in our lives. This is why he is called “Emmanuel” which means God is with us. Is Jesus truly in my heart? If so I cannot do one single sin and the world’s love will disappear from my life? ***“No***

DECEMBER

Second Sunday

one can serve two Masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other....” (Matthew 6:24)

✠ In order to truly receive Christ in my life and say with St. Paul “***I live not I, but Christ lives in me***”, I must keep myself away from sin. I can stay away from sin by doing two things:

- * I pray to God to protect me and put a fence around my life so that the devil cannot reach me. I ask for the protection of God in every prayer.
- * I do my best to stay away from sin, by adhering to the word of God in the Holy Bible and regular partaking of the Holy Communion for the remission of my sins.

✠ If I repent and do my best to stay away from sin, I can become the bride of Jesus. For me to become the bride of Jesus means I live my life with Him here on earth and also when I go to paradise. He is also my Lord and I belong to Him. Hence, a true Christian would live a heavenly life here on earth. This means all his or her feelings are with Christ, the Angels and the Saints, without ignoring the daily needs.

✠ We must belong to someone, either to the devil or to God. If we belong to God and we are united with Him (He is our king and we are His people), then we are the “bride” and He is “The bridegroom”.

✠ For my soul to become the bride of Christ, I must do my best to maintain the purity that I obtained when I was baptized and chrismated. An evidence of this purity is love not lust or selfishness. Remember the candle, which vanishes to give light to the people. Remember also the incense, which disappears in the censer to produce an excellent smell and nice aroma that goes up to the Lord.

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✠ The Lord Jesus Himself talked about “His Bride”:

- ✠ In Mathew 25:1-13, the parable of the 10 Virgins; 5 of them were wise and 5 were foolish, they both were to receive the bridegroom. The 5 who were foolish did not take oil inside their lamps. The oil represents “Love”. Remember that God is love. If we belong to God, then our hearts must be filled with love.
- ✠ One time the Pharisees asked Jesus why his disciples are not fasting. Jesus answered, ***“Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”*** (Matt 9. 15.)

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- 1) We must always review our degree of intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ. We must aim at having a deep fellowship with Christ, just as a bride has a very strong relationship with her bridegroom.
- 2) We must lead a life filled with love not lust. Once we are determined to do any action or thought love, we find ourselves in direct and true contact with God. God is love.

DECEMBER

Second Sunday

SONGS 🎵

AGIOS O THEOS

Agios O theos
Agios Athanatos

Holy, God, Holy
Holy, Immortal, Holy

Alleluia is a word
Everywhere it is heard

In all the universe
They praise Him with this verse

Michael and Gabriel
They all praise Him as well

The heavenly Cherubim
They too glorify Him

And the twenty four priests
And the four incorporeal Beasts

And all of God's
Animals and vegetation

Agios Ees-shiros
Amen. Alleluia

Holy, Mighty, Holy
Amen. Alleluia

that means praise ye the Lord
Amen. Alleluia

in heaven and on earth
Amen. Alleluia

Raphael and Souriel
Amen. Alleluia

and the mighty Seraphim
Amen. Alleluia

seated on golden seats
Amen. Alleluia

from every race and nation
Amen. Alleluia

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SACRIFICE

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III



The love which does not sacrifice is a barren love, without fruit.

Love is a productive mother that gives birth to numerous virtues such as compassion and affection, a word of encouragement and a word of consolation, attention and care, forgiveness and seeking the salvation of the soul. This is the spiritual love...

Perhaps the most distinguished quality in love... is sacrifice.

This is the big difference between love and lust: love always seeks to give whereas lust always seeks to take.

Lust seeks to take because it is concentrated around the self, but love, as the Apostle said, " ...does not seek its own".

Love that does not sacrifice is not a true love.

Love sacrifices everything, does not keep anything from whom it likes, no matter how this thing is precious or essential to it. It gives from its needs.

The greatest thing a loving person can offer is to sacrifice himself, and the Lord said, *"Greater love has no one than this, to lay down his life for his friends. " John. 15:13).* This was shown in depth on the cross...

The crucified Jesus is a sacrifice of love... The Bible said,, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. " (John 3:16).*

During the Passion Week, many contemplate on the passions of Christ. Christ's passions are merely a natural result of His love. Love here is the origin, while pain is the outer appearance...





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I wish we would contemplate on His love which He revealed through His passions.

The candle melts to give light to others; this is also a kind of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. So, we put candles before the icons of the saints... as a symbol.

Also the incense burns in fire to give sweet smell which ascends to God... it is a delightful burnt offering to God, and it is also a symbol...

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THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

I AM MY BELOVED'S AND MY BELOVED IS MINE .a

Christ's relation with the Church is a relation of deep love and complete unity exemplified by Paul the Apostle as the relation of a bridegroom with his bride.

"For the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the Church."

"Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her."

"Man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh."

"This is a great mystery and I take it to mean Christ and the Church".
(Eph. 5:23-31).

Through this relation the Church calls her Lord her love in the Book "The Song of Solomon": ***"My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies."***
(Song2:16.)

✠ Pure Bride

Every believing soul in the Church who has chosen Christ as a heavenly bridegroom is sanctified and purified from past sins, proceeding in newness of life towards her bridegroom who is the Holy God of Saints. ***"... For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."*** (2Cor.11:2)

For this reason we live a suitable chaste pure life for we are joined with the heavenly bridegroom and we keep our bodies holy for him, adorned by virtues and prepared as a bride for her husband when He comes in glory.

✠ The Church's Nuptial Feast

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St. John described the heavenly joy and victorious Church when she is led to her bridegroom saying *“I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, then came one of the seven angels and spoke to me “...come I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God”(Rev. 21:9-10).*

✠ The Bride and the Body

The bride is joined to her husband and the two shall become one. So, they are no longer two but one. Such is the Church, which is the body of Christ. It is an undivided part, Christ is the head and the Church is the body. Christ lives in the Church, suffers for her own sufferings and whatever befalls her befalls upon Him personally *“Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?”*

✠ Submission and Obedience

As there is a harmonious relation between the body and the head and as all the organs in the body obey the orders of the brain and is at its disposal, so also the bride submits to her husband in obedience. That is what distinguishes the believing soul, which lives the life of obedience to The Savior. Obedience is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

✠ The Bride and the Temple

The temple is consecrated and hallowed so that the Lord may descend in it and the bride specifies all her life to her husband; she is joined to him.

The temple is specified for the Lord and nothing else; the bride is married to the husband, she is not allowed to betray him by being

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joined to another man.

The Church is God's distinguished people in whose life God is glorified on earth "***Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.*** (1Cor. 3:16-17).

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**DECEMBER
THIRD AND FOURTH SUNDAY**

KEY VIRTUES IN THE VIRGIN MARY'S LIFE

Please read Luke 1:5-38, and the attached article entitled, “Key Virtues”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To focus on the fact that God did not come to our world to give us names. He came to our world to give us life with virtues: love, humility and submission. The Lord gave us all the abilities to gain these virtues. But we have to do our share by doing our best to lead a righteous life.

MEMORY VERSE:

“...Behold the maidservant of the Lord” Luke 1: 38

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✙ Tell the two stories: The Angel with Zacharias and the Angel with the Virgin Mary. Note the difference in the way each of them answered the Angel.
- ✙ The Angel said to the Virgin Mary ***“Hail, O Favorite one”***. She was favored because God knows what is in her heart: love, humbleness, obedience and simplicity. Hence, this is a good place

DECEMBER

Third & Fourth Sunday

for the God incarnate.

✚ There are three key virtues that were manifested clearly in St. Mary's answer to the angel, "***Behold the maidservant of the Lord.***" These virtues are love, humbleness and submission. St. Mary had great love for God and she worshipped Him from all her heart. She was in the altar since her early childhood; dedicating all her life to God whom she loved a lot. She still called herself the "maidservant" even after she knew from the Angel that she would be the Mother of God.

✚ There are many Saints with these three virtues: love, humbleness and submission. But St. Mary is the deepest of them all.

✚ It was essential for Jesus to choose a humble person to be born from because:

* He Himself is humble.

* If the Virgin Mary was not humble she would not be able to withstand all these glories. For example, titles like "***Mother of God***". The blessings of God are great when humbleness prevails.

* She will become a good example for all Christians at all times and in all places.

* When we have any problem or request from God, we have to ask Him to help us solve it. But we should wait for God, because without God we cannot do anything.

✚ Let us explain and discuss that the Virgin Mary with her love, humbleness and submission corrected the sin of our mother Eve. Eve fell in sin because in her pride she wanted to be like God. Hence she was deceived by the serpent and ate from the forbidden

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tree. The result of her pride was falling into sin with her husband and all the generations that came from them. Until the fullness of time when the Virgin who was very humble came along and said to the Angel ***"I am the handmaid of the Lord"***. Then the Holy Spirit came upon her and she became pregnant and later on gave birth to God.

✠ Examples of great achievements that follow humbleness:

- *The Baptism of the Lord Jesus in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:13-17).
- * The washing of the feet of the Disciples by the Lord Jesus (John 13:1-20).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- 1) Talk in a humble way. Think in a simple and humble way. Dress in humble clothes and do not worry about the outside appearance. Even when you eat, take the food from the Hands of God thankfully and in a humble way.
- 2) Do not worry. Just do your share in everything and leave some room for God to do the rest. Expect nice things to happen before they actually happen and live cheerful without worries.
- 3) Adhere to love. Love your neighbor. Do not compete but rather stick to love of all people. Then the most important thing will happen to you; that is love of God.

DECEMBER

Third & Fourth Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

SILENT NIGHT

Silent night ! Holy night!
Round you Virgin Mother and Child
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night ! Holy night !
Glories stream from Heaven afar
Christ, the Saviour, is born!

Silent night ! Holy night !
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth

All is calm, all is bright
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace

Shepherds quake at the sight!
Heavenly hosts sing, Alleluia
Christ, the Saviour, is born!

Son of God, love's pure light
with the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth

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THE BASIC VIRTUES

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Some virtues are partial and one struggles hard to attain them, but there are basic virtues which include various merits within them; that is the topic of our talk...

Ahead of all these virtues is: Love.

The Lord Jesus Christ said that all the Law and prophets are concerned with this virtue.

St. Paul explained the various sorts of the virtue of love and said, "Love suffers long and is kind, love does not envy, love does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (1 Cor 13:4-8)

Therefore, whoever has love, has all these virtues.

All that St. Paul mentioned was our love to our neighbours...

As for our love to God, no doubt, it includes various matters:

It includes prayer with all its levels, contemplation, deliberation, reading the Bible, loving the church and its sacraments, spiritual gatherings, fasting, prostrating... it also includes following all commandments as God says, "He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me." (Jn 14:21)

Another leading virtue is the life of submission...

Submission means the complete surrender of one's self to the Holy Spirit that works in his heart, to run his life...

This person will show the fruits of the Holy Spirit that St. Paul explained in Galatians 5:22, by saying, "But the fruits of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and selfcontrol."

One of the mother virtues is also humility...

A humble person acquires gentleness quietness, stays away from anger and judging others and keeps himself from cruelty...

Humility also includes contrition of heart, selfreproach, the virtue of tears, love, blessing everyone, seeking the blessings of everyone, listening more than talking, never boasting or elevating oneself or self praising, contentment with everything, satisfaction, thankfulness and simplicity

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**JANUARY
FIRST SUNDAY**

**SOME OF THE LESSONS BENEFITED FROM THE
BIRTH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**

Please read(Galatians 4:4-7) and discuss it in the classroom to reveal some of the lessons benefited from the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Please read also the attached article entitled, “The Suitable Time”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To focus on four lessons benefited from the Birth of our Lord Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE:

“... But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law.....”Galatians 4:4

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✙ St. Paul said “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ***“Abba, Father!”***. ***“Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”*** (Galatians 4:4-7)
- ✙ From the above passage we can deduct some of the lessons benefited from the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ as follows:

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1. The Principle of Fullness of Time:

- ✠ When “the fullness of time had come” i.e. when the time is right from God, God sent His only Son.
- ✠ Why was this the right time? The amount of wickedness was extreme. There were no prophets for a long time and even the great majority of the priests and the lawyers became corrupt. Then the Lord Jesus came as a light in the fullness of time in the midst of the darkness.
- ✠ Sometimes we ask God to give us something and He does not. Then, we know that what we asked for is not good for us or that God is going to give it to us in the fullness of time. We must trust God and leave the timing to Him, because he knows everything.
- ✠ In the fullness of time, Zechariah and Elizabeth had a son. A great son named St. John the Baptist. Other example is what God did with Abraham. He promised him that he would give him a son from his wife Sarah. But Abraham got impatient and did not wait for God to do His promise. Abraham married one of his servants (her name was Hager) to have a child. But God’s promises always come true. When the time was right, Abraham got a son from his wife Sarah and he named him Isaac.
- ✠ Let us be patient in everything we do. We must not be troubled when something at school or at home goes wrong. When we do not understand something in the Bible or in life, we must pray for an explanation from God and wait. When we fight against sin, we must be patient and never give up the struggle against Satan.

2. The Great Love of God for Us.

- ✠ When Man could not reconcile and make peace with God, God came to make peace with Man. Hence, God started the process of Salvation for Adam and all his descendants through the birth of the Lord Jesus.

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This is why when Simon the elder saw Jesus in the temple with his mother St. Mary, he said ***“Lord~ now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples.”***(Luke 2:29-30).

“For the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10).

3. **The True Glory is from Inside not from Outside:**

The Lord Jesus Christ was born in a manger. He was very poor. But He is God incarnate and He is called the King of Glory.

Please discuss with the students all the glorious matters that were associated with the Lord’s birth, life in flesh on earth, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

4. **There is a great difference between the “slave” and the “son”**

Before the incarnation of the Word of God, the whole human race was under the slavery of Satan. But when the Lord came to our world, He saved us from Satan and made us worthy to be adopted as sons. As sons, it is an honor and an obligation. St. John wrote about this, ***“I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed”*** (John 8:34-36.) So we are sons, we are free in Christ Jesus.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Let us be patient in our daily life. Give time for things to happen.
- (2) If God loves us to that extent, let us also love Him. Our Lord Jesus came for our salvation and showed us a perfect example in love. Can we love one another in our daily life?



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- (3) Let us seek the inside glory in being free of sin as true sons of Jesus.

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SONGS 🎵

YOU MAY WONDER

You may wonder
Came down to earth

how the creator
Alleluia

Born in a manger
As a stranger

was God our Maker
Alleluia

He is the eternal
God is immortal

he is paternal
Alleluia

He is the Christ
We praise His light

who grants us sight
Alleluia

He is wonderful
Of glory He is full

He is beautiful
Alleluia

They raised Jesus
A mystery to us

high on the cross
Alleluia

He was crucified
Wounded in His side

and for us He died
Alleluia

He died and was risen
Our sins were forgiven

in three days as spoken
Alleluia

At His Father's right
Hearing our sigh

He sits up high
Alleluia

He is the Saviour
He will come in splendor

who will sits up high
Alleluia

Our Lord dear
Until You appear

we await You here
Alleluia

JANUARY

First Sunday

THE SUITABLE TIME

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

The Bible said, *"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. " (Ecc. 3:1).* The spiritual work must be done at the right time.

When the Lord incarnated, it was *"the fullness of the time."* It was the most suitable time for the fulfillment of the prophecies and the readiness of the world to receive the Word and understand the work of salvation.

That taught us to take the suitable time into consideration. at work, when talking, while silent, in serving, in everything... It is like plants that do not grow except in a specific season, in the suitable weather, with the right temperature and wind.

As for talking, the Bible said, *"There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak. " (Ecc. 3:7).* It also said, *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. " (Prov 25:11).* A wise person does not talk at a time when he should be silent and does not remain silent at the time when he should speak.

When you reproach someone, you must choose the suitable time, otherwise, the outcome could be the opposite of what you expect. Seize the suitable time when others are prepared to listen to you, ready to accept your talk.

Do not ask anyone for something when he is busy, tired or annoyed because this is not the suitable time.

If there is a time for everything, anytime is suitable especially for repentance.

Do not say: when it is time for repentance, I will repent! When I get a suitable chance, I will repent. The Apostle says, *"Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation. " (2 Cor. 6:2).*

Nevertheless, there are times that we consider more suitable and more effective, *"Today, if you will hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. " (Heb 4:7).*

Therefore, some take advantage of the opportunity. They never let it slip from their hands when grace is working in them...

If they are touched by a word they heard, then it is the suitable time. An example of this is St Anthony whose life changed because of a word or a specific incident, like the death of his father. He took advantage of the situation to the fullest. That made him forsake worldly pleasure...

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For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the students
in the class

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**JANUARY
SECOND SUNDAY**

**THE BAPTISM OF THE MESSIAH AND THE LESSON
OF SANCTIFICATION**

Please read Matthew 3:13-17, John 1:18-34, John 3:1-13 three articles attached
“What is Epiphany? “The Baptism of Jesus Christ”, “God’s love for us” and
give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that the Lord Jesus, because of His love for us, did many
things that He didn’t need to do, but He did them to teach us and open
the door for us to accept heavenly gifts in our weak human nature.

MEMORY VERSE:

***“... The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to
preach the gospel to the poor “Luke 4:18***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✙ Start by describing the events of the Baptism of Jesus Christ in the
Jordan River(Matthew 3:13-17).
- ✙ Emphasize the part about the Holy Spirit. ***“The heavens were opened
to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove.”***
(Matthew 3:16). Jesus was about to start His preaching so He
accepted the Holy Spirit in His Body to open the door for our bodies

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Second Sunday

also to accept the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation. This is the reason that Jesus said ***“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.”*** (Luke 4:18, 19). Also (Isaiah 11:2.), ***“The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.”***

✠ The Lord Jesus did not need to be baptized. He did not need anything. But He did everything for us. He went down to the Jordan River with our Flesh that He took from the Virgin Mary. His Flesh accepted the descent of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God, inside us. This happened to every member of our church in the Sacrament of the Holy Chrismation (also called the Sacrament of Confirmation). The priest or the Bishop anoints the person right after his or her Baptism 36 times at all openings and joints. Thus the eyes are sanctified, the ears are sanctified etc. The whole body becomes sanctified and it becomes a vessel of the Holy Spirit. Do I then take the eye, which was sanctified, and make it look at lustful or evil things? No .. and so on for the usage of the rest of my body. Our bodies and senses as true Christians must do good things, glorify God’s name and not be used in a sinful matter. This is the meaning of sanctification or consecration.

✠ He saw the Holy Spirit descending as a dove ***“Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves”*** (Matthew 10:16). A dove is also a symbol for peace. In the days of Noah, the dove came declaring that the danger of the flood was over. So the Holy Spirit will grant many fruits to the believers, “love, joy, peace....” Gal. 5:22.

✠ God’s love for us:

At this point let us meditate on God’s love for us. He prepared everything for us before creating us. When we sinned, He prepared for our salvation. He came to our world, blessed our nature in Him, opened the door for us to follow His footsteps in many things and

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accept the gifts from heaven (as in Baptism and Chrismation), paid the price of our sins on the Cross and rose from the dead, raising us with Him and then He went up to prepare a place for us in heaven.

What did we learn from this lesson?

- (1) After we were baptized we took the Sacrament of Chrismation. We have to make sure that the Holy Spirit is active in us; we have to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and do what He teaches us to do.
- (2) Never take the parts of your body, which were sanctified by the Holy Spirit and make them sinful. If this happened, I must quickly repent, confess and take the Holy Communion to wash my sins away. Then I am sanctified again. But I must learn my lessons and never defile myself again.

JANUARY

Second Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

THE EPIPHANY

On Epiphany every year
We celebrate once a year

we are happy with one accord
the baptism of our Lord

On the Jordan shores there stood
Preaching, teaching, all good

John the Baptist baptizing
the people repent, sin despising

Jesus came to John the saintly
He said “No, I am not worthy

asking him to be baptized
I am in need to be baptized”

Jesus stood in the Jordan
John saw the Holy Spirit

to be baptized by John instead
as a dove above Christ’s head

There opened were the heavens
This is My Beloved Son

the voice of the Father heeded
in whom I am well pleased

We are immersed in baptism
Our sins are forgiven

three times in holy water
new birth we have with our Father

Alleluia, Alleluia
Jesus Christ the Son of God

Alleluia, Alleluia
was baptized in the Jordan

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GOD'S LOVE FOR US

By Pope Shenouda III

How great is God's love for us. It's enough to say that God is Love... And "we love Him because He first loved us. " (1 Jn 4:19)
He loved us before we were, therefore He created us...

Because of His love for us, He created us after His image and likeness.
He prepared everything for us before we were created. He raised the Heaven to be a roof and paved the Earth so we can walk on it. He made the light, water, plants and paradise... Then He created us.

When we fell in sin, He prepared for us a way of salvation.

Due to His love for us, He sent prophets to guid us and gave us a conscience and a written Law to enlighten our insights.

It was His love for us that made Him incarnate, take our nature and bless this nature in Him. On our behalf, He obeyed the Law and pleased God the Father by presenting a God-fearing image of humanity.

Due to His love, He died for us, "The just for the unjust. " (1 Pet 3:18)
He became a love-offering on the Gross. He carried the sin of the whole world and washed it with His blood. "The One without sin was considered sinful, for our sake, " and paid the whole price one our behalf.

"... Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. " (Jn 13:1). And, "Greater love has no one than this, to lay down his life for his friends. " (Jn 15:13)

Because He loved us, He said, "No longer do I call you servants, but I have called you friends. " (Jn 15:15). He also called us brethren and, "... in all things He had to be made like His brethren. " (Heb 2:17). We became sons of the Heavenly Father, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God. " (1 Jn 3:1)

To show His love for us, He said, "... I am with you always, even to the end of the age. " (Mt. 28:20) "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them. " (Mt. 18:20)

His love is also shown in His protection, care and guidance for us in everything.

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WHAT IS EPIPHANY?

- ✠ Epiphany is when Jesus was baptized and the Holy Trinity was manifested. The Father appeared in the form of a voice from heaven saying, ***“This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”***. The Son was in the Jordan River and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove.

✠ Why was Jesus Baptized?

He did not need to be baptized because He does not have any sins. He was baptized to teach us to follow His example. Imagine, Jesus bowing His head under the hand of John the Baptist, although He is his Creator!

✠ Doesn't this teach us a lesson in humility?

At first, John refused to baptize Jesus telling Him ***“I need to be baptized of you and you come to me”***. Then Jesus told him ***“If you please”***. Jesus was so courteous and polite in answering John. Are we courteous and polite in dealing with others? Do we always say “Please” and “Thank you”?

Jesus was baptized to teach us that we should be baptized. But why should we be baptized?

I am sure you don't remember the day when you were baptized because you were a tiny baby. But you have probably seen one of your brothers, sisters, or relatives being baptized. Do you know what happened the day of your baptism? The priest had immersed you three times in the water, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This had a great meaning. This was the most important day of your life. On that day, all your sins, inherited from Adam were washed away and you became a child of God. What a great honor and privilege. Do you know what it means to become God's child? Your Heavenly Father is God Himself the King of Kings. If you were the son or daughter of an earthly king, I am

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sure you will feel secured because many guards will protect you. When you become the son or daughter of the Heavenly King, you will feel secure because He will protect you with His Angels. He will take care of you wherever you go because you are His child. Whenever you are in trouble, whether you are sick or have a hard test, He will surely help you. A father wants always to please His children. Your Heavenly Father always wants to please you. He wants you to be happy in life. ***“I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.”***(John 10:10)He will take care of you. He watches over you even when you are sleeping.

When you became God’s child on your baptism, you do not only have rights as God’s child, but also you have responsibilities. Any king’s child has to appear in a respectable manner. It will be a shame if a king’s child behaves sinfully. If you are the child of the King of Kings, you have to behave in a Christian way and to reflect your Father’s image.

You have to behave differently in school, even if they make fun of you because you are a special person, the child of the Great King, God.

Never forget the most important day of your life, the day of your baptism, the day you become God’s child.

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The messenger did not explain. Instead, he led his hearers to the river's edge and dipped their sweaty, dust-covered bodies into the refreshing water. Just as the water of the Jordan River cleansed their bodies, so God would clean their filthy sin stained souls. The Prophet called this "baptism". That is why we call that messenger of God "John the Baptist". The word "Baptism" is derived from the Greek word "Baptismos" which means "Emersion".

