

PREPARING SERVANTS FOR
The Service Of The Kingdom

BOOK 3
LOGIN TO FAITH



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**Preparing Servants For
The Service Of The
Kingdom**

This is a course for preparing servants and leaders for the service of the Lord. It includes a comprehensive outline of the major Orthodox doctrines based on the teaching of the Holy Bible, the Tradition and the sayings of the Early Fathers who rightly taught the Word of Truth. The lessons illustrate vividly the application of the Orthodox Faith in the Church and in the Service. The course is divided into three books:

Book2

**Zoom Into The
Heavenly Places.**

Our life in Church, which is the Body of Christ, is a foretaste of heaven on earth. This book explains how the Christian servant can be a living member of the Church. The Holy Spirit uses living branches abiding in the True Vine Jesus Christ to do His work in the Church and in the world.

Book3

Login To Faith.

The lessons in this book are designed to help prepare servants who are conversant with the biblical aspects of their Orthodox Faith so that they can pass it on to the people they serve. They also tackle some contemporary issues from a biblical perspective.

Acknowledgement

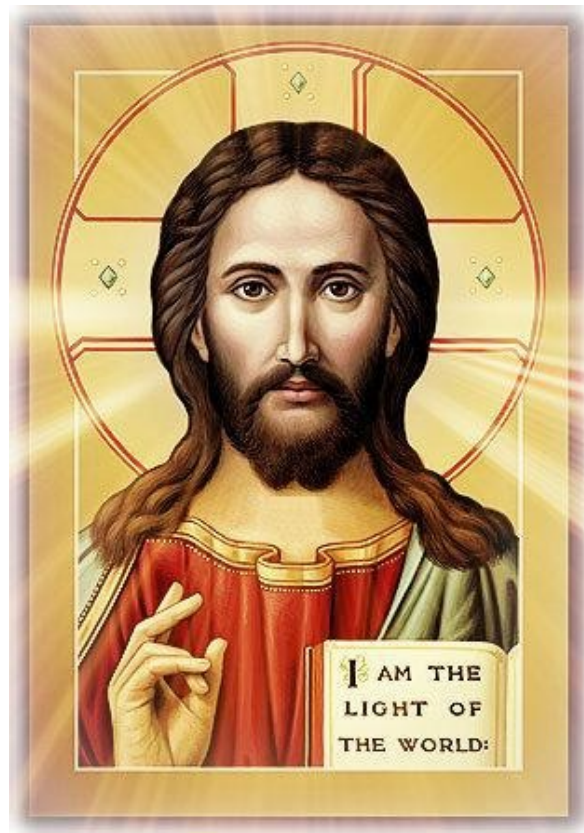
"But the people who know their God will be strong and do valiantly," Dan 11:32.

We praise our Good Lord and thank Him for His great help throughout this work. Special thanks are given to the many God-loving people who were moved by the Spirit of the Lord to assist in the production of this book.

May the Lord repay them hundred-fold and bless them



Login To Faith



"I am the true vine and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit....As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me," John15:1, 2, 4.



Book 3: Login To Faith



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Preface

“The Lord has done great things with us; we are glad,” *Psa126:3.*

Login to Faith is the third book of the course for preparing servants for the service of the Kingdom. It provides a comprehensive outline of the biblical aspects of the Orthodox Faith and their practical application in the life of the individual believer. It includes lessons that deal with contemporary issues such as homosexuality, different types of addiction, different types of killing and IVF, cloning and cremation from biblical and orthodox perspectives.

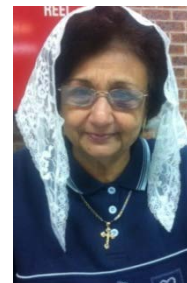
The lessons were originally given in Sydney, Australia (1990-2010) to pre-servants classes in

- St Anthony and St Paul's Church, Guildford
- St Mary's Church, Sydenham
- The Holy Apostles and St Abanoub's Church, Blacktown
- Archangel Michael and St Pishoy's Church, Mount Druitt.

To be well learnt and versed in the Orthodox faith is essential for the efficient and effective Service of God. We hope these lessons assist individuals in strengthening their faith and help them in passing on to others the fundamentals of the Orthodox teachings that have been passed down to us by the Apostles and Early Fathers of our Church.

June 2013 AD

Feast of the Ascension of our Lord into Heaven



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THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST

Big Idea: Jesus Christ is no ordinary man. He is God made man.

Bible Text: John10:24-38 and others.

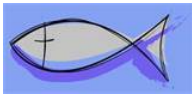
Bible Verse: 1Tim3:16, "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✕ That Jesus is no ordinary man.
 - ✕ That Jesus possessed the five natural attributes of God.
 - ✕ That the five works of God are ascribed to Jesus.
 - ✕ That Jesus claimed to be God (John10:30; John12:45; John8:18, 58).
 - ✕ He was the great I AM in person (Exo3:14; Lev24:12-16).
 - ✕ That belief in the deity of Christ is essential to salvation.
- Feel:**
- ✕ Sure of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour (Rom10:9).
 - ✕ Capable of proving the divinity of Christ to others.
- Do:**
- ✕ Thank God for His love and salvation.
 - ✕ Be always ready to stand fast by their faith in the deity of Christ and explain it to others.



THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST



As Christians we believe in the person of Christ. We believe that Jesus Christ is God made man, and that He is our Lord and Saviour. **"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved," Rom10:9.** To believe in the deity of Christ is essential to salvation. To deny the deity of Christ is to rob mankind of a saviour and condemn us eternally.

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Jesus was no ordinary man. Several hundred years before He was born, Isaiah the prophet said, **"behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son," Isa7:14.** No other man in all history could say his mother was a virgin. The scriptures teach that He did not have a human father; if He did he would have inherited the sins and impurities that all men have, since **"that which is born of the flesh is of the flesh," John3:6.** Since He was conceived not by natural means, but by the Holy Spirit, He stands as the one man who came forth pure from the hand of God. He was the only man since Adam who could stand before His fellow men and ask, **"which of you convicts Me of sin," John8:46.**

If we honestly probe our minds we have to admit that there are mysteries about the incarnation that none of us can ever understand. In fact St Paul speaks of God manifest in the flesh as a great "mystery". In his letter to the Philippians St Paul explained the "Man who is God" by saying, **"have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Jesus Christ who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God, a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men," Phil 2:5-7.**

DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

The uniqueness of Christ is that in His life on earth He displayed every known attribute or characteristic of deity. By definition the attributes of God are those distinguishing characteristics of the nature of God, which are inseparable from the idea of deity and which constitute the basis and grounds for His various manifestations to His creatures.

First, God is Holy. In The Old Testament God is described as **"holy in all**



His works," **Psa145:17.** The prophet Isaiah in His vision of the Lord God declares, **"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts," Isa6:3.** In the New Testament Jesus Christ, "the holy child" (Luke1:35) and the sinless man (John8:46) possesses this unique attribute. Thus Jesus Christ had a characteristic that only God could possess.

Secondly, God is Just. In order to guard His holiness, God must exercise justice. Jesus Christ was just. He exhibited this characteristic when He drove the racketeers out of the temple with a whip (John2:15). He is also described as just in forgiving us our sins (1John1:9). When He died for our sins it was: **"The just dying for the unjust," 1Pet3:18.**

Thirdly, God is Mercy. This characteristic of deity was seen in the entire life of Jesus Christ. When the woman who was an adulteress was brought before the authorities and condemned to be stoned, Jesus defended her with the charge, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone". Her accusers retreated in embarrassment. Jesus Christ exhibited God's mercy and told her to go and sin no more.

The love, mercy and compassion of Jesus came out time after time through His public ministry. In the opening address that Jesus gave at His hometown of Nazareth He quoted Isaiah the prophet, **"the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, and to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," Luke4:18.**

Fourth, God is Love. God's love is the continuing result of His holiness, justice and mercy. As a Holy God, He hates sin and can have no fellowship with sin. Because the Bible tells us that the soul that sins must surely die, we can see that separation from God is a result from sin. However, because God is also mercy, He longs to save the guilty sinner and must then provide a substitute which will satisfy His divine justice. He provided that substitute in Jesus Christ. There's God's love, **"for God so loved the world, that He sent His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life," John3:16.**

Fifth , Jesus Christ possesses the three great Omni's of God: Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent. Jesus Christ performed many



miracles. He raised the dead. He took a few loaves and fishes and multiplied them to feed thousands. He cured the chronically sick and healed the crippled. He ordered the sea and wind and they obeyed Him. But why should this be surprising? Jesus said, **"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," Matt28:18.** Only God could make such a claim. **Jesus is omnipotent;** He possesses all power; He is Almighty.

Jesus Christ was omniscient. This means He knew all things, and He still knows all things. The Scriptures say, **"Jesus knowing their thoughts," Matt9:4. "He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man," John2:24, 25.** St Paul declares, **"In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col 2:3.**

God can be everywhere at once; **He is omnipresent.** We are physical creatures who are bound by time and space and can only be in one place at a time. God transcends time and space and so does Jesus Christ. He existed before time began. **"Before Abraham was born, I AM," John8:58. "He is before all things," Col 1:27.** Jesus is not earth-bound. He said, **"where two or three of you are gathered in My name, there I am in their midst," Matt18:20.** Jesus is omnipresent.

THE FIVE WORKS OF GOD ARE ASCRIBED TO JESUS

"Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do you keep us in doubt? If you are the Christ tell us plainly". Jesus answered them, **"I told you and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me...If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him," John10:24-38.**

The Five Works Of God Are:

- Creation (John1:3; Heb1:3).
- Preservation (John6:39).
- Forgiveness (Mark2:5, 7).
- Raising the dead (John6:40; Rom1:4).
- Judgment (John5:22, 24& 27).

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Jesus claimed to be God. He is God before all ages, and He remains God



after the incarnation and for all eternity. He declares:

- Equality with the Father (John10:30; John12:45).
- Witness of the Father (John8:18).
- Sent by the Father (John8:18).
- The Light of the world (I AM) (John8:12).
- The Way, the Truth and the Life (I AM) (John14:6).
- The Resurrection and the Life (I AM) (John11:25).

The way we reach the Father is forever established in the Person and work of the Son. The Son is the truth because He is the unique revelation of the Father. Christ is the life who became Man so we might have life.

God is the creator of heaven and earth and all the host of them (Gen1:1, 2:2). To the Colossians, St Paul declares that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation, for in Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, all things were created through Him and for Him (Col 1:15-17).

He is the supreme manifestation of God **"for in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell," Col 1:19**. Through Him God was pleased to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven making peace by the blood of His cross (Col 1:20). This means **"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," 2Cor5:19**; **"For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily," Col 2:9**. And you have come to fullness of life in Him, who is the head of all rule and authority (Col 2:10).

As Jesus Christ is our life, not even death can hinder us from coming to Him, then we ourselves will become "children of God", living eternally in the love of the Father (John1:12).



THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST

Big Idea: Jesus Christ is God made man. He was born without the sin nature.

Bible Text: Matt1:18-24.

Bible Verse: Isa7:14, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel". This is repeated in Matt1:23.

Students will

Know:

- ✕ Since Adam sinned, all born thereafter inherit a sin nature from their parents (Psa51:5, Rom5:12).
- ✕ If Christ inherited a sin nature, then He was a sinner and died for His own sin, and even though Christ lived a sinless life, He would have been unable to save one soul.
- ✕ God the Father solved this problem by "the Virgin Birth of Christ" (Matt1:23).
- ✕ Jesus did not have a human father for the Holy Spirit was His Father. Mary, His mother, did not pass on a sin nature to baby Jesus.

Feel: Grateful to and praise our wonderful God to solve this difficult problem so that we might have a saviour who could truly redeem us from sin on the cross of Calvary.

Do: The mystery of the "virgin birth" is to be believed, adored and accepted by Christians.



THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST



God in His goodness created man with a free will. God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen2:17). They fell from their original state of innocence when Satan approached Eve through the serpent and tempted her to eat of the forbidden fruit (Gen3:1-5). She ate the fruit and also gave it to her husband to eat (Gen3:6, 7). Their disobedience plunged them and, subsequently, all the human race into a state of sin and corruption. **"Therefore just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and this death spread to all men, because all sinned," Rom5:12.**

God in His love had a plan to save Adam and his children from death. He promised a saviour born of **the woman** (Gen3:15). Any human being is born of a man and a woman.

GOD'S PLAN TO REDEEM MAN

1. **"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head and you shall be on guard for His heal," Gen3:15.**
2. **"Now the Lord said to Abraham, 'Get out of your country... I will make you a great nation," Gen12:1-3.**
3. **"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah... until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the expectation of the nations," Gen49:10.**
4. **"Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel," Isa7:14.**
5. **In the fullness of time the Saviour is born (Matt1:18-25; Luke2:4-7).**

THE UNUSUAL CONCEPTION (Matt1:25)

Although St Joseph and St Mary were married (i.e. betrothed) they never lived together as husband and wife. How do we know that?

- Matt 1:19, "Then Joseph **her husband**, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly". Why would St Joseph do such a thing if St Mary was bearing his child?
- Luke1:34, "Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" How can I have child when I am not married? St Mary



inferred that she was a pure virgin abhorring immorality.

How then can we explain that the Scriptures refer to St Joseph as St Mary's husband (Matt 1:19)? This is explained in Luke 1:26, 27, where St Mary is described to be "a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph".

Betrothal is an engagement to marry. From biblical times until about the eleventh century AD, Jewish marriage had two stages. The betrothal came first, followed a year later by the marriage ceremony itself. Unlike modern engagement, biblical betrothal was a legally binding commitment (Deut 20:7). The betrothal committed a man and a woman to each other. Even though the marriage was not consummated until after the wedding ceremony, the betrothal could only be broken by the man giving his betrothed a written certificate of divorce (Deut 24:1).

Who then is Jesus' Father? Every child must have a father. Matthew explicitly states that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin (Matt 1:18, 20 & 23). The angel also carefully explained to St Joseph that the Holy Spirit would be the Father (Luke 1:35). The role of St Joseph was to protect St Mary from the extremity of the law (Lev 20:10). She would have been stoned to death as an adulteress.

WHO THEN IS JESUS?

God the Son born of the Father before all ages became incarnate from the Blessed Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit and became Man. **Jesus is the "Holy One", The "Son of God" (Luke 1:35), "Immanuel" which is translated "God with us" (Matt 1:23).** God takes special care to show us

- That the unborn child could not possibly be contaminated with a human father (Matt 1:25).
- That Christ did not inherit a sin nature. If He did, then He was a sinner and died for His own sin. Even though Christ lived a sinless life (John 8:46), He would have been unable to save one soul.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

If man is totally depraved, then he needs a Saviour to redeem him. This Saviour must be pure and capable. Jesus Christ is the only possible Saviour of the world. The only way that Jesus could become man without a sin nature is by the "virgin birth". Salvation is closely linked with this doctrine.



If Jesus was not born of a virgin, then I am a lost sinner still and so are you.

THE PURPOSE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

To reveal God (John1:18): Jesus came to declare and reveal the Father to man. Man's spiritual eyes have been fogged by sin. Therefore, man forgot God and deviated and worshipped idols.

To bridge the chasm between God and men: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus," 1Tim2:5.

To save men (Heb2:14, 16): This was the basic purpose that brought Christ to earth (Matt1:21). He came to change the moral condition we were in by releasing us from sin and the prospect of facing divine wrath and even making us able to do truly good works (Eph2:1-10).

To rescue the whole creation (Rom8:19-23).

Let us thank God that He found a way to bring the Saviour into the world without the taint of original sin. Let us thank Him for sending us His only Begotten Son born of the Woman and not an angel or archangel or prophet to save us.

The virgin-born Saviour is undiscernible truth. It is a mystery hidden in God. There is a sense in which all life and birth is a mystery. How can a tree put life into its seed? The mystery of the virgin birth is to be believed, adored and accepted by Christians. Let us ceaselessly in our teaching present the virgin- born Saviour to the world.



SALVATION

Big Idea: The concept of Salvation in the Orthodox Church.

Bible Text: Matt 28:19-20; Matt 25:31-46.

Bible Verse: Mark 16:16, "He who believes and is baptised will be saved".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✠ That salvation is the remedy of our problems.
 - ✠ Why there is no salvation except through the Blood of Christ.
 - ✠ The conditions of salvation through the Blood of Christ.
 - ✠ The importance of spiritual striving.

Feel: Sure of God's promises.

Do: Trust God and keep on striving till the end.



SALVATION



We all recognise that the world had changed radically since the beginning of this century. We, who once marvelled at the Telegraph, now take the far greater miracle of television and electronics for-granted. Not so long ago many of man's physical diseases were termed hopeless and incurable. Today, we have drugs so effective that many age-old diseases are disappearing.

But with this progress, man has not solved the basic problem of the human race. We have successfully probed the far reaches of space and conquered the unknown. But we still can't govern ourselves or live together in equality and peace. We may discover newer and better vitamins, but there is nothing new about our troubles. They are the same old ones that man has always had; only they seem magnified and more abundant. They may come upon us in new ways, they may seem to give sharper pain and deeper anguish; but fundamentally we are facing the same temptations, the same trials, the same testing that have always confronted mankind.



Forever, since that tragic moment in the Garden of Eden, when man gave up God's will for his own will, man has been plagued by the same problems, namely sin, sorrow and death. Their cause is stated in the third chapter of Genesis. The terrible conditions that produced them are related in the first chapter of Romans. Fortunately, the Gospel of Jesus Christ gives us their remedy and the way of salvation.

SALVATION IS THE REMEDY OF OUR PROBLEMS

Sin: Rom3:23, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God".

Remedy: 1John1:9, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".

Sorrow: Job5:7, "For man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward".

Remedy: 1Pet5:7, "Casting all your care upon Him for He cares for you".

Death: Heb9:27, "it is appointed unto men once to die".

Remedy: John3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life".



Love unto death is an invitation for trust and assurance. The promise of eternal life is the recipe for faith. St Paul in **Heb 11:1** says, "To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see". In **John3:18** we are told, "He who believes in the Son is not condemned". In **Acts10:43**, we have the promise that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name. Also St Paul writes to the Romans, "Therefore, since we are justified by faith we have peace with God through the Lord," **Rom5:1**.

Therefore, we can conclude that by faith in Jesus Christ, we:

- have forgiveness of our sins (no sin);
- have peace (no sorrow); and
- have eternal life and do not perish (no death).

We can also state that:

FORGIVENESS + PEACE + ETERNAL LIFE = SALVATION

The gift of salvation is for everyone who reaches out and accepts it by receiving Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to give us the answers to the three enduring problems of sin, sorrow and death. In the restless sea of human passions, Christ stands steadfast and clam, ready to welcome all who will turn to Him and accept the blessings of safety and peace.

No Salvation, Except Through The Blood Of Christ: Why?

Sin is disobedience to God, transgression of His rights and lack of love for Him. Since God is Unlimited, sin is unlimited too because it is committed against God, the Unlimited. Therefore, sin cannot be forgiven except by an unlimited propitiation.

All works done by the limited man are limited. God alone is Unlimited. The only solution then for the remission of sin is that God Himself becomes incarnate and dies. In this way, His death can be an unlimited propitiation (atonement) that satisfies God's unlimited justice which required punishing the unlimited sin committed against God the Unlimited.