✠ Crowds come to John the Baptist:

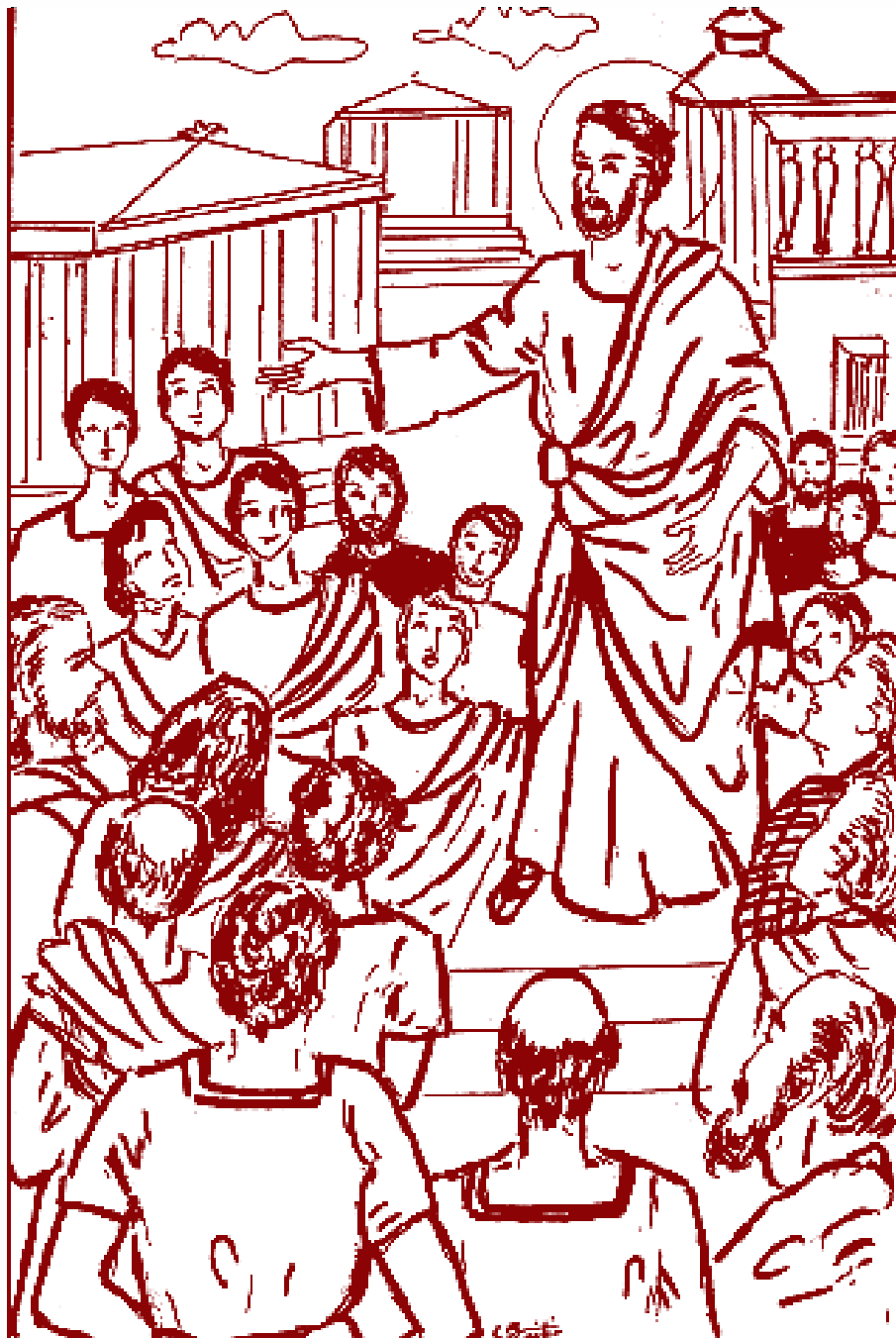
In the early Jewish tradition and until the coming of the Messiah, God used to send every hundred years or so a prophet to preach to the Jews to return back to their God and to foretell about the coming of the Messiah, the Savior who would release them from their bondage. When John the Baptist appeared at the Jordan River, it was more than 300 years since the Jews had a prophet to tell them, ***"Thus saith the Lord ..."***. The Jews were waiting for either another prophet or the Messiah Himself. Therefore, the word spread like fire through the land ***"There is a new prophet preaching at the Jordan ford. There is a message that has come from God"***.

✠ The Baptism of the Messiah

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him saying, ***"I have need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"*** "But Jesus answered and said to him, ***"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."*** "Then he allowed Him. Then when Jesus had been baptized, He came up immediately from the water, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ***"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"*** (Matthew 3:13-17.)

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Third Sunday



**JANUARY
THIRD SUNDAY**

**THE PERSONALITY OF ST. PAUL (I):
GOD'S CHOICE FOR ST. PAUL**

Please read the attached article entitled, "Faithfulness in the little things", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #1 in a series of 2 lessons about the life of St. Paul and his personality, to learn from him. In this lesson we will focus on his upbringing and his call from God to serve. God is rich and would like to give generously. He chooses people, who are ready to receive His gifts, enjoy them and work with them for the growth of His Kingdom. These people must first be faithful in the little things that they do.

MEMORY VERSE:

"...But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles "Galatians 1:15

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✠ The Origin of Paul:

*** His Hebrew name was Saul. This was the name that was mentioned**

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from Acts 7:58up to Acts 13:9. Then from Acts 13:9 ***“But Saul who was called Paul...”*** To the end of Acts as Paul.
The change in name signifies the complete change in life.

- * Saul was born in Tarsus, which is the Capital of Cilicia in Asia Minor. He was born from a well-known family. His father was a Pharisee. Following the laws of Moses in very narrow way. Acts 23:6 St. Paul said, ***“I am a Pharisee a son of Pharisees”***
- * He used to work in making tents as mentioned in (Acts 18: 3), ***“... For by occupation they were tentmakers.”***
- * He was sent by his family to Jerusalem to get his education. He was well educated under a well-known person called “Gamaliel” as mentioned in (Acts 22:3), ***“I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers.”***
- * He had a lot of power in Jerusalem. He was using his power against the Christians. He hated them (Acts 7:58-59) ***“They put their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul”. And Saul was consenting to his death (i.e. Stephen’s death)*** (Acts 8:1). He continued to be against the Christians (Acts 8:3, 9:1) ***“But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the Disciples of the Lord.”***

✠ The Call for Paul

- * **Please read** the memory verse
- * The call went into stages:

- ✧ Stage 1: At the gates of Damascus
Please read Acts 9:1-9 - Read this part in the class and discuss with the students.

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✦ Stage 2: Emphasis of his call
Please read Acts 9:10-19

✦ Stage 3: Paul started the preparation to preach:
He went to the wilderness for 3 years as mentioned in
(Galatians 1:17-18).

✦ The Lord Focuses on the Heart

* When the Lord has an important job to be done, He chooses the most suitable people. In this choice God looks at the heart. He looks at the people who are faithful in the little things that they do and gives them more blessings.

Why did God choose Saul to preach more than any other disciple?
Why did God choose David to replace King Saul?
Why did God choose the Virgin Mary to incarnate from her through the Holy Spirit? The Lord knew that all their hearts were ready to receive the heavenly gifts of God, enjoy them and work with them for the growth of the Kingdom of God.

✦ Never Lose Hope

* If God changed Saul to become Paul, He can also according to His mercy and power change anyone of us from being a hopeless person (or a deep sinner) into a good Christian. He also changed the life of the Samaritan woman (John 4) and the life of Zacchaeus (Luke 19). We must only focus on praying and never lose hope.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Submit your life in the hands of God and always say with St. Paul
“Lord what do you want me to do?”
- (2) Be good and faithful in everything you do no matter how small.

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Then the Lord will give you more things to do and enjoy.

- (3) Look for the true richness to come to you from God. This will change your life totally. Do not look for the richness of this world.

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Third Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

I PUT MY LIFE INTO YOUR HANDS

I put my life into Your hands
Lead me and guide, hold my hand
Please protect me lest I fall
Bless me and sanctify my soul

my Saviour and my Lord
and help me serve Your word
Your Holy name I always call
until I see the Lord

REFRAIN

Your tender voice I hear
Come to Me o troubled come
Come to Me heavy laden come

whether I am far or near
I will help you to overcome
and I shall give you rest

When life's troubles worry me
All the clouds will disappear
The Lord is my shield and my hope
His love protects me from the foe

when darkness is so near
when the Lord's light appear
He is my strength and my goal
until I see the Lord

Lord, have control over my life
I call Your sweet name day and night
That I may return back again
I ask You to strengthen my faith

and guide me through Your way
so please answer my prayer
to fill my heart with Your grace
until I see the Lord

When my life's end becomes so near
The Lord will come in a glorious scene
The Good Lord will wipe every tear
His love to me, His cross revealed

I feel a great relief
and take me to His feast
and fill my heart with His peace
I long to see the Lord

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FAITHFULNESS OVER A LITTLE

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

The Bible says, "You have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much. " (Mt.25:21).

It means that, as you have been faithful in earthly things, I'll set you over the heavenly. You have been faithful in this present world, I'll set you over eternity...

This principle could* be applied in many fields...

- + If you are faithful in loving your relative, God will set you over loving the enemy. He will give you the grace which enables you to love your enemy...
- + If you are faithful in serving God during your leisure time God may grant you the love to consecrate all your life for Him.
- + If you are faithful in rejecting willful sins, God will deliver you from unwillful sins...
- + If you are faithful in keeping your conscious mind from evil thoughts, God will grant you purity of the subconscious mind and God will also grant you purity of dreams...
- + If you are faithful in childhood, God will grant you faithfulness in your youth, which has more combats.
- + If you are faithful in not judging others by words, God will enable you not to judge by thoughts, which is more difficult.
- + Likewise, if you are faithful in controlling yourself from external anger, then God will grant you freedom from internal anger, freedom from rage, envy and thoughts of anger.
- + If you are faithful in the ordinary spiritualities (the fruits of the Spirit), God may grant you gifts of the Spirit, and without faithfulness in the first, you can never get the second.

God tests you first in the little, and if you prove to be faithful, He will set you over what is more: If you show your failure and faithlessness in the little, God will hardly set you over much...

As the Bible says, *"If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with the horses?" (Jer. 12:5).*

It is amazing how many think themselves able to carry out big responsibilities while they are unable to cope with what is lesser. They are unable to use the grace they have, and still ask for more, forgetting God's words, *"You have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much, "* this is conditional...



JANUARY

Third Sunday



For the success
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HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
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JANUARY

Fourth Sunday



**JANUARY
FOURTH SUNDAY**

**THE PERSONALITY OF ST. PAUL (II):
THE STRONG PERSONALITY**

Please read the attached article entitled, “The Strong Personality”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson 2 in a series of 2 lessons about the life of St. Paul and his personality, to learn from him. In this lesson we will focus on his life after his call to serve God. St. Paul was a real strong person. Christianity shapes the individual to become very strong.

MEMORY VERSE:

“The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” 2 Timothy 4:6-7

Please emphasize:

✠ (A) Christianity in the heart of St. Paul:

✠ St. Paul was a man of prayers:

He used to focus on prayers through which he gained all the blessings. He also, asked people to pray for him. He advised people to adhere to a life filled with prayers. Please read: Acts 9:11, Romans 1:10,

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Philippians 4:4-7.

✝ **St. Paul was a very humble man:**

If he was not humble, he could not be a true Christian. He considered all what he had and all he had done was only from the grace of God on him. Please read: Romans 1:1, 1Cor. 15:9-11.

✝ **St. Paul was very dedicated to his mission:**

He was a sick man in the flesh. Yet he traveled a lot, preached a lot, he faced many difficult situations and suffered a lot. But the Lord supported him. Please read 2 Tim. 4:6-7.

✝ **St. Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit:**

If he was not supported by the power of the Spirit of God, he would not have been able to do all these spiritual services, to preach and to bring fruits and to withstand all these sufferings on him. Please read Acts 13:1-4.

✝ **(B) Christianity shaped up St. Paul's personality**

✝ **St. Paul performed many miracles:**

As a strong spiritual man and an excellent preacher, the Lord supported him by giving him the power to perform miracles. Please read (Acts 27 and 28)

✝ **St. Paul wrote a significant part of the Holy Bible:**

He wrote 14 letters inspired by the Holy Spirit. These letters are keys to the Christian faith.

✝ **St. Paul was stronger than the rulers judging him.**

JANUARY

Fourth Sunday

With St. Paul in prison, the iron chains on his hands, he was praising God and rulers were shaken up by him.

✠ **St. Paul shed his blood for the sake of his love to the Lord Jesus Christ:**

Although he was living a heavenly life on earth, he was longing to be with Christ. For the sake of witnessing the true faith, he was very willing to shed his blood. Therefore he gained the crown of martyrdom.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) We have to be humble and adhere to our faith as was delivered to us from generation to generation. We will hear of cults and various heretics, but we must adhere to our precious faith.
- (2) A true Christian is a strong person too; example St. Paul. The real strength is not an outside appearance; but it stems from a strong heart that overcomes sin, Satan, the materialistic world and all its temptations.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

AS IT WAS, AND SHALL BE

As it was, and shall be,
from generation to gene-
ration, and unto all ages
of ages. Amen.

Osper-een ke este estin,
apo gene-as ees gene-an,
ke pantas toos e-onas ton
e-onon. Amen.

JANUARY

Fourth Sunday

THE STRENGTH OF PERSONALITY

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Strength of personality is not an outward appearance, it springs from the depths of Man, from his heart, mind and will.

One might be considered strong because of his intellectual strength, intelligence and ability to understand, conclude, obtain and gather items of knowledge, beside a good memory that collects and arranges information.

There is no doubt that an intelligent person is a strong one...

He is stronger than the knowledgeable person and the well-read. If he acquires these qualities too, his personality increases in strength. The strength of will and determination are also sources of a strong personality.

Therefore, it is said that he who overcomes himself is better than he who defeats a city. Also, an intelligent person without a strong will could fail in life because he knows, but he is not able.

Among the causes of a weak personality are: hesitation, doubt, lack of self-control, weakness of will and inability to take a decision.

Fasting and spiritual exercises that one follows strengthen one's will and one's personality.

A spiritual person is strong; due to his inner victory. He is strong because he conquered sin, the devil, the flesh, materialism and the world. He plunged into spiritual combats and all of Satan's flaming weapons failed to defeat him...

Other sources of the strength of personality are wisdom and prudence.

Therefore, those who are known for their wisdom are right for leadership and guidance. They are capable of attracting others to them.

Courage is also a quality of the strong personality...

Thus, he whose personality is considered strong is bold and brave. He does not fear or become troubled when facing counter forces. He is also able to express his opinion, explain his faith and defend his belief.

There is a big difference between bravery and rashness. Rashness is void of wisdom...

Therefore, a personality is considered strong, when it fulfils many conditions of real strength that support each other.

This is said to differentiate between the real strength and the aspects of false strength that depends on authority, physical power, violence, pride or assault of others.

NOTES

[illegible]

JANUARY

Fourth Sunday



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**FEBRUARY
FIRST SUNDAY**

**OUR SOCIAL BEHAVIOR (I):
BE A PEACE MAKER NOT A TROUBLE MAKER**

Please read Matthew 5:38-48, the attached articles, “The inner peace”, “Do not resist an evil person”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that if we are true Christians, we must behave as Christians. The inner peace is only for Christians as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. An evil person must not shake the inner peace and we must not resist an evil person.

MEMORY VERSE:

“But I tell you not to resist an evil person...”Matthew 5:39

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) Recognize the source of peace:

* The best gift that our Lord Jesus gave us is Peace. This is a very important personal attribute to be peaceful especially in a very troublesome world as the one we live in now. We must be living in peace, ***“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled***

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First Sunday

neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27) Only Christians can enjoy inner peace as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

- * As our beloved Lord made peace between heaven and earth and eliminated the old enmity between the two, we as Christians must be peacemakers, (Ephesians 2: 13-18.) “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us having abolished in His Flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near, for through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

(B) Develop habits of peace making:

- * In the New Testament there are a large number of references to the need of peace. The peacemaker has a special blessing ***“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”*** (Matthew 5:9)
- ✠ Please discuss the passage in Matthew 5:38-48. We can see that there are two major principles of Christianity as far as interpersonal relationship go:
 - ✧ Do not take revenge
 - ✧ Love your enemies

For an individual who is filled with the Holy Spirit, loving of the enemies is a direct result of the action of the Holy Spirit, because love is the first fruit of the Holy Spirit Gal. 5:22. An example of this love is the love of St. Stephen who loved the people who were

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stoning him and asked for their forgiveness (Acts 7:60).
For an individual who is filled with the Holy Spirit, loving of the enemies is important. We can love our enemies in steps. We have to learn first to love our parents, our friends and our church. We must pray to God to give us more love through the action of the Holy Spirit inside us.

* Let us always try to live in peace with other people (Heb. 12:14).
Let us be kind and forgiving (Eph. 4:31-32).

(C) **Do not be troublemakers:**

✝ The Lord Christ did not resist any of the evil persons and authorities around Him, during His Crucifixion. So, also Joseph the righteous, Abel, David etc., they did not resist all the evil persons who faced them.

✝ Do not get angry, give things time to solve and be patient, ***“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*** (James 1:19-20)

✝ Create an atmosphere of unity of opinion and unity in desire. Avoid division because division destroys peace. (I Corinthians 1:10).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) As true Christians we must enjoy inner peace. This inner peace we get from God who is the King of peace. This is a unique Christian attribute that others from different religions cannot have.

(2) Then we must think peacefully, talk peacefully, act peacefully and never be a source of trouble.

(3) Let us train ourselves to forget the wrong doings of others, do not resist it, maintain our inner peace and let God do His work.

FEBRUARY

First Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

O KING OF PEACE

(glorification tune)

O King of peace give us
Thy peace, accord to us
Thy peace and forgive us
our sins.

Disperse the enemies of
the church, fortify her
and establish her forever.

Emmanuel our God is now
in our midst, in the glory
of His Father and the Holy
Spirit.

May He bless us all, purify
our hearts and heal the
sicknesses of our souls
and bodies.

We worship Thee O Christ
with Thy Good Father and
the Holy Spirit, for Thou
hast come and saved us.

epouroo ente tihirini
moi nan entek-hirini
semni nan entek-hirini
kanrnnovi nan evol.

Gor evol ennigagi ente
ti-ekeklicia aricoft
eros enneskim sha eneh

Emmano-eel pennooti
khen tenmiti tinoo
khen epo-oo ente pefiot
nem piepnevma ethoo-wab.

Entefesmo eron tiren entef
tovo ennenhit, entef talsho
enny shony ente nen epsishi
nem nensoma.

Tenoosht emok O pekhrastos
nempekiot enagathos nem
piepnevma ethoo-wab, je ak-i
aksoti emoon.

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PEACE OF THE HEART

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Peace of the heart is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit dwells in one's heart, it gives peace to this heart, as the postle says, *"and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding..." (Phil 4:7)*

Peace was a gift from the Lord Jesus to the people, as He said, *"Peace I leave with you, peace I give to you." (Jn 14:27)*

The one who is full of peace does not get troubled, or worried or disturbed, no matter how much pressure is on him from the outside.

His peace does not depend on the outer circumstances but on his confidence in God's protection and care and his faith in God's promises.

As long as the Lord exists, works and protects, there is no need to fear. For this reason the prophet David said, *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me." (Ps 23:4)*

His source of peace is his feeling that God is with him.

The Disciples were troubled when they were in the boat and they thought that the Lord was asleep, while the sea was high. They lost their peace. The prevailing factor was the outer circumstances and the feeling that God's work was not there. Therefore, the Lord arose and rebuked the wind and restored their peace to them.

Be firm inside, steadfast in your faith, then nothing from outside will shake you. Be like a house built on the rock, no wind or rain will affect it, as it is firm inside.

A good ship is never harmed by strong waves that hit it. But when does a ship get affected? When there is a hole that lets water inside it... Do you have a hole that would let water leak into yourself and drown it...

St Anthony was an example of peace of the heart. The Apostolic St Athanasius, said about him *"Anyone with a bitter soul, and disturbed thought, will have his heart filled with peace when he sees the face of St Anthony."*

The one who is full of peace could flow over to others, granting them comfort...

Live then in peace, you will be comforted and live in confidence and calm, in good health, both spiritually and physically...



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**FEBRUARY
SECOND SUNDAY**

**OUR SOCIAL BEHAVIOR (II):
HOW TO RELATE TO AUTHORITY**

Please read: (Romans 13:1-7), (Mark 12:13-17) and (Matthew 17:24-27), and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that the Holy Bible and the Commandments of God necessitate that a true Christian follows closely the laws of the country and abides with them.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities”.

Romans 13:1

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✙ In the Bible there are various locations that indicate the necessity of obeying the authorities of the government.
- ✙ One must not mix things related to God and to the government. This is what the Lord Jesus did when the Jews came to Him asking whether they should pay taxes to Caesar or not. Please read (Mark 12:13-17). Therefore we should not mix up spiritual things with worldly things. For example, if I am working I should not mix up my share in eternal

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Second Sunday

life versus getting a fair hourly rate.

✚ Obey state authorities. Please read (Romans 13:1-7) in the classroom. This part very clearly shows that a true Christian respects and abides with the laws because:

- (a) These authorities are allowed to govern by God.
- (b) It is God's commandment to obey them.
- (c) Usually people fear the authorities, if they do something bad and a true Christian does not do something bad.

✚ Remember that the Holy Bible does not give details on our social behavior. For example the Bible does not say whether or not we should wear the seat belt while driving. But the Bible specifies that we must abide with the law of the land. Then we deduce that the details of the law of the land must be abided by.

✚ Also as a Church member one must obey his or her Church leader. We can discuss and try to understand the leader's point of view. But if we still differ, we should submit to the opinion of the leader as the Bible is teaching us, ***"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls."***(Hebrews 13:17)

✚ However, we must not forget that supreme authority is to God. The authority of God is above all authorities. If there is any situation where there is conflict of authority, then we must give first priority to the authority of God.

✚ Please tell them in detail the incident in which Peter and John declared to the Jews that they have to obey God and not obey the Jews (representing the authority). Please read (Acts 4:17-20). This shows that if the authority of the government differs from what God wants us to do, and then it is clear that we should obey God.

✚ In our social behavior we must observe that as true Christians we must

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be good examples for others. This is the reason the Lord Jesus said about us ***“You are the light of the world”***. When others see our good works i.e. honesty and respect of authorities, they glorify our heavenly Father and some of them may become Christians because of our good behavior. On the contrary, if we are breaking the social laws and run into trouble with authorities, we bring shame to Christianity and Christ. Then people will never think of becoming Christians because of our bad deeds.

✠ In (Matthew 17:24-27) the Lord Christ was the only one who was not supposed to pay taxes to the altar in Jerusalem because it is His. The Lord Jesus is God and the church is the “House of God”. But He gave up His right (a) To be a good example for others and (b) They could not understand that Jesus was the Son of God at this point in time. So, it was going to be a stumbling block for them all and would have caused a big problem. So, we too can give up our comfort, our right with an open mind in order to abide by authorities and not to cause problems. For example, if I live in an apartment building, I am supposed to put the volume of the music or the hymns that I am listening to so that I do not anger my neighbors, even if I love to hear them at the louder volume.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) We must not mix religion, spiritual guidelines and social laws. We must abide with the social laws as the Lord Jesus did.
- (2) The commandment of God is telling us to obey the authorities and the Commandments left all the details for us to work out.
- (3) As Christians we should be willing to give up our comfort and our rights even if it is just for the sake of not conflicting with the authorities and maintaining peace.

FEBRUARY

Second Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

HOW GREAT THOU ART

O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
consider all the works Thy hands have made
I see the stars ; I hear the rolling thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

Then sings my soul, my Savior , God to Thee
Then sings my soul, my Savior , God to Thee

How great Thou art!
How great Thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze

And when I think that God His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die , I scarce can take it in
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin

When Christ shall come with shouts of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim , My God how great Thou art!

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**FEBRUARY
THIRD SUNDAY**

**SOUL SEARCHING (I):
TO WHOM DO YOU BELONG, AND WHERE ARE YOU
GOING? WHOSE ARE THESE IN FRONT OF YOU?**

Please read Genesis 32:9-23 the attached article entitled, “Review your way”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

Soul searching is an essential part in defining our spiritual situation so that we improve and come closer to God. The three questions in the title can help us to undergo successful soul searching. But we have to be honest in our answers. In this lesson we will deal with the first question.

MEMORY VERSE:

***“...To whom do you belong, and where are you going?
Whose are these in front of you?” Genesis 32:17***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✝ Soul searching is a very important and beneficial element in spiritual life. Remember the parable of the prodigal son. The first step that led to his return to the father was “.....***when he came back to himself***” (Luke 15:17). So, he gave it some soul searching and went back.

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✠ Start by reviewing the circumstances that accompanied the meeting of Jacob with his brother Esau. Jacob was very afraid of his brother Esau. He prayed for God's help and God guided him to a very good preparation plan. Part of this plan was for Jacob to send messengers first to meet Esau. He had to prepare them well with gifts to Esau and proper answers for three key questions:

- (1) To whom do you belong?
- (2) Where are you going?
- (3) Whose are these in front of you?

The meeting went very well as can be seen in Genesis Chapter 32 and 33. These same three questions if each of us reviews can get honest answers for them and prepare a suitable course of action.

✠ **The first question: To whom do you belong?**

This question means: Who is the one who has authority on your soul, your heart and your feelings? Who is the one that you permit to lead your life and your behavior?

✱ **Does money have authority on you?**

- ✠ There are several examples for people in the Bible who worshipped money and money had the authority on them. Judas Iscariot preferred to sell his master for a small amount of money. He later on, killed himself and was buffer while he was doing so.
- ✠ The rich man came to ask the Lord Jesus what should I do to gain eternal life?! When Jesus asked him to give his money to the poor, he preferred money and "went back sad". (Mark 10:17-22).

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Result:

Money is a terrible master. Money is collected with bread-winner, protected with fear and left with sadness.

***Does Sin have authority on you?**

- ✧ “Everyone committing sin is a slave to sin.” This means the devil has the authority on the sinful soul.

Example: Samson (tell the story in detail). Samson had the Spirit of God in him and he was so strong. One time he killed 1000 Palestinians. When he committed sin with Delilah he became so weak, she cut his hair, they made him blind and imprisoned him Judges 16.

Result:

Devils and Sins are terrible masters. They humiliate the person and separate him from God.

*** I belong to my Creator and my Savior**

- ✧ God created me, so I must belong to Him.
- ✧ God saved me on the Cross and loved me, so I must love Him from the depth of my heart. Hence, God is the king of my life.

Result:

I live a peaceful life because my king is the king of peace. I will have a place with God in heaven because I trust His promises.

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WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Let us be clear with ourselves. If we are truly the children of God we must have a strong fellowship with Him. Let Him reign over our hearts. How? By having God come to the picture of our life, in every aspect of it.
- (2) If we are convinced that God's reigning over our life is to our benefit, we reject anything else to reign over our life.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

YOU ARE MY HIDING PLACE

You are my hiding place
You always fill my heart
With songs of deliverance
Whenever I am afraid
I will trust You
I will trust You
Let the weak say I am strong
In the strength of the Lord

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Third Sunday

EXAMINE YOUR WAY

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

There is a kind of person who rushes on his way and would not change it, no matter what happens!

He stubbornly insists on his way, even after it is proved wrong and would not lead to any satisfactory result.

He thinks that dignity is to be firm, even in what is wrong, as Herod did when he killed John the Baptist!

He considers changing one's way a kind of hesitancy that does not go in line with strength and firmness!

It is a type of stubbornness that some people adopt and never change despite the fact that it becomes obvious that it is harmful for them and their followers.

Some might continue in such a way for years...

It might be a conflict or a lawsuit that drags for years...

It could be a lost case, but he would not give up...

Or, it could be a matter of a relationship that some would keep, even though it would not end well...

As for you, examine your way from time to time...

There is nothing wrong in evaluating the situation and its surroundings and the anticipated consequences. Then one would be able to see the necessary action, suitable for the time being, not the past...

Examining one's way is wise...

The important thing is not to stick to one, but to make sure that this is the right way.

The way is merely the means to reach an aim.

You have then to be more concerned about the aim and objective, choosing the suitable means to achieve it.

Many wasted their life because of obstinacy and stubbornness...

Others destroyed many with them, following the same course...

Both groups probably lived without guidance...

They depended on their own thoughts, or more correctly on their emotions. So they wasted life unwisely and in vain...

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FEBRUARY

Fourth Sunday



FEBRUARY FOURTH SUNDAY

SOUL SEARCHING (II) TO WHOM DO YOU BELONG, AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING? WHOSE ARE THESE IN FRONT OF YOU?

Please read the attached article entitled, “Your eternal life”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

In this lesson we will deal with the second and third questions of this lesson’s title. Let us think about our future. Let us think about what God has given us.

MEMORY VERSE:

“...But we know that when He (Christ) is revealed, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:2

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✠ Where are you going?

This is a very important question because all of us must go away from earth at one point in time. Every day that ends in our earthly life, it means we are closer to the end of our earthly life. If we wanted to collect various answers from the students to this question we may get:

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- * I do not know:
This is not a good answer, because if a person is driving his car and does not know his destination, then he will be in trouble.
- * God knows, I do not know
This is also not a good answer, because God for sure knows everything but He also told me that there are two ways: The easy way that leads to hell and the difficult way that leads to paradise.
- * As God wishes
God wishes that all of us be saved. And He also said ***“come back to Me and I come back to you”***
- * According to my deeds I will go:
Deeds alone cannot end up with the person being in paradise as St. Paul says ***“Not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*** (Ephesians 2:9)
- * I hope I go to heaven:
Hoping to go to heaven is not enough.
- * The mercy of God will not let me go to hell
The mercy of God is now as the tax collector prayed ***“God have mercy on me I am a sinner”*** and he was granted mercy; but the rich man asked for mercy after his death but it was too late then. There are no mercies after a person has died with his or her sins.
- * I am for sure going to paradise. I do not deserve it but I am adhering to the word of God in the Bible and I believe that the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ will wash away my sins. I do not deserve it but I trust in God’s love. I do not deserve it but I will keep struggling in my life until the last breath. I do not deserve it but I am trying to live a heavenly life here on earth by adhering to prayers to love heaven and the Saints.

FEBRUARY

Fourth Sunday

† Whose are these in front of you?

Everything that we have, God has given it to us? The question is how are we utilizing it?

* Health:

“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?” (1Corinthians 6:19). We must utilize our capabilities in our growth, the growth of our church and the growth of the society.

* Money:

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, *“If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.”* (Malachi 3:10.)

* Our Time:

“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Are we wasting time? Time is very important. We have to use time for our growth. On one of the large clocks downtown of a city it was written under the clock “it never goes back.” We must then use time effectively.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Let us work for eternal life. Let us do something every day towards building a heavenly place for ourselves. What have you done today for your heavenly share?
- (2) God gave us everything that we have. He will ask us in the last day about what we have done with these things. Are we being careful and utilizing everything that God gave us?

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Coptic Orthodox Church



[SONGS](#) 🎵

O SEEKER TO MEET JESUS

O seeker to meet Jesus
Your food is the Bread of life

You traveler, forget the past
If you suffer on the road

The trumpet will be heard soon
A great feast above the clouds

He'll prepare a place for you
His heart is longing for you

You are a part in Jesus Christ
Have no fear from all dangers

forget your hunger and thirst
and you'll drink from His wounded side

and go steadfast in the path
remember for you He died

with happiness and sound of joy
and a crown for the watchful

he is always waiting for you
blessed are you if you are prepared

you who lives among the rocks
you're protected by the Lord

FEBRUARY

Fourth Sunday

YOUR ETERNITY

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Most people think only of their lives on earth, all their wishes are concentrated on this earthly life. All their efforts and struggle are for its sake, but as for their eternity, perhaps they never think of it...

Your whole life on earth is not worth a twinkle of an eye, if compared with the endless eternity...

Your life on earth is just the preparation for such an eternity, the immortal life...

Maybe sticking to a worldly honour makes you lose all the respect that the saints receive in the everlasting glory...

Nevertheless, you still stick to this worldly honour and sacrifice your eternity, as if you do not care!!

Perhaps your sticking to some of the temporary or passing worldly pleasures deprives you of eternal happiness...

Therefore, you have to be convinced of the importance of eternity, put it always in front of your eyes. Everything becomes of small value compared to it.

How good is the saying of the Apostle, St Paul, to the Corinthians, *"While we do not look at the things which are seen, but all the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary but the things which are not seen are eternal."* (2 Cor 4:18)

Truly, in this view, the main difference between a wise person and an ignorant person is quite clear.

The ignorant is short sighted, his look does not proceed beyond the visible things. But the wise person looks too far, to even after death... and keeps thinking: What will become of me after I take off this body? Where shall I go? What shall I be?

And you, brother, with what are you busy...?

Where did you leave your heart? Here or there?...

For where your heart is, there your treasures will be also...

The wise feel they are strangers on earth and do not concentrate their hopes on earth, but *"... he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."* (Heb 11:10)

He who gives importance to his eternity is raised above the earth and all earthly things. Nothing in this world attracts him.

The whole world is behind him and not in front of him...



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of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
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HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the children
in the class

MARCH

First Sunday



MARCH FIRST SUNDAY

THE SPIRITUALITY OF FASTING (I): THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #1 in a series of 3 lessons on the spirituality of Fasting.
This lesson is about the importance of fasting.

MEMORY VERSE:

“...And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry “Matthew 4:2

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

† Fasting is the Oldest Commandment:

The first commandment from God to Adam was to not eat from a certain type of a tree (Genesis 2:16-17).

In this way God wanted to set a limit not to exceed the desires of the flesh and to teach Adam to behave over the level of the earthly and the materialistic things.

Adam was defeated by temptation when he should have been fasting. This was evidence that Adam gave a greater authority to his flesh than his spirit.

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The Lord Jesus began his service with fasting, ***“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry”*** (Matthew 4:1-2).

✙ Old Testament prophets fasted:

David Ps. 35:13, Ps. 69:10

Daniel Daniel 3

Ezekiel Ezekiel 4:9

✙ The Apostles fasted:

As our Lord Jesus fasted, so did the Apostles.

- * St. Peter, ***“Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance...”*** (Acts 10:10)
- * St. Paul, ***“... in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fasting ...”*** (2Cor. 6:5), ***“... in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness ...”*** (2Cor. 11:27)
- * All the Apostles, ***“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ...Then, having fasted and prayed, they laid hands on them, they sent them away.”*** (Acts 13:2-3)

Our Righteous Savior said about fasting ***“However, This kind (i.e. demons) does not go out except by prayers and fasting”*** (Matthew 17:21)

✙ The Fasting of a Whole Congregation

- * The people of Nineveh. The Lord accepted their repentance and fasting. Please read Jonah 3:5-10.
- * The fasting of the Jews for God to help Esther in her meeting with the King. Please read Esther 4:15-17. The Lord accepted their

MARCH

First Sunday

fasting and saved his people.

† **Fasting always precedes all blessings:**

To become spiritually fit to receive the blessings from God, we must prepare ourselves through fasting. Therefore, fasting precedes all the Church feasts. Fasting also precedes taking Communion.

† **The Sacraments of the Church are preceded with fasting:**

This holds for Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, the Unction of the Sick (Except the incapable sick), the Holy Orders and the Sacrament of the Holy Matrimony (as it was originally done at the start of the Divine Liturgy and the newly married couple will take the Holy Communion). The exception is to the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession in order not to delay repentance lest the chance of repentance may not happen again.

† **Fasting is always required before serving God:**

The Apostles fasted and prayed before choosing anyone for serving the Lord, *“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ...Then, having fasted and prayed, they laid hands on them, they sent them away”* (Acts 13:2-3). In our Church, the ordinations of bishops, priests or deacons are preceded by fasting.

† **The Real Meaning of Fasting:**

It is enrichment to the soul by means of denouncing the desire for food of the body and all its lusts. Hence fasting is a method towards spiritual growth and any fasting without a spiritual growth is just a mere change of food.

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What do we learn from this lesson?

- (1) Our precious Coptic Orthodox Church is still adhering to the biblical teachings, to the actual practices of the Apostles and to the Holy Traditions as far as fasting is concerned. Fasting almost disappeared from other Churches.
- (2) Are the desires of our flesh controlling our actions? We must limit the desires of the flesh in order to control them.
- (3) Fasting is an excellent method towards spiritual growth.

MARCH

First Sunday

SONGS 🎵

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE MERCY

REFRAIN

Blessed are those who have mercy
The Holy Spirit will fill their hearts

who give to the poor, fast and pray
and obtain mercy on judgment day

Moses fasted for forty days
To receive the ten commandments

to be cleansed in body and spirit
which our Lord did write

Fasting and prayer of the prophet
The Lord kept shut the lions' mouths

Saved his life in the lions' den
for God protects his holy men

Elijah fasted and prayed that the sky
That the Israelites who went astray

for forty months would not rain
would feel hunger and pain

Fasting and prayers of Nineveh
When they repented were forgiven

as they appealed to God above
and God filled them with his love

Fasting and prayers of the disciples
Baptizing and preaching the Gospel

spread God's word to every nation
healing and bringing salvation

Fasting and prayers of the martyrs
knowing that even losing their lives pain. Is

gave them the power to stand the
nothing compared to their gain

Fasting and prayers of the righteous
In caves and deserts and mountains

and cross bearers kept them living
for. Their love for Christ the King

NOTES

[illegible]

MARCH

First Sunday



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**MARCH
SECOND SUNDAY**

**THE SPIRITUALITY OF FASTING (II): FASTING AND
THE BODY**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #2 in a series of 3 lessons on the spirituality of Fasting. This lesson is concerned with the relationships between fasting and the physical body and its spiritual growth.

MEMORY VERSE:

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the King’s delicacies “Daniel 1:8

PLEASE EMPHASIS:

- ✝ Please start by telling the story of Daniel and his friends (Daniel 1:1-16). From this story we can see that the concept of the world, as far as food is concerned, is opposed to that of God. The king who was a non-believer wanted to do his best for the health and wellbeing of Daniel and his friends. He thought he could do that by giving them the best food. He thought that man is made up of flesh only, so the best food is the most important element. On the other hand, Daniel and his friends who were true worshippers of God had learned the lesson that they are not made up of flesh only and that materialistic food is not the most important thing. The soul and feelings are the most important elements, and both are better when the food given to the body is under

MARCH

Second Sunday

control.

What is the result of Daniel and his friends fasting? They were healthy and they grew deeper and deeper into their spirituality.

Definition of fasting from the flesh point of view

Fasting from the spiritual point of view will be done in the next lesson. But fasting from the flesh point of view has two components: A period of time abstaining from food preceded by only eating vegetarian food with no animal or dairy component in it. Let us now talk about these two components of fasting.

1) The period without food:

In fasting there must be a period without eating any food. Otherwise if we only eat vegetarian foods without “a no-food period” we acquire only vegetarian diet, which is not fasting. The period without food differs from one person to another depending on:

- * The degree of spirituality of the person.
- * The age of the person.
- * The health of the person
- * The type of work and the efforts required in it

However, there is a minimum level required without food. This minimum is coordinated with the father of confession. The element of hunger is important in fasting. This can be shown in the following examples:

The Lord Jesus *“And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.”*(Matthew 4:2)

St. Peter *“Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance.”*(Acts 10:10)

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St. Paul

“I know how to be abased, and I know how to be abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”(Philippians 4:12) and ***“in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness...”***(2Cor. 11:27)

Fasting reaches its desired level when the person is hungry; he or she can have more effective prayers. He or she will also feel for the poor people and will be able to assist them and gain great blessings.

2) The vegetarian food:

- * God created man a vegetarian, ***“And God said, “See I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.””*** (Genesis 1:29), and even the animals were vegetarian. (Genesis 1:30)
- * After Adam forced himself out of the paradise, because of his sin, his descendants were given meat to eat after Noah’s ark. (Genesis 9:1-3)
- * When God led his people in the wilderness for 40 years, he gave them vegetarian food, ***“And the house of Israel called its name Manna . And it was like white coriander seed, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.”***(Exodus 16:31), and when God allowed them to eat meat it was with reluctance, ***“But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plaque...”*** (Numbers 11:33-34)
- * Vegetarian food was the choice of Daniel and his friends (Daniel 1:8-12, 10:3). Also Ezekiel ate vegetarian food

MARCH

Second Sunday

(Ezekiel 4:9).

* Vegetarian food is light and it makes the person more tamed.

† **Benefits of fasting to the body:**

* Period of rest to the major components of the body: the liver, the heart (lower cholesterol) . . . etc.

* Less weight for the person; good for the heart and the general health; the person becomes more active.

* The fasting food in fact strengthens one's health and the factors that trouble the body are in the heavy foods and fats.

† **Fasting is related more to the soul than to the body:**

The action of fasting in the body is a preparation for its action on the soul. Thus, fasting is not just hunger for the body but a direction to soul enrichment. Hence the fasting period is a time in which both the body and the soul participate in a spiritual act.

† **First priority is to the soul:**

Please read:

“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.”(Matthew 4:4)

*“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”
(Romans 8:5)*

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) If you fasted your physical health will not hurt. In fact it should improve.
- (2) More importantly, if you fast you make yourself ready to grow spiritually. At this point you can then defeat the devil

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with fasting and prayers.

- (3) When you fast you gain the virtue of self-control. Self-control as a virtue gained through fasting can be utilized as an important personal asset. The person who can control what he says or hears or looks at is a strong person in complete control of their whole life. So, let us all fast.

MARCH

Second Sunday

SONGS 🎵

CONSIDER YOUR WAY, O SINNER

Consider your way, O sinner
Take Christ as you only portion

return and repent today
don't waste your whole life away

REFRAIN

Christ will enlighten your whole life
And give you joy and forgiveness

and take away all your fears
and wipe away all your tears

Surrender your life to Jesus
His light will guide you and lead you

and walk with Him like before
His hand will open the door

Satan has always deceived you
Lift up your heart to your Saviour

Satan has led you astray
and let Him show you the way

Don't say, I will start tomorrow
Confess and you'll be forgiven

Tomorrow is years away
start your repentance today

Come to Him all ye that labor
Your debts will be all forgiven

He will take your burdens away
He died so you don't have to pay

Sinner, rejoice and be happy
Enter the joy of your Master

His Blood will wash all your stains
forget the sorrow and pains

Make haste and come back, O sinner
For all the angels in heaven

the day is over and spent
rejoice when sinners repent.

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HOLY BIBLE

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in the class

MARCH

Third Sunday



**MARCH
THIRD SUNDAY**

**THE SPIRITUALITY OF FASTING (III):
CONSECRATE A FAST**

Please read the attached article entitled, “Exercises in the Great Lent”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #3 in a series of 3 lessons on the spirituality of Fasting.
This lesson is about consecrating our fasting.

MEMORY VERSE:

“....Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly. “Joel 2:15

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

† **The meaning of “consecrate a fast”:**

The word consecrate means make it special and in this way our fast is supposed to be made special or private to God. The days of fasting are to become holy, and especially dedicated to God and not to the world. This is the meaning of “consecrate a fast” in the memory verse.

† **What is the goal of your fasting?**

Why do we fast? Is it just a period of time the church dedicates for fasting? Each one of us must have his or her own goal for their fasting. The best goal for fasting is to become closer to God because of our love for Him. When we fast, our soul becomes closer to God by preventing the desires of the body. Therefore, fasting is not a relationship between man and food, but it is rather a relationship between God and man.

1. Fasting is to be accompanied by repentance:

If repentance is supposed to be a daily spiritual practice, it is most suited during fasting in order to achieve a consecrated fast. ***“Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to lose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?”*** (Isaiah 58:6.)

2. Fasting is to be accompanied by more prayers:

Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ taught us, ***“However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting”*** (Matthew 17:21). This means to live a victorious life over the temptation of the devil, especially during the fasting period. All fasting must be accompanied with prayers.

3. **Fasting is to be accompanied by staying alone for some period of time:**

Our Lord taught us by his own actions ***“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God”*** (Luke 6:12.) Then to go deeper in our spiritual life, we have to exercise silence around us and be alone. This is most needed during fasting. Is it suitable to stop watching the TV

MARCH

Third Sunday

during fasting? Yes.

4. **Fasting is to be accompanied by participating in the church's spiritual programs during the fasting period:**

Churches prepare spiritual programs composed of more Liturgies, hymns, sermons and many guest speakers. Let us all benefit from this.

✠ **Rejected types of fasting:**

- * The fasting of the Pharisees: Luke 18:9-14 (Please tell this story in detail)
- * The fasting of the people who said that they will continue to fast until they kill St. Paul, *“And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy.”* (Acts 23:12-13)
- * The fasting of the people in the days of Jeremiah (Jer.14:1 1-12)

✠ **What do we learn from this lesson?**

- (1) Fasting is a period for spiritual growth. To achieve this spiritual growth we have to be serious and consecrate the fasting period.
- (2) Fasting must be accompanied by repentance, extra prayers and reflection in solitude for a longer time
- (3) Please do these exercises mentioned in the attached article entitled, “Exercises in the Great Lent”.

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SONGS 🎵

AMAZING GRACE

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
I once was lost, but now am found

Through many dangers, toils and snares
His grace hath brought me safe thus far

When we've been there ten thousand years
We've no less days to sing God's praise

that saved a wretch like me!
Was blind, but now I see.

I have already come
and grace will lead me home.

Bright shining as the sun
Than when we first begun.

**RECITATION CURRICULUM:
PLEASE LOOK AT THE RECITATION CURRICULUM
AT THE END OF THIS BOOK.**

MARCH

Third Sunday

EXERCISES DURING LENT

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

To have a powerful effect on your spiritual life during lent , you need to follow certain exercises. So when you are involved a life situation, you will have benefited from your fast:

[1] To exercise giving up a specific sin, out of the sins that prevail upon you, and is repeated in many of your confessions.

[2] To exercise learning some Psalms from the Agbeya. You may choose one or two Psalms from each of the seven prayers, especially the Psalms that leave an effect on you.

[3] To exercise learning the Bible readings of the different hours. Divide them into parts, analyze them knowing that for each prayer there are three or six parts.

[4] To exercise the mental prayer of what you have learned. You may pray during work, on the road, while with people or at any time.

[5] Use these prayers, Psalms and Bible readings as a sphere for contemplation, to enable yourself to pray them with depth and understanding.

[6] To exercise spiritual readings: either by plentiful reading from the Bible regularly, with understanding and meditation... or reading the lives of the Saints or some spiritual books, so that you gain a profitable yield of deep readings.

[7] During lent, you may exercise learning the hymns of lent and of the Passion Week. Repeat them until you are full of their spirit...

[8] You may exercise a certain level of fasting, under the supervision of your spiritual father.

[9] There are many spiritual exercises in the field of dealing with people... such as gentleness, patience, enduring others' weaknesses, controlling anger, using words of praise and encouragement, serving and helping others, kindness and meekness.

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[10] Other exercises in purity of the heart: Such as modesty, inner peace, love of God, being satisfied without grumbling, quietness with no disturbance, internal joy in the spirit, faith and hope...



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Third Sunday



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**MARCH
FOURTH SUNDAY**

**PALM SUNDAY: MY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP
WITH THE LORD JESUS**

Please read (Matthew 21:1-11), (John 12:13-19), the attached material entitled, “God’s love for us”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To focus on taking the Lord Christ as our personal King and Savior.
How do we develop a personal relationship with the Lord Christ?

MEMORY VERSE:

Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel! “John 12:13

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

1. In the Spiritual domain, as the Holy Bible illustrates, there are two kingdoms:

(a) The Kingdom of God:

Where the people of God are glorifying the Lord Christ with the Holy Angels and the Saints. The Lord Christ is the Heavenly King. In this kingdom, peace and love prevail.

(b) The Kingdom of Satan:

Where the evil people belong. The Devil and all his evil power hate our human race. Satan is always fighting us, trying to make us fall

MARCH

Fourth Sunday

into sin.

2. When our Lord Jesus came, He performed many miracles of casting out demon spirits that made people suffer. Thus, declaring power over everything. Not only that, but He gave this power to His Disciples who said to Him ***“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name”*** (Luke 10:17.)
3. As True Christians, every one of us must develop a personal relationship with the Lord Christ, taking Him as a personal King and a personal Savior. My level of spirituality will be a lot deeper when I enter into a loving and personal relationship with the Lord Christ, taking Him as my King and Savior.

1. The Lord Jesus is my Personal King:

- * Jerusalem was a selected city from God to have the only Altar that was entitled according to the law to have the Passover and the offerings in it. The Lord Christ entered this city as a triumphant King of Peace. He was welcomed with heavenly praises, from the simple people.

It was expected that this city will be the first to receive the Lord Jesus and follow His teachings and believing in Him. On the reverse, the people in Jerusalem refused Him and they went their way doing evil deeds. Please read Ezekiel 22:3-31 to see what God was saying through prophet Ezekiel about Jerusalem.

- * So, the Lord entered Jerusalem declaring His kingdom. He wanted to reign over everyone's heart in love and not by force. If the Lord Christ is my personal king then I must be very faithful to follow His commandments, which are balanced and beneficial for me. I must then think, talk, believe, plan and do everything as a true son or daughter of Christ.

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2. The Lord Jesus is my Personal Savior:

- * It was me who was supposed to be killed for my sins because the reward of sin is death. But God, because of His love sent His only begotten Son to die instead of me. Paying the price for my sin so that I can live.
- * The Jewish Passover was in the 14th day of the month in which Jesus entered Jerusalem. Jesus came to the entrance of the city in the tenth day (10th) of the month. This is the same day in which the Jews used to take the Lamb for the Passover according to the laws of Moses. Please read (Exodus 12:3). The Lamb of the Jews was kept in preparation of His killing in the Passover. This lamb was a symbol for the true lamb. The blood of the lamb in the Old Testament was used to save the Israelites from the destroying Angel. So, they went out of Egypt.
- * The Lord Jesus, the true lamb entered Jerusalem in the same day as the Lamb used to enter (i.e. on the 10th) thus declaring that He is the Lamb of God. John the Baptist said about Jesus ***“Behold! the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”*** (John 1:29).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- 1) Lord, enter my heart and clean it as you cleaned the altar in Jerusalem.
- 2) Lord, let me feel the warmth of your love for me and help me to exchange love with you.
- 3) Lord, help me to abide by your commandments for the sake of your goodness.
- 4) Lord, make mention of me when I come to your Kingdom as you did for the thief who was hung beside you.

MARCH

Fourth Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

THE HYMN OF PALM SUNDAY

“Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel”(Jn 12:13)

He Who is above the Cherubim
With great glory riding a colt

today appeared in Jerusalem
surrounded by ranks of ni-angelos.

REFRAIN

Oussana khen ni – et – chocee
Ef-es-marou-out enjevi-ethni-yo

fai pe epouro empi - Israel
khen efran em epchoice ente nigom.

On the way they spread garments
With joy and praise they did sing

from the tress they cut branches
Hosanna to the Son of David.

Today God fulfilled many words
As Zachariah prophesied

the prophecies and the proverbs
this prediction of Jesus Christ.

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GOD'S LOVE FOR US

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Because of God's love for us, He considers us part of Him, as He says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. " (Jn 15:5) And He also says, "... we are members of his body. " (Eph 5:30), or He is the head and the whole Church is the body. Again He says, "Abide in me, and I in you, as the branches abide in the vine. " (Jn 15:4) He also says about us to the Father, "I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one. " (Jn 17:23)

+ How beautiful is the expression in the Bible about God's love for us, in saying, "... partakers of the divine nature. " (2 Pet 1:4) **And also, "... the communion of the Holy Spirit. " (2 Cor 13:14)** Of course it is not a communion in the nature and essence but in work. Therefore, St Paul says about himself and his friend Silas, "For we are God's fellow workers. " "For we are God's fellow workers." (1 Cor 3:9)

+ **One of the aspects of God's love for us is the friendship that developed between Him and our human race.** For example, Abraham was called, "El-Khalil" the friend of God, and Enoch, about whom it was said, "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not for God took him. " (Gen 5:24) Moses, too spent forty days with God on the mountain. The twelve Disciples are also another example, the way the Lord associated with them...

+ **It is also beautiful how God made His delight in the sons of men...**

And He, the unlimited, humbled Himself for the human beings, who are limited, and associated with them. He also appeared to them and talked to them through mouth to ear.

+ **It is also due to God's love for us all that these amazing ways of care** which history tells us occurred, such as the split of the Red Sea, the Manna in the wilderness, the water flowing from a rock, looking after Elijah during the famine, delivering Peter from prison and Daniel from the lions' den and the three youths from the burning furnace... beside many other stories that have no end.