This applies to the sin of Adam as well as to the sin of anyone else. "The wages of sin is death," **Rom6:23**. The punishment of sin is the same 'death'



in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament (Ezek18:4; Psa49:7; Jam1:14-15; Zep1:18). **"There is none who does good, no, not one; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Rom3:12, 23.** So, everyone came under the sentence of death, **"that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," Rom3:19.**

There became no other means to attain salvation except that God's Grace would seek us and it did. God's Grace sought us and saved us through the blood of Christ, the only means for Salvation. The Bible says, **"Without shedding of blood there is no remission," Heb 9:22.** Also in Acts4:12, **"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved".**

BLOOD ATONEMENT

The distinctive feature of Christianity is blood atonement. Without it we cannot be saved. Blood is the life-sustaining fluid in the veins and arteries of humans and animals. The Bible treats blood as a sacred fluid, symbolic of life, which is itself a gift from God. The thought is best expressed in Lev17:11, **"The life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourself on the altar".**

Blood expresses the essence of the Old Testament sacrifice, in which an animal substitute was killed to make atonement for human sins, i.e. put man "at one" with God (Lev4). Thus, atonement in the Old Testament is directly linked with sin, sacrifice and God's forgiveness of the sinner (Lev4:26). Yet it is only through the New Testament that we fully understood the Old Testament ceremony. St Paul explains the death of Christ in terms of atonement, **"God presented Him (Jesus) as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His Blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished," Rom3:25.**

The Old Testament sacrifices had provided no moral basis on which God could extend His forgiveness to sinners. Yet God had forgiven and had done so justly, knowing that in the coming death of Christ, the moral foundation of forgiveness would be laid. Christ's death and resurrection have put us "at one" with God:

- "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have been justified by His Blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's



wrath through Him," Rom5:8, 9.

- "In Him we have redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of sins," Eph1:7.
- "Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the Blood of Christ," Eph2:13.

FIVE THINGS THE BLOOD OF CHRIST BRINGS

It redeems (1Pet1:18-19). Redemption means "buying back". We had been sold for nothing to the devil, but Christ redeemed us and bought us back.

It brings us near (Eph2:13). When we were strangers in the world without God and having no hope, Jesus brought us near to God.

It makes peace (Col 1:20). The world will never know peace until it finds it in the Cross of Jesus Christ. You will never know peace with God, peace of conscience, peace of mind and peace of soul until you stand at the foot of the Cross and identify yourself with Christ by faith. There is the secret of peace. This is peace with God.

It justifies (Rom5:9). It changes men's standing before God. It is a change from guilt and condemnation to pardon and forgiveness.

It cleanses (1John1:7). All sins are cleansed by the death of Christ.

The Blood of Christ is capable of the remission of the sins of the whole world (John3:16; 1John2:2). The propitiation of Christ, then, is unlimited and is sufficient for the remission of all sins of all the people in all ages, in the past, present and future. The Blood of Christ is available, ready to save and capable of that.

However, in spite of the availability of the Blood of Christ, some people perished, some still perish and others will perish. This is because there are certain conditions that must be fulfilled initially, so that a sinner might deserve to be saved by His Blood.

CONDITIONS OF SALVATION THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

There are four essential conditions, namely:

- Faith
- Baptism



- Church sacraments of Confirmation, Repentance and Eucharist.
- Good works.

Faith: It is the main condition to deserve the Blood of Christ (John3:16, 18). Our Lord Jesus declared to the Jews, **"If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins,"** John8:24. In order to be saved through the Blood of Christ, you must believe in the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

Baptism: The Lord said expressly and plainly, **"He who believes and is baptised will be saved,"** Mark16:16, John3:5.

When Jesus sent His disciples to preach His Kingdom, He ordered them, **"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you,"** Matt28:19, 20. These two verses indicate that salvation requires:

- Faith which comes through discipleship;
- Baptism which is the direct gate to salvation;
- Good works by keeping the commandments and the Sacraments.

The Blood of Christ is like a great treasure which we can only access if we have faith, are baptised, receive the Holy Spirit, have Holy Communion, repent and do good works worthy of our Faith.

THE SACRAMENTS

Confirmation (Acts2:38; 8:14-16; 1John2:2:20, 27). This sacrament is essential so that we can lead a spiritual life and proceed along the way of Salvation.

Eucharist (John6:53-58). Eternal life depends on partaking of the flesh of the Lord to the extent that whoever does not partake of it, will have no life; he will perish.

Confession (1John1:18; Luke13:3; 1John1:19). Since a believer is apt to fall and perish due to his sins in spite of his being in faith; and since man is in a continuous battle against sin and every day he stumbles and falls, God gave us repentance. However, repentance without the Blood of Christ is of no avail. Repentance makes one worthy of being washed and cleansed by the



Blood of Christ and thus be saved.

GOOD WORKS (John5:28-29; Matt12:36; Rev22:12).

Works are very important for our salvation and for determining our destiny. Works are either good or evil. Good works are the fruit of faith and evidence of its presence and thus faith is perfected. But man's good works need the support of Christ's grace; **"apart from Me you can do nothing,"** John15:5. Evil works lead to perdition (loss). Many Bible verses explain and prove this statement. For example, according to Gal 5:19-21, Eph5:5-6 and Col 3:5, 6, evil works prevent the sinner from entering the Kingdom of Heaven.



We are judged according to works according to the Old Testament (Psa62:12) and the New Testament (Matt16:27). Jesus Christ also said **"when I was hungry you fed Me, thirsty, you gave me drink...etc,"** Matt25:31-46. Works are the fruit requisite of faith. A living faith must bear fruit; such fruit is good works (Matt7:19-21). Works are evidence of being born of God. How do you know that you are a child of God? The answer is in 1John2:29; 1John3:9. Good behaviour and good works are as important as faith (2Thess 3:6); not faith alone!!

SPIRITUAL STRIVING (Luke13:22-30)

As Jesus went through the cities and villages teaching, one said to Him, **"Lord, are there few who are saved? And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from',** Luke13:22-25. Neither verbal confession of the Lordship of Jesus nor sacramental experiences (Luke13:26) avail anything unless we do the works of faith.

Is man then saved merely by his own works or by Grace or by both of them? Man can't be saved by his own spiritual striving only as God said, **"apart from Me you can do nothing"**. Grace alone too, would not save you unless your own will and decision respond to it. For example, in the battle, soldiers use weapons; they fight and win. Is victory due to their bravery or weapons? Bravery without weapons is not good enough and weapons without



skilled soldiers are of no use. The same applies to spiritual warfare.

Therefore, it is not through our works and striving on our own but by working with God's grace and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Weapons are there, but one has to fight and work with God (1Cor3:9). When practicing spiritual exercises we must depend on God's power not our own strength. **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," Phil 4:13.** Every success should be attributed to God, not to our courage or self control.

HOPE IN GOD'S MERCY

To what extent may we have hope in God's Mercy? You should know that there is no limit for hope in God's Mercy, as it is infinite. Perfect hope is realised when it is clarified of any doubt, and is steadfast with all assurance. Such trust amounts from two things; one pertains to God, the other to man.

Hope is based on belief in God's attributes, the atonement of His Blood and His true promises. His attributes are infinite Mercy and Compassion (Ezek18:23). On the other hand, we lose salvation when we deviate towards evil by our own free will; not that God is unable to save us.

So don't lose hope as Cain or Judas of Iscariot. The biggest mistake is to fall into despair; it is a plot of the devil. Also it is a big mistake to depend on Christ's Blood and forget our own striving; then we become unworthy of the desserts of the Blood of Christ. We would be mistaken if we think that we have been renewed and just sit back. We trust in Christ's Blood but we must acknowledge that we can still perish because of our sins if we don't repent (Luke13:3).

HAVE YOU BEEN SAVED???

The answer is yes, from original sin through Baptism; this is obtained by the Blood of Christ and the power of His atonement and redemption. As to final salvation, we'll receive it after putting off the flesh. The martyrs and saints are celebrated on their death date. We sin everyday and have to repent from our sins every day in order that we can trust that we are saved. St Paul the apostle says in **2Tim2:11, 12, "if we be dead with Him... and if we suffer..."** This means salvation does not depend on God alone but on us as well.



IS IT POSSIBLE THAT A BELIEVER PERISHES?

It is possible. There is a difference between a 'select' and a 'believer'. All selected are believers, but not all believers are selected. Some of them may fall and perish. "Then you will begin to say, 'we ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say to them, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity,'" Luke13:26, 27.

There are many evidences of believers who perished. Jesus gave the example of **the branch which is cut off** (John15:2-6). It is imperative that we continue to abide in Christ. St Paul advises, "**Therefore, let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall,**" 1Cor10:11, 12. Lot's wife left Sodom but then perished. If we sin wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the Truth, we will definitely perish (Heb10:26-31; 1Tim4:1-3). **Judas** the apostle perished. In the parable of the Soils, **those who fell on rocks** perished (Luke8:13). We also learnt of the perdition or loss of **Demas**, St Paul's assistant in 2Tim4:10.

St Paul taught about **the great apostasy** and the coming of the '**son of perdition**', the antichrist, at the end of the age, (2Thess2:3; Heb6:2-4). These were enlightened and fell away also (2Pet 2:20). In Rev 13:7, St John told us about **the beast** who was to make war with the **saints** and overcome them; the 'saints' surely means the 'believers'.

CONCLUSION

Yes, we are sure of God's promises of Salvation; we trust in them but we must not depend on ourselves. Therefore, we ought to strive and keep on striving till the end. By His Grace, Jesus unites us with His righteousness and life. Jesus Christ alone lived in complete righteousness, and He alone was resurrected from the dead. Therefore, He alone is the fullness of the glory of God, and we receive that glory in Him (John14:6). The glory of God is both eternal righteousness and eternal life.



FAITH TO BELIEVE

Big Idea: Faith is realization and confidence that involve both the mind and the will.

Bible Text: Heb 11: 23-29.

Bible Verse: Heb11:1, "Now faith is the substance (realization) of things hoped for, the evidence (confidence) of things not seen".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✕ The definition of faith (Heb 11:1).
 - ✕ That believing is intellectual.
 - ✕ That believing is personal.
 - ✕ That believing involves deciding either for or against Christ and His offer of salvation (Rom10:9) e.g. Jocabed and Moses.
- Feel:** As Moses, so each and every one of us must meet Christ personally and decide for Him at one stage in life.
- Do:** Believe in a contemporary Christ and take the leap of faith in our daily life.



FAITH TO BELIEVE



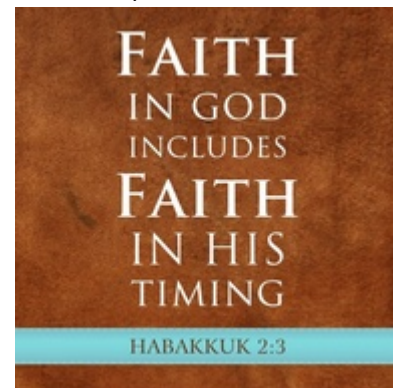
As Christians we believe that Jesus Christ is God made man, and that by faith in His atoning work, we are saved from sin and its consequences. St Paul describes **faith** as **"the substance (realization) of things hoped for, the evidence (confidence) of things not seen," Heb11:1**. We hope for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in His glory to take us with Him in His Kingdom (things not seen).

Faith is confidence in God that leads us to believe His Word, the Holy Bible. In Rom10:9, St Paul explains that besides the knowledge and intellectual faith which involves our mind, we have to decide for or against Christ and His offer of salvation. This means that faith involves our will as well. **"If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that God has raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, you will be saved," Rom10:9.**

An illustration of this is found in the story of a little girl who asked her father if she could go down to him in the cellar. He said that she might, but when she was about to descend, she found that the ladder had been taken away. "I can't get down" she called, "there is no ladder". "Jump down" said the father, "and I will catch you, my arms are wide open". The girl had faith in her father. She jumped unhesitatingly into the darkness, and was safely caught in her father's arms.

When I say I believe, I mean that I believe not only with my **mind** which tells me my father is down there waiting for me, but also with my **will** which makes me take the leap of faith into his waiting arms.

Another example is that of Jocabed, Moses' mother. She had faith in God's promise to deliver them from the slavery of the Egyptians and take them into the Promised Land. Based upon her faith, she made a decision not to throw her son in the river, but to hide him for three months. Later, she put him in a basket and trusted him in God's hand. As his nurse, she transplanted in him her faith in God's promise.





Again when Moses grew up, he had to make a decision whether to follow the faith of his mother, which is belonging to God's chosen people from whom the Saviour will come, or belonging to the Egyptians and be a Pharaoh. He could have argued by choosing the latter, he would be identifying with his grandfather Joseph. Indeed, he could have thought that would have been God's choice since He brought him to the palace.

However, by faith, when Moses became of age, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward (Heb11:25, 26).



When we were baptised our godparent (sponsor) was the one who renounced Satan and accepted Christ for us. He / She was the one who confessed the "I believe" of the Nicene Creed for us. But if we are to be true Christians, there must be a time in life when we must say these words for ourselves, a time when we ourselves decide for Christ and commit our whole being to Him as personal Lord and Saviour. Unless this happens we are Christians in name only.



What makes a Christian a Christian is this personal commitment to Christ. One's formal belonging to the Church through Baptism and other Sacramental participation remains a mere potential if the individual commitment does not take place. The Sacramental gifts of Baptism and Eucharist and of all the Sacraments are essential for an objective membership in the body of Christ; but again they are pure potentials if a conversion of the heart and mind does not occur at some point in life.

To say "I believe in Christ" is to believe in Christ who lives today, not just an important historical figure. The kind of Christ I believe in speaks to me today. He is present with me today. He judges me today. He is a contemporary Christ.



To say "I believe in Christ" is to know God in Christ. To know that He loves me, that He came down from heaven for me, that He gave His life for me.

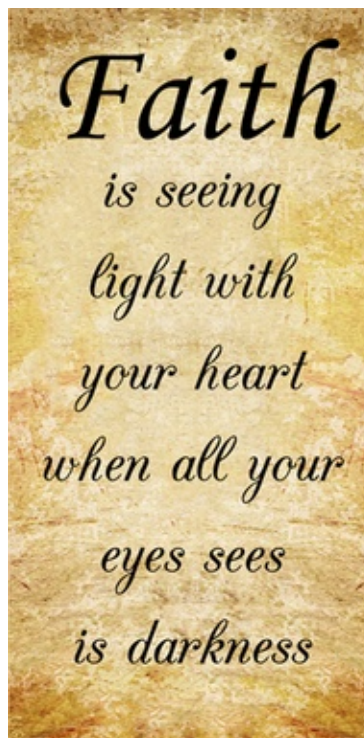
In view of all this, I can safely trust that no matter what He allows to come to me, there is meaning and purpose and love behind it: God's meaning, God's purpose, God's love.

"I believe" said the apostles. They made the leap of faith into Christ's arms. Listen to the record of what their faith accomplished. "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to fight the armies of the aliens," Heb11:33, 34.



Conclusion

Belief is something personal, something you must do for yourself, something nobody else can do for you. No one will ever get to heaven on someone else's faith. We need to believe in a contemporary Christ and take the leap of faith in our daily life.





CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER

Big Idea: Christ is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," John1:29.

Bible Text: Exo12:1-4; Heb 9:22; Acts 4:12; Rev 5:6 and 19:11.

Bible Verse: Act4:12, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Students will

- Know:**
- ✘ The background of the Jewish Passover.
 - ✘ A new "Passover Lamb".
 - ✘ God our saviour desires all men to be saved (1Tim 2:4).
 - ✘ In every mass we celebrate the Salvation of Christ.
- Feel:**
- ✘ Grateful for the love of Christ and His free gift of Salvation.
 - ✘ The need to spread the good news to everyone.
- Do:**
- ✘ Yield their will to Christ.
 - ✘ Put their sins on the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
 - ✘ Attend the mass especially on Holy Thursday well prepared.
 - ✘ Help others realise the great gift of salvation offered to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.



CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER



Passover is the historic meal shared by Hebrew families on the night God passed over the Jewish community but struck the first born of Egypt only (Exo12:13). Moses commanded each Hebrew family to take a lamb into the household between the tenth and fourteenth of the month. On the evening of the fourteenth, the lamb was to be slaughtered and its blood sprinkled on the door post of the home. The meat was to be roasted and eaten, with any leftovers burnt.

On the night of the fourteenth, every first born son in Egypt died, but within the blood marked homes, the Israelites were safe. That very night pharaoh, his arrogance striped away at last, summoned Moses and Aaron with all the Egyptians, **"urged the people to hurry and live the country,"** Exo12:33. God's action that first Passover night was the final stroke that shuttered the chains of slavery forged by the Egyptians.

Moses established the Passover as a **"lasting ordinance for you and your descendants,"** Exo12:24. Each Jewish family is to eat unleavened bread between the 14th and 21st of the first month. On the 14th the family shares and observes the simple ritual found in Exo13:14-16. Thus the meal is an invitation for each new generation to identify with what God did for their forefathers (Exo12:26, 27). Each new generation is to realize through this rite that they were in fact present in their ancestors when God acted to make possible the freedom they now enjoy.

A NEW "PASSOVER LAMB"

The last supper that Jesus shared with his disciples was a Passover meal (Luke22:7-23). The symbolism is significant. A new "Passover Lamb" was about to be sacrificed (John1:29, 1Cor5:7), and through His death, Christ would win our ultimate freedom; freedom from the power and consequences of sin. Just as the death of the first Passover lamb purchased safety for the Jews whose homes were marked by blood, so Jesus purchased safety for all who rely on the merits of His sacrifice. His blood is able to bring about the required transformation of the believer, bringing us not only forgiveness but inner renewal.

His sacrifice was so efficacious that "once for all" Jesus was able to "do



away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb9:26). **"We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all," Heb10:10** and through Him have been guaranteed full forgiveness (Heb10:11-18).

HOW WAS CHRIST MADE TO BE SIN FOR US? (2Cor5:18-21)

He, the incarnate Son of God, voluntarily assumed the consequences of our sin, corruption and death, without sinning Himself. And He submitted to unjust suffering because of the sinful passions of men and of angels. This means salvation is far more than forgiveness of sins. It is new life: our reconciliation to God (2Cor5:18, 20) and our becoming new creation. This means our salvation is not just juridical, the static legal pronouncement of a judge, but it is personal and relational, the dynamic, sacrificial love of a father for his child (Phil 3:20, Heb1:3).

God our Saviour **"desires all men to be saved," 1Tim2:4**. The Lord seeks the salvation of every individual soul. Jesus Christ died for the whole world and especially He died for me. He desires that I am saved. Jesus walked for six hours to save one Samaritan woman (the salvation of the woman resulted in the salvation of the whole city John4:42). Jesus cared for the salvation of Saul who responded immediately (Acts9:1-20); the outcome of Saul's salvation is that he became a chosen vessel of the Lord to bear His name before Gentiles, Kings and the children of Israel (Acts15). Jesus cared to explain the truth of rebirth to Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews (John3:1-21). The Lord showed His desire to save every individual when he looked up at Zacchaeus; the outcome of Zacchaeus' salvation was the salvation of his entire house (Luke19:2-10).

"The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost," Luke19:10. If you feel that you are a lost sheep, then the Lord has come especially for you and He will be seeking to save you. He is the physician that has the remedy to our ailments. Do not wait until you have become well and then come to the Lord. For, then you will not need a physician. Zacchaeus did not wait to accept the Lord until he has given back the money he stole or until he has given money to the poor. On the contrary, these good deeds are the fruits of his encounter with the Lord and accepting His salvation.

As Christians, we are to present ourselves to God "living sacrifices" (Rom12:1), consecrating ourselves to His service. St Paul sees his



approaching death as a libation, drink offering, used to enhance the odour of the burned offering (Phil 2:17). Even the gifts given by the Philippians to support St Paul in his ministry are acceptable sacrifices, fragrant and pleasing to God because of their intent (Phil 4:18).

We can do nothing to add to the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice of Himself for us. But we can express our gratitude for His self-giving by freely giving our self to Him and to other members of the community of faith. Through Christ's Pascha, the Great Passover, we have passed from death to eternal life.

Eternal life begins now when we establish a living, personal relationship with Christ, speaking with Him every day in prayer; reading the Holy Bible; meeting Him personally in each one of the Sacraments; abiding with Him in the Eucharist; ministering to Him personally in the least of His brethren. As Jesus said, **"in as much as you have done it to one of the least of these My brethren you have done it to Me," Matt 25:40.**



As we partake of the Sacraments on Holy Thursday of Pascha Week and on any other day, we become another Christ in the world today. Upon receiving the Holy Body and Blood of Christ may we be possessed with a divine restlessness about the situation of the world, and may we go out and plunge ourselves into the midst of the world's problems bringing them to Christ's answer Christ's solution, Christ's love, Christ's understanding Christ's peace and Christ's hope.