+ **As a sign of God's love for us He has given us these beautiful promises:'**

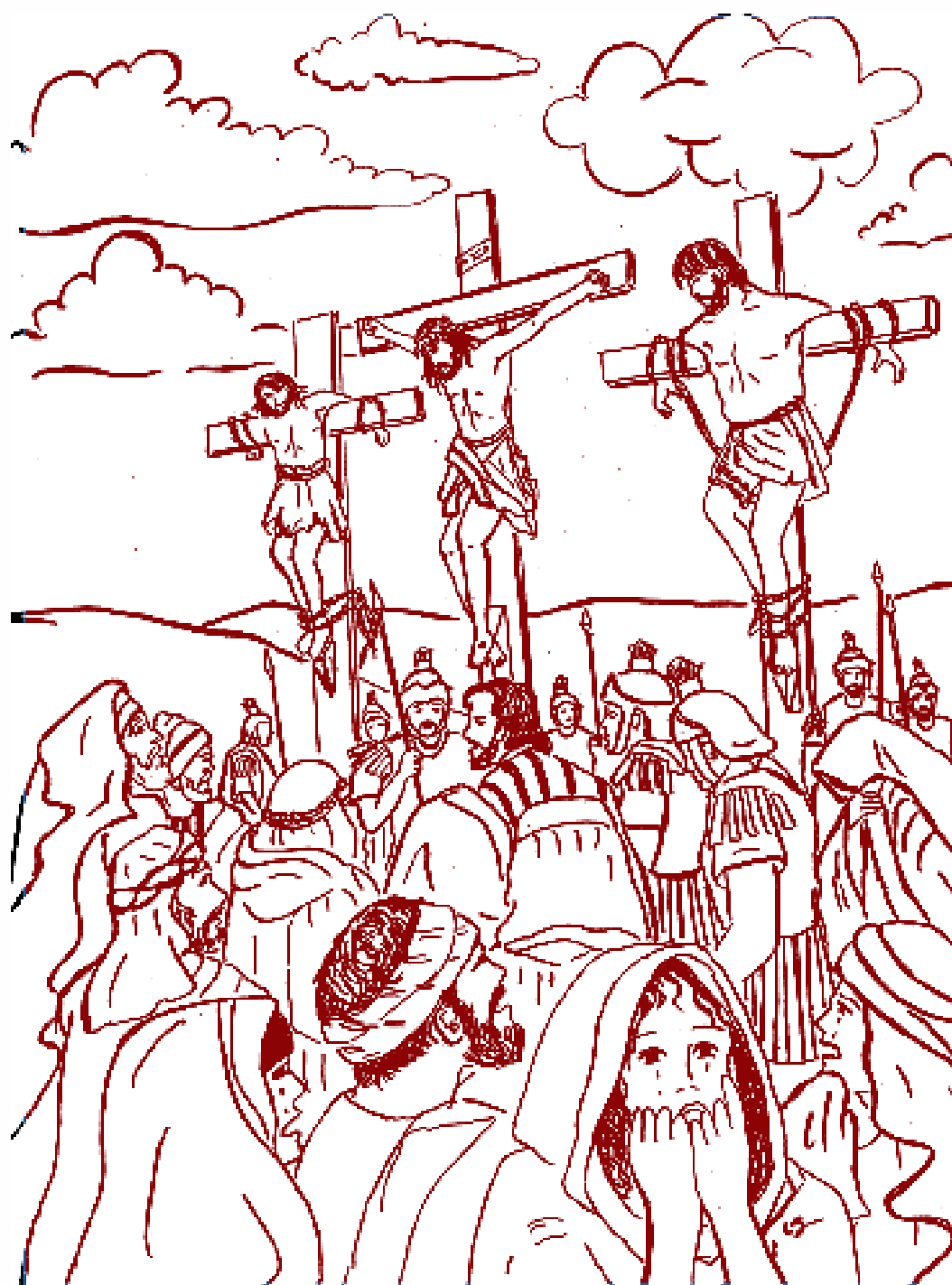
"I have, inscribed you on the palms of my hands. " (Is 49:16), "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. " (Mt. 10:30), "I will give you a new heart, ", (Ezek 36:26), And no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (Jn 10:29) and, "I go to prepare a place for you. " (Jn 14:2)

+ The gifts we are granted are an evidence of God's love for Man.

The gift of eternity, of the resurrection as in the body of His glory and the several gifts of the Holy Spirit... Blessed by God in His love.

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Fourth Sunday



St. George and St. Rueiss

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**MARCH
FIFTH SUNDAY**

**CONTEMPLATION ON GOOD FRIDAY (I):
CHRIST IS THE SACRIFICE OF LOVE AND GIVING**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that the greatest love of God for us was manifested on the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE:

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ....”Gal. 6:14

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) Introduction

On Good Friday, we see the utmost love and giving of God for us. An individual, who cannot give, is a person who does not love. Or whose love is so weak that they prefer themselves over others. This is the lesson that we take on Good Friday. ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whoever believed in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*** (John 3:16)

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(B) The love and giving of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross

- (1) God showed His love to the world in many ways: He gave the world its existence, knowledge, spiritual gifts, and many good things. God kept looking after the world with His care, blessings and love. But He manifested His utmost love when He gave up Himself so that we may have eternal life. ***“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many...”*** (Mark 10:45.)

- (2) The first thing God gave was giving up His glory by taking the form of a servant (Ph. 2:7). Then he gave up His comfort also by going around doing good for everyone and He did not have a place to rest (Matthew 8:20). Ultimately, He gave up His life on the Cross and in this way He expressed His unconditional love. Therefore the picture of the Lord Christ on the Cross became the most beautiful picture to all humanity. It is a picture of love and giving in its deepest sense.

If we do not love and give, then we did not learn how to benefit from the Cross of the Lord.

- (3) ***“Let us not love in word or in tongue, but indeed and in truth.”*** (1 John 3:18) This is the practical love. Do you want to love God?

You ought to love until death ***“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”*** (Gal. 5:24)

- (4) There are obstacles that prevent the person from giving, e.g. love of self, love of rest, or love of honor. True love does not give importance to these things, but only gives because of love for others. For example, Abraham and his love for God let

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him give up everything. Jacob when he loved Rachel gave up a lot for her, and worked twenty years for her (Genesis 31:40 29:20).

- (5) We must train ourselves to give gradually. How can someone give up himself before being able to give up things that are external to him? If someone is not able to give a share of his money or time for God, how can he give his life for God? He will not be able to.

In the martyrdom era the church used to train its children to give up the love for food, money, or possessions. Gradually they went to the extent that they can give up their life and shed their blood for the sake of their faith. If someone cannot give up a little, how can they give up a lot?

The Lord Christ used to give up a lot until He gave up Himself on the Cross by His own free will. The Cross then became the symbol of love, giving and atonement. On the Cross, the Lord forgave the sins of the world. He gave the thief on the right hand the promise to be with Him in paradise. He gave the people who crucified Him, forgiveness of sin only if they truly repented. He gave Saint John the beloved a spiritual mother who was Saint Mary the Virgin and Saint Mary the Virgin a son who was Saint John the beloved.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) When we look at the Cross we have hope because we see the Lord Jesus opening His arms welcoming everyone and ready to forgive our sins.
- (2) Let us look at the Cross a lot and take the lesson of self-denial.
- (3) Let us all apply putting the sign of the Cross on ourselves, several times when we pray during the day, seeking the mercy of God.

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Fifth Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

I WILL SING THE WONDROUS STORY

I will sing the wondrous story
How He left the realms of glory

of the Christ Who died for me
for the cross on Calvary.

Yes, I will sing the wondrous story
Sing it with His saints in glory,

of the Christ Who died for me
gathered by the crystal sea.

I was lost but Jesus found me
Raised me up and gently led me

found the sheep that went astray
back into the narrow way.

Days of darkness still may meet me
But His presence still is with me

sorrow's path I oft may tread
by His guiding hand I'm led

He will keep me till the river
Then He'll bear me safely over

rolls its water at my feet
made by grace for glory meet.

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Sing it with His saints in glory

of the Christ who died for me
gathered by the crystal sea.

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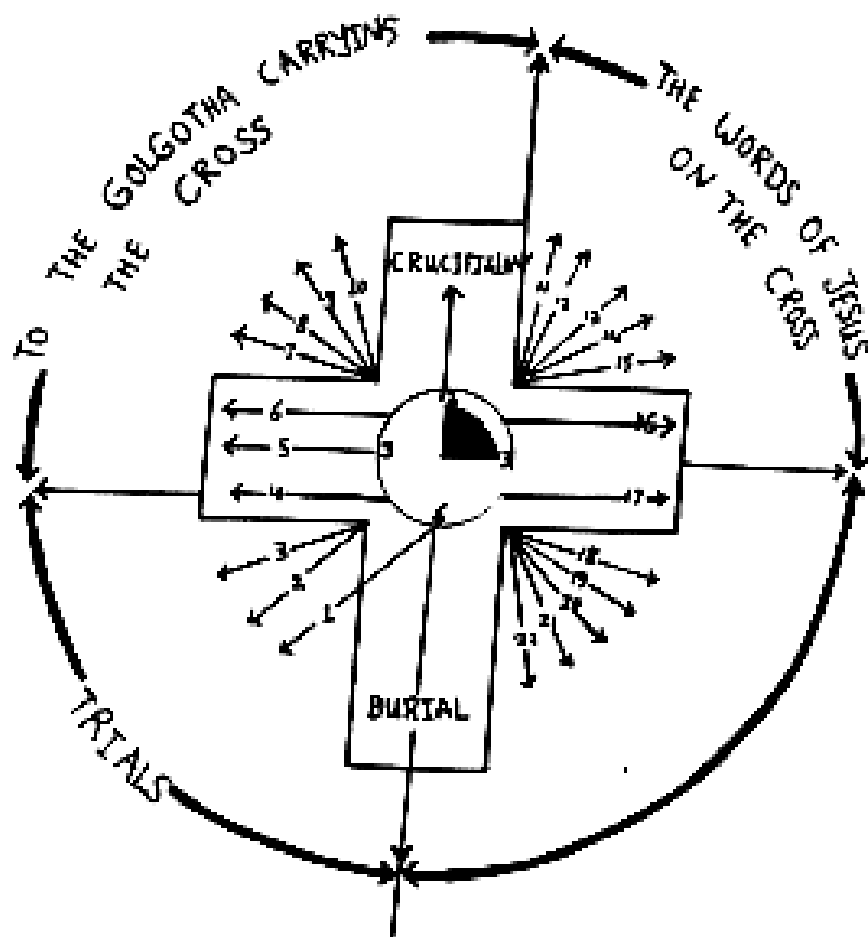
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**APRIL
FIRST SUNDAY**

**CONTEMPLATION ON GOOD FRIDAY (II):
SACRIFICES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT VERSUS THE
LORD'S SACRIFICE**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To illustrate the meaning of the word sacrifice and to compare the sacrifices of the Old Testament with the true sacrifice of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE:

"He shall bruise your head" "Genesis 3:15

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) What is the meaning of the word "sacrifice"?

The Lord promised Adam salvation when He said to Him ***"He shall bruise your head"***. Since then, he taught him to offer sacrifices and to give the same teaching to his descendants. Through this lesson Adam learned the first lesson in atonement.

(B) Scarifies of the Old Testament

When Adam sinned he realized his nakedness, and the leaves on the fig tree were not good enough to cover him. So God made for him a leather jacket

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and covered him with it. This leather jacket would have been obtained from a sacrifice. We know that sins bring with them nakedness and sacrifices bring covering and this was the **first lesson**. There were many animal sacrifices that followed: A pure soul, which did not have a sin, dies on behalf of a soul that sinned. We read about the sacrifice of Abel the righteous (Genesis 4), which he offered from his best and fattest cows. How did Abel know to offer a sacrifice as a burnt offering for God? Most likely he took it by tradition from his father Adam who received the same thing from God. The idea of sacrifices or the doctrine of sacrifices was passed through all generations. We read about the sacrifices of our father Noah (Genesis 8) from among the pure animal. It is the same lesson: a pure soul to die on behalf of a sinned soul. This was the **second lesson**.

Similarly, we read about the sacrifices offered by Job the righteous on behalf of his children (Job 1:5).

From the shedding of the blood of those sacrifices the **third lesson** was ***“For the wages of sin is death”*** (Ro. 6:23) for the sinner. Then Moses came to explain in details the offering and the sacrifices, which were offered to deal with sin. They all were symbols of the sacrifice of the Lord Christ from certain angles. Let us explain a bit more about these sacrifices so that we can realize what the Lord Christ offered us on Good Friday.

We know that the human race sinned and their sins were against God Himself. The result of this sin was twofold: angering God, and destruction of man. Then Christ came to deal with these two matters.

1. Reconcile with God the father and pay the price of sins
2. Save man who had a death sentence on him and die instead of him.

The satisfaction of God’s heart was symbolized by the burnt sacrifice. Therefore it was mentioned in the beginning of all sacrifices in the first chapter of the book of Leviticus. In that chapter, it was mentioned three times ***“and the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burned sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord”***(Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17). It was special for God, no one used to eat from it; neither the priest nor the Levite nor the people who offered it. But the fire was used to consume it

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(which signifies the justice of God). The fire kept burning until the offering turned into ashes. The priest then took the ashes out of the camp, to a pure place (Lev. 6:8-12). This signifies that the justice of God is completed and the reconciliation is done. He took the price of the sin and was pleased from the full submission of the burnt offering up to the end. This was about satisfying God's heart. How about the salvation of man? The sacrifice of sin was the one, which used to carry man's sin and die instead of him so that he may be saved. Similarly, was the sacrifice of unintentional sin. These were two sacrifices; one of them about the sins that are done deliberately, and the other one about the sins that a man could do because of negligence (Lev. 4,5). Both the sacrifices of deliberate sin and unintentional sin was pure and without blemish. The sacrifice was not sinful, but it was carrying sin. It was carrying the sin of the person who is offering it, who puts his hand on it to signify that it will be instead of him and his sins will transfer to the head of this sacrifice to die on his behalf (Lev 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33) And the Holy Bible discusses this sacrifice as it is holy of holies ***"In the place where the burnt offering is killed, the sin offering shall be killed before the Lord. It is most holy.... In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of meeting everyone who touches its flesh must be holy....it is most holy"*** (Lev 6:24-29). The same thing was said about the unintentional sin (Lev.7:1,2,6) it is most holy.

(C) The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ

All the sacrifices in the Old Testament were symbols of the true sacrifice, our Lord Jesus Christ.

On Good Friday, God the Father prepared the altar for the sacrifice. The Lord Christ came forward and was carrying the fuel for the offering. He came forward and went up on the altar by Himself. No one forced Him but He was the one who said ***"No one takes it from Me, But I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My father."*** (John 10:18) The Lord Christ went forward by Himself on the altar of sacrifice and fire was lit on Him from all directions. The sins of many nations and many generations came on Him like a fire to satisfy the divine justice. This fire went on for three hours from the sixth to the ninth hour. The fire was eating out this divine sacrifice. Its smoke went up and the Father smelled it with

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satisfaction. The sacrifice cried saying ***“My God my God why thou hast forsaken me?”*** God did not leave the sacrifice of His only begotten Son not for a single moment nor for a twinkling of an eye. But He left the fire of the divine justice to light up the sacrifice up to the end to satisfy the Father and reconcile with Him for all the sins that have been done intentionally or unintentionally by everyone in every place and at all times. Before the sacrifice became ashes He said to the Father: it’s complete. ***“I have glorified You on the earth, I have finished the work which You have given Me to do”*** (John 17:4). As the Lord Christ submitted His soul into the hands of the Father, the Father took the ashes of the sacrifice according to the Law and put it in a pure place: in paradise first then at the right hand of the Father.

At the same time and at the same location the Lord Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice of sin to carry the sin of all the world on Him as Saint John the Baptist said(John 1:29).

The Holy church stands up in front of the divine offering and the sacrifice of sin, and sings every day of the Passion Week saying, “Christ our saviour came and suffered so that through His suffering we can be saved. As the people were insulting the crucified Lord and thought He was weak, the church continues all through the Passion week singing saying “Thine is the power and the glory and the blessing and the strength Emmanuel our God and our King”

THE IDEA OF THE SACRIFICE

The idea of the sacrifice revolves around an innocent animal that dies on behalf of the sinful man. So when the man comes forth a door of the tabernacle of meeting along with the “animal” sacrifice, he feels the following:

1. That he is a sinner and he is confessing his sin
2. His confession that as a result of his sin, he deserves death because “the wage of sin is death” in addition to “grieving the heart of God”.
3. His acknowledgement of the concept of redemption, which implies that a soul that is without sin, redeems another soul worthy of death because “without shedding of blood, there is no remission”. The blameless soul bears the sin and as a result, it is considered a bearer of the sin in spite of it being without sin. Hence, we find that the person who comes forth with the

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sacrifice, places his hands upon it, and confesses his sins. In doing so, the sins are transferred to the sacrifice.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

It was necessary to have a sacrifice without blemish to carry sins of all the people. It was necessary to get a man without sin. If he died, his death will be on behalf of others for their salvation. It is important for this one who died to be unlimited, to offer unlimited atonement enough for the sins of all people at all times and all places. Among all the creatures, there was no man without sin and who is unlimited. So the Lord was Incarnate for us, carried our sins and then He died on behalf of us.

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First Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

REMEMBER ME O LORD

“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43)

Remember me O Lord,	when You come into Your kingdom.
Remember me O Holy,	when You come into Your kingdom.
Remember me O Master,	when You come into Your kingdom.
Remember me O God,	when You come into Your kingdom.
Remember me O Saviour,	when You come into Your kingdom.

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For the success
of this Sunday
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Second Sunday



APRIL SECOND SUNDAY

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE RITE OF JOYOUS SATURDAY (APOCALYPSE NIGHT)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To learn about the spirituality of the rite of the various portions of Joyous Saturday Service (Apocalypse night).

MEMORY VERSE:

“For You will not leave My soul in Sheol nor will You allow your Holy One to see corruption. “Psalm 16:10

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) The spiritual meaning of joyous Saturday (Apocalypse)

The word “Apocalypse” is a Greek word, which means revelation. In Arabic we call it “abu-ghalamesis”.

On this service we celebrate the first effect of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ and His atonement work on behalf of the generations of the Old Testament. When the Lord was crucified His soul went to Hades and freed the souls of the righteous people of the Old Testament as St. Peter said, ***“by whom also He went and preached to the spirits imprisoned.”*** (1Peter 3:19). Also St. Paul said, ***“Therefore He says: when He ascended on high, He led***

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captivity captive and gave gifts to men. Now this, He ascended – what does it mean? But that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?”(Eph 4:8-9).

The Lord Christ continued in the tomb for three days. His soul went to Hades and got out Adam and those who were caught in prison by the devil. Light shone on those who were sitting in darkness of Hades. Glory is to you O Lord because You went and preached to those in Hades and moved them to paradise.

For this reason, we see only the first effect of the resurrection while the Lord Christ was still in the tomb. The prayers on Joyous Saturday (the Apocalypse Night) is done with half of the tunes in sad tunes and half of the tunes with joyful tunes. Again, the one half of the sad tunes reminds us that the Lord was still in the tomb and the joyful tune reminds us of the joy of the people who moved from Hades to paradise.

(B) Outline of the main parts of the Apocalyptic Service

1. Praises and prayers of the prophets:

The praises start with Psalm 151, which commemorates the work of God with David when He transferred him from poverty to glory. David with the help of the Lord was able to defeat Goliath who represented Satan. As the Lord helped David to overcome Goliath, He can and will help us to overcome all the temptations of the world.

The congregation sings various praises and various prophecies. For example, Deuteronomy, Habakkuk, Jonah, Isaiah, are read. These prophecies are talking about salvation and the joy of the righteous waiting for our Lord to save them from Hades.

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2. **Matins the morning raising of incense:**

There are added hymns in the Matins of Joyous Saturday to the regular Matins. In these hymns and prayers we glorify the Lord Jesus and say, "Holy Immortal who will never die, have mercy on us."

3. **Prayers of the Third and Sixth hours:**

In addition to the psalms of the third and sixth hour there are prophecies from the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah, that talk about the defeat of Satan and the victory of the sons and daughters of God.

4. **Reading of the Book of Revelations (Apocalypse):**

This is a unique opportunity in the church in which the whole book of Revelation is read in the church. The Book of Revelation talks about the slaughtered resurrected Lamb, the Heavenly Power, the paradise, the second coming of Christ and the Kingdom of heaven. The priest gets a dish with oil in it and he lights up seven candles to represent the seven churches, which were mentioned in the book of Revelation. ***"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen and I have the key of Hades and of death"*** (Rev. 1:18).

At the end of reading of all the book of revelation, which has to be read very accurately, without adding a word or deleting a word, the priest anoints with this joyful oil all the congregation members attending.

5. **Prayer of the Ninth hour:**

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In this prayer we pray the Psalms of the ninth hour and we listen to prophecies and gospels readings. These readings discuss the Divinity of Christ, and His ability to overcome death.

6. The Liturgy of Joyous Saturday:

The hymn “Halleluiah this is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it” is not chanted because the angel has not announced the resurrection of the Lord from the tomb yet. The Pauline reading as well as the gospel reading is done half with the sad tune and half with the joyful tune as explained above.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Plan to attend the prayers of Joyous Saturday in the church and enjoy all these praises, prophecies and prayers.
- (2) The reading of the book of Revelation reminds us of heaven. The most important thing in our life is our place in heaven.
- (3) After the mass on Joyous Saturday the people of the congregation can start shaking hands again, since they were stopped from doing this from the evening of Wednesday of the Paschal week to commemorate the betrayal of Judas Iscariot (remember: it was announced during church not to shake hands with each other to acknowledge the betrayal of the Lord by Judas Iscariot, and in differ ourselves from it).

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Second Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

REMEMBER ME O LORD

“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43)

Remember me O Lord,	when You come into Your kingdom.
Remember me O Holy,	when You come into Your kingdom.
Remember me O Master,	when You come into Your kingdom.
Remember me O God,	when You come into Your kingdom.
Remember me O Saviour,	when You come into Your kingdom.

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April

Third Sunday



**APRIL
THIRD SUNDAY**

THE GLORIFIED BODY (I)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #1 in a series of two lessons about the glorified Body of the Lord Jesus after He resurrected from the dead. In Christianity we have the promise from the Lord to raise us up with glorious bodies similar to His.

MEMORY VERSE:

“The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption”
1Cor. 15:42

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) Question:

What kind of body did the Lord Christ resurrect with? Did He rise with an ordinary body like ours or with a glorified body? If He rose with a glorified body, what would be the meaning of ***“He ate in the presence of His disciples”*** (Luke 24:43)? What is the meaning of ***“They touched His flesh and His bones”*** (Luke 24:39)?

Was the glorified body with which the Lord rose, the same body He took from the Virgin?

Why don't we say that He was born with a glorified body?



(B) Answer

(1) Undoubtedly, the body of the resurrection, in general, is a glorified body.

St. Paul explained this glory saying, ***“So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”*** (1Cor. 15:42-44).

(2) If we shall be raised with a glorified body, how much more was Christ’s resurrection?

The clearest rule that we will be raised in the likeness of His glorious resurrection is the saying of St. Paul in his epistle to the Philippians ***“Jesus will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body”*** (Phil 3:21).

(3) How was it said that Christ has eaten after His resurrection and He had flesh and bones?

This matter is very clear in the Bible according to St. Luke. He wrote about Christ’s appearance to His disciples after the resurrection ***“They were startled and frightened thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hand and my feet. It is I Myself! Touch Me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have. When He said this, He showed them His hands and feet.”*** (Luke 24:37-40)

In the same chapter and in the same occasion He took a piece of broiled fish and ate it in their presence (Luke 24:41-43). **How can we explain that matter?**

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Third Sunday

We explain that matter by the following:

1. **He wished to prove to them the resurrection of His body... while they did not understand the meaning of the spiritual body.**

Of course, without the proofs given to them such as eating and touching His flesh and bones, they would have thought Him a ghost, without a body. In their understanding it meant that the body had not risen.

2. **The important matter in the resurrection is the rising of the body.**

As the disciples thought they had seen a ghost, it meant that the idea of the rising of the body was far from their minds. It is because the spirit is, by nature, a living thing which does not die. Only the body dies when it is separated from the spirit. It changes into dust, but the spirit remains alive in the waiting place. Thus, the resurrection is the rising of the body, which will unite with the spirit once more.

So, it was necessary to convince them of this, so that they convince others.

The spirit alone does not represent a complete human nature. It was necessary to prove that the body has risen. So He allowed Thomas, His disciple, and Mary Magdalene to touch His body. All this was to prove the rising of the body.

3. **This spiritual glorified body was that which went up to heaven.**

The act of ascension may not agree with the law of earthly gravity because it is heavier than air, but He went up, in glory

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with a spiritual body. With the same glory He sat at the right hand of God. The same glorified body will come back (Matt. 25:37), (Luke 9:26).

4. **This glorified body is that body with which He appeared to Saul, from Tarsus, on His way to Damascus.** (Acts 9:3-5).
5. **This glorified body is the same body with which He was born of the Virgin.**

The body with which He was born was not as glorious as that of the resurrection because in His birth, ***“He made Himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant.”*** (Phil. 2:7). The act of making Himself nothing ended in the glory of the resurrection and ascension.

6. **The body of the resurrection was the same body of the birth; but in a case of transfiguration.**

He gave us an example of it on the mountain of transfiguration (Mark 9:2,3).

The resurrection of the Lord Christ was with the same body of birth but in glory or in a case of transfiguration. Which suggest the body in a glorified nature, and then to a spiritual one. The same steps will happen to us.

7. **Some may ask: did Christ’s body take His glorified nature immediately after the resurrection or after the ascension?**

We answer saying, His body took that nature during the resurrection itself. The cases with which He proved His human nature were nothing but exceptional cases in order that the disciples might believe that His body had risen and with confidence spread the faith. (1 John 1:1), (Acts 10:41). In cases

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other than these cases the glorified body of the resurrection does not drink or eat any material thing. It needs nothing. It does not feel hungry or thirsty. In glory it does not feel tired. It does not suffer pain. It does not become subject to death.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) There are various types of bodies. An important body is the glorified body with which we will rise from the dead. If we had a righteous life on earth, united with the Lord Christ then we will have a glorified body similar to that of the Lord (with which He resurrected) when we meet with Him in His second coming.
- (2) The resurrection is the glory of Christianity because it lifted up our future to the level of enjoying happy eternal life with God.

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SONGS 🎵

VERY EARLY SUNDAY MORNING

“Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb.”(Mk 16:2)

Very early Sunday morning
Our Lord arose declaring

while the guards were still asleep
His promise He did keep

REFRAIN

Resurrection is my song
Resurrection made me strong

resurrection gave me life
Jesus my Lord is alive

Jesus is risen in glory
And the angel told the story

heaven and earth sang and praised
He is risen as He said

Mary Magdalene was looking
Jesus Himself was telling

in the garden for her Lord
her to go and spread the word

All the disciples were praying
When Mary came to them saying

they were truly in great fear
He is risen, He is not here

While they were in the room
My peace I give to you

Jesus Christ Himself appeared
and My peace with you I leave

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NOTES

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APRIL FOURTH SUNDAY

THE GLORIFIED BODY (II)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson # 2 in a series of two lessons about the glorious Body with which the Lord Christ rose from the dead. In this lesson we learn that His body took the glorified nature during the resurrection itself.

MEMORY VERSE:

***"When the doors were shut... Jesus came and stood in the midst" John
20:19***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Please review the previous lesson. Continue to answer all questions related to the glorified Body with which the Lord Christ rose from the dead and the glorified bodies with which we will rise.

8. **Entering the locked door and coming out of the closed places are clear proofs of the glory of the body of the resurrection.**

In the upper room with the doors locked he came in and stood among the disciples. He did so many times (John 20:19, 26). In His resurrection, He went out of the tomb with the entrance sealed. It was after the resurrection when the angel came and rolled the big

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11. **The glory of His nature before the redemption was an impeccable one.**

His birth, the period of St. Mary's pregnancy, the time He spent on earth were spiritual glories done by His good will but His body was, in everything like ours except for sin. He made Himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant.

12. **His unity with Divinity is considered one of His glories.**

This unity lessened nothing of His human nature. It did not nullify the weaknesses of the body as hunger, thirst, weariness and death. Otherwise redemption would have lost its nature and its value. His pains were true, so was His redemption. He made Himself nothing in order that He, in His resurrection, might bestow glory on us.

He made Himself nothing before glory, before the crucifixion, and said to God *"Father glorify your Son, that Your Son may glorify You."* *"And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began."* (John 17:1,5)

It was said about the resurrection "Only after Jesus was glorified...." (John 12:16).

13. **The disciples could not bear seeing His glory.**

Thus, when John the beloved one saw some of God's glory in the revelation *"Fell at His feet as though dead."* Why? *"Because His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance and His eyes were like blazing fire"* (Rev. 1:17, 16, 14).

14. **For these reasons the Lord advanced gradually with His disciples when He showed them the glory of His resurrection.**

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Fourth Sunday

He did so with Mary Magdalene who at first thought Him the gardener. Then at last, He revealed Himself to her (Jn. 20:14, 16).

He did the same thing with the two disciples of Emmaus with whom He walked along but they were kept from recognizing Him (Luke 24:16).

With the disciples, He used the same style of graduation in order they might bear these matters because seeing Him after the resurrection with His glorified body was not so easy.

15. **Does this mean that we shall not see Him in His glory? If we shall see Him: how and when?**

Our human nature will be changed when we rise from the dead. We shall be like His glorious body (Phil. 3:21). Then we shall see Him and as the apostle says *“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror, then we shall see face to face”* (1 Cor. 13:12).

What is the meaning of the phrase “face to face”? How will that be accomplished?

My brothers, now it is better for me to keep silent for this is easier and better by far.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Our Lord Jesus was born with a body like ours liable to suffering and death. His Divinity never parted from His humanity for a single moment nor the twinkling of an eye.
- (2) His human nature, which was similar to ours except sin, could accomplish the act of redemption, and then it was glorified in the resurrection.

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Coptic Orthodox Church



SONGS 🎵

VERY EARLY SUNDAY MORNING

“Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb.” (Mk 16:2)

Very early Sunday morning
Our Lord arose declaring

while the guards were still asleep
His promise He did keep

REFRAIN

Resurrection is my song
Resurrection made me strong

resurrection gave me life
Jesus my Lord is alive

Jesus is risen in glory
And the angel told the story

heaven and earth sang and praised
He is risen as He said

Mary Magdalene was looking
Jesus Himself was telling

in the garden for her Lord
her to go and spread the word

All the disciples were praying
When Mary came to them saying

they were truly in great fear
He is risen, He is not here

While they were in the room
My peace I give to you

Jesus Christ Himself appeared
and My peace with you I leave

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Coptic Orthodox Church



ST. ATHANASIUS



ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

MAY

First Sunday



**MAY
FIRST SUNDAY**

**ST. ATHANASIUS THE APOSTOLIC (I): HIS LIFE AND
BACKGROUND**

Please read the attached articles entitled “Saint Athanasius the Apostolic”, “Standing Firm”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson # 1 in a series of 2 lessons about St. Athanasius. In this lesson we learn about his life and background. One thing that was clear in his life was that he stood firm against the wrong teachings and preserved the Christian faith.

MEMORY STATEMENT:

**“The world is against you” they said to St. Athanasius and he replied
“and I am against the world”.**

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

1. You may select to read the attached material in the class and explain as you go along.
2. St. Athanasius was born in Alexandria from Egyptian Pagan parents at about 296 A.D. He was educated in the famous

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Coptic Orthodox Church



Catechetical School of Alexandria. He learned Christianity in its deepest spiritual form. He was chosen by Pope Alexandros, as to be deacon and secretary.

3. He went to the desert and was a disciple of St. Anthony the Great.

4. He was given the name “Apostolic” because of his very significant contribution to preserve the faith. How did he do this? He stood very firm.

✱ Arius, an Egyptian priest declared that Jesus is secondary in place to God the Father. He defied all the Biblical and Apostolic teachings of the Church. The Patriarch Alexandros tried to stop him, but it was in vain. Although, the Pope excommunicated him, Arius continued to spread his false faith. A need for a council to settle the matter was urgent. In the year 325A.D., at the time of Emperor Constantine, 318 Bishops from all over the world convened. St. Athanasius who was only a deacon, convinced 314 Bishops. They stated that the Son is of the same substance as the Father “Homeiousios”.

5. St. Athanasius was chosen as the 20th Pope of Alexandria after the departure of Pope Alexandros. (Note: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III is the 117th Pope of Alexandria).

6. He is one of the Heroes of faith, a great theologian and writer. Among his famous books:

- ✱ The Incarnation of the Word.
- ✱ Against the Pagans (Heathen)
- ✱ The Life of St. Anthony.
- ✱ Four Books against Arius.
- ✱ The Faith.

MAY

First Sunday

- * Letters on the Holy Spirit.
- * Many Articles about Nicea Council and the Creed.
- * Many Paschal letters.

7. On May 15th of every year, our Church celebrates the feast of the departure of St. Athanasius.
8. He was exiled five times from his views and each time he spared no effort to accomplish a more significant mission. He wrote significant articles, which are the subject of theological studies until now. He chose to be exiled rather than being soft in the faith. He stood very firm.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Our background is very important in our lives. St. Athanasius was brought up in love of the Lord Jesus Christ and he grew this way. We must pay attention to these details and learn and fill our hearts with the love of the Lord.
2. St. Athanasius stood very firm against the Arians and defeated them. We also must stand very firm in defending our faith and values against all the wrong ideas and heresies of the world.

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SONGS 🎵

SAINT ATHANASIUS THE APOSTOLIC

The Defender of the Faith,
The great Saint Athanasius,
Who rescued the whole Church
From the heresy of Arius.

When he was yet a child,
Playing on the beach,
He solemnly preformed
A sacrament of the church.

But he was not aware,
That the Pope, Saint Alexander,
From his palace afar
Was watching with wonder.

The Pope then decided
To adopt him as a son,
And that was the start
Of the course he had to run.

He studied the scriptures
And the Gospels, word by word,
Till he found the mystery of
The divinity of the Lord.

When Arius began to den
The divinity of the Son,
He knew that he was destined
For a war that has to be won.

Against the heretics
He began to preach and write,
Proclaiming the truth of God.
With all courage and might.

At the Council of Nicea,
The Faith he did uphold,
Defending the Trinity,
And the doctrines taught of old.

He fought for the Faith,
By word and by deed.
And when the war was won,
He bequeathed to us the Creed.

When the Pope's time had come
That before Christ he should stand,
He called Saint Athanasius
And laid upon him the hand.

Pope Athanasius endured,
For forty years and some,
Defending all his flock
From whatever may come.

Time after time,
To exile he went,
Carrying the Cross, with Him
Whom the Father sent.

Rejoice, Saint Athanasius
In the heavenly Paradise.
O great one among the saints,
And the prudent and the wise.

O beloved of the Son of God,
Who did uphold His cause,
The angles proclaim and say,
Axios! Axios! Axios!

O friend of Saint Anthony
Who taught us about his way;
Remember us before the Lord
On that fearful day.

From now till eternity,
All generations shall pray,
For Saint Athanasius' sake,
Lord hear us when we say:

MAY

First Sunday

FIRMNESS

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

How easy it is for one to start a spiritual life and live with God for days or weeks then relapses and regresses backwards losing everything... !

It is important then for the one who starts, to continue, settle and become firm.

Therefore, the Lord said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. " (John 15:4).

He explained to us the importance of the branch's firmness in the vine in order to bear fruit. He praised His saintly disciples not only because they stood by His side during trials, but as He said, *"But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. " (Luke 22.28).* So He praised their firmness.

In the parable of the sower the Lord tells us about those who were not firm,"... and because they had no root, they withered away... and the thorns sprang up and choked them. " (Matt 13:6)

Therefore, St. Paul the apostle does not talk only about the importance of faith but more about being firm in faith.

He says, *"...on those who fell, severity; but towards you goodness if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. " (Rom. 11:22).*

He also says to the Colossians, *"...to present you holy... if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast. " (Col. 1:22-23).* And he blames the Galatians who, *"having begun in the spirit". but did not continue and, "...are now being made perfect by the flesh. " (Gal. 3:3).*

Many are those whom the Apostle tearfully mentioned, because they did not continue in firmness.

Some started serving actively, but did not continue... !

Others loved the idea of consecration, but did not abide!

And others started by loving God, then left their first love!



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How grim it is for one to live the life of the tabernacle and altar with Abraham, then ends up in Sodom.

Or starts as one of the twelve, then betrays Jesus.

Or starts his life as a mighty victorious and a Nazirite to God and the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him then ends up shaving his hair and pulling the grinder... !

Abiding in the spirit is a test for our will in the midst of tribulations. Therefore, the Bible says, *"Remember those... whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. "* (Heb. 13:7). They were steadfast and were made perfect in faith.



MAY

First Sunday

SAINT ATHANASIUS THE APOSTOLIC (I) (296 -373)

On the 15th day of May, the Coptic Church celebrates the feast of St. Athanasius the Apostolic, a personality of immortal influence in the history of the Eastern and Western Churches.

Saint Athanasius was born in Alexandria from Egyptian Pagan parents about 296 A.D. Like most of the well-educated of his time, he studied and mastered the Greek language. His profound knowledge of language and since most of his writings were in Greek misled some historians to the error of considering him among the Greek Fathers of the Church. However, St. Athanasius' well-known treatise "On Celibacy" which was written in eloquent Coptic language proves his pure Egyptian descent.

In this brief article, we will consider the following:

- ✝ The era in which St. Athanasius lived.
- ✝ St. Athanasius' Christology and Arianism.
- ✝ St. Athanasius in Exile.

✝The Era

At the time of St. Athanasius, the Church of Alexandria was flourishing with its theological and philosophical studies and Alexandria was the sea of Christian Learning throughout the whole world. The famous Catechetical School of Alexandria furnished its candidates with higher branches of religious and secular learning. It was an international institution that herded students from all over the known world.

Among the graduates of that school were those illustrious names such as Pantaenus, Clement of Alexandria, Origin, etc. these men laid the

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Christian doctrines on Philosophical bases.

In that setting, St. Athanasius studied Christianity, accepted it, and was chosen by Patriarch Alexandros as his deacon and secretary.

✠ **St. Athanasius' Christology and Aryanism**

When St. Athanasius was in his twenties, he was faced by the progress of the universal Arian controversy. Arius (250-336), an Egyptian priest of St. Mark's Church in Alexandria, relegated Christ to a secondary place to God the Father "homeiousios". He set his Church ablaze with his unorthodox teachings. The Patriarch, Alexandros, in his attempt to put a stop to that heresy, called a local council of some hundred bishops at Alexandria and condemned Arius, suspended, and excommunicated him.

Arius, free from being tied to one Church, he began spreading his Christological teachings which he put in hymns to be sung in folkloric tunes.

Very soon the situation became so grave that an Ecumenical Council was summoned at Nicea by Emperor Constantine in 325 A.D. That was the first time when 318 bishops, representing the Western, Eastern, Byzantine and African Churches met together to discuss and settle all outstanding dogmatic and doctrinal differences. The Council produced a creed that stood the test of time and is still in use in almost all Christian Churches.

St. Athanasius, who was still a young deacon, was responsible for the formation of the text of that creed which stated clearly that the Son is of the same substance of the Father "homeiousios". 314 bishops signed the Creed; the Council condemned and excommunicated Arius and the four bishops who refused to sign the Creed.

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First Sunday

✠ **St. Athanasius in Exile**

In 328 A.D., Saint Athanasius succeeded Patriarch Alexandros on the See of St. Mark as the 20th Patriarch after St. Mark. The heat was so strong between Aryanism and Christian Orthodoxy, St. Athanasius had to sustain the fighting. Five times he was exiled from his seat and each time he spared no effort to accomplish a most significant mission.

St. Athanasius' first exile was in Trier (336-337) where he wrote most of his famous treatises that gave theologians and scholars working material to this date.

The second one (339-346) was in Rome where he resided at the curia of Julius I and introduced Coptic monasticism to the Roman Church.

The third and fourth exiles (356-361 & 362-363) were spent in the Eastern and Western deserts of Egypt. There, St. Athanasius visited the Fathers of the deserts and gained their support against Aryanism.

The fifth exile (365-366) served to strengthen the faith of the Orthodox Alexandrine population and to unify them in their angry demand of the Emperor to uproot Aryanism. The Emperor had to return St. Athanasius back to his See so that peace could be restored again in his Empire.

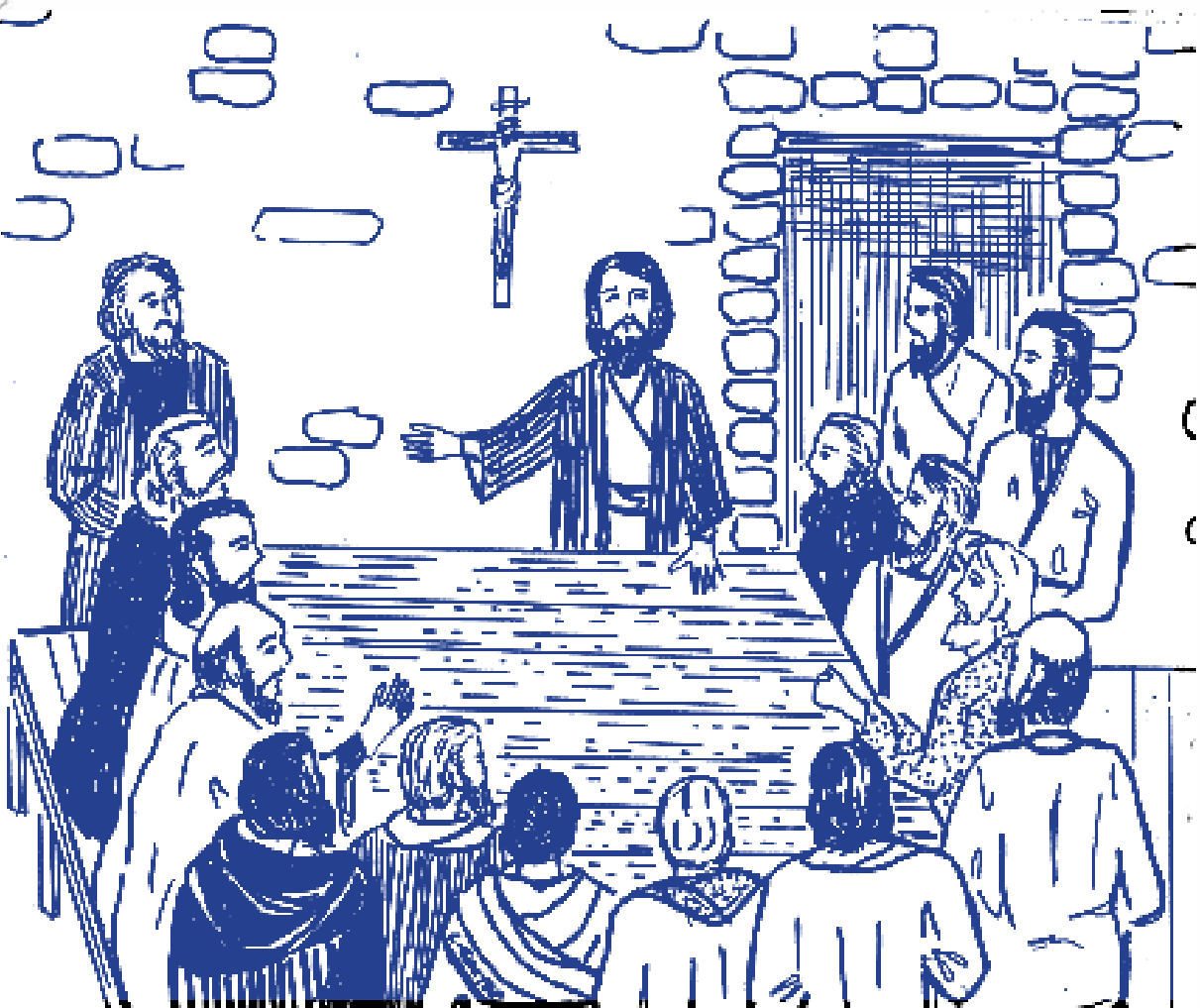
Until his death, St. Athanasius was the image of a militant churchman who carried the banner of Christian Orthodoxy in the midst of a hostile world.

NOTES

[illegible]

MAY

First Sunday



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**MAY
SECOND SUNDAY**

**SAINT ATHANASIUS THE APOSTOLIC (II):
INTRODUCTION TO HIS THEOLOGY**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #2 in a series of 2 lessons about St. Athanasius. In this lesson we will have a very simple introduction about his theological background.

MEMORY VERSE:

“For indeed, Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast” 1Cor. 5:7-8

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Please start by reviewing the previous lesson about the life of St. Athanasius and his background.

(A) General

The Coptic Orthodox Church has the leadership over all the churches in the world as far as its spirituality is concerned:

- ✙ The Gospel according to St. Mark, who preached Christianity in Egypt was the first Gospel written on paper.

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Second Sunday

- ✚ In Alexandria, the best theologians in the world led the first Catechetical school for over 5 centuries.
- ✚ In Egypt's deserts in the third century, the first group of Monks was formed. Through it, all other countries learned monasticism.
- ✚ The first Ecumenical Council was formed in the year 325A.D., to establish a written Creed for the Faith. It was Egypt's delegation that led the world, with St. Athanasius as its main hero.

(B) An Introduction to St. Athanasius' Theological Background

✚ General Principle:

- * His writings carried the principle of defending the faith.
- * His writings are simple without decoration
- * His writings are factual and natural
- * He put one principle in his writing; to expect the truth and only the plain truth.
- * He wrote the majority of his writings in Greek, with some Latin words.

✚ The educational aspects of his theology:

- * Athanasius inherited the theology from the School of Alexandria, taking its theme in illustration and analysis.
- * He did not always believe the philosophies of the school of Alexandria, but would always go back to the originality or the basics of faith as given by the Holy Bible, the Holy Tradition and the Apostolic teachings.
- * His love for Christ was second to none; all his writings and teachings were based upon the love of Christ. The salvation was the focus of everything working it, and it concentrated on

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the personality of our Lord Jesus Christ. His most favored verse that he repeatedly mentioned in many of his articles was ***“For indeed, Christ our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore Let us keep the feast.”***(1Cor. 5:7-8). Please discuss this verse with the students in the class. The reason of our joy is that the Lord Christ is our “Passover” from a dark life of slavery of sin to a new life of the glory of the children of God.

- * He changed the view of the philosophers about the LOGOS (i.e. the Word of God) from “LOGOS” philosophy to “LOGOS” of St. John’s Gospel and from “Philosopher’s God” to “God manifested in Jesus Christ.”

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Our Coptic Orthodox Church’s faith is based on the original Apostolic teaching without confusion or alteration. So, let us adhere to our precious church.
2. One major factor for the success of St. Athanasius was that he was a very spiritual man (i.e. in prayers, fasting etc.), in addition to being a theologian and researcher. We also must maintain a good spiritual life as the only basis to build a successful life upon.

MAY

Second Sunday

SONGS 🎵

SAINT ATHANASIUS THE APOSTOLIC

The Defender of the Faith,
The great Saint Athanasius,
Who rescued the whole Church
From the heresy of Arius.

When he was yet a child,
Playing on the beach,
He solemnly preformed
A sacrament of the church.

But he was not aware,
That the Pope, Saint Alexander,
From his palace afar
Was watching with wonder.

The Pope then decided
To adopt him as a son,
And that was the start
Of the course he had to run.

He studied the scriptures
And the Gospels, word by word,
Till he found the mystery of
The divinity of the Lord.

When Arius began to den
The divinity of the Son,
He knew that he was destined
For a war that has to be won.

Against the heretics
He began to preach and write,
Proclaiming the truth of God.
With all courage and might.

At the Council of Nicea,
The Faith he did uphold,
Defending the Trinity,
And the doctrines taught of old.

He fought for the Faith,
By word and by deed.
And when the war was won,
He bequeathed to us the Creed.

When the Pope's time had come
That before Christ he should stand,
He called Saint Athanasius
And laid upon him the hand.

Pope Athanasius endured,
For forty years and some,
Defending all his flock
From whatever may come.

Time after time,
To exile he went,
Carrying the Cross, with Him
Whom the Father sent.

Rejoice, Saint Athanasius
In the heavenly Paradise.
O great one among the saints,
And the prudent and the wise.

O beloved of the Son of God,
Who did uphold His cause,
The angles proclaim and say,
Axios! Axios! Axios!

O friend of Saint Anthony
Who taught us about his way;
Remember us before the Lord
On that fearful day.

From now till eternity,
All generations shall pray,
For Saint Athanasius' sake,
Lord hear us when we say:

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MAY

Third Sunday



MAY THIRD SUNDAY

ASCENSION: THE ROAD TO HEAVEN VERSUS THE ROAD TO EARTH

Please read (Luke 24:50-53), (John 16:25-28), (Luke 1:1-11), and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show the new powers that the Lord Jesus gave us when He ascended to heaven; the heavenly life that we get while we are still on earth and our entrance to eternal life.

MEMORY VERSE:

“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again I leave the world and go to the Father. “John 16:28

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) Introduction

Please review with the students what they know about the Ascension feast. Read with them a portion from the Holy Bible as referenced here above.



(B) **Meaning of the feasts in the Old and the New Testament**

In the Old Testament

Feasts in the Old Testament were joyful occasions to remind the people about the works of God with them in the past and to strengthen the relationship between God and the people. For example, the Passover feast reminds the people of their victorious exodus from the slavery of Egypt with the help of God. Then the relationship between God and His people was strengthened. But this feast was also a symbol of our victory over Satan through the blood of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Similarly, the rest of the feasts in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament

In the New Testament, feasts are not only joyful occasions to celebrate things that happened in the past, but to discover and live through every new power and every new gift that the Lord has given to us in everything. Therefore, in every feast of the Lord Christ we celebrate the new gifts that have been added in our lives through the events of that feast. For example, when we celebrate Easter we are rejoicing because the Lord defeated death and with His resurrection we also can defeat death and enjoy a new life.

(C) **Events of the Ascension**

- ✝ **The location** was Bethany where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. It was also a place away from the busy and crowded atmosphere in the city. This became a condition of enjoying the ascension by taking time out from the busy and crowded world into a life of solitude.
- ✝ **The time** was forty days after of the resurrection of the Lord through which He showed Himself alive to His Disciples and

MAY

Third Sunday

His followers. His Disciples and His followers saw His resurrection and His ascension as new dimensions of life that the Lord has brought in, which they had never seen before. Therefore, the resurrection and the ascension became the cornerstone of their preaching because these are the new things that the people had never heard about before. All what the people used to hear were two things: an individual is born and an individual die. But for someone to rise from the dead and ascend to heaven was different because these are the new things that the Lord Christ has brought to our life.

(D) The road to heaven versus the road to earth

We all know that after Adam and Eve sinned they were exiled from paradise. Since then every time when an individual died his soul went to Hades and we can call this the road of earth. When David the Prophet and King was about to die he called his son Solomon to give him the responsibility of the kingdom. "And he charged Solomon his son saying: **"I go the way of all the earth....."** (1 Kings 2:1-2). The way of the earth was the way of all people before the coming of the Lord Christ and the salvation that He offered in the New Testament. In the New Testament the Lord said ***"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."*** (John 14:2). The Lord Christ opened the door of paradise for us again. When the thief at the right hand side on the cross asked the Lord ***"Remember Me when I come to thy kingdom."*** The Lord answered, "today you will be with me in paradise". The Lord Jesus gave us an excellent future in heaven. It's not like what David said, ***"I go the way of all the earth"***, but it is now like what the Lord Jesus said ***"today you will be with Me in paradise."***

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Our Coptic Orthodox Church has a great number of saints and martyrs who lived a heavenly life while they were still on earth. Take for example, St. Abraam the bishop who loved the poor and used to eat with them in full humbleness. He sold everything and gave all his belongings to the poor people. In return, God gave him peace on earth, never let him be in need of anything and gave him power to perform many miracles. There are many other Saints. (The teacher may ask the students to give names of saints and describe their experience with the life of those saints).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) During every feast of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ we must try to discover the powers and the gifts that the Lord has given to us in that feast. We must also ask ourselves if we are truly enjoying those gifts and powers in our daily lives.
- (2) We must taste how sweet it is to live with God here on earth away from lies, lusts, love of materialistic things, envy, and hate. Then we will realize that we can live heaven on earth.
- (3) Christians who lead a true life with God here on earth will enjoy being with Him in heaven in the place out of which sorrow and groaning have fled away.

MAY

Third Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

ASCENSION

The Lord ascended up on high!
The Lord has triumphed gloriously!
The grave and Hell are captive led,

CHRIST ASCENDED TO HEAVEN!

The heavens, with joy, receive their Lord –
By saints, by angel hosts adored,
O earth, adore your Glorious king,
Christ ascended to heaven!

You have gone before us, Lord
To prepare for us our heavenly abode,
That we may be where You are now,
Christ ascended to heaven!

For You sat at the Father's right hand,
Our hope, our love may always be.
Dwell in us that we may, too
Dwell forever more in You.