FORGIVENESS

Big Idea: The key note to get into heaven is forgiveness.

Bible Text: Mark11:22-25, Matt18:15-35.

Bible Verse: John13:35, "Forgive and you will be forgiven".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✘ That only God can forgive sins (Luke7:49, Mark2:7).
 - ✘ Forgiveness is found in Christ alone.
 - ✘ Christ authorized the Church to dispense His forgiveness (John20:23).
 - ✘ Forgiveness is bestowed on the ground of the Lord's compassion (Psa78:38).
 - ✘ Forgiveness is bestowed on the basis of the Blood of Christ (Eph1:7).
 - ✘ Forgiveness is bestowed on the ground of divine justice (1John1:9).
 - ✘ When Jesus forgives sin, He forgives all of it and not only part of it (Luke7:47).
 - ✘ Conditions of forgiveness.
 - ✘ Frequency of forgiveness.
 - ✘ Fruit of forgiving others.

Feel: Grateful to God for His kind forgiveness.

- Do:**
- ✘ Repent and ask for God's forgiveness in confession.
 - ✘ Seek and grant forgiveness to others.



FORGIVENESS



By virtue of the fall of man, all men have become sinners. Sin is the one thing that will keep men out of heaven. The key note to getting into heaven is forgiveness: if God forgives us our sins, no one will be able to prevent us from entering into heaven.

Since the sinner has broken the Law of God, only God can forgive him that sin. If you steal my wallet, I can forgive you for that, but if you break the tax law, I cannot forgive you for that (Mark2:7; Luke7:49). **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive," 1John1:9.** He, the Lord God, the Holy one, the giver of the Law, is willing to forgive sinners. Because Jesus is God, He has been appointed to forgive sins. When Jesus forgives sin, He forgives all of it and not only part of it (Luke7:47). Jesus is not here bodily, but He is here invisibly ready to forgive each one of us.

Jesus authorized the Church to dispense His forgiveness (John20:23). When we repent and confess to God our sins, we receive forgiveness immediately but we can receive absolution after we confess this sin in the hearing of the priest (Acts19:18). Any unconfessed sin remains unforgiven and prevents us from going to heaven.

THE FOUNDATION OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is bestowed on the ground of **the Lord's compassion**. "But He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them," Psa78:38.

Forgiveness is bestowed on the ground of **divine justice**. "Faithful and just to forgive," 1John1:9. God can forgive sin and yet remain Holy and just.

Forgiveness is bestowed on the basis of **the Blood of Christ**. "In whom we have redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of sins," Eph1:7. By blood is meant the propitiatory work of Christ. On the cross He shed His



Blood as a ransom and full payment for our eternal redemption. God has decreed that, "the soul that sins it shall die," Ezek18:4. Sin brought death, and because man sinned, as a consequence he must die. **"In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die," Gen2:17.** God has always required blood symbolical of death as payment for sin. To cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve blood was shed to get coats of skin (Gen3:21). Abel's offering was accepted because it contained blood, and Cain's offering was rejected because it didn't have blood (Gen4:3-5). **"For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for yourself," Lev17:11.**

THE CONDITIONS OF FORGIVENESS

Repentance: Repentance comes before forgiveness; **"..... To give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins," Acts5:31.** Repentance is turning from sin unto God. **"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins'," Acts2:38.** In the story of the "Sinful Woman" in Luke7:36/50, the woman expressed her repentance in tears and humility.

However, repentance doesn't cause one to merit forgiveness; repentance is merely a condition. Repentance prepares a man for pardon but doesn't entitle him to it. Even after repentance we are still unworthy of the Lord's love and forgiveness.

Faith: Repentance leads to faith and forgiveness. **"Your faith has saved you," Luke7:50.**

Confession: **"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1John 1:9.** The unconfessed sin cannot be forgiven. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal our sins to us and give us grace to confess everyone, so we will not be forced to spend eternity in hell. **"I acknowledge my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord', and You forgave the iniquity of my sin'," Psalms32:35.** This was



David's experience and it can be our experience too.

Forgiving Others: "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," Matt6:15. See also Luke6:27-29, 37. Let us remember the exhortation of Eph4:32, "**and be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you**". Forgiveness should be easy for a Christian as pictured in Matt18:21-35.

THE FREQUENCY OF FORGIVENESS

How often can we be forgiven? As often as we sin and confess our sins, the Blood of Jesus Christ is available to forgive us if we meet the conditions as set above. Repentance involves forsaking the sin and promising by God's strength not to repeat it.

Shall we continue in sin then, that Grace may abound, because God will readily forgive us, anyway? This question was propounded in Rom6:1, and answered by the Lord through St Paul in Rom6:2, "God forbid", for such a thought is anathema to the Lord. How often should we forgive someone who sins against us? The Saviour answered this question in Matt18:21-35, not till 70 times, but continuously.

FRUITS OF FORGIVENESS

Have you ever had to go to someone and ask forgiveness? How did it feel before you went? It's pretty scary, wasn't it? But how did you feel after you returned? Much better, right! Ah, indeed that's true. But being forgiven is more than feeling good. Let's see what the Bible has to say are the results of forgiveness, when you take care of forgiving someone else or when you go to someone that you have wronged and ask them to forgive you. What benefits can both of you see?

WHAT ARE THE SEVEN FRUITS OF FORGIVENESS?

1. **Reconciliation** is one of the great fruits of being forgiven. You know, you have become estranged from someone, perhaps someone who's very



dear to you. But seeking and granting forgiveness - when you do that - you can be reconciled with that person whether it's your spouse, or your son or your daughter, or a neighbor, a brother, a sister.



To be reconciled means to be at peace with someone. It's signing a peace treaty. But that's not enough; only forgiveness heals a wounded relationship. Do you remember Jesus' words in **Matt18:15**? **"If your brother sins against you, go and tell your brother"**. Now think about that statement for a moment.

If your brother hears you, that is, if he recognizes his sin and repents, you have been reconciled with your brother. You have gained your brother. But does that mean you have lost a brother if no reconciliation takes place? Well, it probably does. Oh, he still may be your brother, but he will be a stranger to you until peace replaces hostility.

And just as you've been reconciled to God by the Blood of Jesus Christ, you and I need to be reconciled to those people from whom we've become estranged. When you make peace, you make it through forgiveness. One of the great fruits of forgiveness is being reconciled to one another. It's worth the effort. The first fruit of forgiveness is reconciliation.

2. The right relationship with the Lord is the second fruit of forgiveness. You and I seek that kind of relationship all the time. Often people ask, "How can I have a right relationship with God?" Well, when our relationship to others is out of whack, our relationship to God is also out of whack. John alludes to this problem in his first epistle. He says, **"If someone says, 'I love God', and hates his brother, he is a liar; for if he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" 1John4:20.**

Basically, what that question means is this : that if our relationship with our brother, our relationship with our spouse, our relationship with our kids or



our parents, if our relationship with somebody at church is not what it ought to be, then automatically, friends, our relationship with God is not what it ought to be. Getting into a right relationship with others may be the fruit of a right relationship with God, but frequently the street runs the other direction. We have to make right our relationship with others in order to be in a right relationship with God. And that means seeking or granting forgiveness. A right relationship with God is one of the seven fruits of forgiveness. I hope it's one of the fruits in your life.

3. **Prayer life:** One of the excellent benefits of forgiveness is that I find my prayer life. Jesus teaches us a very valuable lesson about this in **Mark11**. Right after that great passage about having faith to move mountains, Jesus says, **"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses," Mark11:25**. Did you see the relationship there? If you are praying, He says, 'Stop, seek or grant forgiveness first, whichever the case is necessary for you and then come back to your praying'. Do you know why He says that? Why is it important that you or I seek or grant forgiveness before we pray? The answer, friends, is so that God will hear our prayers. There's just something about that faulty relationship with other people that sets up a roadblock to our prayer life.

Are you getting through to God today? Do you ever have a difficult time getting answers from God? You know, it's not beyond the realm of possibility that your relationship to other people is what's causing a faulty relationship in your prayer life. Harboring an unforgiving spirit or not asking someone to forgive us is sin. The Bible reminds us, **"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear (me)", Psa66:18**.

If you're having a good prayer life; if things are going very well between you and God, you have a great talk with Him several times a day; the chances are pretty good that you also have a good relationship with other people around you. One of the fruits of forgiveness is an excellent and a



vibrant prayer life. Now if it doesn't seem like things are working the way they ought to, you know the first place I look? I look to my relationship to God and then immediately after that, I look to my relationship with other people. Am I harboring an unforgiving spirit toward someone? Did somebody hurt me in some way and I say, "Well, I am not going to deal with that person." Did they say something about me that I resented and I failed to forgive them? There are so many things that you and I can do that set up these roadblocks that keep us from getting through to God.

4. The removal of bitterness is another fruit of forgiveness. There is an undeniable link, between a bitter spirit and a spirit of unforgiveness. The bitterer the person becomes, the less likely they are to forgive. The apostle Paul said, **"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you," Eph4:31-32.** Did you notice the contrast there? I mean it is absolutely evident. In one verse, he says to put away bitterness, and to put away wrath and anger, all those things that eat away at our spirit. And in the very next verse, he says to be kind to one another, to be tenderhearted toward your friends, tenderhearted toward your parents, forgiving one another. You see, the first is juxtaposed to the second. The first is diametrically opposed to the second. If you have the first, my friend, you won't have the second. If you practice the second, there won't be any room for the first. You see, bitterness and forgiveness are mutually exclusive.

If you truly forgive, you have rooted out the root of bitterness. You see, it is an

Forgiveness is a promise not a feeling.
When you forgive other people, you
are making a promise **not to use their**
past sin against them.

easy thing to say, 'I want to forgive my friends', and not forgive because we are so bitter toward them. It is a very easy thing for you to say, 'I would like to forgive my parents who treated me badly, but I am so bitter toward them I can't forgive'. One of the things that you and I have to do in our lives if we want to enjoy the fruit of forgiveness is we have to root out



bitterness from our lives. We have to stop being bitter toward those who have hurt us. That is not easy. But how do I do it? "Well, listen to the Bible again: **"do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice," Eph4:31.** Now to be put away simply means you discard it. You cut it off. You don't feed it anymore. You stop those things that are feeding your bitterness. The thoughts that feed your bitterness - keep those thoughts from your mind. Cut them out. Do you know how to cut them out? You do the opposite thing. Here it is, **"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you," Eph4:32.** If you truly forgive, you have rooted out that root of bitterness and your relationship with God and all those around you will take a dramatic upturn. Remember it this way: the fruit of forgiveness is always better than the root of bitterness.



If you have someone today toward whom your feelings are absolutely bitter, maybe somebody who has hurt you deeply; a friend who betrayed a confidence; a friend who treated you shabbily; a parent who abused you as a child; a brother who just never got it, he just never appreciated you ; if you are still living in bitterness toward any of those people, if you haven't been able to bring yourself to cancel their debt (that is what forgiveness means) then you are robbing yourself of the fruit of forgiveness. And one of the fruits of forgiveness is removing the bitterness in your life (Rom12:18-21).

5. Revival in your life, both personal revival and corporate revival, is another fruit of being forgiven. When we are reconciled to someone we have wronged, following hard on the heels of that reconciliation is revival; it is getting right with God and, subsequently, getting right with people. There are some people that pray every day for revival and they hold a grudge against somebody that hurt them at the same time. Friends, those



are counter-productive activities. Satan knows that it is the little foxes that spoil the vines.

Sometimes great movements of God at a local assembly, a great revival at a local church may be thwarted simply by two people who are unforgiving toward each other. In fact, isn't that exactly what St Paul addressed in the disagreement between Euodia, and Syntyche in Philippians, chapter 4? Revival in that church was just too important to let two unforgiving women spoil it for everyone. When we forgive one another in the same way that God forgave us, it will not bring revival in the church; it will be revival in the church. And one of the great fruits of forgiveness is the fruit of revival.

6. Gaining God's forgiveness: A great reason for forgiving one another is to ensure that God has forgiven us (Matt6:15). Remember Jesus' words in the Lord's Prayer, Matthew chapter 6? **"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"**. Now that either means forgive us in the same way we forgive others, or it means forgive us to the same extent that we forgive others. Either way, if we are not going to forgive, we are not forgiven. If it means forgive us to the same extent that we forgive others, do you want that to be God's criterion for forgiving you: the same extent that you forgive others? Or if it means to receive God's forgiveness in the same way that I forgive somebody else: I am not sure I want that to be the criterion either.



But that is what the Bible says. Jesus continued immediately after that prayer, and He said, **"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you"**. And then this warning, **"But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"**. Friends, this is pretty plain, isn't it? Those are pretty stern words from the Lord. They indicate that one of the fruits of forgiveness is to know that we have been forgiven by God. And all of that is enough to make us want to be forgiving.



7. Have a clear conscience: the seventh benefit of forgiving or seeking forgiveness is to have a clear conscience. Now having a clear conscience is something that a lot of us wish we had, isn't that true? Having a clear conscience is not an easy thing, but it is a necessary thing. Christianity is a religion of the conscience, friends. It is more than an adherence to extent rules. It is the heart that is in tune with God. And once we are convicted of wrong, we are going to be absolutely miserable until we make that wrong right. The Holy Spirit dwelling within us is going to see to it that we are miserable once we know we have done wrong until we make the wrong right. That is what the convicting power of the Spirit is all about in the believer.

In Titus1:15 there is reference to a defiled conscience. When we are unforgiving, that is the kind of conscience we have. But 1Peter3:16 and 1Timothy1:5 speak of a good conscience. Which would you rather have: a defiled conscience - one that is soiled because you have been unforgiving - or a good conscience - one that has been cleaned because you have been forgiving? There is an old proverb that says, 'A good conscience is a soft pillow'. A sleeping pill will never take the place of a clear conscience. Would you prefer a conscience that thumped like a sore thumb all the time or would you prefer a conscience that was soothed, a conscience that was freed from pain, a conscience freed from distress? You can have this last kind of conscience, but only when you are free from offense to God and to others. And to be free from offense to God and others, you have to be both forgiven and forgiving. That is why being forgiven is so important. The fruits of forgiveness are worth cultivating. And they are worth hanging on to once you have them in your grasp.

Being a forgiven Christian today is being a forgiving Christian. Wouldn't it be grand to be able to stand up today, free from bitterness, free from a grudge, free from long-standing hatred? You can, if you seek forgiveness from God by confessing your sin to Him and then seek forgiveness from someone else that you have wronged, or grant forgiveness. And it is benefit that is certainly worth the effort.





THE HOLY CROSS

Big Idea: The meaning of the Cross to us.

Bible Text: Psa22; Isa 53.

Bible Verse: Matt16:24, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross and follow Me."

Students will

- Know:**
- ✕ The rich meaning of the sign of the Cross.
 - How to make the sign of the Cross.
 - Our response to the sacrifice of Christ.
 - The sign of the Cross expresses our faith in the Trinity, the incarnation, the greatest Christian commandment and commitment to Christ.
 - ✕ The Cross of Christ shows us the severity of sin.
 - ✕ The Cross reveals the worth of man in God's eyes.
 - ✕ The Cross enables us to look into the heart of God.
 - ✕ The significance of the Cross (John3:14, 15).
 - ✕ Symbols of the Cross in the Old Testament.
 - ✕ Prophecy of the Cross Ps22; Isa53.
 - ✕ The Blessing of the Cross (Rom5:10).
- Feel:** Empowered by the Cross
- Do:**
- ✕ Ponder on the meaning of the Cross for ten minutes every day.
 - ✕ Pick up the Cross and carry it after Christ.



The Cross in my Pocket

I carry a Cross in my pocket
A simple reminder to me
Of the fact that I am a Christian
No matter where I may be.

This little Cross is not magic
Nor is it a good luck charm
It isn't meant to protect me
From every physical harm.

It's not for identification
For all the world to see
It's simply an understanding
Between my Saviour and me.

When I put my hand in my pocket
To bring out a coin or key
The Cross is there to remind me
Of the price He paid for me.

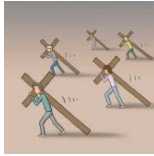
It reminds me too, to be thankful
For my blessing day by day
And to strive to serve Him better
In all that I do and say.

It's also a daily reminder
Of the peace and comfort I share
With all who know my Master
And gave themselves to His care

So I carry a Cross in my pocket
Reminding no one but me
That Jesus Christ is Lord of my life
If only I'll let Him be.



THE HOLY CROSS



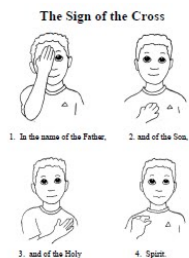
The symbol of Christianity is a Cross; a Cross with a man hanging on it; a man who is God in human flesh, who challenges us: **"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross and follow Me, Matt16:24.**

The Cross appears on almost everything used in God's services: altars, linens, churches, books, vestments. During the liturgy we make the sign of the Cross countless times. In our personal devotions we make it morning and evening, before and after all our prayers, in temptation, in bodily dangers, before every important action or undertaking.

St Cyril of Jerusalem wrote in the 4th century: *'Let us then not be ashamed to confess the Crucified. Let the Cross be our seal, made with boldness by our fingers on our brow and in everything; over the bread we eat and the cups we drink, in our coming in our going out; before our sleep, when we lie down and when we awake; when we are traveling and when we are at rest'.*

THE RICH MEANING OF THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

I wonder if we have ever pondered how rich in meaning the sign of the Cross is as we Orthodox Christians make it.



To make the sign of the Cross we join the thumb, the index and the middle finger of the right hand at their tips, and at the same time we rest the fourth and little finger in the palm of the hand. First we touch the forehead, then the breast and immediately following the left and right shoulder in that order. At the end we let the hand fall to the side as we make

a bow. The thumb, the index and the middle finger touching each other at their tips represent the Holy Trinity: God the father who created us, God the Son who saved us, and God the Holy Spirit who abides in us: three persons in one God -the Holy Trinity. Then we let the fourth and little fingers representing the two natures of Jesus-human and divine-drop into the palm of the hand to denote that Jesus "came down from heaven" and became man for our salvation. Thus, we make the sign of the Cross to remind ourselves of who



God is and what He did for us. Every time we cross ourselves we recall the great price He paid to redeem us.

Through the sign of the Cross we express also our response to the sacrifice of Christ: we place our hand to the forehead and promise that with God's help we shall endeavor to **know Him** with all our mind; we place our hand to our breast promising that our purpose in life will be to **love God** with all our heart; then we put our right hand to the left and right shoulders promising to **serve God** with all our strength. Thus we give expression to the greatest Christian commandment: **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your strength, and with all your soul."** Finally we bow to acknowledge that we and all men are under God's domination and rule.

The sign of the Cross, then, as we Orthodox Christians make it expresses some of the most basic and fundamental teachings of our Orthodox faith: the Trinity, the incarnation, the greatest Christian commandment, and commitment to Christ. It is the body praying together with the soul. The whole man prays to God.

To the people of Christ's day the Cross was the greatest symbol of shame. It was to them what the electric or the hangman's noose would be for us today. Crucifixion was a method of execution reserved only for slaves and the lowest criminals. It was unthinkable for a Roman citizen to be executed by crucifixion. It was that kind of death, the most dreaded in the ancient world, the death of slaves and criminals, that Jesus died. Yet Jesus took the greatest "minus" sign in the ancient world, the Cross, and transformed it into a great "plus" sign. So we today, because of Christ, can take all the great minus signs of life -sin, death, suffering, pain- and transform them into plus signs. Death, for example, was a great minus sign in life until Christ, by His Resurrection, transformed it into the plus sign of life eternal. Sin was another minus sign in life until Christ, by His forgiving love, transformed it into the plus sign of reconciliation with God. The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ have added a great plus sign to life.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST SHOWS US ALSO THE SEVERITY OF SIN

Sin is not just breaking of a divine commandment; it is that, but it is more than that. When we look at the Cross and Him who hang there, we see sin for



what it really is: the crucifixion of God, the breaking not of a commandment but of the heart of God.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST REVEALS ALSO THE WORTH OF MAN IN THE EYES OF GOD

What is a man worth? We shall never know the answer to this question until we look at Christ, the Son of man and the Son of God, hanging on the Cross. Then we know that man has value and worth and dignity not only because he is created in the image of God but also because God sent His only Begotten Son to redeem him. This is the price tag God places on man. He is worth as much as the precious Blood of His Son.

THE CROSS ENABLES US ALSO TO LOOK INTO THE HEART OF GOD

When we look to Moses and the Ten commandments in the Old Testament we learn of the stern justice of God. His universe is law-abiding. But when we look away from Mt Sinai to the Cross on Mt Calvary we know that God is far more than law and justice. He is love and mercy. The Cross becomes a window through which we can look into the heart of God.

A father managed to get his son out trouble again and again until finally he felt forced to give up on the boy. 'I have had to wash my hands of him,' he said. 'What else could I do?' Well, whatever the complete opposite of 'washing our hands' of one is, God did it on the Cross. The Cross is eternal proof that God loves us, that He is after us, that we matter to Him, that He will not hesitate ever to give **"His only-Begotten Son that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have life everlasting," John3:16.**

The finest response to the love of Christ on the Cross is to pick up the Cross and carry it after Christ, matching action to His challenge when He says, **"If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross and follow Me."** Look at some of those who through the centuries took up the Cross and followed Jesus: Simon of Cyrene, the man who was compelled to carry the Cross to Calvary when Jesus collapsed under its weight; Peter, James and John were beaten for preaching the Gospel in the market place against orders; Paul was jailed, persecuted, slandered, finally killed, carrying his Cross; the early Christian martyrs, singing in the Roman arena as the lions came at them, lighting up Roman festivals as human torches, carrying their



crosses; a young person today, who, in the face of tremendous pressure from his friends to do as the crowd does, chooses Christ instead of the crowd, carrying his Cross. These are crucified Christians who use the Cross not only as an external adornment or as a symbol on their altars but also keep it enshrined in their lives. They lift it high for all to look through and see the infinite love for man that burns.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROSS

But there is a deeper significance. Our Lord refers to it when He says in **John 3:14, 15**, **"...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."** Jesus is referring to the time when the Israelites were in the wilderness. They were rebellious and complaining. Because of their disobedience, God sent poisonous snakes to punish them. The people were dying from the bites. They went to Moses with a protest and an appeal for help. Moses, as always, took his troubles to God. God told him to raise a standard of a brazen serpent and to tell the people to look at it when bitten. Healing would come by looking at the standard. And it did. Those who looked at the brazen serpent were healed. Perhaps this is why the serpent today is used as an emblem by medical doctors.

As Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness, says Jesus, so must the Son of man be lifted upon the Cross that whoever believes in Him should have eternal life. Thus, every year on the Feast of the Cross the Church raises the Cross in our midst. She raises it so that we today may find healing and strength in the uplifted Cross of Christ. For, we too, became infected with the deadly poison of sin and guilt. Salvation for us, too, is in a look, a look of faith and repentance and commitment to the Crucified and Risen Christ.

SYMBOLS OF THE CROSS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Abraham offers his son Isaac as a sacrifice (**Gen22:6, 9**) Isaac carried the wood for burning the sacrifice and so did our Lord Jesus Christ (**John19:17**).
- Jacob blesses Joseph's children by crossing his hands (**Gen48:13, 14**).
- Moses prays lifting his arms like the sign of the Cross (**Exo17:10-13**).



- The brass serpent (Numb21:5-9; John3:14, 15).



- The Lamb of the Passover was grilled on two rods tied to each other like a Cross.



- Purification of the leper (Lev14:1); they put fresh water in a clay pot and they also put in the water a piece of cedar timber. Two birds are then brought. One is killed and its blood drained in the water, then it is buried in a hole in the ground in front of the priest and the leper who has healed. The wing of the second bird is immersed in the water mired with the blood of the other bird and then it is let free. The bird that is killed represents Christ who was killed for us. The other bird represents the Risen Christ who redeemed us (Heb 9:12).
- Prophecy of the Cross (Psa22:2-22; Isa53). The New Testament quotes several verses from Psalm22 in relation to the crucifixion: for example, v2, quoted in Matt27:46 and Mark15:34; v9, quoted in Matt27:43; and v19, quoted in Matt27:35. Isaiah describes the suffering of Christ in Isa53.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE CROSS (Rom5:10)

The whole world was cursed, and under the penalty of death, but on the Cross, the Lord carried all of our curses, to give us the blessings of our reconciliation with God, the blessings of the new pure life and the blessings of membership in His body. All the graces of the New Testament are derived from the Cross. That is why priests use the Cross in giving the blessing, signifying that the blessing does not come from the priest, but from the Cross of the Lord. In addition, they use the Cross because they derive their priesthood from the priesthood of the Crucified Lord.



THE POWER AND OFFENCE OF THE CROSS

Big Idea: We identify with Jesus by the Cross.

Bible Text: 1Cor2:1-8.

Bible Verse: 1Cor1:18, "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".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✘ We identify with Jesus by the Cross.
 - ✘ The power of the Cross.
 - ✘ The Cross is at the centre of the service (1Cor2:1-8).
 - ✘ The offence of the Cross.
 - ✘ Bearing the offence is part of the price of discipleship, (Luke14:27).
- Feel:** Hope and glory in the Cross at all times, (2Cor12:9).
- Do:** Embrace the Cross gladly and serve the Lord acceptably.



THE POWER AND OFFENCE OF THE CROSS



The Sign of the Cross: 'In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, One Godhead, Amen'.

By making the sign of the cross we profess our faith. We believe that God the Father in Heaven sent down to earth His Only Begotten Son to deliver us from the darkness of hell to the light of the everlasting life through the Cross. We acknowledge the salvation and reconciliation offered to us by our Redeemer and Saviour Jesus Christ (Col 1:20). We also profess the doctrine of the Holy Trinity; one God-head in three hypostases (persons) the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

WE IDENTIFY WITH JESUS BY THE CROSS

As Christians we "seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified" (Mark16:6). We "preach Christ crucified" (1Cor1:23). We **keep our mind centred** on Jesus Christ and His Cross (1Cor2:2). We **carry** His Cross everyday and follow Him (Matt16:24, Mark8:34, Luke14:27). We **glory** in the Cross (Gal 6:14).

IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST I SEE THREE THINGS

First, I see a description of the depth of man's sin. Do not blame the people of that day for hanging Christ on the Cross. You and I are just as guilty. It was not the people or the Roman soldiers who put Him to the cross; it was your sins and mine that made it necessary for Him to volunteer His death (Isa53:6, John1:29, 1John2:2). He bore my sins on His body upon the tree. He hung where I should have hung. The pains of hell were heaped on Him.

Second, in the Cross I see the overwhelming love of God. If ever you should doubt the love of God, take a long, deep look at the Cross, for in the Cross you find the expression of God's love. The spikes never held Him; it was the cords of love that bound Him tighter than any nails that man could mould. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us," Rom5:8. "He who knew no sin was made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him," 2Cor5:21 (also Gal 3:13 and Mark15:34). "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends," John15:13.

Third, in the Cross I see the only way of salvation. Jesus said, "I am the



way the truth and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by Me," John14:6. There is no possibility of being saved from sin and hell, except by identifying yourself with the Christ of the Cross (John3:14-16).

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

On the Cross, Jesus defeated the devil forever. He conquered hell and the grave by the Cross. The devil is frightened by the sign of the Cross and cannot stand before it (he vanishes, burns, turns into smoke....etc.); he hates the Cross which defeated him. The Cross is the power of God **"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," 1Cor1:18.**

The sign of the Cross and Orthodox prayer are capable of killing microbes

In Moscow, Interfax-Scientists have proven experimentally the miracle-working properties of the sign of the Cross and prayer. We have ascertained that the old custom to make the sign of the Cross over food and drink before a meal has a profound mystical meaning. Standing behind it is the practical use: the food is purified literally in an instant. "This is a great miracle, which happens literally every day," physicist Angelina Malakhovskaya said as cited by the Zhizn newspaper.

Malakhovskaya has conducted a study of the power of the sign of the Cross with the blessing of the Church for nearly ten years now. She has carried out a great number of experiments, which have been repeatedly verified before their results were made public. She has discovered in particular the unique bactericidal properties of water after being blessed by an Orthodox prayer and the sign of the Cross. Water samples from various reservoirs - wells, rivers, lakes- were taken for the research. All the samples had golden staphylococcus, a colon bacillus. It turned out, however, that if the Lord's Prayer is said and the sign of the Cross is made over them, the number of harmful bacteria will decrease seven, ten hundred and even over thousand times. The experiments were made in such a way as to exclude a possible impact of mental suggestion. The prayer was said by both believers and non-believers; nevertheless, the number of pathogenic bacteria in various environments with different sets of bacteria still decreased as compared to the reference templates.

The study also revealed a new, earlier unknown property of the Word of God to transform the structure of water, increasing considerably its



optical density in the short ultra-violet spectral region, the newspaper writes. The scientists have verified the impact of the Lord's Prayer and the Orthodox sign of the Cross make on pathogenic bacteria.

The scientists have also proven the beneficial impact that the prayer and the sign of the Cross have on people. All the participants in the tests had their blood pressure stabilized and blood indexes improved. Strikingly, the indexes changed towards the healing needed: hypotensive people had their blood pressure raised, while hypertensive people had it reduced. It was also observed that if the sign of the cross is made off-handedly, with the three fingers put together unscrupulously or placed outside the necessary points- the middle of the forehead, the centre of the solar plexus and the recesses in the left and right shoulders the positive result was much weaker or absent altogether.

The Cross is the Power of God against All the Powers of Evil (Col 2:13; Gal 6:14).

To identify which of the three crosses discovered is the Cross of Christ, Empress Helena put the crosses in turn over a dead man. When the Cross of Christ touched the dead man, he rose up.

Emperor Constantine conquered his enemies in battle by putting the sign of the Cross on the banners.

To protect himself from wild animals at night, a travelling monk drew crosses on the sand in a big circle within which he slept. In the morning, he could see the footprints of the animals outside the circle of crosses.

A magician dared his audience to topple the plate of "beans" that an ordinary Christian was eating from. He was amazed that he failed. It was because the man made the sign of the Cross on the plate before he started eating. At the Cross, the devil, the prince of this world was judged (John12:31; 16:11).

St Paul experienced the depth and power of the Cross of Christ and stated, **"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," 1Cor1:18.** Indeed St Paul's whole world was in orbit around the Cross. It filled his vision, illuminated his life and warmed his spirit. He 'gloried' in it.

In his epistle to the Galatians, St Paul highlighted how the Cross liberates the soul by crucifying the flesh, the ego and the world.



THROUGH THE CROSS I CRUCIFY MY FLESH

"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires," Gal 5:24. The flesh is not essentially sinful but it is the lusts of the flesh which lead to destruction; these include adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, rivalries and the like (Gal 5:19-21). "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with that we should no longer be slaves of sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we should also live with Him," Rom6:6-8.

Father Pishoy Kamel (1931-1975), who loved the Cross of Christ, emphatically urged his children to gaze and contemplate daily on the Cross as a means of cleansing the soul from the lusts of the flesh. We cherish his inspiring saying, 'a soul without a cross is like a bride without her groom'.

THROUGH THE CROSS I CRUCIFY MY EGO

"I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me," Gal 2:20. Our number one enemy is our ego. Pride is the principal source of all sins. For this reason Christ taught us, "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself, will be abased and he who humbles himself will be exalted," Matt23:11, 12.

In crucifying our ego, we seek to embrace meekness and humility, knowing that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (Pro3:34; Jam4:6; 1Pet5:5). We also need to carry the cross in self-denial as our Lord taught us, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it," Matt16:24.

THROUGH THE CROSS I CRUCIFY THE WORLD

"But God forbid that I should glory except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world," Gal 6:14. St James warns us, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God," Jam4:4. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III advises us saying, 'Live in the world but do not allow the world to live in you'.

THE CROSS IS AT THE CENTRE OF THE SERVICE (1Cor2:1-8).

We are to preach the good news of salvation given to us by Jesus on the



Cross. We have hope; we do not fail in spite of our weakness. We also give hope to everybody at all times. It is never too late. We have our Lord's promise, "**He who comes to Me, I will not cast out,**" **John6:31**. If we fail to bring the message of the Cross to the hearts of the people we serve, then, our efforts are futile.

THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS IS FOOLISHNESS (1Cor1:22-24)

The Cross has always been a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks but to the child of God it is both the power of God and wisdom of God. It is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe.

The Cross stains the pride of human glory; to the Gentile the cross was a mental affront for it offended his intellect. The Greeks didn't think of the curse of the cross but only of its shame; the law of Caesar reserved it only for the worst of criminals. Think of the disgrace and shame of hanging naked. "**Jesus ... endured the cross, despising the shame,**" **Heb12:2**; counting this cost not too great to redeem us.

Natural man cries out, "How could one who died in shame on a Roman gallows be the Son of God? Be the Messiah and Redeemer of Mankind?" The expression, "The Blood of the Cross" is considered cruel, repulsive to polite society today; they consider it a hangover of ancient religion.

Saul of Tarsus rebelled against the Cross and looked on the crucified Nazarene as a blasphemer and consequently set out to persecute and imprison the Christians. The apostle Paul acknowledged his error and learned to glory in the Cross.

BEARING THE OFFENCE TODAY

This represents the inner conflict between the self-life and the new nature (2Pet1:4). Victory comes when we are willing to crucify self, accept the cross and bear the shame. It is a daily (moment-by-moment, experience-by-experience) accepting the stigma of being different joyfully, for the glory of our matchless Redeemer (Luke9:23).

Every occasion that tests our self-surrender and exposes our old nature to further shame and death may be considered as accepting the offence of the Cross. Providential circumstances (sent by the Saviour's hand) bring us up against choices which will antagonise the old nature; daily we will be given opportunity to die. Some of these things may be ordinary routine matters like juggling of the daily schedule; extra accumulation of duties;



unexpected interruptions when we are facing immediate deadlines; unwelcome distractions, though beneficial and pleasant at other times.

Is there any particular area in your life where you have secretly said to God, 'Anything, Lord, anything, but not that?' For you, that may represent the offence of the Cross in its deepest meaning. Why the hesitation? Are you afraid of the shame and ridicule that it might bring you? Put self on the altar and Christ on the throne of your life; accept the "Cross" gladly and choose dying to self; magnify Christ. It is folly to attempt to avoid the offence; His Grace is sufficient to endure the shame (2Cor12:9). Embrace it gladly and serve Him acceptably.

Bearing the offence is part of the price of discipleship (Luke14:27). In Matthew27:32, Simon (an African from present-day Libya) was forced to carry the cross after Jesus. But with us it is so different; we are not compelled to bear the cross but we daily accept it prayerfully as we acknowledge our identification with the Saviour.





THE BIRTH OF CHRIST: A NEW COVENANT

Big Idea: To understand and appreciate the New Covenant that God instituted with humanity.

Bible Text: Jer31:31-34 and others.

Bible Verse: Heb8:6-7, "now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, in as much as He is also a mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then, no place would have been sought for a second".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✕ God's covenant with Abraham.
 - ✕ The Mosaic covenant.
 - ✕ The new covenant foretold by Jeremiah.
 - ✕ Comparison between the Old and New Covenants.
 - ✕ By His incarnation, Jesus became the Mediator of a better Covenant.
- Feel:** Privileged and honoured to be children of God through faith in Christ.
- Do:** Dedicate our hearts and lives to the New Covenant with our Lord Jesus Christ.



THE BIRTH OF CHRIST: A NEW COVENANT



The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ marks the beginning of a New Covenant between God and man, a covenant previously and purposefully foreshadowed and prepared for by a prior covenant. In order to understand and appreciate the New Covenant that God has instituted with humanity, it is necessary to take a close look at the old one first.

After the sin of Adam and Eve, God promised to send a saviour to save mankind from the wages of sin which is death, physically and spiritually (Gen3:15, Rom 16:20).

By the time of Noah, **"the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts within his heart was only evil continually (all the day)," Gen6:5.** And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth and He was grieved (Gen6:6). "So the Lord said, I will blot out man," Gen6:7. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen6:8).

After the great flood, Noah's family repopulated the earth. The people started to build themselves a great city and a high tower whose top was in the heavens in defiance of God. The Lord confused their language and scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth (Gen11:9).

THE OLD COVENANT (TESTAMENT)

God had a plan to save man. Now the Lord said to Abram the son of Shem: "Get out of your country," Gen12:1-3. At that time God gave Abraham several specific promises in Gen12:2, 3:

- I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you.
- I will make your name great.
- You will be a blessing.
- I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

These promises were confirmed by the most binding of all ancient covenants, a covenant of blood. Parties to a covenant of blood passed between the divided halves of animals, symbolically pledging their own lives



if either should violate the covenant's stipulations. But in the covenant of blood described in Gen15, the Lord alone passed between the halves. The promises God made to Abraham were unconditional: God would keep them no matter how Abraham or his offspring might fail. Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision (Gen17) and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth's day, and Isaac begot Jacob and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs (Acts7:8).

After Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt to Sinai, God made promises to the new nation of Israel, the Mosaic Covenant. But the promises expressed conditions. If Israel would keep His laws, God would protect and bless the nation. If Israel did not obey, God would discipline and punish the nation (Exo20-24).

Jeremiah said that the old covenant (the Mosaic Law) was to be replaced by the new (Jer31:31-34) and St Paul argues that the Law Covenant was in effect only until Christ came (Gal 3:15-25).

THE NEW COVENANT (TESTAMENT)

This was instituted by Jesus Christ. It was predicted by Jeremiah (Jer31) and Ezekiel (Ezek36). Jeremiah cried in God's name, **"The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel," Jer31:31.** The prophet went on to explain that the new covenant will not be like the Mosaic Covenant which God's people broke. Instead under the new covenant, **"I will put My law in their minds and write it in their hearts. I will be their God and they will be My people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying: 'Know the Lord', because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more," Jer31:33, 34.** This covenant was not instituted in Jeremiah's day. Jeremiah only foresaw it.

The New Covenant was sealed on Calvary, about 30 AD. The night of His arrest, Jesus clearly identified His death by crucifixion as the making of the new covenant: He offered His disciples a cup of wine and said, **"This is My Blood of the Covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins," Matt26:28.** As St Luke records it, **"This cup is the new covenant in My Blood," Luke22:20** (also 1Cor11:28). God's certain promise of forgiveness for humankind was sealed with the shed Blood of His Son.



The covenant promise was originally given to the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer31:31). Yet it is under the New Covenant that salvation is given to all. That salvation provides not only forgiveness of sins but also an inner transformation, expressed by Jeremiah as putting God's law in our minds and writing it in our hearts. Through Jesus Christ all the benefits of the New Covenant are made available to those who put their trust in Him.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW COVENANT

OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
The Old Covenant was between God and Israel, "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you", Gen17:7.	The New Covenant, however, is established between God and any person who will receive the Son of God, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God", John1:12, 13.
The Old Covenant was temporary, and conditioned upon the Israelites' obedience of the Law. God foretold Moses that this covenant would not last but would soon be broken, "this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them", Deut31:16, 17.	The New Covenant is designed for eternal life; and will thus last forever. St Paul says, "The God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant", Heb13:20, 21.
In the Old Covenant, the law could not bring salvation nor justify anyone. All it could do was to teach people the need for salvation by a Saviour and by His grace granted henceforth (Gal 3:17-25).	In contrast, in the New Covenant, we are justified and sanctified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (Gal 2:16).