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MAY

Fourth Sunday



**MAY
FOURTH SUNDAY**

THE HOLY SPIRIT (I): UNITY OF THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE FATHER

Please read the attached article entitled “The Unity of the Son and the Holy Spirit with the Father” extracted from the writings of St. Basil the Great. Read the attachment in the class with the youth and explain, and give the lesson with the emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson # 1 in a series of 7 lessons about the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we learn that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, are One in the Holy Trinity entities of God.

MEMORY VERSE:

***“And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said unto them,
‘Receive the Holy Spirit’.” John 20:22***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

† **Introduction:**

The Holy Trinity is existing and everlasting and form God’s unity. The Father has never been separate from the Son and the Son has never

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been separate from the Holy Spirit. He is united, immortal, unchanged and unlimited.

Each Entity has His own identity. The three are identifiable without any confusion regarding their unity.

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. St. John the Baptist saw Him descending from the Father upon the Son and He is with the Father and the Son.

✠ The Holy Spirit in our Coptic Orthodox Creed:

- * “Truly we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, Giver of life, who precedes forth from the Father, we worship Him and glorify Him with the Father and the Son who Has spoken through the prophets.”
- * We must realize here that every word mentioned about the Holy Spirit in our creed is founded clearly in the Holy Bible, accepted by our Holy traditions (i.e. the verbal teachings) and by the teachings and writings of our great Fathers and Saints of the Church.
- * The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He proceeds from the Father to the people who believed in the salvation that the Lord Jesus Christ has completed on the Cross. Therefore, the descent of the Holy Spirit was conditional upon the completion of the Salvation by the Lord Jesus. As the Lord Jesus said ***“He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water, But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:38:39)***

✠ The Holy Spirit in the Holy Bible:

- * God is Spirit. St. Peter said, ***“Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit... You have not lied to men but to God”(Acts 5:3-4)***

MAY

Fourth Sunday

- * The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, *“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”* (John 15:26)
- * The Holy Spirit is God’s light, *“For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light”* (Ps. 36:9).
- * The Holy Spirit is our comforter, *“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.”* (John 14:16)

✠ The Unity of the Son and the Holy Spirit with the Father

- * God the Father anointed His Son with the Holy Spirit:
“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” (Acts 10:38) and *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me..”* (Is. 61:1).
- * The Holy Spirit was with Jesus in all His actions before and after resurrection: *“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.”* (Matthew 4:1) & *“And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’* (John 20:22).
- * The Holy Spirit is one in Jesus Christ: *Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His*” (Romans 8:9).

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What do we learn from this lesson?

1. The most precious gift given to everyone as Christians is the Holy Spirit Who is the Spirit of God, so that we can truly be God's children.
2. As children of God we have privileges and obligations as well.

MAY

Fourth Sunday

SONGS 🎵

LET US ALL PRAISE THE LORD

Let us all praise the
Lord for He is in glory
Glorified

REFRAIN

He ascended into heaven
And send us the Paraclete
The Spirit of truth, the
Comforter Amen. Alleluia

He made the two into one
Which is heaven and earth

O come all ye nations, let
Us worship Jesus Christ

This is God our Saviour
And Lord of every one

Three in one and one in
Three; the Father the
Son and the Holy Spirit
The spirit of truth the
Comforter. Amen Alleluia

Maren hos e-epchoise: Je
Khen ou –o –oo ghar afetchi o-oo

Afshenaf e-epshoi enifio –wee
wee af oo- orpe nan empi
parakliton piepnevma ente
timethemi: Amen . Alleluia

pentaf er piesnav en owai
ete fai pe etfe nem epkahi

Amoini nilaos tiro: entenoo-
osht en Isos piekhrastos

Fai pe efnooti pensotir : owoh
epchoise ensarex niven

Oo-etrias esjik evol: esoi
enshomt esoi enowai: ete fai
pe efiot nem epshiri nem pi
epnevma ethoo-wab; piepnevma
ente timethmiL amin Alleluia



THE UNITY OF THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE FATHER

Having explained the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, St. Basil also explained the relation between the Holy Spirit and the Son and the Father.

God the Father anointed His Son with the Holy Spirit. ***“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him.”*** (Acts 10:38). The Holy Spirit is inseparably united with Jesus Christ ***“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord has anointed Me.”*** (Is. 61:1.)

The Holy Spirit was present in every action Jesus did, as it is written: ***“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit to the wilderness to be tempted by the devil”*** (Mat. 4:1). Further, the Holy Spirit was bound to Christ even after the Resurrection as St. Basil cited the verse; ***“And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’.”*** (John 20:22.)

The Holy Spirit is one in Jesus Christ and is often called the Spirit of Christ. ***“Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”*** (Romans 8:9.)

The Holy Spirit is the glory that the Father and the Son have since the beginning; and the three are in one; ***“And now, O Father, glorify Me together with yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”*** (John 17:5).

MAY

Fourth Sunday

✠ **The Holy Spirit**

God is spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit means that God is incorporeal and indivisible. The Bible describes Him as being continuously united with the ***“Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father.”*** (John 15:26). He is of unlimited greatness, boundless in power, generous in goodness and outside of time and space.

The Bible calls the Spirit of God, God. St. Peter said to Sapphira: ***“How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?”*** (Acts 5:9). ***“You have not lied to men but to God”*** (Acts 5:4).

The greatest proof of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit is that He has the same relationship with God as the spirit within us has with us: ***“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God”*** (1 Cor. 2:11.) Thus it is written; ***“For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God”*** (1 Cor. 2:10.)

What light was King David speaking about when he wrote; ***“In Your light we see light.”*** (Ps. 36:9).

The answer is: the Holy Spirit as Jesus Christ said; ***“That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world”*** (John 1:9.)

St. Basil exhorts his readers by saying “He who fixes his gaze on the Spirit is transfigured to greater brightness. His heart illumined by the light of the Spirit of truth. “As the Father and the Son are Holy, so does holiness fill the very nature of the Holy Spirit. He is our Creator, ***“The Spirit of God has made me.”*** (John 33:4).

He is our comforter as it is written; ***“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper.”*** (John 14:16.)

St. George and St. Rueiss

Coptic Orthodox Church



**JUNE
FIRST SUNDAY**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT (II): THE ETERNAL GODHEAD OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE HERESIES AGAINST THE
HOLY SPIRIT**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson # 2 in a series of 7 lessons about the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we learn that the Holy Spirit's Godhead is eternal and we learn about the heresies against the Holy Spirit.

MEMORY VERSE:

"For there are three that bear witness in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." 1 John 5:7

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✙ **Introduction**

Our Holy Apostolic Church believes that the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Holy Trinity and is equal to the Father and the Son in Eternity, essence, ability and glory. As the Holy Spirit has the Divine nature being the Spirit of God, hence He deserves all respect, love, trust and worship.

The Heresies against the Holy Spirit:

Many Heresies arose against the Church and its belief in the Godhead of the Holy Spirit. The most popular heresies are those of Arius and Makdonius. Arius said, the Holy Spirit is created and not a creator.

June

First Sunday

Makdonius said, the Holy Spirit is created and is not a Godhead Person.

Makdonius was the Patriarch of Constantinople in the late part of the fourth century but he diverted from the correct faith of the Church through his new teaching about the Holy Spirit. Because of this, the second Ecumenical Council was held at Constantinople in the year 381 A.D. with 150 Bishops attending from around the world. In this Council they declared the true faith about the Holy Spirit and ex-communicated Makdonius. In this Council, they added to the Orthodox Creed that was written in the year 325 A.D. the following:

“Truly we believe in the Holy Spirit, the life-giving Lord, who proceeds from the Father, we worship and glorify Him together with the Father and the Son, who spoke in the Prophets.” The Holy Apostolic Church was taught by our Lord Jesus that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as our Lord said *“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”* (John 15:26). In the Council of Constantinople it was declared (as mentioned in the Orthodox Creed) that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father.

However, in the middle centuries, the Church in Rome produced a new heresy: that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Also the Protestant church believed in this heresy.

This heresy leads to the inequality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, and therefore caused a confusion, but it has been proven wrong by our Church.

✠ Proof of the Godhead of the Holy Spirit:

✠ There are 3 factors used to prove the Godhead of the Holy Spirit:

1) Names and titles proving the Godhead of the Holy Spirit:

*** God:**

In Acts St. Peter said “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit... You have not lied to men but to God.” (Acts 5:3-4).

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✠ The statements of the Church Fathers about the Holy Spirit:

St. Cyril said “We believe in One God, eternal with no start and no end, One Father complete, and One Son complete and One Holy Spirit complete and those three do not have degrees as in a kingdom, but they are one in essence, one in ability, one in desire and one in Godhead.”

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) The Godhead of the Holy Spirit is eternal, proceeds from the Father and is one in essence with the Father and the Son.
- (2) We have to be aware that these were heresies against the Holy Spirit as there were heresies against the Lord Christ; but our Church defeated all these heresies and maintained the right faith for us.

St. George and St. Rueiss

Coptic Orthodox Church



SONGS 🎵

MY COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

“... and on this rock I will build My church.” (Mat 16:18)

My Coptic Orthodox Church
In Nubia and Ethiopia
Also in African nations
In the European countries

you have spread Christianity
and in Western cities
as well as in Sudan
you witnessed through the land

REFRAIN

O my church the strong
We defend you with our blood

O great place of prayer
we defend you with our life.

At the Nicean Council
Your deacon Athanasius
With Clement and Origen
And Cyril and Discoros

you stood firm and remained
is the hero of faith
with Anthony and Paul
all of your saints stood tall.

My beloved Coptic Church
You are so sweet and radiant
Our eyes do look toward you
O great place of prayer

a house of beauty bright
we defend you with our love.
and our hearts adore you
we always come to you

Jesus came and visited you
And the blood of St. Mark
St. George and St. Demiana
The blood of Abba Peter

with His Mother He blessed you
established your faith true.
were martyred for the faith
ended the pagan ways.

Mother of seven sacraments
The wicked persecuted you
The oldest of all churches
The love of all our martyrs

as well as of our saints
but God kept strong your gates
in the world a bright light
you are the way of paradise.

June

First Sunday



For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the children
in the class

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**JUNE
SECOND SUNDAY**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT (III):
THE HOLY SPIRIT STRIVING WITH THE WORLD**

Please read the attached material entitled, “The Holy Spirit in your life”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #3 in a series of 7 lessons about the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we learn about the influence of the Holy Spirit in the heart of people.

MEMORY VERSE:

“And when He (the Holy Spirit) has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. “John 16:8

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

1) Resistance of People to the Voice of the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit strives with the world, even with those who finally and forever resist His gracious influences. The resistance of man to the Holy Spirit appeared both in the Scripture and from experience.

✠In the Old Testament:

The wickedness of man became so great that God said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh.” (Genesis 6:3). And after that the Lord sent the flood to destroy all people except

June

Second Sunday

Noah who found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

✠In the New Testament:

When St. Stephen was speaking to the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Council who judged to kill him), he said, ***“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”*** (Acts 7:51).

From the above statement we can see that the Spirit of God strives always to help man. It is up to man to respond to the Holy Spirit.

2) Positive responses to the Voice of the Holy Spirit in the Hearts of people:

✠ The Lord Christ summarized the actions of the Holy Spirit inside a human being when He said ***“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”*** (John 15:26)

✠ The Lord Jesus also said ***“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”*** (John 16:13-14).

How can I explain the latter part of the verse ***“He (i.e. the Holy Spirit) will take of what is mine and declare it to you?”*** “The Holy Spirit inside me will tell my human soul and explain all things about the Lord Jesus Christ: His love, His Salvation and His mighty acts. ***“No one can say Christ is the Lord except through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”***

✠ He is the Holy Spirit who enlightens the understanding ***“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights.”*** (James 1:17) He is the Holy Spirit who invites my human soul to accept the gifts from God.

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✝ ***“The Spirit and the Bride say; Come! And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”(Rev. 22:17.)***

Hence, the Spirit often powerfully moves those who are of the world to come to God. ***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”(Rev 2:29).*** He promotes the words of wisdom, which contain offers of His grace.

✝ Under the presence of the striving of the Holy Spirit, man may effect a great outward reformation. They may leave many sins and they may take delight in approaching God.

3) Obstacles to the action of the Holy Spirit inside a person:

There are many obstacles that may hinder the action of the Holy Spirit. Some examples of these obstacles:

✝ Lack of Humility:

The Holy Spirit will not work inside a person filled with pride. He will only work with humble people ***“I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”(Luke 10:2 1)***

✝Lack of meditation and prayers:

When an individual is occupying all his thoughts and feelings with worldly things, he or she is not giving a chance for the Holy Spirit to work inside them. For this reason, so many people left the extremely busy atmosphere of the world and chose a quiet atmosphere instead.



June

Second Sunday

WHAT DO WE LEARN FORM THIS LESSON?

- (1) The Holy Spirit strives with me to lead my soul to God. It is up to me to respond, obey and give the leadership to the Holy Spirit.
- (2) I must humble myself and take time for meditation in order to give the Holy Spirit a good chance to work within me.

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Coptic Orthodox Church



[SONGS](#) 🎵

OUT OF THE DEPTH, O LORD

“I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me.” (Jon 2:2)

Out of the depth, O Lord
Consider my afflictions
I am in need

I’ve cried with all my heart
accept my invocations
I am in need

When I pour myself before Thee
Before Thee, O my Lord
Please hear my voice, O Lord

let my prayer be accepted
as rising sweet incense
Please hear my voice, O Lord

May the lifting up of my hands
To purge all my iniquities
I praise Thee, O Lord

be like evening oblation
and purify my heart
I praise Thee, O Lord

June

Second Sunday

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOUR LIFE

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

What is your relationship with the Holy Spirit since you were anointed with the Holy Chrism (Myron) after your baptism?

Do you feel your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit of God dwells and works in you?

Did you enter into communion with the Holy Spirit which the priest mentions in the blessing prayer?

Does the Spirit of God partake in every deed you perform?

Or you work alone without the Spirit of God independent with your opinion, with management and personal desires?

Does the work of the Spirit give you special warmth, either in your prayers or contemplations, in your service or your love to God, His church and kingdom?

Are you able to carry out the commandment of the Apostle which says, "*... be filled with the Spirit.* " (Eph. 5:18).

Does the Spirit of God speak on your tongue as it was said, "*For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you?*" (Matt. 10:20). If it is so, certainly your words will have power and effect on the hearts of your listeners...

Or do you talk by yourself and the Spirit does not open your mouth?

Do you have the fruits of the Spirit about which the Apostle St. Paul talked in (Gal. 5:22) when he said, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control.* " Or does your life bear no fruit or you wish for the gifts of the Holy Spirit without having the fruit of the Spirit?!

Do you sometimes feel that you "*grieve the Holy Spirit of God.* " (Eph. 4:30) with certain conduct which does not agree with the Holy Spirit who dwells in you.

Do you "*quench the Spirit.* " (1 Thess. 5:19). with the life of lukewarmness and lack of response to the work of the Spirit in you?!

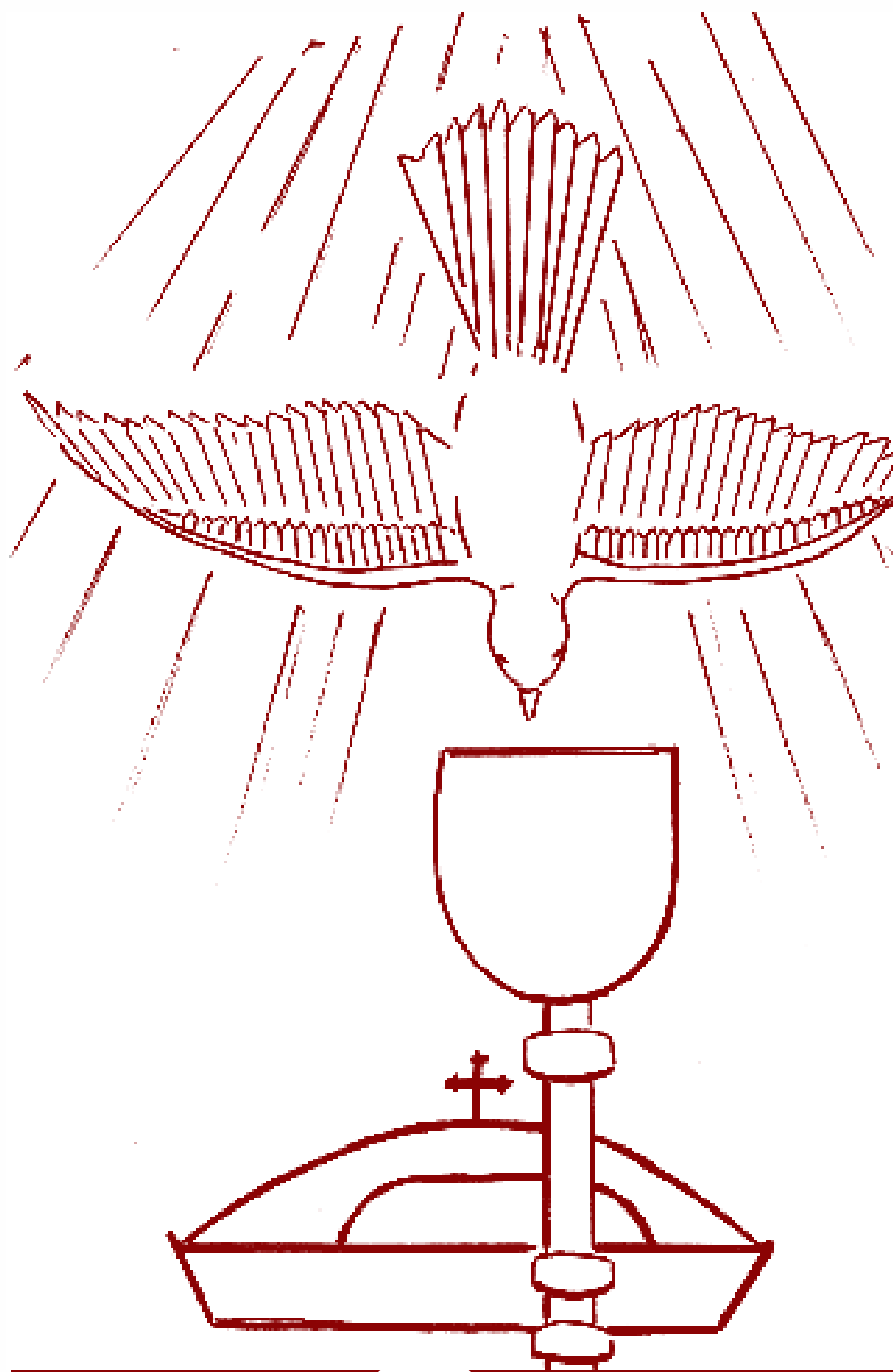
Would you re-consider the extent of your relationship with the Holy spirit and then ask:

Is your life a spiritual life? Are your words spiritual?



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June

Third Sunday



**JUNE
THIRD SUNDAY**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT (IV):
THE WORKINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE
CHURCH (A)**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson # 4 in a series of 7 lessons about the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we learn about the workings of the Holy Spirit in the Church, especially in the Holy Sacraments.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God “John 3:5

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

As we studied before, in order to complete any of the seven Church Sacraments, 3 factors are needed:

- * A substance suitable for the sacrament, for example, water for baptism ... etc.
- * A Bishop or Priest to perform the liturgy of the specific sacrament according to the rituals of the Church.
- * The action of the Holy Spirit to perform the actual Sacrament.

✧ **In the Sacrament of Baptism:**

The Holy Spirit works on the water and transforms it after the “Liturgy of the blessing of the water of Baptism “to Baptismal water capable of

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Coptic Orthodox Church



the new birth. The Holy Spirit also starts to act within the person to be baptized by enlightening their soul and giving them a new life.

✠ **Please read** about the Action of the Holy Spirit in Baptism.

“Knowing that Christ, having being raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no more has dominion over Him.”(Romans 6:9)

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”(John 3:5)

“...you received the Spirit of adoption....The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:15-16)

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”(Mark 16:16)

“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior”(Titus 3:3-7)

✠ **In the Sacrament of Chrismation, or Confirmation:**

This is also, called the Sacrament of the Anointing with El-Mayroun.

Through this Sacrament we gain the gifts and talents of the Holy Spirit, to grow in faith and in spiritual life. Also, all our bodies and senses are sanctified.

✠ **Please read** about the Action of the Holy Spirit in the El-Mayroun Sacrament. *“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit*

June

Third Sunday

in our hearts as a guarantee” (2Cor. 1:21-22)

“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things” (1 John 2:20)

✠ **In the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession:**

As a human being is inclined to do bad things, and the Baptism, which renewed the individual, cannot be repeated, God established in the Church the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession as a second Baptism to clean the human being again, (this occurs after he or she repents, confesses and takes the Holy Communion).

✠ **Please read** the Action of the Holy Spirit in the Repentance and Confession:

“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth, will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:18)

“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (John 20:22:23)

✠ **In the Sacrament of the Holy Communion:**

This is also called the Sacrament of Eucharist. In the priest’s prayers in the Divine Liturgy, he prays that the Holy Spirit comes to do two things:

1. To make Holy the bread and wine and make them the Body and Blood of Christ.
2. To purify us, the people who are taking Communion, to be able to accept Christ’s Body and Blood inside us.

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✠In the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick:

This Sacrament is known to the people as “El-kandeel”. In this Sacrament, the priest anoints the sick with Holy Oil so that they can be healed in body and spirit by the action of the Holy Spirit.

✠**Please read** Action of the Holy Spirit in the Unction of the Sick:

“And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”(James 5:15)

“And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them”(Mark 6:13)

✠In the Sacrament of Marriage:

This is also called the Sacrament of the Holy Matrimony. The two people become one and their unity, is analogous to the unity between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Church.

✠**Please read**(Ephesians 5:21-22)“...*submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*”

This unity is fulfilled by the Holy Spirit. The two people become united in their faith, desire, goals and love.

✠In the Sacrament of the Holy Orders:

There are 3 orders in the Church:

- ✠ Deacons
- ✠ Priests
- ✠ Bishops

The Holy Spirit works in each rank and aids the individual in performing his duties and services to God.

June

Third Sunday

✱ **Deacons:**

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Deacon gets wisdom and ability to serve people.

✱ **Priest:**

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Priest gets to serve people, guides them spiritually and performs the Sacraments.

✱ **Bishop:**

Bishop means “Abiskobos” in Coptic. The word means looks after or directs from above i.e., the Bishop has the job to look after many churches and administer the work in certain area of his responsibility.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FORM THIS LESSON?

- (1) The Holy Spirit works in the Sacraments and hence all the gifts of God can be granted to us.
- (2) There are four Sacraments that are needed by all of us: Baptism, Chrismation, Repentance and Confession, and the Holy Communion. The other three may only be required by some of us, e.g. if you are not to be married, you do not need the Sacrament of the Holy Matrimony.

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Coptic Orthodox Church



SONGS 🎵

NIGHT OF THE LAST SUPPER

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger..." (Jn 6:35)

Night of the Last Supper
Jesus took bread and broke

night of the Last Supper
and said: "Eat my body."

REFRAIN:

Our Master, our Saviour
He is the Bread of life

gave us the vine of love
coming from heaven above.

Night when my Lord suffered
He took Wine and gave thanks

night when my Lord suffered
and said: "This is my Blood".

This the Groom's supper
Promising eternal life

is given to His bride
up in the paradise.

This is the food of souls
And the Blood is given

is offered to us all
to help me lest I fall

Jesus, you are my hope
Wash me and clean my soul

forgive my sins O Lord
put on me a new robe.

My hear I give to you
Your love for me I knew

Your will I want to do
when You paid all my dues

Jesus fills all my heart
And through this sacrament

the devil has no part
He gave me a new start.

Jesus to You I pray
Bless me and help me obey

to lead me in Your way
all what the Bible says.

Christ suffered for my sake
My sins Jesus forgave

His mercy is so great
and a new life He gave.

My heart is filled with joy
With God I have union

and my soul does rejoice
when I take communion.

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For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the students
in the class

June

Fourth Sunday



JUNE FOURTH SUNDAY

THE HOLY SPIRIT (V): THE WORKINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH (B)

Please read the attached article entitled, “The Spiritual Road”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #5 in a series of 7 lessons about the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we learn about the workings of the Holy Spirit in the growth of the Church and the faithful.

MEMORY VERSE:

The Spirit said to him (i.e. to Peter), “Behold, three men are seeking you. “Acts 10:19

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✘ The Holy Spirit’s workings in the growth of the Church.

In the Book of Acts, we read about many cases in which the power and authority of the Holy Spirit were the main factors in directing the preaching of the Apostles to the growth of the church.

This is why the Book of Acts, is called by many people the book of the “Actions of the Holy Spirit.”

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Please tell the stories in the class and explain the action of the Holy Spirit in each one of the following.

Examples: Acts 8:26-40
Acts 10:17-33
Acts 13:2-4

✠ The Holy Spirit's workings in the growth of the faithful:

The three Persons of the Holy Trinity participate in our salvation: the Father with His love, the Son with His sacrifice and Grace, and the Holy Spirit with His guidance and gifts. For this reason the priest prays in the Divine Liturgy and says, "May the love of God the Father the grace of His only begotten Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.

Of course you can find many verses in the Holy Bible to support these actions of the Holy Trinity for the salvation of each of us. Without any of the three actions, one cannot be a true son or daughter of God and cannot have a place in heaven.

The following items show the actions of the Holy Spirit inside each one of us.

✠ The Sonship to God:

By the spiritual birth (Baptism and Chrismation) and the faith in Christ's' salvation, we become sons and daughters of God through the action of the Holy Spirit inside us. ***"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.....you received the Spirit of adoption....The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"***(Romans 8:14-16)

June

Fourth Sunday

† Leading to the truth:

The Holy Spirit inside an individual controls their feelings, leads them and moves their heart towards the truth., , *“And I will pray the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever- the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”* (John 14:16-17)

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”(John 14:26)

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”(John 15:26-27.)