<p>The ceremony of the Old Covenant included the slaughter of a heifer, a goat, a ram, a dove, and a young pigeon. After that Abraham cut the carcasses in half, and then at sunset only God walked the blood path between the two pieces of the carcasses without Abraham (Genesis 15). This indicated that God and only God would have to pay the price with His own blood.</p>	<p>The New Covenant was established by the slaughter of the Son of God on the holy wood of the Cross, after having walked the blood path Himself. "Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes", Isa 63:2-3).</p>
<p>The old Law revolved around a system of animal sacrifices performed by chosen priests from the tribe of Levi. These Levites had to make an offering for their own sins before they could offer sacrifices on behalf of anyone else. Sinful priests were prevented from continually offering the sacrifice.</p>	<p>In the New Covenant our Mediator is a High Priest who being sinless, offered His own blood (for our forgiveness) for us and brought His sacrifice to Heaven itself as the only perfect offering to God. Because He has been raised from the dead, His perfect priesthood continues forever (Heb7:23, 24).</p>
<p>The Old Covenant was written on two tablets of stone (Exo19:5).</p>	<p>The New Covenant is an internal Covenant written on our hearts by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, "I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts", Heb8:10.</p>
<p>We knew sin through the Law, the Old Covenant (Rom7:7-11) and with the Law, there was no forgiveness but curse and wrath.</p>	<p>Through the New Covenant we have received the forgiveness of our sins, "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more", Heb8:12.</p>
<p>The Old Covenant revealed the holiness of God in the righteous standard of the Mosaic Law and promised the coming of the Redeemer.</p>	<p>The New Covenant has shown the holiness of God in the righteousness of His Son.</p>



The Old Covenant became obsolete, "When He said, A New Covenant, He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear", Heb8:13.	The New Covenant is eternal (Jer31:31-34).
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From the above comparison between the Old and New Covenants, it is obvious that the New Covenant is a more excellent one because it establishes a new and better relationship between God and man. As St Paul says, "And for this reason He is the Mediator of the New covenant", Heb9:15, because "now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second," Heb8:6, 7.

God intended to bless all people through Israel (Gen12:3). The Hebrew people have been the agents through whom God gave the Old Testament Scriptures and the channel through which He revealed Himself in Jesus. Through His incarnation, our Lord Jesus Christ became a Mediator of the New Covenant that was foreseen by Jeremiah the prophet (Jer31:31-34).

WHAT IS A 'MEDIATOR'?

St John Chrysostom explains the meaning of a Mediator: *'A mediator is not lord of the thing of which he is mediator, but the thing belongs to one person, and the mediator is another: as for instance, the mediator of a marriage is not the bridegroom, but one who aids him who is about to be married. So then also here: The Son became Mediator between the Father and us. The Father willed not to leave us this inheritance, but was wroth against us, and was displeased with us as being estranged from Him; He accordingly became Mediator between us and Him, and prevailed with Him.'*

The New Covenant has been instituted by the Blood of the Lamb, "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," 1Cor11:25. St John Chrysostom elaborates, *'But they were not sprinkled with 'scarlet wool,' nor yet "with hyssop." Why was this? Because the cleansing was not bodily but spiritual, and the blood was spiritual. How? It flowed not from the body of irrational animals, but from the Body prepared by the Spirit. With this Blood not Moses but Christ sprinkled us, through the word which was spoken: "This is the blood of the New*



Testament, for the remission of sins". This word, instead of hyssop, having been dipped in the Blood, sprinkles all. And there indeed the body was cleansed outwardly, for the purifying was bodily; but here, since the purifying is spiritual, it enters into the soul, and cleanses it, not being simply sprinkled over, but gushing forth in our souls. The initiated understand what is said. And in their case indeed one sprinkled just the surface; but he who was sprinkled washed it off again; for surely he did not go about continually stained with blood. But in the case of the soul it is not so, but the Blood is mixed with its very substance, making it vigorous and pure, and leading it to the very unapproachable beauty.'

Today, Christians relate to God under the New Covenant, not the Old. We are saved by faith (Rom4; Gal 3:19-20). Once faith has brought us into personal relationship with God, all the benefits of the New Covenant, promises of forgiveness of sins and transformation into Christ's likeness, are ours (Jer31:31-34). A people called by God's name must reflect His character and display a resemblance to their Lord.

At Christmas, may we rededicate our hearts and lives to the New Covenant with our Lord Jesus Christ! May we join the angels in praising the Lord for His birth saying, **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men," Luke2:14.**

May the Glorious Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ bless us and alert us to rededicate our hearts and lives to the New Covenant with our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Adapted from an article by His Grace Bishop Youssef)



SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Big Idea: The Orthodox understanding of the Second Coming of Christ.

Bible Text: Titus 2: 12-14

Bible Verse: Rev 22:12, "I am coming quickly and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done".

Students will

Know:

- ✕ God's timing is not ours.
- ✕ We are to walk faithfully as we wait peacefully.
- ✕ Anticipating the Lord's return keeps us living productively.
- ✕ The antichrist in the belief of the Orthodox Churches.
- ✕ Comparison of the First and the Second Coming of Christ.
- ✕ The fullness of time.

Feel: Assured that Jesus would come again.

Do:

- ✕ Look forward to seeing Christ face to face.
- ✕ Remember that Jesus can come any moment.



SECOND COMING OF CHRIST



When, God's children Adam and Eve sinned, they were condemned to spiritual and physical death. They became Satan's children (John8:44, 1John3:8, 10). In His loving mercy the Good Lord had a plan to save and adopt them. He promised to send His Only-Begotten Son, the Messiah, to pay the wages of their sin. The Christ would die, rise from the dead and ascend to heaven. Those who believe in Him would become members of His Body. The Christ would come again to take the called, the chosen and the faithful to live forever with Him in His Kingdom, **"for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him has everlasting life,"** John3:16.

The Orthodox understanding of the Second Coming of Christ is clear. The Lord Jesus Christ truly will return. His second advent is not a myth, nor an empty promise, nor is it a metaphor. In fact, each time the Divine Liturgy is celebrated, the priest makes a proclamation to the Father, which reveals how the Church responds not only to the Second Coming of Christ, but to all of His work.

Orthodox Christians also believe that the New Testament revelation of the Second Coming of Christ is meant to stimulate our preparation for it, not our speculation about it. This explains the relative simplicity with which the Nicene Creed, the most universal confession of faith in all of Christendom, addresses Christ's return: "He ... will come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; Whose Kingdom shall have no end". The emphasis is that Jesus will come again, not when He will come again (1Cor11:23-26).

Throughout history, the Orthodox Church has steadfastly insisted on the reality of the Second Coming of Christ as a settled belief, but granted liberty on the question of when it will occur. In the last chapter of Revelation, Jesus speaks the words **"I am coming quickly"** three different times (**Rev2:12:7-20**). His coming will occur on a day, at an hour when it is not expected. To confess the return of Christ is to stand squarely within the apostolic tradition. To add "when" to the promise of His coming is warned against in the Scriptures. As members of the Bride of Christ, let us attend instead to being ready when the Bridegroom comes.



COMPARISON BETWEEN THE 1st AND 2nd COMINGS OF CHRIST

	FIRST COMING	SECOND COMING
Where:	In Bethlehem	On the clouds of heaven, Matt26:64.
When	At Christmas	Time unknown, by surprise, unexpected (Matt24:36, Matt24:37-44, Matt25:1-13, 2Pet3:10-18, 1Thess5:2-3, Rev3:3, 11, Rev22:7, 12, 20). Time is near (Heb10:25, Jam5:9).
How	Humble and poor	With power and glory (Matt24:30, Titus2:13, Rev1:7).
Why	To reconcile the world with God (2Cor5:19).	To judge the world, to give each one according to his deeds (John5:25-29, Acts17:31, Rom2:3-16, Phil 3:20-21, 1Thess4:13-17, 2Pet3:10-13, Rev20:11-15, Rev22:12).
Sign	A star seen by three wise men.	The Cross, Matt24:30
Angels	Singing joyfully, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will towards men".	Angels will be God's body-guard (2Thess 1:7). The archangels are his heralds, they shout and blow the trumpet (1Thess4:16, Rev11:15).
Events Preceding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The falling of man in sin.• God's chosen people.• The Law• The prophets.• St John the Baptist is the forerunner calling for repentance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The calling of the Gentiles (Matt24:14, Mark13:10, Rom11:11).• The conversion of the full number of Israelites (Rom11:25-29, 2Cor3:15).• The great Apostasy and the great tribulation (Matt24:12, 2Thess 2:3, 2Tim 3:1-7, 2Tim 4:3-4, Matt 24:21).• Natural disasters.• The coming of the Antichrist (1John2:18-22).• Signs and wonders (Matt24:29-30, Mark13:24-25, Luke21:25-26).



There are signs of Christ's coming to be sure. Jesus prophesied many events that would take place in the world prior to His return (Matt24, Luke21:7-36). But even here the teachings of Jesus in these gospels close with His exhortation to virtue, righteousness and preparation for the Judgment. Christ and His apostles issue severe warnings, implicit and explicit, against second-guessing the time of His coming (Matt24:3-8, 36, 43, 44, 50; Luke21:7-9, 34; Acts1:7; 1Thess5:1-3; 2Pet3:8-10).

Much of modern Christendom has succumbed to divisive speculation regarding Christ's return. We are divided into pre-millennial, post-millennial and a-millennial camps. Breaking it down even further, there are pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, and post-tribulation adherents. Christians part away and new denominations spring up around interpretations of events which have not yet even come to pass!

THE ANTICHRIST IN THE ORTHODOX BELIEF

The Coptic Orthodox Church believes that there are many antichrists who came and will come into the world as false prophets and teachers who bring in destructive heresies, and many will follow their destructive ways (2Pet2:1, 2). St John spoke about those heretics, who deny the divinity of the Lord and His Incarnation for the salvation of mankind and calls them "antichrists and liars, who deny the Father and the Son" (1John2:18-22). The Church tells the believers that they must not receive them in their houses nor greet them, as advised by St John, in order not to share in their evil deeds (2John9-11).

The Church believes that the antichrist that will appear in the last days before the Second Coming of the Lord is the beast that will come from the sea as mentioned in Revelation 13 and interpreted by many forefathers. St Paul says that he will come after the falling away, clarifying that he is "the man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing that he is God," 2Thess2:3, 4.

He added that "the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one will be according to the working of Satan, with all the power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all the unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth," 2Thess2:9-10.



The book of Revelation tells us that the false prophet is the beast who will rise up from the earth (Rev13:11). St Andrew of Caesarea and St Victorinus of Petovium described the false prophet as the armour bearer of the antichrist and by sorcery and deceit will prepare the way for the antichrist. He will be full of malice and he does the work of the devil.

The book of Revelation gives examples of his remarkable signs, such as making fire fall from heaven and his servants will speak multiple tongues, as if they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, with fiery tongues as the disciples of the Lord Jesus (Rev13:13). Irenaeus also said that the antichrist would perform the miracles by ways of magic and not by divine power. By God's permission, he will do amazing things in order to delude the souls of God's children, that he would be accepted by them instead of Christ. Thus, **"All the world marvelled and followed the beast," Rev13:3.**

As John the Baptist led to the Saviour those who believed, this false prophet will deceive many into believing that the antichrist is "GOD" (Rev13:4). The antichrist will deceive many people, rule everything (one world government), and will persecute the Church and all those who do not obey him (Rev13:12-17).

Both the antichrist and the false prophet work together through demons. But for those who will suffer for the sake of their Christian belief, their reward will be the heavenly citizenship and the inheritance of the Kingdom of God.

The name of the antichrist is not given in the book of Revelation, but the number of that beast **"is a human number, and it is 666," Rev13:18.** Although many scholars tried to know his name, according to many calculations, our Church advises the believers not to attempt to know his name. He is, in any case full of shame and wickedness.

THE FULLNESS OF TIME



The fullness of time is the right time to fulfil God's promises. The following table demonstrates the fullness of time for Christ's First and Second Comings. It includes the various steps taken to prepare the right time for either coming.



First Coming of Christ	Second Coming of Christ
Establish the nation of Israel, the chosen people of God (Gen12:1-3; Acts7:8).	Establish the New Israel, the Church the Body of Christ (Mark13:5-10).
<p>Establish types of messiah for easier comprehension; e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sacrifice of Isaac (Gen22). • The Law of purification (Num19). • The brass serpent (Num21, John3:14-16). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural disasters (Rev8). • WWIII (Rev9:14-19). • Building the third Temple (Rev11:1-2)? • The great apostasy (Rev16:8-11).
<p>Establish the prophetic trail in the Scriptures (300 prophecies):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born of a virgin (Isa7:14; Matt1:23). • Born in Bethlehem (Mic5:2; Matt2:1). • From the tribe of Judah (Gen49:10; Matt2:5-6). • Called out of Egypt (Hos11:1; Matt2:15). • Raised in Galilee (Isa9:1-2; Matt3:13). • Sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zech11:12; Matt26:15). • His hands and feet pierced (Psa22:16; Luke24:39-40). • Buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa53:9; Matt27:57-60). • Come back from the dead (Psa49:15; 16:10; Matt28:5-6). 	<p>Prophecies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The coming of the antichrist, referred to by the little horn in Dan7, and Rev13:1-10, 18). • The coming of the false prophet (Rev13:11-17). • A type of antichrist (Dan8:9-12) is Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC). • Coming of Elijah and Enoch (Rev11:3-8). • Abomination of Desolation (168 BC, 70 AD and Nero). • The Jews will believe in Christ (Rom11:25; Rev11:13).



<p>Global Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global language: the Greek language. • Old Testament Septuagint; New Testament written in Greek for Jews and Gentiles equally (Mal 1:11). • Transport to facilitate the spread of the gospel (Isa9:1-2). The Greek built ships and the Romans built roads. 	<p>Global Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global language: the English language. Global or one world government (Rev13:1-2). • Global or one world religion. • Technology for mark of the beast (Rev13:15-17) and internet for global communication.
<p>At the time of the Romans for the crucifixion.</p>	<p>At the time of the holy Roman empire, the European Union (Dan2:44; Rev17:12). From the time of King Saul until the Second Coming of Christ, men will rule themselves.</p>
<p>Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gentiles in Jerusalem (Luke21:24). • Animal sacrifices need to stop. • Destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. • The Jews were dispersed all over the world. 	<p>Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything will be shaken (Heb11:26-28); • Armageddon (Rev16:16, Rev17:14). • Casting of the devil in the lake of fire (Rev20:10). • The resurrection of the dead (John5:28-29). • The Rapture (1Thess4:15-17). • The Great White Throne Judgement (Rev20:11-15). • Alleluia Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, takes His Bride, the Church, to Heaven (Rev21:1-4). • "It is done" (Rev21:6). Paradise is regained.

The Bride, recognising the voice of her Beloved, runs out to meet Him, and in her joy proclaims, **"Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus," Rev22:20.**



RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD AND FINAL JUDGMENT

Big Idea: Because Adam sinned, all must die. Because Christ rose, all must rise to be judged.

Bible Text: 1Cor15:1-15-54

Bible Verse: 1Cor11:31, "for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged".

Student will

Know:

- ✧ All must and shall rise from the dead.
- ✧ The resurrection body.
- ✧ The resurrection mystery.
- ✧ The judgment of the believers.
- ✧ How to prepare for the Bema.
- ✧ The judgment of the wicked dead.
- ✧ The judgment of the fallen angels.

Feel: The need to get ready to meet Christ our Lord and Bridegroom.

Do: Pray that the Lord makes us worthy to stand before Him without fear.



RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD AND FINAL JUDGMENT



Our entire faith rests or falls with the resurrection. If Christ did not die and was not raised from the dead then:

- Your faith is vain.
- You are still in your sins.
- All who have died have perished.
- Then there will be no future reunions with loved ones.

But Christ did rise from the dead.

THE RESURRECTION OF LIFE

Because Jesus rose we have a positive hope of resurrection; every man, woman, and child shall rise from the dead. **"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation," John5:28, 29.** Therefore all the dead must and shall rise from the dead. Some will rise to eternal blessing, while others will rise and be cast into hell forever. **"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them," Rev20:13.**

THE RESURRECTION BODY (1Cor15:35-49)

There are some who deny the resurrection of the body, saying that the post-resurrection product will be a spirit only. In 1Cor15:44 St Paul says that the body is raised a spiritual body, not a spirit without a body. How are the dead raised up? By God's power (1Cor15:35). And with what body do they come? St Paul proceeds to answer the second question:

- It is not the same body (1Cor15:37). The dead body is like a seed planted in the ground and the plant is different from the seed that was planted. The crippled or burned body at death will not be like that in the resurrection. It will germinate and mature as the other bodies. There will be no aged, deformed, crippled or ugly bodies in heaven.



- It is a God-given body (1Cor15:38). It is according to the sovereign will of God. **"When He shall appear, we shall be like Him," John3:2**, that is, perfect.
- It will be a body suited in every way to the individual spirit (1Cor15:38), to every seed his own body (1Cor15:41, 42); the stars differ and so will our bodies.
- It will be an incorruptible body (1Cor15:42). This body will be incapable of death or decay. Those condemned in hell will need this kind of body to endure forever and ever in hell. The present human body would disintegrate there.
- It will be a glorious body (1Cor15:43). Probably like the glorious body in Matthew 17 at the Transfiguration; radiant in white glory.
- It will be a body of power (1Cor15:43). It will not be subject to the laws of earth. Jesus' body passed through locked doors and solid walls. Jesus ascended easily into heaven.
- It will be a spiritual body (1Cor15:44).

THE RESURRECTION MYSTERY (1Cor15:51-54)

The mystery is that it is not necessary for all of us to die. Some will be alive when Jesus returns. The living shall be changed. **"And we shall be changed," 1Cor15:52**, proving that the resurrection body is different, yet likely similar to our present bodies. The living body must put on incorruption, and immortality (1Cor15:53).

The wicked dead will rise with eternal, incorruptible bodies, but likely minus the glorious aspect of the bodies of the saints (Isa66:23, 24).

THE JUDGMENT

Because Adam sinned, all must die. Because Christ rose, all must rise to be judged. **"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," Heb9:27**. God has appointed His Son Jesus Christ to be the judge of all earth. **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," 2Cor5:10**.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, THE BEMA

The judgment of the believers at the Bema will take place in the air, immediately following the general resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ (1Thess4:13-17). **"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father**



with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his works," **Matt16:27**. Christians will be judged in respect of their stewardship of the talents, gifts, opportunities and responsibilities granted to them during the course of their lives. While all will enjoy perfect bliss, there will be degrees also in the enjoyment of heaven (2Cor9:6). The believer's sins committed and confessed after conversion will not be judged at the Bema (1John1:9); confessed sin is forgiven and cleansed forever. What then will we be judged for?

- **Our works** will be judged. "Every man's work shall be made manifest ... and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is," 1Cor3:13. **"For God shall bring every work into judgment" Eccles12:14.**
- **Our words**: "That every idle word that men speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," Matt12:36, 37.
- **Our thoughts**: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts; these are the things which defile a man," Matt15:19, 20; also, ".... looks lust.....," Matt5:28.
- **Our secrets**: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel," Rom2:16.
- **Our motives**: Correct motives, "constrained by His love," 1Cor5:14. Wrong motives, self-glory. "Therefore let no man glory in men," 1Cor3:21.



The test will be by fire. "For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is," 1Cor3:13. This will be a fair impartial public display of justice. No one will be able to say that God showed favoritism. **"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever man sows, that shall he also reap," Gal 6:7,**

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF THE BEMA?

For the works that remain, there will be rewards. For that which is burned,



the individual will suffer loss. **"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire," 1Cor3:15.** The Bible does not tell what that loss will be. If the reward is a crown, the loss of a reward or loss of a crown will bring shame, for we will not have a crown to lay at the feet of Jesus Christ.

Building materials are of two classes:

- Fireproof: gold, silver and precious stones.
- Combustible: wood, hay and stubble.

What works are represented by fireproof materials?

- Righteousness, a clean pure life in the sight of the Lord.
- Honesty, not only before men but before God.
- A life of faith, faith in God, Christ, Bible, etc...
- Love, true love, "1 Cor13". Love to God and love to man.
- Patience (2Pet1:6) a highly desirable and praiseworthy virtue.
- Meekness and humility (Matt11:28, 29), being molded and fashioned like our Saviour.
- Peaceful (Matt5:9; 2Tim2:22), follow peace.

What works are represented by combustible material?

- All forms of sins and wickedness.
- Cheating, graft and bribery so common on earth, so hateful to the Lord.
- All forms of dishonesty will be quickly burned.
- Influence benefits will crumble in the flames.
- Yielding to youthful lusts, 1Tim6:9-11; 2Tim2:22; Joseph in Gen39:12.
- Good things done with wrong motives.
- Pride is perhaps the most reprehensible sin in the sight of God.

How can I be prepared to meet the Bema?

- By constant communion with my Saviour Jesus Christ. By much self-examination.
- By constant confession of my sins (do not confess the same sin twice. God forgives after the first honest confession).
- By much prayer and meditation on the Word of God.
- By constant attention to the will of the Holy Spirit.
- By having a conscience void of offense before God and men (Acts24:16).



To the Christian the Bema should hold no terrors; it ought to be the best day he has ever had. It will be his crowning day. **"And then shall every man have praise of God," 1Cor4:5.** Much of our works may be burned, but God will find at least one thing to praise. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may stand before God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED DEAD

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away... Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them," Rev20:11, 13. The wicked dead (Rev20:12) are those who have never been baptised and those whose works were evil. They will be judged whether or not their names were recorded in the book of life and also the works of these individuals. **"And**



the Books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works the ungodly are to be cast into the lake of fire. And

whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire," Rev20:12, 15.



The Great White Throne Judgment is personal and final; it is not a trial to discover whether the person is guilty or not. It is pronouncement of judgment by the Lord God Almighty on the ungodly and doomed.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE FALLEN ANGELS (1Cor6:3)

The fallen angels will be judged probably at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment when Death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire (Rev20:14). This will be on the basis of the rebellion led by Lucifer (Ezek28:12-19, Isa14:12-17, Rev12:4). **"And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day," Jude6.** Also in 2Pet2:4, **"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment".**



THERE WILL BE DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT

- "But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you. And you Capernahum who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for you," **Matt11:22-24.**
- "And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare (himself) or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many (stripes). But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more," **Luke12:47-48.**
- "**Who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation,**" **Luke20:47.**

When God created mankind, He shared His own image and likeness with us. This gift makes each individual far too significant to live a brief, solitary life, and then simply cease to exist. Each human being will exist beyond his or her physical death, to find a destiny in eternity. The gift God gave man also brought with it personal responsibility. Man was given the capacity to choose, and with that capacity there came the possibility of making wrong, and even disastrous, choices. When Adam fell, his sin brought spiritual death. Sin also brought mankind under God's wrath, for justice demands that sin be punished. Yet human beings were too precious to God to be abandoned, so through Jesus' suffering and death, God provided salvation for everyone who responds with faith to God's self revelation.

When Jesus said that God created Gehenna for Satan and his angels, He made a most significant statement. God did not create hell for people. Actually, God has acted at great personal cost to free us from the threat of eternal punishment. Jesus said, "**God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him,**" **John3:18.** Only willful continuing refusal to respond to God's revelation of Himself can now condemn an individual! The choice of each person's destiny is his or hers alone.



ST MARY IN THE ORTHODOX CONCEPT

Big Idea: Learn about the assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her intercession.

Bible Text: John2:1-11.

Bible Verse: Luke1:48, "For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✕ The story of the assumption.
 - ✕ The difference between the assumption of St Mary and the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - ✕ Why we fast before the feast of the assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
 - ✕ Why we call the fast after the Blessed Virgin Mary.
 - ✕ The intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the wedding of Cana and at any time.
 - ✕ How we bless the Virgin Mary in the Coptic Orthodox Church.
- Feel:**
- ✕ Grateful to be called children of St Mary.
 - ✕ Closer and more intimate with the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- Do:**
- ✕ Ask the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary more fervently.
 - ✕ Trust that Jesus won't refuse her any wish.
 - ✕ Help others understand the true meaning of intercession of the saints in the Coptic Orthodox faith.



ST MARY IN THE ORTHODOX CONCEPT



After the death of her Son, Jesus Christ, St Mary lived under the care of St John according to her Son's commandment at the Cross. She witnessed to the "New life in Jesus Christ" and helped the disciples and apostles by her love and prayers.

ST MARY'S FALLING ASLEEP

When she was about 60 years old and on the 20th Toba, St Mary together with the disciples and the virgins of Mt Olives were gathered, and the Lord Jesus appeared and greeted them. He told them that He would come back the next day and receive His mother's soul.

On the 21st of Toba the Lord returned in the chariot of the Cherubim accompanied with thousands of angels and David the sweet Singer. The assembled men and women wept, and St Mary also wept, but the Lord consoled them. He kissed her and blessed them and bade St Peter to look upon the altar for the heavenly garments, which the Father had sent to shroud St Mary in.



She turned toward the east and prayed in a heavenly language and then lay down, still facing eastward. The virgins stood about St Mary singing, and Jesus sat by her side. David the Singer rejoiced and said, "Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," Psalms 116:15.

At the ninth hour the Lord received her soul and shrouded her body in the heavenly garments. He bade the apostles to take up the body, St Peter bearing the head and St John the feet. They carried her to a new tomb in the field of Jehoshaphat.

At the Field of Jehoshaphat

According to the Coptic text, when they came to the field of Jehoshaphat, the Jews heard the singing and came out intending to butt the body. The apostles set down the bier and fled. Darkness came on the Jews and they



were blinded and smitten by their own fire. They cried out for mercy and were healed and many were converted.

When a Jewish man called Reuben tried to upturn the bier, his hands withered to the elbow. He began to weep and asked the apostles to pray for him that he might be saved and become a Christian. They knelt and prayed, and his hands were loosened and he was healed. He was baptised at once, and began to preach.

THE ASSUMPTION OF ST MARY'S BODY

After the body of St Mary was put in the grave, the Lord did not permit that the body in which He Himself had dwelt and from which He took His own human body become a prey to corruption and dissolution. St Mary died as any human being; but her body was assumed into heaven.



According to the narrative of Joseph of Arimathea, Thomas the Apostle was absent in India when St Mary passed away. On his return he asked about her and was told what happened. St Thomas pretended not to believe until he had seen the body in the grave.

At the grave he told the disciples that the body of St Mary was not in the tomb. When they rolled the stone the tomb was empty and the body was not there. They did not know how to explain it as they were vanquished by what St Thomas had said. Then St Thomas told them how he saw her body being assumed to heaven by the angels and he showed them her girdle which St Mary gave him. They all rejoiced and asked the Lord to see her again.

On 15th Misra, seven month after her death, the disciples reassembled at the tomb and spent the night watching and singing hymns. At dawn on 16th Misra there was great thundering and a choir of angels was heard. The Lord Jesus came on the Cherubim with the soul of the Virgin Mary seated in His Bosom and greeted them, "Peace to you, my brethren". The disciples were honoured to see what St Thomas was privileged with.

On 16th Misra, we commemorate the appearance of the assumption of St Mary's body into heaven, as she preceded us and sat at the right hand of her Bridegroom and Son. It bears a powerful witness to the eschatological truth of our faith, i.e. "the life of the age to come".



THE INTERCESSION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

At the Wedding at Cana Galilee (John2:1-11)

- The Virgin Mary did not ask for anything but she just put the case in front of her Son: "They do not have wine".
- She told the servants, "Do whatever He asks of you".

From this dialogue we understand the following:

- The Virgin Mary puts our needs and petitions in front of God with trust and faith as a mother and as a queen: and the Lord will not refuse her.
- She directs our hearts within us to keep the Lord's commandments and "do whatever He asks us to do".

When we pray, what part of us does the praying? Is it our body or our spirit? Our spirit does not die; therefore the dead can pray for us too. This means we can still continue to have fellowship with the dead.

HOW WE LOOK AT THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY?

- She is the mother of God; her purity made her eligible to be the mother of God (Matt1:23; Luke11:30).
- She is also our mother; "**John this is your mother,**" John19:27.
- Jesus does not refuse anything for her, as in the wedding of Cana (John2:1-11).
- Among her many virtues, she used to keep things in her heart and think about them (Luke2:51). She was also humble and obedient (Luke1:38).
- We do not know of any speeches or deeds of St Mary other than the Magnificat (Luke1:46-49) but we do know that she used to pray with the disciples (Acts1:14).
- She is blessed (Luke1:48).

THE VIRGIN MARY IN THE BIBLE

- Very pure and full of grace (Luke1:28).
- Queen (Psa45:9).
- Ever Virgin (Ezek44:2).
- Mother of God (Luke1:43).
- Wrapped by the sun (Rev12:1-6).

THE VIRGIN MARY IN OUR PRAYERS

- In the liturgy of the mass we ask the Lord to forgive us our sins through the pleading of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



- In our praises we say, "Hail to Mary with the Angel Gabriel. We always bless you Mother of God; ask the Lord to forgive us our sins".
- We rank her above the angels as she is the throne of the Lord. The archangels carry the throne of the Lord. In one of the praises we sing, "You are higher than the Cherubim and stay above the Seraphim".
- We celebrate ten feasts for the Virgin Mary every year.
- On the 21st of every Coptic month, we remember the Virgin Mary and ask her prayers and blessing for us.
- We ask her intercessions in the prayers of the Agpeya.

FEASTS OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

Each saint in the Church has one feast, usually commemorating their departure or martyrdom. Some saints have an additional feast marking the finding of his/her relics, a certain miracle to which that saint is given credit or the consecration of a church in his or her name. The Virgin Saint Mary is special; we celebrate many feasts to commemorate her blessed life:

- The feast of the annunciation of her birth (7th Misra). The angel of God announced the birth of St Mary to her father Joachim; he and his wife were filled with joy and vowed to offer their daughter to serve the Lord.
- The feast of the birth of St Mary. The Church celebrates this event on 1st Bashans.
- The feast of her entry into the temple. This is celebrated by the Church on 3rd Kiahk; it is the day on which she entered the temple, in a place especially for virgins as her mother promised. She was approximately three years of age.
- The feast of her entry into Egypt, with our Lord Jesus Christ and St Joseph. This is celebrated by the Church on 24th Bashans.
- The feast of the departure of St Mary. This commemoration is on 21st Tuba. On this day the Church also commemorates the miracle which occurred on that day. The disciples surrounded her, except for St Thomas who was preaching in India.





- The monthly feast of St Mary. This is on the 21st day of each Coptic month and commemorates her passing away on 21st Tuba.
- The feast of the assumption of her body. The Church celebrates it on 16th Misra (22nd August). This is preceded by the fast of the Virgin Mary which lasts for two weeks.
- The feast of her miracle of dissolving the chains of St Matthias. This is on 21st Baouna and we commemorate on it the miracle of the release of St Matthias the Apostle from the chains with which he was bound.
- We also celebrate the building of the first church in her name in Philippi.
- The feast of her appearance at El-Zeitoun, upon the domes of the church of St Mary. This occurred on 2nd April 1968 (24th Baramhat) and continued for many years.



In addition to all these feasts, we celebrate the whole month of Kiahk (from 3rd December to 7th January) with praises honouring St Mary.

All of these feasts have special hymns and doxologies in the rites of the Church. They consist of many prophecies and symbols concerning St Mary in the Old Testament.

May we be blessed by her intercession and prayers for us Amen.



THE PERPETUAL VIRGINITY OF ST MARY

Big Idea: The Blessed St Mary continued to be virgin before and after the birth of Christ.

Bible Text: Matt12:46-50, Matt13:55, 56, John19:25 and others.

Bible Verse: Ezek44:1, 2, "Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And the Lord said to me, 'this gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it, therefore it shall be shut'."

Student will

Know:

- ✕ That St Mary was virgin before conceiving with Christ.
- ✕ That St Mary remained virgin after the birth of Christ.
- ✕ That Christ did not have real blood-brothers, but blood-relatives.

Feel: Sure of the validity of the Orthodox tradition of the perpetual virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Do: Ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to pray on our behalf so that we can have a 'virgin heart' dedicated to Christ.



THE PERPETUAL VIRGINITY OF ST MARY



The tradition of the Church holds that St Mary remained a virgin all her life (Isa7:14; Matt1:23).

VIRGIN BEFORE CHRIST

Archangel Gabriel appeared with good news both to Zacharias and St Mary. In Luke1:12, Zacharias was troubled at the **sight of** the angel; in Luke1:29, the Virgin Mary was troubled at the **greeting** of the angel. She wondered 'has God refused my vow of celibacy and consecration?' Any married woman can expect a child. But St Mary's relationship with St Joseph was not that of husband and wife; otherwise why wonder "**How can this be, since I do not know a man?**" Luke1:34. Again why would St Joseph want to leave secretly if St Mary was carrying his child (Matt1:19)?

VIRGIN AFTER THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

St Mary was likened to the Ark of the Covenant. She was pure inside and out. The Ark (Exo25:10, 11) was made of Acacia wood which does not rot. This was a symbol of the perpetual virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was overlaid with pure gold inside and out. This was symbol of the Holy Spirit overshadowing St Mary to bring about the union of divinity with humanity. It contained the manna which is a symbol of Jesus Christ the True Manna who became incarnate of the Virgin Mary.

JESUS' BROTHERS AND SISTERS (Matt12: 46-50, Matt13:55, 56)

Consider the following verses:

John19:25, "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother and His mother's sister Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."

Mark15:40, "There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses and Salome."

Matt13:55, "Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers James, Joses, Simon and Judas?"

Matt13:56, "And His sisters are they not all with us?"

Mark 6:3, "Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?"



From the above verses we conclude that James, Joses, Simon and Judas are the children of Clopas and his wife Mary who is the sister of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Matt12:46-50). James the younger (or the less, the son of Alphaeus), was called the 'younger' to distinguish him from James the elder (the son of Zebedee), the brother of John the Beloved.

In Jewish usage "brother" may also signify a "step-brother or other relative". Abraham called his nephew Lot, brother (Gen14:14). Boaz spoke of his relative Alimalek as his brother (Ruth4: 3). Joab called Amasa, who was his first cousin, brother (2Sam17:25). Thus, it was on account of these ancient customs that the sons of Christ's maternal aunt, Mary the wife of Clopas, were called Jesus' brothers. As for the Virgin Mary, she only gave birth to the Lord Christ, and then lived in virginity for the rest of her life.

Orthodox Christians believe that Jesus had relatives not blood-brothers. Indeed at the Cross Jesus commits His mother to the care of His disciple John (John19:26, 27). This would have been a crime against tradition had she had another child to care for her; and Jesus would not have placed her in the care of St John. Thus the apostolic teaching that St Mary remained ever-virgin was confirmed by the Lord because He put His mother in the care of St John.

On the other hand after watching the miraculous conception of Jesus and the birth of the Son of God, the Holy One, it is unreasonable for St Mary and St Joseph to break their vows of celibacy and live as husband and wife.



ANGELS

Big Idea: Learn about the nature and work of angels and devils.

Bible Text: Matt4:1-11

Bible Verse: Psa33:8, "the angel of the Lord encompass all around those who fear the Lord and he will deliver them'.

Students will

- Know**
- ✕ When the angels were created.
 - ✕ The nature of the angels.
 - ✕ The different ranks of the heavenly hosts.
 - ✕ The work of the angels.
 - ✕ The fallen angels.
- Feel:**
- ✕ Encouraged by the guardianship of the angels
- Do:**
- ✕ Ask the protection and intercession of the angels.



ANGELS



Little attention is paid to this doctrine today, for men consider it almost valueless except as angels occur in bedtime stories. However, we should not underestimate the ministry of angels, particularly that of guardian angels; we certainly do not know how much we owe to them.

THE EXISTENCE OF ANGELS

The word "angel" first occurred in *Gen16:7*, where the angel of the Lord ministered to Hagar after Sarah had mistreated her. The angels were created by God. **"For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible,"** *Col 1:16*. In *Matt4:11*, "angels came to minister to Jesus at the great temptation". Jesus said, speaking of guardian angels, **"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven,"** *Matt18:10*.



But the time of their creation is not revealed. However, since they are angels of light (*1Cor10:14*; *Rev18:1*; *Matt28:3*), it is believed that they were created on the first day of creation when God said, **"Let there be light,"** *Gen1:3*. Jesus believed in angels and so did St Paul (*Col 2:18, 21*; *2Thess1:7*).

THE NATURE OF ANGELS

Angels are spirit beings. "Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits ...?" *Heb1:14*. **"Who makes His angles spirits; His ministers a flaming fire",** *Psa104:4*. As spirits, angels are not bound by natural human laws; angels can enter locked prisons (*Acts12:7*); open prison doors (*Acts5:19*); ascend in a flame (*Judges13:19, 20*). Angels are able to travel great distances very quickly (heaven to earth, which may be many light years apart). Compare *Dan10:12, 13*, the angel apologized for being 21 days late.

Angels are wiser than men. "My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth", *2Sam14:20*.

Angels are strong. "Bless the Lord, ye His angels that excel in strength," *Psa103:20*. One angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night (*2Kin19:35*). One



angel slew 70,000 Israelites following David's sin in 2Sam24:15, 16. One angel thwarted the power of Rome, broke the seal and rolled away the stone from the tomb (Matt28:2, 4).

There are various ranks and orders of angels. Michael is called an archangel (Jude9). The Bible speaks of archangels, angels, principalities, powers, dominions and thrones (Col 1:16, Dan10:12-21, 1Thess4:16, 1Pet3:22).

Angels are immortal, without material bodies, knowing nothing of decay and death (Luke20:35, 36); if Jesus had become an angel he could not have died.

Angels neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt22:30; Luke20:35, 36).

Angels seem to be innumerable. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times, and thousands of thousands", Rev5:11. "...to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels," Heb12:22. Jesus spoke of being able to call for twelve legions of angels (3,000 to 6,000 each, Matt26:53). The servant of Elisha saw the mountains full of chariots of fire round about Elisha and these doubtless were angels (2Kin6:17).

The angels are executors of the divine will. Of their own volition, they acted neither for nor against man. The angels of light, obedient to God, the source of all good, could themselves only be **good and holy** (Matt25:31).

The very essence of the angels' nature is worship. The angelic choirs have been divided into three choirs:

First Choir: Seraphim (Isa6:2-6), Cherubim (Ezek1:10) and Thrones (Col 1:16). The Seraphim and the Cherubim are also known as the Four Living Creatures (Rev4:6).

Second Choir: Dominions (Eph 1:21), Virtues (Authorities, 1Cor 15:26) and Powers (Eph 1:21).

Third Choir: Principalities (Rom 8:38, Eph 1:21), Archangels (1Thes 4:16, Jude 9) and Angels.



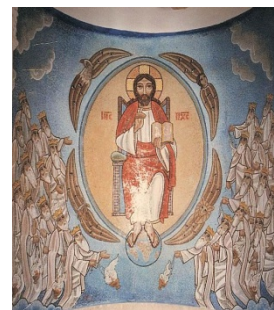
THE HEAVENLY SCENE (Rev 4:1-11)

Other inhabitants of heaven are the Twenty-four Presbyters (elders) and the Four



Living creatures who are around the throne of God (Rev4:4). Before the Throne of God, there are the Seven Spirits of God, the archangels.

The Twenty-four Presbyters: These are a spiritual and priestly host. They are close to God. They sit on luminous thrones, wearing royal garments. On their heads, there are crowns of honour, and in their hands golden censors filled with the prayers of the saints. They embrace golden bowls, kneeling in front of the True Lamb, and asking Him for the forgiveness of the sins of mankind.