† Wisdom and declaration:

The Holy Spirit inside a person gives him or her spiritual wisdom and makes a declaration of heavenly matters. *“...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the working of His mighty power.”*(Ephesians 1:17-19)

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† Renewal and Purification:

The Holy Spirit renews the person, purifies him or her, and changes his or her sharp character gradually: *"...But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."*(1Cor. 6:9-11)

† Helping in prayers:

The Holy Spirit helps to strengthen people and teach them how to communicate with God i.e. how to pray: *"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."*(Romans 8:26)

† Comforting in troubles:

The Holy Spirit "The Comforter": *"And I will pray the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever"* (John 14:16)

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Search to see if the Holy Spirit is doing His work inside us. If not, pray for that.
- (2) Repentance is the first step in the spiritual life. The Holy Spirit can help us to repent. Then we can move into the stage of growing in virtues: like love, self-denial, attachment to heaven etc. In all these the Holy Spirit can help us as He helped the Saints who reached a very deep level in their spirituality. Let us keep praying asking for the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

June

Fourth Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

DO NOT LEAVE ME ALONE

Do not leave me alone
Be always near to help me

O shepherd of my soul
and hear me when I call

REFRAIN

My lord, I'm nothing without Thee
So take my right hand
Forever in Thy way

I am nothing at all
O Lord, and lead me

Do not leave me alone
And hold me lest I fall

My guardian and my guide
whenever my footsteps slide

Do not leave me alone
When outward things are strong

if I'm tempted to sin
keep watch, O Lord, within

Do not leave me alone
Subdue Satan before me

whenever I feel frail
and let him not prevail

Do not leave me alone
But take my hand and lead me

when I have gone astray
again into Thy way

Do not leave me alone
But rather, Lord, forgive me

whenever sins abound
and turn my life around

Do not leave me alone
But rather reassure me

when hope has fled away
and teach me to watch and pray

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THE SPIRITUAL PATH

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

A life of repentance is the beginning of the spiritual way. It is a transition from being hostile and resisting God, to following His way.

But it is a long way where one aims at a life of holiness, *"... without which no one will see the Lord. " (Heb 12:14). And the Lord said. "... you shall be holy for I am holy. " (Lev 11 :44).*

There are levels of holiness, where one grows, taking the Lord Himself as an example, to come closer to His image and likeness...

That is how the faithful develop from just a life of holiness, to aiming at perfection, as God expects from them.

God commanded this perfection in us by saying, *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. " (Mt 5:48)*

St Paul, the Apostle, was raised to the third heaven and saw unutterable things. God granted him many gifts and knowledge and chose him to carry His name among the Gentiles, and he suffered more than all the other Apostles.

This same Paul says about the spiritual heights that he reached, *"Not that I have already attained or am already perfected, but I press on, that I may lay hold of... But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press towards the goal... " He concludes his advice by saying, "Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this in mind... " (Phil 3:12-15).*

What is this "ahead" that Paul was trying to reach?

He says to the Ephesians, *"... you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. " (Eph 3:18,19)*

What an amazing phrase, *"to be filled with all the fullness of God."*

Perfection in the spiritual path has no limits...

Whenever you pass one stage, you feel that you have not progressed, so you increase in contrition.

You become like one chasing the horizon Every time you reach the point where you think heaven and earth meet, you find it spreading ahead of you... to no end.

If the matter is as such, let us then proceed forward...

If we haven't yet reached repentance, that is the beginning of the way!... would we say that we are out of God's way?!...

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**JUNE
FIFTH SUNDAY**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT (VI):
THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson # 6 in a series of 7 lessons about the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we learn about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are heavenly gifts because they are from God. Therefore these gifts are very precious.

MEMORY VERSE:

“When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. “John 16:13

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✠ When the Lord Jesus asked His disciples not to depart from Jerusalem until they gain the strength from above, it was a declaration about the necessity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church in order to be able to witness to Christ. However, the Holy Spirit does not work against the desire of the person or his freedom.
- ✠ The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given from God and they do not originate from the natural talents of man or his abilities, but they are strictly gifts from God. St. James in his Epistle explains the difference between the wisdom from up above (i.e. from the Holy

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Spirit) and the earthly wisdom. *“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”* (James 3:13-17.)

✝ The gifts can be classified into 3 types:

1) Gifts of Speech:

* The Holy Spirit leads the teaching and gives words to the preachers. Please read (John 16:13).

* Prophecy cannot be obtained by reading and by being intelligent. Prophecy is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Please read (1 Cor 2:10).

* Speaking in tongues:

This is the gift that was given to help the preachers, to preach to people who do not speak the preachers' language. Please read (Acts 2:1-6).

2) Gifts of knowing about God:

* Teaching with knowledge -- knowing about God, *“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His*

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inheritance in the saints,..."(Ephesians 1:17-18)

- * Teaching with wisdom -- living with God. (1Cor 14:1-4)

3) The Practical gifts:

- * Performing miracles and powers, *"to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,"*(1Cor 12:9)
- * Serving people and their needs, with love. (1 Cor. 13:1-8)

Note:

- (1) There are many verses in the Holy Bible about the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the faithful, but there are three chapters in the bible that concentrate to a great extent on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are 1Cor. Chapters 12, 13 and 14.
- (2) Please let us read the litanies of the third hour from the Agpeya book.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) We must pray to God to give us the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as the church is teaching us in the litanies of the third hour in the Agpeya book.
- (2) When the gifts of the Holy Spirit when are to an individual, they are given for a certain reason or reasons. Among all these reasons is the growth of the church and the kingdom of God. For example, the gift of speaking in tongues was given to the Disciples in the upper room to help them preach the word of God all over the world (i.e. in different tongues).

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

WHEN THE SPIRIT

When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart	I will love as Jesus loves
When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart	I will pray as David Prayed
When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart	I will preach as Peter preached
When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart	I will serve as St. Paul served

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**JULY
FIRST SUNDAY**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT (VII):
THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #7 in a series of 7 lessons about the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we learn about the fruit or the effects of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believers.

MEMORY VERSE:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control “Galatians 5:22-23

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✠ When you deal with a true Christian you see a great difference in thinking, behavior and life style from a non-Christian or a Christian by name only. These differences are the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the life of the true Christian, which others do not have. The fruits of the Holy Spirit that we are going to talk about are:

- (a) The fruit mentioned in Galatians, ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*** (Galatians 5:22-23)

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- (b) The fruit mentioned in Ephesians, *“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”* (Ephesians 1:17-18)

(a) The fruit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23

This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in my inner person and in yours. It affects the way we think, feel, behave and live. This fruit is as follows:

✠ LOVE

Love is the foundation of all righteousness, *“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy, love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails ,...”* (1Cor. 13: 4-8.)

✠ JOY

Christianity’s main goal is the joy and happiness of man. In fact the meaning of the word Gospel is “Happy News.”

Please read:

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4: 4)

“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, ...” (Thessalonians 1: 6)

✠ PEACE

Peace is related to joy, *“... for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”* (Romans 14:17)

Love and joy result in the peace of the life of the believer.

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✧ **LONG-SUFFERING**

This means to be slow in getting angry and to be able to withstand unfair treatment from others. The Lord Jesus gave the perfect example of long-suffering.

✧ **KINDNESS**

Kindness is the reverse of aggressiveness, *“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”* (Romans 11:22) and *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;”* (Colossians 3:12)

✧ **GOODNESS:**

Kindness prepares for goodness, *“Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”* (Romans 15:14)

✧ **FAITHFULNESS:**

Correct faith is the main basis of a good life, *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”* (Hebrews 11:6.)

✧ **GENTLENESS:**

Gentleness means that even when a person is guilty, we don't judge him. Jesus taught us to be gentle. *“Learn from Me as I am gentle and humble in heart.”*

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✠ SELF-CONTROL

Self-control against committing sins, ***“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”*** (2 Peter 1:5-7)

(b) The Fruit mentioned in Ephesians 1:17-18

Wisdom and enlightenment in the true Christian person, make him or her capable of witnessing and living in the glory of God, i.e., a taste of heavenly life on earth. As St. Paul said ***“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”***(Eph. 1:17-18)

What do we learn from this lesson?

- (1) When we were baptized we obtained the Holy Spirit in us. All the above- mentioned fruits of the Holy Spirit can be ours if we obey and communicate well with Holy Spirit.
- (2) When we look at the Saints of the Church we find that they were able to obtain a great deal of blessings and fruits of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This is why we light a candle underneath the icons of Saints. The candle is made up of frozen oil. The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. As long as there is oil i.e. the candle is burning, the light is on (i.e. the good life with the fruit of the Holy Spirit exists).

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

SUNDAY PSALI

I called upon You from the depth of my heart Release from me the bonds of sin	My Lord Jesus help me My Lord Jesus Christ help me
Overshadow me with the shadow of Your Wings Make haste O my God and save me	My Lord Jesus help me My Lord Jesus Christ help me
Every knee bows down before You All of my sins O God erase	My Lord Jesus help me My Lord Jesus Christ help me
You know my thoughts and search my inner parts Create in me a holy heart	My Lord Jesus help me My Lord Jesus Christ help me
Your Holy spirit Cast not away from me Incline your ear to me and hear me speedily	My Lord Jesus help me My Lord Jesus Christ help me
Set before me a law in the way of your righteousness Your Kingdom O my God is an everlasting Kingdom	My Lord Jesus help me My Lord Jesus Christ help me
Have patience on me and destroy me not speedily I wake up at dawn that I may praise Your Name	My Lord Jesus help me My Lord Jesus Christ help me
Praised and beloved Your Holy Name Disperse from me all the devils	My Lord Jesus help me My Lord Jesus Christ help me
Instill on me the fruit of Your righteousness Give us Your true peace and forgive our sins	My Lord Jesus help me My Lord Jesus Christ help me

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**JULY
SECOND SUNDAY**

**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE APOSTOLIC
ERA(I):
THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH (A)**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #1 in a series of 7 lessons about the Christian Church in the Apostolic Era. In this lesson we learn about the importance of studying the Church's history particularly in the Apostolic era.

MEMORY VERSE:

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed...

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✱ **Introduction:**

✚ **Why do we in general study the history of the Church?**

When we study the history of the church, we are actually studying the subject of the Kingdom of God on earth; the establishing of this kingdom, it's widespread, and the salvation of mankind.

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* The history of the Church is a continuous explanation to the parable of the mustard seed or the yeast, which affected a whole lot of bread, *“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”* (Matthew 13:31-33.)

* The history of the Church shows the strength of God against all the forces of the devil and that the kingdom of light is much stronger than the kingdom of darkness.

* The history of the Church is the best explanation for Christianity itself because it shows the continuous religious progression of the human race and God’s plan of salvation.

* The history of the Church is a source of encouragement and comfort to every Christian. *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”*. (Hebrews 12:1.)

✠ Importance of studying Church history in the Apostolic era.

✠ The Apostolic era is the main source for the Christian Church. It is the era in which the Holy Spirit governed all the actions of the Apostles, and all the Apostolic explanations affected all the eras that followed.

✠ The Apostolic era shows us a faithful picture to the effectiveness of Christianity and its purity.

✠ It offers us a strong proof that Christianity, as a religion, is God’s

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Second Sunday

work, which is above human beings' work.

- ✠ It shows the actions of various leading personalities as good examples for us: Peter, Paul, Mark, John, etc.

✠ **Historical sources for information about the Apostolic era:**

- ✠ The books of the New Testament, particularly, the Book of Acts.
- ✠ The teaching books and the laws of the Apostles - For example: "The book of teaching of the 12 Apostles" called Didacha and the book of Didascalia.
- ✠ The writings of the Apostolic Fathers (who were the disciples of the Apostles), for example Klimantous the Roman, Agnatius and Polykarpos
- ✠ Jewish sources, for example the writing of Philo and Yousofos
- ✠ The writings of the Fathers in the second century (i.e. The second generation of the Apostles), for example Youstinous, Erianous and Hegesippus

✠ **What is meant by the Apostolic Era?**

It is the period between the Pentecost in the year 33 A.D. to the year 100 A.D. in which St. John the Apostolic departed. He lived the longest life of all the Apostles.

✠ **The World in which the Church was born:**

In order to cover this aspect we have to study 3 parts:

- * The Jews: Their sectors, customs etc.
- * The Gentiles: The world who worshipped idols
- * The political situation in the world at that time.

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✠ What do we learn in this lesson?

- (1) We have to study the history of our precious Church in order to adhere to her and resist all the new false ideas and other world religions.
- (2) Our church is historical. We have roots that go back many years. We have to be connected to our roots to stay strong.
- (3) It is not enough to say that we are proud of this precious church. The bottom line is do we truly love and show this love in our actions towards others.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

O APOSTLES OF CHRIST

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mk 16:15)

With happiness and joy
Now many crowns enjoy

in heaven with our Lord
O Apostles of Christ

Through sufferings and tears
You taught for many years

and yet without any fears
O Apostles of Christ

In pain you never complained
The paradise obtained

even when you were jailed
O Apostles of Christ

Remember to ask for us
Blessings may He grant us

before our Lord Jesus
O Apostles of Christ

With happiness and joy
Now many crowns enjoy

in Heaven with our Lord
O Apostles of Christ

NOTES

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**JULY
THIRD SUNDAY**

**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA
(II): THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH (B)**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #2 in a series of 7 lessons about the Christian Church in the Apostolic Era. In this lesson we learn about the world in which Christianity was born.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees...” Luke 11:44

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✝ Please start by reviewing the last lesson. We ended the last lesson by saying that in order to study the world in which Christianity was born, we have to study **the Jews, the Gentiles and the Political status.**

(A)The Jews

1) Their political status

Since the Romans defeated Jerusalem in 63 B.C., the Jews became politically under the Romans; the Romans appointed a Jewish governor under a Roman representative.

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2) **Their economic and Social status:**

It was very bad. The majority of the Jews were poor.

3) **Their religious status:**

They were sticking to the words of Moses' laws without the spirit of it.

4) **The Jewish Synagogues:**

The Synagogue was the social and religious center of the Jews. Every city had its own Synagogue. The location was usually close to a river or seashore to facilitate the rites of washing. Jerusalem had about 400 Synagogues for the various sectors of the Jews.

The Synagogue was usually built at the highest spot in the city. Every Synagogue had its own president, ***"As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe..."*** (Mark 5:36) and a number of elders, readers and translators. This is in addition to various other people who did manual work, collected money and distributed money to the poor.

The worship in the Synagogue was very lengthy: It included songs of Psalms, readings of the books of the Old Testament and explanations. However, the bloody sacrifices were restricted to the Altar in Jerusalem and they stopped completely with the destruction of the Altar, after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus who is the true sacrifice.

5) **The Jewish sects:**

The birth of the Church was accompanied by the presence of various Jewish sects. Three major sects were: The Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes.

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(a) The Pharisees:

The Pharisees i.e. the chosen or selected sector: a very strict Jewish sect, holding the Mosaic Law and their own traditions as binding. See the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. *“Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men – extortionist, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* (Luke 18:9-14).

The Scribes are also mentioned in association with the Pharisees. *“Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.”* (Matthew 23:2) *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them.”* (Luke 11:44.) The Scribes are not a separate religious sect but they were a sub group of the Pharisees who teach the scriptures. The Scribes as a group started since the days of Ezra, *“And the families of the scribes who dwelt at Jabez were the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and the Suchathites. These were the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.”* (1 Chronicles 2:55). The Scribes had a great position among the people.

(b) The Sadducees:

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They were the aristocratic party of the Jews at the time of Christ. They had firsthand authority on the Altar, the taxes that were collected for the Altar and they had a share in the 1/10th offering. So, they were very rich and they were concentrating on money and materialistic things and they were enemies of the Pharisees.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection after death, *“Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’ And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, ‘God will strike, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?’ And those who stood by said, ‘Do you revile God’s high priest?’ Then Paul said, ‘I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’ But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, ‘Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!’ And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection – and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees’ party arose and protested, saying, ‘We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.’”* (Acts 23:1-9) and did not believe in the presence of Angels or Spirits. *“For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection – and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.”*(Acts 23:8).

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(c) The Essenes:

The Essenes were not mentioned in the Book of the New Testament but new studies have revealed their effect on the religious life at the time of Christ. It was mentioned that some of Jesus' disciples were from them. They were strict about the Jewish laws but not in a word by word manner as the Pharisees. In fact they were against the cosmetic behavior in religion and they wanted to feel the spirit of the scriptures. They gave themselves the name of "The group of God" or "The group of permanent covenant."

6) Jewish Council: Sanhedrin

It is the highest Jewish Council. Our Lord Jesus and His disciples were judged in front of this council. It was an aristocratic council composed of 70 or 72 members from 3 groups: Priests (i.e. leaders of the 24 teams offering the service), Elders (i.e. heads of tribes), and Scribes (i.e. heads of the Pharisees). This council used to meet in the Altar.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) The Jews let the opportunity pass by, and the majority of them did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ because all of their worshipping was not from the heart. Let us not pay attention to the outside appearances, and worship from the heart.
- (2) The Jews at the time of the Lord Jesus Christ were very rigid. They wanted a Messiah who would free them from the Romans and make them rich. When they saw the Lord Jesus performing miracles but not doing what they wanted, they lost sight of the situation and the majority of them did not believe in Him. We must be flexible in our life.
- (3) We are winners when we are flexible.

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Third Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

O TELL ME JOHN

"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us." (Eph 5:2)

O tell me john, O tell me
And how you were so lucky
Please answer me and tell me
He called me the "Beloved"
He trusted me with His Mother
His heart is ever beating

And dear peter please tell me
And how you were appointed
Please answer me and tell me
In spite of all denials
And though I was so bitter
His heart is so forgiving

And dear Thomas how did you
When you were not believing
Please answer me and tell me
I saw with my own eyes
And in His side, the hole
By all his wounds and sufferings

And all you His disciples
How when you were in trouble
All the disciples answered
The life that is awaiting
So joyful and so peaceful
Our life is all for Jesus

about His shining face
on His chest your head laid.
John answered me and said,
in His eyes I found grace
I took her to my place
with love for the human race.

about the rock of faith
a pillar in His church.
Peter answered and said
His love for me was great
my sins He did erase
for sinners in every place

doubt that He is raised
He appeared just for your sake.
Thomas answered and said
the places of the nails
where Blood and Water drained
He opened heaven's gate

tell me again and again
for you He took good care.
we can never explain
those who believe in His name
there is no worry or pain
and that is really a gain

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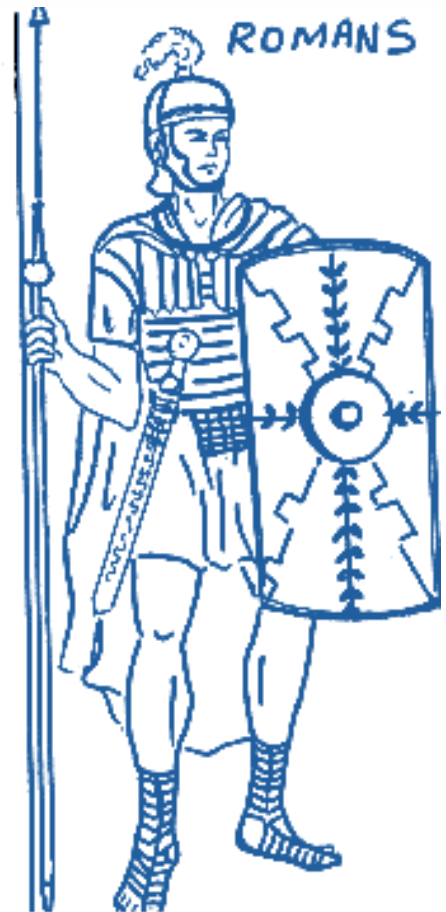
JEWS



GENTILES



ROMANS



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**JULY
FOURTH SUNDAY**

**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA
(III):
THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH (C)**

Please read the attached article, “The Crops and the Weeds”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #3 in a series of 7 lessons about the Christian Church in the Apostolic Era. In this lesson we learn about the world in which Christianity was born.

MEMORY VERSE:

“What does this blabber want to say....” Act 17:18

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Please start by reviewing the last lesson about the Jews.
In this lesson we continue to talk about the Gentiles and the Roman authorities.

(B) The Gentiles:

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This is the part of the world that worshipped the idols and they did not realize any meaning of God, sin, or holiness.

1) The Philosophy of the Gentiles:

The most important schools of philosophy in the first years of Christianity were Epicurean and Stoic. *“Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, ‘What does this blabber want to say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,’ because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.”* (Acts 17:18)

The Epicurean philosophers: attacked all religions and they considered any faith in any religion is a sin. They considered no Godly rule in the universe. They claimed that their God is somewhere, living in isolation of people and does not care about their life. The majority of the Romans believed in the Epicure’s philosophy.

The Stoic philosophers: believed in One God, One Spirit from which all things came and that every person is a ray from the nature of God. Man has to maintain this ray and keep it lighted and in good condition. It is considered that the best gift to man from God is the mind.

2) The Characters of the Gentiles:

The best description to that corruption is in (Romans 1:18-32), *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen,*

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being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”

(C) The Roman Empire:

The Jewish countries were under the Roman authorities, which were strong and well organized. We read in the Gospel and in the Book of Acts about the Roman authority.

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- * **Its extension:** It has parts in Europe, Asia and Africa.
- * **Its governments:** It was composed of provinces, each of which had a governor appointed by the capital, Rome, and they were under the Roman law and taxation system. Egypt was also under the Romans.

It was a rule at this time that the defeated countries became under the ownership of the victorious country but the original defeated people can still live in it by paying money regularly in return. This is the reason the Romans used to review regularly the number of people under their authority. *“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.”* (Luke 2:1)



The Rights of Roman Citizenship:

This is a special status. “Roman citizens” rights were given to a few people, either by buying it or serving in the army for a long time. The privileges gained were: protection under the laws, no jail without trials and the right to be judged in Rome. *“Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.”* (Acts 22:29), *“But Paul said to them, ‘They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.’”* (Acts 16:37) *“For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.”* (Acts 25:11)



WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) The three elements that Christianity had to face in the first century: The Jews, the Gentiles and the Roman authority. This will help us in our study of the Bible to understand what was involved in the various events.
- (2) Christianity had to face very powerful and well-established opposing forces. But the power of God is stronger and Christianity overcame all these forces and spread very quickly.
- (3) Christianity was not occupied by trying to fight and oppose all these forces (Jews, Gentiles and authorities). Rather, Christ was to build the faith of the people and the Kingdom of God. Therefore, instead of cursing the darkness, light a candle.
- (4) There are many negative things in today's society. The Christian way is not to curse them but to focus on the correct and positive things and spread them.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

O TELL ME JOHN

"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us." (Eph 5:2)

O tell me john, O tell me
And how you were so lucky
Please answer me and tell me
He called me the "Beloved"
He trusted me with His Mother
His heart is ever beating

about His shining face
on His chest your head laid.
John answered me and said,
in His eyes I found grace
I took her to my place
with love for the human race.

And dear peter please tell me
And how you were appointed
Please answer me and tell me
In spite of all denials
And though I was so bitter
His heart is so forgiving

about the rock of faith
a pillar in His church.
Peter answered and said
His love for me was great
my sins He did erase
for sinners in every place

And dear Thomas how did you
When you were not believing
Please answer me and tell me
I saw with my own eyes
And in His side, the hole
By all his wounds and sufferings

doubt that He is raised
He appeared just for your sake.
Thomas answered and said
the places of the nails
where Blood and Water drained
He opened heaven's gate

And all you His disciples
How when you were in trouble
All the disciples answered
The life that is awaiting
So joyful and so peaceful
Our life is all for Jesus

tell me again and again
for you He took good care.
we can never explain
those who believe in His name
there is no worry or pain
and that is really a gain



THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Your job is not to pull up the tares, but to grow as wheat. When the wheat harvester comes, He will find the ears of your wheat full, and will gather thirty and sixty and a hundred till his barns are filled with wheat.

The Lord Jesus never wasted his time in resisting faults...

He did not spend the period of his incarnation on earth struggling with those at fault or with problems of society and church. He took care of building, laying new principles and preparing people to believe in them and spread them everywhere.

It is a waste of energy to be absorbed in gathering up the tares.

The devil is ready to occupy you all the time by various problems and offers you endless mistakes. His main aim is to distract you from building yourself and building the Kingdom of Heaven, by fighting these mistakes.

By pulling the tares, you may lose your inner peace and probably your peace with people too; as you are going to live in a struggle.

Therefore you will lose your quietness and serenity and maybe your meekness as well. These problems may create an atmosphere of endless disturbances and differences that may agitate you and surround you by continual rage.

Likewise, as you lose your gentleness and quietness, you may also lose your cheerfulness. People will see you ever gloomy with no smile. Anger and sorrow might control you and you might accept them as holy anger and grief for God's sake..

This may lead you to cruelty of the heart...

You will always judge those who are wrong, revolting against their mistakes, taking the excuse of pulling up the tares from them. You will be always in clamour and you may raise your voice, rebuke and yell at people and become annoyed with everything...

During all that, you may lose your love to people and lose your gentleness. So while you are gathering up the tares from others, you will probably pull the wheat that is in you. People will look and see you like the tares, in everything...

Few are those who could pick the tares and, at the same time, keep their wheat. Therefore, it is good that God prevented His children from pulling up the tares for fear of picking the wheat too.

It is well said in the Bible *"Do not resist evil"*...

The best way of gathering up tares is by setting a good example to overcome them. And as the wiseman said, *"Instead of cursing the darkness, light a candle."*

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For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
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HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
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teaching the children
in the class

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**AUGUST
FIRST SUNDAY**

**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA
(IV):
THE CONFRONTATION WITH THE JEWS**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #4 in a series of 7 lessons about the Christian Church in the Apostolic Era. In this lesson we learn about the confrontation with the Jews. Christianity was spreading through miracles, love and martyrdom.

MEMORY VERSE:

“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord...”Acts 5:14

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Start by reviewing briefly what was mentioned before in the series.

(A) The Church in Jerusalem:

The Church was born in Jerusalem during the Pentecost. After Pentecost, the people who believed in Christ in the day of the Pentecost went back to their homeland.

But the spirit of God acted on the Apostles and the number of

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believers increased from 3,000 to 5,000. ***“However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”*** (Acts 4:4) The factors of the continuous growth were: performing miracles, and the true Christian life that was full of love and righteousness. ***“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.”*** (Acts 5:14), (Acts 6 & 7) ***“Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”*** (Acts 2:47).