The Four Living Creatures: These are the guardians of the Throne of God (Exo25:10-22; 1Kin6:23-28). They are the two ranks of the Cherubim (Ezek10:14) and the Seraphim (Isa6:2). They are created of light and fire. They are very strong and powerful. They are without crowns or thrones as the Twenty-four Presbyters, for God is their crown and they are His chariot. They are full of eyes around and within. This indicates their absolute vigilance and points to their understanding of the present and future mysteries which the Lord reveals to them. Each of them has six wings, with two they cover their faces, with two they cover their legs and they fly with two (Isa6:2). They are seen by the Fathers to typify the Four Evangelists, while their unity in spirit (Ezek1:12, 20) illustrates the spread of the gospel.



Besides asking on behalf of human beings, they also ask on behalf of all the creation -beasts, animals and birds- for they are more close to Him than all the heavenly spiritual creatures. With a voice full of glory, they shout one in front of the other, sending the praise of victory and of our salvation. They appeal to God for the forgiveness of sins of mankind and for having pity on them. **"The first Living creature was like a lion, the second Living creature like a calf, the third Living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth Living creature was like a flying eagle," Rev4:7.**



As the Living Creatures praise the Eternal Living One, the Twenty-four Presbyters cannot endure this view. So they stand up from their thrones, take off their crowns, cast them at the Lord's feet and kneel in front of Him for His greatness, His holiness and His love and care. This is repeated all the time and will be forever.



The amazing thing is that the subject of the praise of the heavenly creatures "is our victory and our salvation". How wonderful!

The Seven Spirits of God: These are the seven **Archangels** (Rev8:2, 5:6). The three well known Archangels are Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. The other four, Souriel, Sadakael, Sarathael and Ananiel, were mentioned in Church Tradition. Archangel Michael is the chief of this rank and chief captain of the host of the Lord (Josh5:14).



The Work of Angels

In heaven: to honor, worship and serve the Lord God (Rev5:11-12, 8:3, 4).



On earth: running errands for the Lord: a) showing Hagar a fountain; b) appearing before Joshua with a drawn sword; c) releasing chains from St Peter; d) opening prison doors; e) feeding, strengthening and defending God's children, etc.



To exercise God's judgments and purposes: a) to block Balaam's pathway (Num22:22); b) to kill Herod (Acts12:23); c) to gather the sinful tares at the last judgment and burn them (Matt13:41).



To guide believers: an angel guided St Philip to meet the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts8:26).

To assist, protect and strengthen saints: a) Elijah (1Kin19); b) Daniel in the lions' den (Dan6:22); c) Jesus in Gethsemane (Matt4:11, Luke22:43).



They will accompany our Lord when He returns (Matt25:31; 2Thess1:7-8).

They take the Lord's children to heaven at death (Luke16:22).



The angels had a part in the giving of the Law (Heb2:2; Acts7:53, Gal 3:19).

THE ABODE OF ANGELS

The present abode of the angels is in heaven, **"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven," Matt22:30.** Also refer to Eph3:10, John 1:51 and Luke 2:13, 15.

THE FALL OF ANGELS

Angels are described by our Lord as being holy (sinless and pure). "... when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels", Mark8:38. Angels are created beings; they were created holy (Luke9:26; 2Pet2:4; Jude6). On the basis of 1Tim5:21, "elect angels" infers that these are now confirmed in holiness.

However, we also gather that God placed the angels on probation for a time. When the test came some defected and some maintained their innocence and were confirmed in their goodness (Psa89:7). St Peter in 2Pet2:4 speaks of the fall of angels, "... the angels that sinned." The actual test and time of the fall of angels is uncertain; however, there are several that rebelled when Satan tried to become like God (Isa14; Ezek28; Rev12:7). As a result of their fall they are awaiting judgment. **"And the angels which kept not their first estate but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day," Jude6.**

The Church has organized, among many feasts for the angels, a feast day for Archangel Michael every 12th day of each Coptic month, a special feast day for the Four Living Creatures on 8th Hatour (17th November) and another for the Twenty-four Presbyters on 24th Hatour (3rd December).



Powers

The angels offer our prayers upon the Golden Altar which is before the Throne (Rev 8:3, 4). Therefore it is only natural and right to call upon them in prayers.



A Group of Angels

(Adapted from

- The Angels, pamphlet by H H Pope Shenouda III.
- The Book of Revelation by Father Tadros Malaty
- The Holy Angels by Mother Alexandra).



SATAN

Big Idea: To learn about the origin and work of Satan, the father of all evil, and his demons and how to claim victory over them through the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bible Text: Ezek28:12-19; Isa14:12-17.

Bible Verse: Col1:13, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love".

Students will

Know:

- ✘ Satan's origin.
- ✘ Satan's subordinates.
- ✘ Satan's character.
- ✘ Satan's titles.
- ✘ Satan's work.
- ✘ The doom of demons.
- ✘ Forms of demon practices.
- ✘ Ways in which Satan attacks Christians.
- ✘ How to resist the devil.

Feel: That Satan is mighty but God is Almighty.

Do:

- ✘ Resist, fight and draw the sword of the Word of God.
- ✘ Avoid all forms of demon practices.



SATAN



The Christian life is a battle against our great foe, Satan, called the devil. By virtue of the fall of man we became the devil's possession, his pawns. We share the same fate i.e. cursed by God and destined to hell. When we receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour this relationship of Satan and sinner is broken. But Satan does not give us up easily; he fights desperately to regain us. The Bible tells us to resist Satan, fight him, and give him no place in our lives.

SATAN'S ORIGIN

Satan is a created angel according to the Lord (Col 1:16); the time of his fall is unknown (1Tim5:21). Satan is described in Ezek28:12-19:

Verse 12: Satan was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Verse 13: He was covered with precious stones, sardius, topaz, diamond, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, emerald, carbuncle and gold. He was capable of using tabrets and pipes for he was musical.

Verse 14: He was the anointed cherub, perhaps the chief and highest angel.

Verse 17: His heart was lifted up because of his beauty and wisdom.

Verse 15: He was created perfect and remained perfect until sin entered him.

Verse 16: Sin and iniquity were discovered in Satan.

Verses 16-18: Satan was cast out from the presence of God in heaven.

Satan is also described in Isa14:12-17:

Verse 12: He was called Lucifer, the son of the morning.

Verses 13-14: His pride led him to desire to be like the most High God.

Verse 15: His destiny is Hades, down to the foundation of the earth.



Since Satan has been cast out of heaven he now makes his abode in the air (Eph2:2). Satan still has a limited access to heaven to accuse the brethren (Job1:6-12; Zech3:1). This power may continue until the fulfillment of Rev12:10.





When Satan sinned against God (Isa14:12-20; Zech3:1), he did not sin alone but was the leader of a group of angels. When Satan fell, he and his angels were cast out, and these fallen angels have become demons. In Matt12:26, Satan is presented as a king over a kingdom of lesser devils.

SATAN'S SUBORDINATES

- **Satan's angels, evil spirits, unclean spirits and devils:** "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness ..," 2Pet2:4. "And the angels who did not keep their own abode... reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day," Jude6.
- **Principalities, powers, world rulers and spiritual hosts:** "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," Eph6:12.
- **Sinners who do his will:** "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do," John8:44.
- **Saints sometimes inadvertently allow Satan to use them** as St Peter did in Matt16:22, 23. Jesus looked at Peter but rebuked Satan who had spoken through Peter's lips.

SATAN'S CHARACTER

- **He is a thief.** The devil steals the Word of God from the hearts of hearers: "When any one hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart," Matt13:19.
- **He is subtle.** Satan beguiled Eve. "...as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety," 2Cor11:3.
- **He is a murderer.** "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning," John8:44.
- **He is a liar.** "When he (Satan) speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources for he is a liar, and the father of it," John8:44.





- **He is a deceiver.** "... and Satan, which deceives the whole world ...," Rev12:9.

SATAN'S TITLES

- **He is a roaring lion.** "...your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour," 1Pet5:8.
- **He is the prince of the power of the air.** "...according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience," Eph2:2.
- **He is the power of darkness.** "...delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son," Col 1:13.
- **He is the great dragon, the serpent, the devil, Satan.** "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him," Rev12:9.
- **He is the prince of this world.** "For the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me," John14:30.
- **He is the god of the world.** "In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which do not believe," 2Cor4:4.
- **He is king of the bottomless pit,** "whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon," Rev9:11."



SATAN'S WORK

- **To seek whom he may devour:** "The devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour," 1Pet5:8.
- **To sow tares and evil doctrine:** "His enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way," Matt13:25, 30.
- **To blind the minds of man:** "In whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of them who do not believe," 2Cor4:4.
- **To accuse the brethren:** "For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night," Rev12:10.
- **To sift (test) the Christians:** "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:





but I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren," Luke22:31, 32.

- **To destroy the flesh (lives) of men:** "To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," 1Cor5:5.

THE DOOM OF DEMONS

The doom of all demons, like that of Satan, was sealed by Christ on Calvary. The abyss is the intermediate place of punishment of demons (Rev9:11). The demons know that their doom is coming, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" Matt8:29. The eternal doom of demons will be with Satan in the eternal fire, "...everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt25:41.

FORMS OF DEMON PRACTICES

- **Divination:** the ability with the aid of familiar spirits to foresee or to foretell the future. According to Lev20:27, anyone with a familiar spirit was to be put to death.
- **Necromancy:** this is contacting a dead body as Saul did in contacting Samuel (1Sam28:8). This is a heinous sin in God's sight (2Chr33:6; Lev20:6).
- **Prognostication:** this is illustrated in Ezek21:21, and includes divination, idols and the inspection of the entrails of fowls and animals.
- **Magic:** this was a great science in Egypt (Gen41:8) entailing a mixture of science (astronomy, astrology) and familiar spirits. This is practiced today in hypnotism, mind cures and fortune telling; do not seek healing in a mysterious way. 
- **Sorcery:** this involved strange formulas relating to astronomy, chemistry and familiar spirits (Isa47:9-13); it is referred to in Acts19:18, 19 where all books were burnt. 
- **Witchcraft:** a conscious complicity with evil spirits. This is condemned in Gal 5:20. It is essentially devil worship and counted as rebellion (1Sam15:23).

WAYS IN WHICH SATAN ATTACKS CHRISTIANS (2Cor2:11)

- **The devil makes us lazy:** A spirit of lethargy, heaviness comes over us; the brain becomes abnormally dull, tired and ambitionless. Perhaps we



blame sleeplessness, the weather, diet or pressure of duties. Check each point: Have I had sufficient sleep? Is the weather hotter now than before? Is my diet sufficient? Am I busier than I should be? If the answers are negative then recognize the thing as an attack of Satan and rebuke him in the Name of the Lord; Satan will be forced to flee from you. **"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," Jam4:7.**

- **Sleeplessness:** If Satan succeeds in making us lose sleep, then our senses will be dulled; our activities are arrested and weakened; normal operations of life are undermined.
- **Pressure of duties:** This makes us tired, overwhelmed and irritable; if we are too busy, too active, delays can frustrate us and Satan gets an advantage of us. Satan can cause traffic jams to delay us to attempt to exasperate us. Beware of the time when unexpected callers or the children annoy us.
- **Nerves:** Satan tries to attack the body and cause us to become nervous wrecks. If he succeeds in this then the devil gets us to sin easily in our weakened position.
- **Satan wrecks minds** (2Cor4:4). Satan blinds the minds of the unsaved. And Satan is striving today to regain control of the minds of Christians. Satan attempts to enter the mind through a wrong thought, impression or idea lodged in the realm of the thought life. Scripture says a man is, as his thoughts make him. Satan may enter our mind through a root of bitterness, a grudge, a disappointment (in love, school or business), pride, etc.
- **By death:** Satan is a murderer and seeks by accidents to claim the lives of mankind. God holds the keys of life and death, yet God gives this power to Satan at times. In Job1:12 God gave Satan the power to destroy Job's family and consequently in Job1:18, 19 his seven sons and three daughters were killed by a collapsing building.
- **By suicide:** Satan tried to get Christ to commit suicide by jumping off the pinnacle of the Temple in the great temptation of Matt4:6. Perryman tells the story of a man who couldn't shave himself because



the temptation to cut his own throat was so great. Doubtless this is the explanation of most suicides; Satan has gained an entrance.

- **By moods:** These are common to man but the devil must not be allowed to take advantage of them for his own pernicious plotting. Watch your moods closely and seek victory through Christ over them quickly and constantly.
- **Money spending habits:** Many of us succumb to "impulse buying," or have bought items we could not afford. The devil often takes advantage of a weakness and makes us sin by overdoing it.
- **Fashion craze or habit:** God says that women are to dress modestly. Many err in dress by following modern fashions without considering the effects that it might have on the opposite sex. Some men have committed terrible sins but confessed later, "I had no intention of doing it but because of her immodest dress I was tempted beyond the power of my resistance".
- **Confusing believers regarding guidance:** Satan comes to the seeking soul with many suggestions; he makes a fog in the mind by creating a great uncertainty. Recognize the difference: God's voice is specific while Satan's is indecisive.
- **Daydreaming:** This is one of the devil's most fruitful fields. There are good and bad day dreams; watch your passive, uncontrolled mental musings. Flagrant sin is often the outworkings of accomplished daydreams.
- **Feelings:** These, like thoughts and moods must be watched; don't be touchy, don't say "I wonder if he meant to insult me? Why did he say that?" Live by the faith of the Son of God and not by feelings.
- **Criticism:** We must be prepared to receive it; we may be misinterpreted, misunderstood. This could overwhelm us and lead us to introspection and discouragement.



- **Discouragement:** is one of the major weapons utilized by the devil.
- **Old Age:** You have served the Lord faithfully; Satan will say 'Now you are too old to resist; just relax and take life a lot easier.' This is the devil's lie.

Preachers have many temptations, so pray much for them. Satan tempts us to be flippant during the worship, and the tangible presence of the Lord is lost from the meeting. They may have temptation to spiritual pride: A fine prayer; good sermons; excessive compliments. They may be tempted with vision of great results: seeing "myself" as the centre of a great revival; great crowds; much publicity; hundreds of decisions.

A missionary under attack experiences "perplexing situations" such as stress of conflicts, disappointments, discouragements; "mental breakdown"; "blow upon blow"; "baffled", and as a result the missionary is seemingly enveloped in darkness.

HOW TO RESIST THE DEVIL

- **Recognize** these as attacks of the devil, "Resist the devil," Jam4:7.
- **Resist**, fight, and draw the sword, "... that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," Eph6:11.
- **Use the armour** provided for the saints and listed in Eph6:10-18:



Verse 14: loins girt about with truth.

Verse 14: chest protected by the breast plate of righteousness.

Verse 15: feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.

Verse 16: body protected with the shield of faith, to turn aside Satan's fiery darts.

Verse 17: head protected with the helmet of salvation.

Verse 17: offensive warfare engaged with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

- **Put on Christ:** "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts hereof," Rom13:14. Christ in me must be the Victor.
- **Use the Word:** Christ in the great temptation in Matt4:1-11, did not pray or call for angels to





protect Him, but three times He quoted Scripture to Satan (verses 4, 7 and 10).

- **Take the offensive; display the triumphant life:** Use your will or will-power by saying, 'I will not sin; I resolve by the power of the indwelling Christ and His grace to overcome and be victor over sin.'
- **Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit:** the Spirit will guide us as to whether or not the temptation is of the devil (for example in the matter of guidance).
- **Pray:** "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all saints," Eph6:18.
- **Plead the Blood of Christ to cover you:** Satan will always flee from the presence of the Blood. "And they overcame him (Satan) by the Blood of the Lamb," Rev12:11.
- **If you sin, confess it immediately** and claim forgiveness on the basis of 1John1:9. Rise up and take the sword and fight more diligently.



Satan is mighty but God is Almighty; Satan was forever defeated at Calvary. Let us constantly claim victory over Satan through the Blood of the Lamb (Rev12:11).

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WORSHIP

Big Idea: Entering into the presence of God.

Bible Text: 1Chro29:10 - 21.

Bible Verse: Rom8:26, "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 us with groaning which cannot be uttered."

Students will

Know:

- ✘The definition of worship.
- ✘How to experience the awesome presence of God.
- ✘How to worship in Spirit and Truth (John4:2324).
- ✘The need to worship in private (Matt1:35, Luke 5:16).
- ✘To have a diligent prayer time of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication .
- ✘To understand David's prayer in 1Chro29:10-21, as a demonstration of worship.
- ✘Formality of worship.

Feel: That worship is elevating and enriching.

Do: Dedicate a particular time for a daily encounter with the Lord.



WORSHIP



By definition, worship refers to the supreme honour or veneration given either in thought or deed to a person or thing. The Bible teaches us that God alone is worthy of worship (Psa29:2, Rev4:11). The first commandment tells us we must worship God. The next two also have to do with our relationship to God. Our Lord Jesus Christ rephrased these three commandments to show that God really wants first place in our hearts and lives. **"You shall love the Lord your God with *a//* your heart, with *a//* your soul and with *a//* your mind," Matt22:37.**

When we worship God, we enter into the very presence of God. Christ has made it very easy for us to enter in God's presence by faith. But we must not forget what it cost Him to make this possible. As our high priest, Christ offered Himself on the cross as a perfect sacrifice for our sins in order that we might come in His name, into the very presence of God.

Sometimes, when we pray, we are so busy thinking about other things that we really do not appreciate, what a wonderful privilege it is to talk with God. We should worship God in reverence.

When Jesus came to earth, He announced, **"The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit and those who worship Him, must worship in spirit and truth," John4:23-24.** The term spirit speaks of the personal nature of worship. It is from my person to God's person and involves the intellect, emotions and will. The word truth speaks of the content of worship. God is pleased when we worship Him, understanding His true character.

Worship is not something we do if we like, but it says "shall" and "must". In Rom8:26-27, St Paul explains that the Holy Spirit prompts us to praise God correctly.

WORSHIP IN PRIVATE

We want to worship God, to be with Him, to experience His presence. There must be a place in your life where you go down on your knees, where you shut out all the rest of the world, and you and God just the two of you



get together. It has to be honest between you and Him. It has to be regular, at least once a day, and it has to be fought for, clawed and scratched for, or it will never happen. There is a need for a consistent encounter where there is just God and you.

It was important for Christ. Jesus took large hunks of time to be alone with His Father (Matt1:35, Luke 5:16). You say, "But He didn't live in the 20th century." My friend, we all have time for what we really want. Choose a quiet place and a particular time for this daily appointment with God. Write it in your diary.

In that holy time have a double goal, to know God and to obey Him. Pray for understanding, and then read through your chosen passage for the day. Ask yourself what you learn in that passage about God. Then have a diligent prayer time of: **Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication**; i.e. follow the simple acrostic of the word **ACTS**.

Adoration

This is praising God. To praise God is to acknowledge the glories of His excellent Person. It differs somewhat from thanksgiving, which describes what God has done rather than what He is.

Here are some facts about praise:

- God alone is worthy of our praise (Psa18:3, Psa113:3).
- It is His will for us that we praise Him (Psa5:23, Isa 43:2).
- This praise should be continuous (Psa34:1, Psa71:6) and also public (Psa22:25).
- We are to praise God for His holiness (2Chro20:21), grace (Eph1:6), goodness (Psa135:3) and kindness (Psa138:2).
- All nature praises God (Psa148:10).
- The sun, moon and stars praise Him (Psa19:1, Psa148:3).
- The angels praise Him (Psa148:2).

Confession

This is exposing our hearts before God. After his great sins of adultery and murder, King David prayed and confessed his sins in Psalm 51. David's prayer can serve as a pattern today to the Christian when he is guilty of sins in his life.

- David begins his prayer by freely admitting his sins (Psa51:3-4). This honesty is vital in our confession. God will graciously forgive all our sins, but not on account of excuses.



- He then displays real sorrow over his sins (Psa51:17). St Paul writes in 2Cor7:10, that the main characteristic of true confession is godly sorrow (e.g. Peter's sorrow after betraying Christ is godly contrition in contrast to that of Judas whose sorrow was ungodly).
- He asks God's forgiveness (Psa57:1, 7, and 9).
- He believes that God has heard him and will restore him (Psa5:12-15).