As a result of this success, the new Christians went into a tremendous confrontation with the Jews.

† The persecution of the Christians by the Jews:

The gospels show very clearly the Jewish behavior against Christ, the Apostles and the new Christians. From the beginning, when they found people following Jesus, they cried saying crucify Him, crucify Him. ***“But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabas and destroy Jesus.”*** (Matthew 27:20)

Also they hated Stephen and stoned him. ***“Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. Then they secretly induced men to say, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’ And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. They also set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.’”***
(Acts 6:9-14)

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Also against St. Paul, we can see that in several locations in the Book of Acts. *“Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.”* (Acts 9:23-25), *“But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.”* (Acts 13:50), *“But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, ‘These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king – Jesus.’ And they troubled the crowd and the rules of the city when they heard these things.”* (Acts 17:6-8) *“Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.”* (Acts 14:1-6) *“And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother’s womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, ‘Stand up straight on your feet!’ And he leaped and walked. Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!’ And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the*

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multitudes. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them. Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead." (Acts 14:8-19). St. Paul who suffered from them a lot as he said in (1 Thessalonians 2:15-16), "who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they do not please God and are contrary to all men. Forbidding us to speak to the gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost."

St. James was the first martyr among the Apostles. ***"Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword."*** (Acts 12:1-2) Then St. Peter was jailed after that. We can see in Acts 12 the Spirit of the newly born Church and its spiritual values.

† **The Fruits of the Persecution:**

All the energies of the Apostles were concentrated in Jerusalem until the persecution reached its peak and the people who were persecuted got dispersed in various cities preaching the word of God at various other locations; *"Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word."* (Acts 8:4), *"This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I*

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cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”
(Acts 26:10-11)

✝ Preaching in Samaria:

Samaria was not totally worshipping idols. Please read the origin of the Samaritan in 2 Kings 17:24-34.

Although it was a step in the right direction, preaching Christianity in the cities of Samaria, it aggravated the enmity between the Apostles and the Jews who hated the Samaritans for a long time.

The first one to preach in the Samaritan cities was Philip, one of the 7 deacons, and the Lord supported his mission through many miracles. *“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.”*(Acts 8:5-8) Then Peter and John also preached in Samaria. *“Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”* (Acts 8:15-17) *“So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, grace preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans”* (Acts 8:25).

Christ is preached to an Ethiopian. Please see (Acts 8:26-40).

✝ Christ is preached to the cities by the sea:

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Philip went to the Palestinian cities by the seashore and preached, after he baptized the Ethiopian... *“Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.”* (Acts 8:39-40)

† Preaching in Galilee:

The indications were that Galilee was preached early. *“Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.”* (Acts 9:31) Saul converted in the year A.D. 37. Please read (Acts 9:1-6).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

The light of Christ disperses the darkness of the devil. So Christianity spread all over the world despite the strong hold of the opposing forces. Similarly, if you would like to overcome the darkness of sin, let the light of Christ shine in your heart despite the darkness of sin.

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[SONGS](#) 🎵

SAINT ATHANASIUS

Athanasius the faith he freed
Athanasius apostolic indeed

from heresies and wrote the creed.
true hero with all good deed.

Athanasius as a deacon declared
Prayers and services he shared

the church of god will never fail.
surely for all people he cared.

To Nicea in humility
To Arius that had no loyalty

he came but with certainty
he proved Jesus' Divinity.

Far away he was banished
But brave he always managed

and five times roughly punished
and never be discouraged.

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First Sunday



For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the children
in the class

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**AUGUST
SECOND SUNDAY**

**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA
(V):
THE CHURCH OUTSIDE JERUSALEM, AND
THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM, AND ITS ALTAR.**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #5 in a series of 7 lessons about the Christian Church in the Apostolic Era. In this lesson we learn about the establishment of two major Church centers: One in Damascus and one in Antioch. We also learn about the destruction of Jerusalem and its Altar.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Start by reviewing briefly what was mentioned in the previous lessons.

(B) The Church outside Jerusalem:

As we have mentioned, Churches were established first in Jerusalem, Judea, Galilee, Samaria and some cities on the Mediterranean Sea. The new Churches were confined only to these areas for about 12 years.

Then Christianity started to spread to the rest of the world outside Jerusalem and two major Christian centers have been formed outside Jerusalem: one in Damascus and one in Antioch.

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† The Church in Damascus:

This is the first center outside Jerusalem. This Church was formed before the year 37 A.D. in which Saul was converted. Remember Saul was going from Jerusalem to persecute the Christians in Damascus. Please read Acts 9:1-9.

† The Church in Antioch:

Antioch was a great city in its buildings and geography. It is the third largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. Antioch was preached in by the same group who was scattered because of the persecutions that happened because of the killing of Stephen, *“Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.”* (Acts 11:19-21). Large numbers of Greek people, who were worshipping idols, became Christians. So, Antioch was the first center for the Gentiles who became Christians.

In the beginning of the formation of the Christian group in Antioch, the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. Barnabas had a very successful mission, *“Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.”* (Acts 11:22).

Then Saul (St. Paul) joined him in Antioch and they served there together for a year, *“And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”* (Acts 11:26).

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The Church in Antioch, in this early stage, had a lot of talents and plenty of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, *“Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 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 13:1-3). Also, Christians in Antioch were totally detached from the Jewish influences and Christianity found its name for the first time in Antioch, *“And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”* (Acts 11:26).

(C)The Destruction of Jerusalem and its Altar in the year A.D. 70 :

There was a lot of money in Jerusalem. The main source of this money was the Altar of Jerusalem. Every Jewish male had to pay taxes to the Altar in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus also had to pay, *“Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.”* (Matthew 17:27)

The Synagogues outside Jerusalem were only places of prayers and meetings without any offerings. The offerings were only in Jerusalem. So, all the hopes and lives of the Jewish people were tied up in Jerusalem.

† The Lord Jesus predicted the destruction of the Altar:

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Please read “...And Jesus said to them, *“Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”* (Matthew 24:1-2)

† Introduction to the destruction of Jerusalem:

For a period of 6 years (between 64-70 A.D.) in the days of the Roman Emperor Niron, he increased the pressure and persecution of the Jews and the signs started for Jesus’ prediction to be fulfilled. As a reaction the Jews organized revolutions against the Roman governors. The news reached Rome that the Jews were resisting the Roman rulers.

† The destruction in A.D. 70:

In April A.D. 70, the Romans attacked Jerusalem and caused a famine in the city and many thousands died. Then it turned into a complete destruction with a severe blood splash. Hence, the prophecies were fulfilled about the destruction of Jerusalem and its Altar, *“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”*(Daniel 9:27) and *“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand),*”(Matthew 24:15)

† The Fate of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem and its Altar:

They became very poor, miserable, and they totally stopped their offerings from this day on.

† The effect of destruction of Jerusalem on the Christian Church:

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Four years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Christians in it left it because they believed that Jesus' predictions, about the city were going to come true, ***"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),"*** (Matthew 24:15).

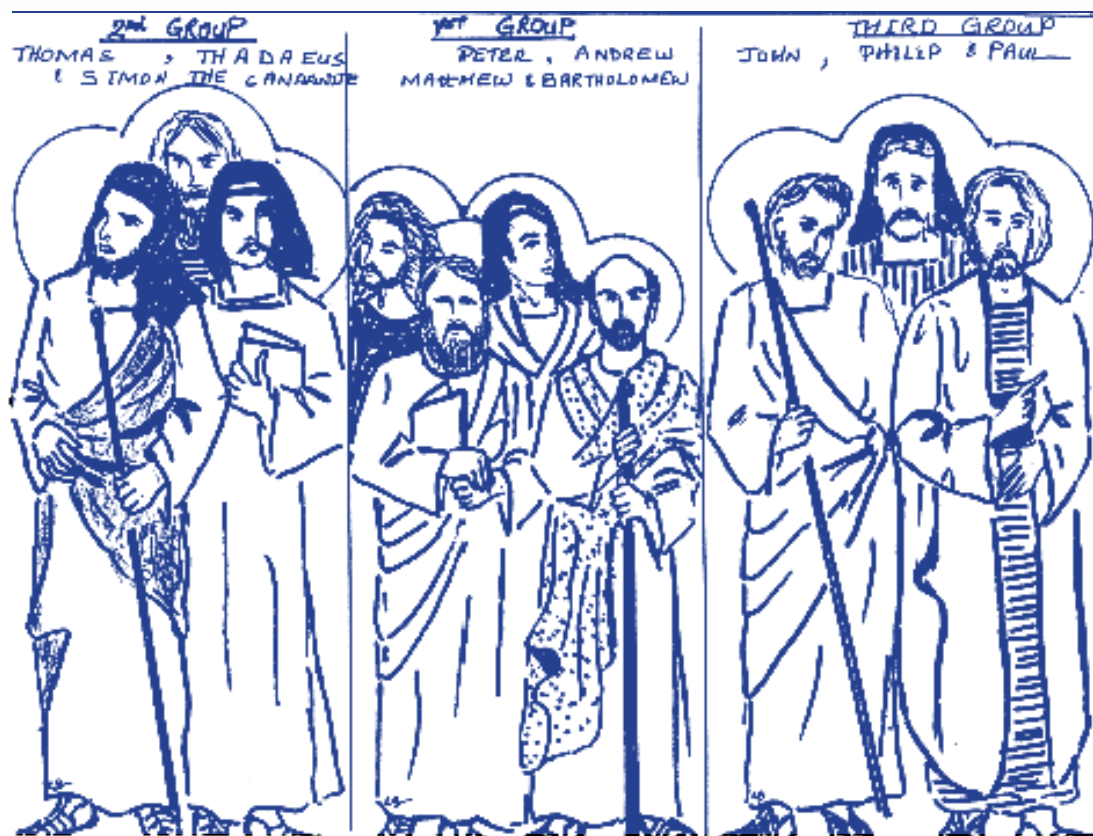
Since the year 70 A.D. (year of destruction of Jerusalem), the progress and growth of the Christian Church became very significant. Many new Christians who have some Jewish habits and religious residues started to lean completely towards Christianity and away from those Jewish habits.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Every word that our Lord Jesus said must be fulfilled. We may hear many false ideas and heresies, but what the Lord Jesus had said is the only thing that is true.
- (2) Not all people are right. Not all ideas and religions are right. There are many wrong religions around. But all these wrong ideas and religions cannot survive. Darkness cannot prevail. Christ is the true light and Christianity is the true religion.

AUGUST

Second Sunday



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[SONGS](#) 🎵

HITEN FOR THE APOSTLES

Hiten ni evki ente
nachois enioti en
apostolos nem epsepi
ente ni matheetis
Epchois...

Through the prayers of my
masters and fathers, the
apostles and the rest of the
disciples, O Lord...

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Second Sunday



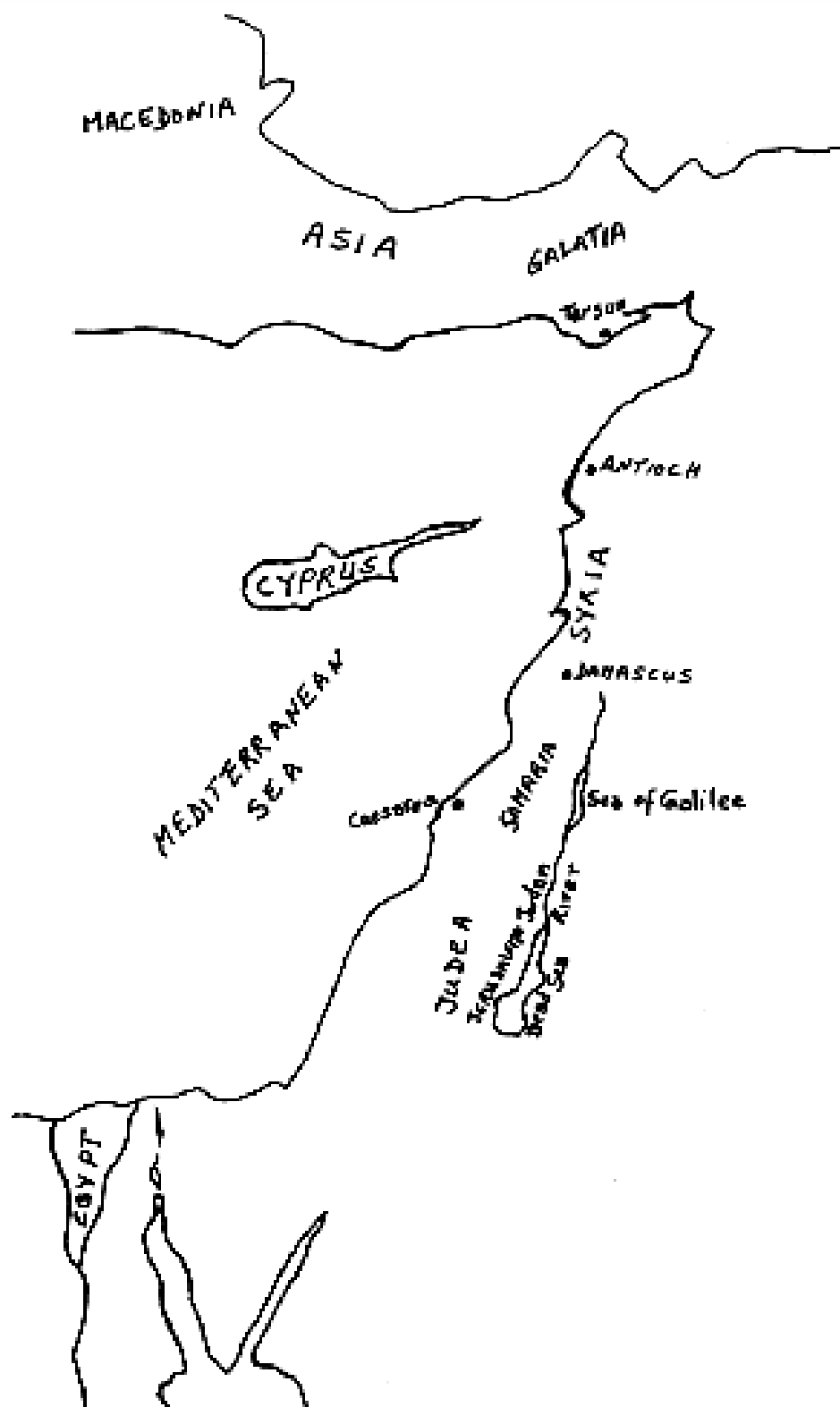
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AUGUST

Third Sunday



**AUGUST
THIRD SUNDAY**

**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA
(VI):
CHRISTIANITY IN THE WHOLE WORLD**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #6 in a series of 7 lessons about the Christian Church in the Apostolic Era. In this lesson we learn about the spread of Christianity in the whole world, factors that helped its spread and the relationship of the Roman government with the Christians.

MEMORY VERSE:

“...He preached the Christ in the Synagogues, that he is the Son of God” Acts 9:20

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Introduction

Start by reviewing briefly what was mentioned in the previous lessons:

The Apostles did exactly as our beloved Lord Jesus told them to do. (Mark 16:15).

The prophecy of David has been fulfilled. Please read (Psalm 19:4).

To facilitate describing the spread of Christianity in the whole world we can group the Apostles as follows:

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✠ First Group:

It included Peter, Andrew, Matthew and Bartholomew.

- * **Peter:** Preached to the locations to which he wrote his Letters, *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ , to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ...”* (1 Peter 1:1.)
- * **Andrew:** Preached in Skithia (a portion of Russia), the kingdom of Bosphoran east of the Black Sea and in the city of Sinope on the east side of the Black Sea.
- * **Matthew:** Preached in the Persian Gulf and was martyred there. He also preached in the kingdom of Bosphoran with Andrew.
- * **Bartholomew:** Preached in India and until this time the Christians in India consider him their preacher. He also preached with Matthew and Andrew in the kingdom of Bosphoran.

✠ Second Group:

It included Thomas, Thadaeus and Simon the Canaanite.

In general this group preached east of the locations preached by the first group.

- * **Thomas:** Preached in Edessa, which is a city in the north west part of El-Pharate River He also preached in India.
- * **Thadaeus:** Preached for 5years between the two rivers. He also preached in Edessa. It is worthwhile mentioning that the Jews in large numbers were living in those areas between the two rivers.

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* **Simon the Canaanite:** Preached in Babel and in Syria.

✧ **Third Group**

* **John and Philip:** They preached in Asia Minor

* **John:** Preached in Ephesus

* **Philip:** Preached in Ferigia and Hierapolis.

* **St. Paul:** He preached more than any of the Apostles. Please read 1 Cor. 15:10 and 2 Cor 11:23. He preached in Damascus, Syria, Tarsus, Antacia, Cyprus, Asia Minor, Pessidia, Darba, Listera, Galatia, and Ephesus and the cities in Greece.

✧ **Factors which helped the spread of Christianity in the old world:**

The main factor, no doubt, is the Lord's support and the divine nature of Christianity as a religion. However, there were existing circumstances that helped to spread Christianity and defeat other religions existing at that time. These circumstances were:

1) The dispersion of the Jews:

The Jews got dispersed all over the Roman Empire and they had Synagogues in all the cities. These Synagogues were the first locations to preach Christianity from all over the cities.

2) The strength of the Roman government and its influence in the world, and the settled social and economic life in the majority of the countries.

3) The presence of so many roads and the facilities to travel by sea.

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4) Places of preaching:

- * The Apostles preached in the Jewish Synagogue, ***“Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.”*** (Acts 9:20)
- * They also preached in homes, ***“And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.”*** (Acts 18:7) and ***“How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.”*** (Acts 20:20.)
- * They preached in Ephesus in a school, ***“but when some were hardened and did not believe but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.”*** (Acts 19:9.)
- * They preached in the houses of the rulers, ***“...who was the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.”*** (Acts 13:7.)
- * They preached in the markets, ***“Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.....And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus,.....”*** (Acts 17:17-19.)
- * St. Paul preached at the seashore, ***“And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.”*** (Acts 16:13.)

*The Times of Preaching: They were preaching day and night,

“Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:31).

✠ Relationship between the Church of the Apostles and the government:

AUGUST

Third Sunday

At the beginning, the Romans looked at Christianity as a religion coming out of the Jewish religion. This helped at the beginning to reduce the resistance of the Romans, until they realized that Christianity is a new religion and started to resist it.

✠ Christianity in Rome:

The Christians were in Rome in good numbers at the beginning of the ruling of Niron, ***“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”*** (Romans 1:8). Please read (Romans 16:5-15.)

The Christians were exposed to two major persecutions from the Roman government: one under Nero, and one under Domitian.

✠ The persecution under Emperor Nero:

The cause of the persecution was not initially religious. There was a huge fire on July 18, 64 A.D., which continued for 6 days in Rome and resulted in major destructions. It was historically proven that Nero himself (who was a very bad emperor) initiated the fire so that he can build a new city and give it his name. However, he claimed that the Christians started the fire, and he used this as a reason to kill massive numbers of Christians.

✠ The persecution under Domitian:

Domitian considered himself “God and Lord.” He considered any Christian his enemy. He killed many Christians including some of his relatives. Domitian was the one who exiled St. John after putting him in jail.

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WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) The Lord who strengthened the Apostles, who were very small in number to be able to preach to the whole world, can help every one of us. We have to ask Him for help in our prayers.
- (2) Missionary work is not hard even today. We have to start and dedicate some efforts if we are serious about getting others to see the light of Christ and enjoy it as we do.
- (3) Before we open our churches for non-Christians, we have to open our hearts for them with love.

AUGUST

Third Sunday

SONGS 🎵

WATCHING US

‘Behold , great is thy intercession, strong and acceptable with our Savior.’ (the sixth prayer)

REFRAIN

Watching us, hearing us, loving us
She is St. Mary
We are her children

she could never possibly forget us
Mother of Jesus who saved us
and she is always guiding us.

She is in heaven in her glory
And is always interceding

the pride of all our saints
with the saints on our behalf

She is heaven but she appears
Spreading on earth love and peace

to her children everywhere
and preserving faith for all

She is heaven but she sees
Mettias was hand-cuffed in jail

when her children are in tears
but she came and broke the chains

She is in heaven but she hears
Anba Abraam come out and see

the pleadings of a great Pope
the faith that moved the mountain

She is in heaven but she leaves
In the church she comes and shares

many miracles where she appears
with faith we witness her care.

NOTES

[illegible]

AUGUST

Third Sunday



For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
teaching the students
in the class

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**AUGUST
FOURTH SUNDAY**

**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA
(VII):
THE WORSHIPPING SYSTEM IN THE APOSTLES'
CHURCH**

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson #7 in a series of 7 lessons about the Christian Church in the Apostolic Era. In this lesson we learn about the system of worshipping in the church at that time.

MEMORY VERSE:

“I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God...”(1 Tim 3:15)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A)Introduction

- ✙ Start by reviewing briefly the previous lessons and proceed.
- ✙ Before we go into the details of the system of worshipping, let us first talk about the importance of the church to the believer. The church in the Apostolic state of mind is the house of God, ***“but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of***

AUGUST

Fourth Sunday

God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” (1 Timothy 3:15) The Church is the bride of Christ.

- ✝ We gain a lot of blessings and grace from the Holy Sacraments practiced by the church. The church in the Apostolic era emphasized the importance of the Sacraments: Please read Acts 9 and Acts 10 for the Baptism of Saul and Cornelius respectively.

(B) The Lord’s Day: “Sunday”

Sunday is called the Lord’s day because our Lord Jesus arose from the dead on that day. Sunday replaced Saturday that the Jews celebrate. In many locations in the Bible we see Sunday as the day of the week in which the Christians got together to have the Eucharist, *“And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, ‘Peace to you!’”* (John 20:26), *“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.”* (Acts 20:7), *“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”* (1 Cor 16:2.)

(C) Meetings of Worship:

✝ Locations:

The meetings of worship were in homes, for example, as the Church was established on Pentecost in the upper room (House of Mary, the mother of St. Mark).

✝ The System:

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prophecies of the Old Testament, Sermon, Prayers for church matters, prayers of absolution and the Sacramental prayers and the Holy Communion.

† **The Agabe: “Meetings of the believers”**

The Agape are known in the Apostles’ Church. The Christians used to get together, sing hymns and eat together. At the beginning the Agape was mixed with the Eucharist. Then the two were separated completely.

† **The Prayers:**

Men and Women pray together in the same place, each of them taking one half. They used the Lord’s prayers, “In this manner therefore pray ‘Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come.....but deliver us from the evil one for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen’” (Matthew 6:9-13) a lot. They used the Psalms also in their prayers, “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.” (1Cor 14:26) and “...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:19)

† **The Hymns:**

They used to sing hymns a lot, “...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:19) and “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching, and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Colossians 3:16).

AUGUST

Fourth Sunday

† The Sign of the Cross:

The Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is the place of honor and holiness for the Christians since the beginning. They printed it on their chests and hands. They used to Cross themselves with the sign of the Cross to gain the strength of the Cross, to defeat the devil and to remember the Lord's love which manifested on the Cross.

† The Lent:

The Lent of Wednesday and Friday:

These two days every week were fasted by the Apostles' Church instead of the Monday and Thursday that the Jews used to fast.

† The Holy Forty Days Fast:

It was also practiced for the Easter celebration.

† The Holy Week:

Was fasted also since the very beginning.

† The Christian Feasts:

There is enough evidence that they celebrated at least two feasts: The Easter (for the resurrection of the Lord) and the Pentecost (for the Holy Spirit coming to the Church).

† Prayers for the dead:

The Church in the Apostles' era practiced praying for the dead. The church believed in the benefits of these prayers to the dead and the people who are attending the prayers. St. John emphasized that these prayers are beneficial for the people who did not do the type of sins

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that lead to death, *“If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death.”* (1 John 5:16), *“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior...”* (1 Timothy 2:1-3), and *“The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day- and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.”* (2 Timothy 1:18) This means that these prayers help the dead who spend a holy life with God but may have done some minor mistakes they did not know were sins.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Let us stick to our Apostolic Church. We will hear of many new religions of the world, but must not be attracted to all these false teachings. Our church goes back in history to the days of the Apostles.
- (2) How about changes in our system of worship? If we opened up for changes, we cannot maintain the Apostolic system of worship. There are no benefits in introducing changes. It can only hurt. Other Christian denominations lost badly because of these changes. “The Lord Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.”

AUGUST

Fourth Sunday

[SONGS](#) 🎵

O VIRGIN MARY

O Virgin Mary , you are
And brighter than the sun

O morning star, shine upon
Enlighten my mind, and the eyes

O Mother of Jesus – O
Forsake me not whenever

Above the stars and the moon
that shines at noon

this temple of my soul
and the senses all

my mother and my hope
with sin I cannot cope

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For the success
of this Sunday
School Program
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

in his/her preparation
of the lessons and in
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MAJOR

MAJOR REFERENCES (with permission)

- (1) Books by the Thrice-Blessed Pope Shenouda III of blessed memory up to March 2011.
- (2) El-Keraza Magazine, head publisher: the Thrice-Blessed Pope Shenouda III of blessed memory, all issues up to March 2011.
- (3) Books by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, up to the present time.
- (4) El-Keraza Magazine, head publisher: His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, up to the present time.
- (5) Recorded Sermons by His Grace Bishop Rowiss up to March 2011.
- (6) Books by His Grace Bishop Moussa up to the present time.
- (7) All books by Mr. Kamal Habib (Late Bishop Biman Bishop of Mallawi)
- (8) Books by His Grace the Late Bishop Youanis, Bishop of El-Gharbia.
- (9) Books by Late Father Bishop Kamel of St. George Coptic Church, Alexandria, Egypt.
- (10) All issues of "Sout El-Rabi" magazine, St. George Church, Alexandria, Egypt.
- (11) Books by Father Tadros Y. Malaty, St. George Coptic Church, Alexandria, Egypt, up to the present time.
- (12) "Bahgat El-Aiad" by Yassa Mansour, 1970.
- (13) "The Seven Church Sacraments" by St. Habib Girgis the Archdeacon, 1968.
- (14) All Colouring books, Father Tadros Y. Malaty, St. George Coptic Church, Alexandria, Egypt.

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THE FOLLOWING TABLES
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