In 1John1:9, St John tells us that in essence the means of forgiveness and cleansing is the Blood of Christ, while the method of this forgiveness and cleansing is the confession of the Christian. Like David, we must admit our sin, regret the actions of our sin, plead the Blood of Christ, and believe that God has indeed done what He promised, namely, to cleanse us from sin and restore us into fellowship and service.



Thanksgiving

The importance and spiritual benefits of thanksgiving in our prayer life cannot be overemphasized. The Bible tells us, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (Jam4:6). But the question is: how do you become humble? It is done by being thankful.

A good rule is to be worried for nothing (Phil 4:6); be prayerful in all things (1Thess5:18), and be thankful for anything. It was the sin of thanklessness that caused the ancient world to plunge into the terrible depths of sexual depravity (Rom1:21). In the Old Testament, a special group of priests was appointed to do nothing else but pray and thank the Lord (2Chr31:2).

There are two main things we are to thank the lord for:

- We are to thank Him for His work in creation (Psa100, Rev4:11).
- We are to thank Him for His work in redemption (Rev 5:9), through which we can become a new creation.

Supplications

When we pray, our supplications and petitions should be made by faith (Jam1:6), and in the name of Jesus (John14:13, 1John3:22, 1John5:14 -15). We need to pray for ourselves and for spiritual leaders (Col 4:3), sick believers (Jam5:14, 15), rulers (1Tim2:1-3) and even for our enemies (Matt5:44).

David's prayer in (1Chro29:10-21) is a demonstration of worship. One great difference between Christianity and all other religions is that the believer



has a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God (1Kin18:26, Psa66:19). You learn to pray by praying. Use your head and your heart. When you pray, think and it helps greatly to talk out aloud, so you voice with meaning your heart's desires.

Worship is elevating. It's healing; it's comforting; it's enriching. It's Christ honouring. It's a growing thing to worship God. It's really up to you. It's where the rubber meets the road.

FORMALITY OF WORSHIP

The people of Israel used to be concerned with the rituals of worship while their hearts were far from God, doing both evil and worship side by side. God rebuked them saying: **"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me? I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of the fed cattle. Bring no more futile sacrifices. Incense is an abomination to Me. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My Soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood," Isa1:11-15.**

This external ritual worship is rejected by God, **"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and their heart is far from Me," Matt15:8.** God does not want your worship but your heart, **"My son, give Me your heart," Pro23:26.** Let worshipping be just an expression of what this heart feels. Beware of being like tombs that are whitewashed on the outside... concerning yourself with worship and rituals, sacrifices and incense, leaving aside the weight of the Law: justice and mercy (Matt 23:23).

Do not measure your prayer by its length but by its depth and purity. The prayer of the Pharisee was longer than that of the tax collector but God did not accept the Pharisee as his heart was not pure. Do not concentrate on the external incense but purify your heart and your prayer will be set before God as an incense.





PUBLIC WORSHIP
THE LITURGY OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST
THE HOLY MASS

Big Idea: To know and experience the five stages in the spiritual journey of the Holy Mass.

Bible Text: Luke24:30 -32 and others.

Bible Verse: John4:23, "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✘ The awesome presence of the Lord and the heavenly hosts during the mass.
 - ✘ How to prepare ourselves in order to be able to worship in Spirit and Truth.
 - ✘ The five stages of the journey of the mass:
 - A crushed heart (Psa5:7)
 - Peace and reconciliation (Matt5:23-24, 1Cor11:27-32).
 - Fear and reverence (Isa6:1-6).
 - Revelation (John14:21-23).
 - Union and happiness (Psa145:3-5).
 - ✘ Each stage is a pre-requisite to the next one.
 - ✘ All stages are very much inter-dependent.

Feel: Eager to experience the five stages of spiritual levels in the liturgy.

- Do:**
- ✘ Come prepared to meet the Lord in the holy mass.
 - ✘ Come early so that the Holy Spirit can lift us up from one level to the other.
 - ✘ Try to attend extra masses during fasting time.



**PUBLIC WORSHIP
THE LITURGY OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST
THE HOLY MASS**



There is a need to worship God and to do so in fellowship with each other. The Lord assigned a day of the week, when we must put aside everything, to worship Him.

The most essential form of prayer and public worship is the Holy Mass or the Liturgy of the Eucharist. This is generally held in church which is the house of God and the gate to heaven; it is the house of angels and the congregation of saints.

During the prayers of the Holy Mass, the angels and the archangels, the seraphim and the cherubim and all the heavenly hosts attend around the altar in great glory. When the priest calls on the Holy Spirit to come and transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, He comes in such a great and glorious mystery in the midst of the praising of angels that no human mind can comprehend. Hence, the glorious time we spend in church during the Mass is a moment of heaven on earth. Because we are still in the body, we cannot perceive the glory with which we are surrounded, and many of us complain that they do not get anything out of it.

Thousands go to church every Sunday. A few are worshipping, most are just playing church. The task before every Christian is to worship every week, not to go to church every week and have the experience of true worship once a year, or almost never. Worship is top priority. Everything, absolutely everything must be put aside to do this. Worship is lofty business, but we do it so poorly. Many Christians don't even show up with regularity. A person may say, "Well, I don't get anything out of it." If you get nothing out of the Word of God, or out of the great hymns of the Church, or out of the Holy Mass, then it's because you don't know how to put anything into it.

Or a person may say, "I'm tired, it's the only day I get off during the week." Well you'd better be on; because worship is the meaning of the whole thing of living. It's the best, much higher than anything we can do. If your job makes you too tired to worship God, quit your job, find another.

Too often we come to meet each other and miss meeting God. I believe that



the problem is that we've never really learned the importance of worship. The attitude in which we come also shows our poverty in worship. Some come and fold their arms and lean back, look around, and kind of evaluate the situation; how is the priest doing today? How do things look up in the choir?

The culture around us says, 'You go to church on Sunday? Man don't you have any fun?' And we let the surrounding culture set the mood for us. We must not do that. That makes us worldly Christians.

We must learn to worship, or church is a terrible drag. Worship is getting to God. Worship is sitting shoulder to shoulder, eyes front and centre on God! Worship is to God. Worship is for God. Jesus took His best friends up the mountain with Him (Luke 22:39, 40). But then He withdrew from them a stone's throw and fell on His face. When you go to worship, meet God personally. Press to the very heart of God and meet Him there. Whatever anyone else does around you, you get through to Him.

In **John 4:23, 24**, Jesus announced, **"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and Truth"**. When we get into worship, we cannot just walk into church and expect to be in a prayer mood. If we pray psalms 122, 84 and 15, then we can "wind up" the right way!

FEEL THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

When you come to church, put blinders on and help others wear blinders. Slip quietly into church and go to God. Give your whole mind and heart to God. Sing, think when you sing and sing for God. Meeting with God and feeling His presence then become real.

Feeling the presence of the Lord gives us holiness and we do not notice trivial things. Alternatively, it gives us positive vision. Then it does not matter whether the choir are doing well or whether the deacons are conferring with each other. If a girl is with her fiancé in the park, would she be looking around to see how untidy the park is? Or rather would she be listening to the love words of her fiancé? If we are invited to a party, do we care to talk to the host or be satisfied to look at the decoration in the house? The Lord is inviting us to His banquet, is it not reasonable to talk to Him?



THE Holy MASS

The Holy Mass is a spiritual journey of five stages, or spiritual levels of feelings. Each stage is a prerequisite to the next one and they are all very much interdependent.

A Crushed Heart

As you come to church, make the sign of the Cross before the altar saying, **"But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy,"** Psa5:7. Feel that you are not worthy to stand among the angels and saints. Have a contrite heart and ask for God's forgiveness.

When the Lamb (the Bread) is offered, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John1:29), and put on Him all your sins and troubles and worries and petitions.

When the priest prays the "absolution for the servants", i.e. for the priest, the deacons and the congregation, feel that you are not worthy to join in this holy service. But decide to share in the service with all your heart, join in singing and in the responses.

As the priest comes out with incense, he greets all the saints and icons. Then he comes, when possible, to put the Cross on the head of every person present in the church. Then you pray, 'I ask You Lord Jesus to forgive me all my sins that I know and that I don't know'. Pray it with a contrite heart.

The priest then enters the sanctuary and raises incense over the altar. Then he takes this collective repentance and prays the "confession of the congregation" which says, "O God who accepted the repentance of the thief on the Cross, please accept the repentance of all Your people. Forgive them their sins for the sake of Your Holy name that is called upon us in the multitude of Your mercy and not according to our sins".

Keep the feelings of contrition throughout the prayers. Join the deacons when they ask the Lord to forgive us our sins through the pleading of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints. Listen to the readings from the New Testament with an open heart and anxious to have a special message from the Lord to you. Listen to the sermon and note down a few things you would like to practice in the coming week. This feeling of contrition and crushed



heart leads us to the next stage which is peace and reconciliation.

Peace and Reconciliation

In the prayer of reconciliation we remember the work of Christ to reconcile man with his creator (Eph2:14, 15; Col 1:20). He did that especially for me personally (Gal 2:20; 1Tim1:15). When the priest asks God to fill our hearts with peace, join him with all your heart and you will feel His peace fill all your being.

When the deacon asks the congregation to exchange a holy kiss, it is essential that you make sure that you are in peace with everybody with whom you deal. If you are upset with someone, or alternatively if someone is upset with you, it would be a great idea if you stood next to that person in church and pressed on their hand at this point and forgot all your grievances. Otherwise, how could you have Holy Communion or how would you even stand in front of God.

Jesus said, **"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way, first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift", Matt5:23, 24.** In 1Cor11:27-32, St Paul warns us not to partake of Holy Communion in unworthy manner or we will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. As the peace and grace of God fill our heart, then, we are sure when we ask Him to forgive our sins, that He will do so. **"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"**. These feelings of contrition, peace and reconciliation take us right into the very presence of God, and there we have the feelings of fear and reverence.

Fear and Reverence

The priest then asks "where are your hearts?" We answer, "They are with the Lord". Pray and struggle to keep your mind and heart on the Lord. At this stage, we receive all sorts of temptations to take our mind off the Lord. Press for the heart of God. Bring all thoughts and worries for the care of the Lord.

As we sing "the cherubim worship You and the seraphim glorify You", feel the wings of the angels at the exchange of "napkins" and feel that you are not worthy to join the cherubim and the seraphim in standing before the Lord and in praising Him (Isa6). As we sing this prayer and praise God, we



hope that the Lord would open our eyes to see the "King in His beauty".

Revelation

The Lord will reveal Himself to you (John14: 21, 23). It depends on how well you prepare your heart and how hard you strive for Him. This takes place at the coming of the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine to the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Pray with all your heart. Pray in the spirit and truth. Ask the Holy Spirit to make your heart His temple. Ask the Lord to come and rest in your heart and in your mind. Ask Him to give you the "mind of Christ" in His humility. In faith and love be united to the Body of Christ.

Union and Happiness

Ask the Lord that you be one with Him as He and the Father are one. Pray "Your will not mine, let it be done on earth as it is in Heaven". Your happiness will be "complete" as He promised.

These five stages make the spiritual levels of the Mass; one level leads to the next. If you come late, which level will you jump into? You need the energy of the level of contrition to be able to get into the level of peace and reconciliation. Once reconciled, your heart will be filled with peace and then you can feel the presence of the angels and listen to their praise. These help you share with them their feeling of fear and reverence. You kneel down as the Holy Spirit attends and your eyes will be opened to see the King in His beauty as the "Bread is broken", (Luke24:30-32). You unite with Jesus in Holy Communion and rejoice.

If you have not repented with a contrite heart as you get into church, then you will find it very difficult to have peace and reconciliation or forgive others. Consequently you cannot have the fear and reverence. If you do not have the fear and reverence, then nothing will be manifested or revealed to you. You won't be able to see anything. You have Holy Communion but you miss on happiness and union with Christ. Rather you will have condemnation for unworthy partaking of the Holy Eucharist and be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord (1Cor11:27-32).

St Athanasious said, 'the altar slaughters'. There was a Pope who was not accepted by two monks because they thought that he was not capable to do the job properly. They conspired against him with the government which surprisingly put them in jail. The Pope pleaded for them, so they were freed. Then they, thinking that the Pope was too weak and worried, told him



to abdicate. After praying a Mass with them, the pope asked for forty days to think about it. One of them died the same day and the second on the thirtieth day.

God is continually reaching for us in the worship service of the Mass. After the Mass, we want to go out exclaiming "wasn't it great to meet God!"

I challenge you to learn how to worship.

- Read Psalms 95 and 100.
- Write out what it means to you to worship God.
- Then talk over your definition with Him.



PRAYING WITH PSALMS

Big Idea: The Psalms prayerfully express human emotions in the realities of life.

Bible Text: Psalm 1 and others.

Bible Verse: Psa3:3, 4, "But You O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill."

Students will

Know:

- ✘ That God wants us to be honest with Him in our prayers.
- ✘ That the Psalms can help us express our feelings to God and learn to respond to Him righteously.
- ✘ The five different types into which the Psalms are categorized.
- ✘ The canonical prayers of the Agpeya.

Feel:

- ✘ The importance of praying with the Agpeya.
- ✘ Confident to use the Psalms to open their hearts to God in prayer.

Do:

- ✘ Study Psalm 1.
- ✘ Make an informed decision and bear its consequences.
- ✘ "Taste and see that the Lord is good," Psa34:8.



PRAYING WITH PSALMS



The Book of Psalms is Israel's hymn-book, full of authentic human emotion and divine insight into life. The psalms express personal feelings we all feel, even today, centuries after they were written. They prayerfully express human emotions, positive and negative, in the realities of life. No matter how we feel or what we want to say to God, we can find it exemplified in this rich book.

What type of emotion do you sometimes feel as you talk with God? Trust or faith; thank God; feel sad; afraid, or angry about something; praise God for who He is etc... As we look at the Psalms, we will discover that they can be categorized into five main types: Trust, Praise, Lament, Thanks and Wisdom. Note that every human emotion is captured in the psalms and can be categorized generally in these five types. Some Psalms express more than one emotion.

Trust: Psalms 121:1-8.

"I will lift my eyes to the hills - from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber, Behold, He who keeps Israel. Shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in, from this time forth, and even forevermore".

Praise: Psalm 103:1-5.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's".



Wisdom: Psa139:1-6.

"O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it".

Lament: Psa64:1-10.

"Hear my voice O Lord, O God, in my meditation; preserve my life from fear of the enemy. Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the rebellion of the workers of iniquity, who sharpen their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows- bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the blameless; suddenly they shoot at him and do not fear. They encourage themselves in an evil matter; they talk of laying snares secretly; they say: "Who will see them? They devise iniquities: "We have perfected a shrewd scheme." Both the inward thought and the heart of man are deep. But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly they shall be wounded. So He will make them stumble over their own tongue; all who see them shall flee away. All men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider His doing. The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in Him. And the entire upright in heart shall glory".

Thanks: Psa32:1-5.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and You forgave the iniquity of my sin".

God wants us to be honest with Him in our prayer. He already knows how we feel and what is going on in our lives. The Psalms can help us express our feelings to God and learn how to respond to Him righteously.

In this lesson we will focus on Psalm 1 of the Morning Prayer. This is a psalm of



wisdom. It tells us the truth that a person either is for or against the Lord - and there are consequences for both. At some point each person must decide if he or she will follow the world's ways or the Lord's ways. This vital decision has consequences both temporarily and eternally. When a believer chooses to follow Jesus Christ, he or she must understand that righteousness comes from Christ's death on the Cross alone not as a result of his or her actions. He took our iniquities and gave us His righteousness.

The Church, in her wisdom, selected for us some psalms to pray **seven** times a day. These prayers are collected in the Agpeya, the book of canonical prayers, or hourly prayers. **Why seven?** The reasons are:

- ✠ Our teacher David the prophet said, "seven times a day I praise You. Because of Your righteous judgments," Psalms 119:164.
- ✠ At each hour we also remember important events in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Church.

The seven hours are:

1. First or Morning Hour (start of the day, corresponding to 6:00 a.m.)

This hour commemorates:

- The Eternal Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, "In the beginning was the Word," John 1:1), and His birth in the flesh, "and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," John 1:14.
- His trial, "why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His anointed," Psalms 2:1, 2.
- His resurrection, "For You will not leave my soul in hell, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption," Psalms 16:10.
- This prayer also expresses the longing of the human soul for her Creator, and encourages us to have a good start to the new day.

2. The Third Hour (corresponding to 9:00 a.m.)

It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles in the form of tongues of fire, "Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions," Psalms 45:7. Therefore, in this hour we ask for stirring up the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our life.



3. The Sixth Hour (corresponding to 12:00 o'clock noon).

In this prayer we commemorate the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Mercy and trust have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." Psa85:10-11. In this prayer, we contemplate on the blessings of salvation, and ask our Lord to destroy the documented record of our sins.

4. The Ninth Hour (corresponding to 3:00 p m).

In this hour our Lord Jesus Christ died in the flesh upon the cross, triumphed over the evil powers, reigned over us, and through these events, salvation was accomplished. "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool'. The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies," Psa110:1, 2. This prayer reflects the joy of the children of God with salvation, and their grief over their sins that have inflicted all this pain upon our compassionate Saviour.

5. The Eleventh Hour (corresponding to 5:00 p m).

This prayer commemorates the removal of the body of Jesus Christ from the cross, and the restoration of our father Adam and his children to paradise, praising and saying; "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me severely, But He has righteousness; I will go through them, and I will praise the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter. I will praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation," Psa18:15-21. In this prayer we ask God to open for us His fatherly bosom, as He opened the gate of paradise to our righteous fathers, and to shut the gate of Hades before us through the intercession of St Mary.

6. The Twelfth Hour (hour before sleeping, corresponding to 6:00 p m).

It commemorates the laying down of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ in the grave. At the end of the day, we are also reminded of the end of our life. This prayer encourages us to strive hard and repent, because life is not forever, and our dwelling on earth is not for good. "I shall not enter my



dwelling, I shall not recline on my bed; I shall not close my eyes in sleep nor my eyelids in dozing, nor give any rest to my temples, until I find a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the God of Jacob," Psa132:3-5.

7. Midnight

This prayer reminds us of the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ to judge the world. It is composed of three services. The gospel of the first service reminds us that we should watch for we know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. The gospel of the second service teaches us that watching means repentance and love, as the sinful woman did. The gospel of the third service advises us that repentance needs hope, and hope ought to exist because it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now my brethren, you see how deep the spirituality of the Agpeya is. So I encourage you to use it in your prayers, meditate on its meanings, and try to match the prayers of each hour (Psalms, Gospel and Litanies) with its events. Prayer is not an obligation or an order. It is not just a commandment or piety and devotion. It is a desire and longing. Otherwise, it would be a burden which we unwillingly practise, just for obedience sake!!

The Lord is standing at the door of your heart asking, **"My son give me your heart and let your eyes observe my ways," Pro23:26.** Will you respond?

"Jesus my heart is all yours. I love You with all my heart." Amen.



PRAISE

Big Idea: Our life should be a song of praise (1Cor10:31).

Bible Text: Various psalms.

Bible Verse: Psa150:6, "Let everything that has breathe praise the Lord"

Students will

- Know:**
- ✕ The meaning of praise.
 - ✕ That praise is obligatory:
 - From angels (Psa103:20)
 - From saints (Psa30:4)
 - From children (Matt21:16)
 - From all creation (Psa150:6 and Psa148:1-10)
 - ✕ Why we praise the Lord (Isa25:1, Luke1:68-69 and Psa150:2).
 - ✕ How to praise the Lord
 - With understanding (1Cor14:15)
 - With the whole heart (Psa9:1)
 - With gladness (2Chr29:30)
 - With thankfulness (Psa147:7)
 - Continually (Psa71:14)
- Feel:**
- ✕ That praise is the precious privilege of every Christian
 - ✕ That praise is an attitude of the heart (1Cor10:31).
- Do:** Attend Midnight Praises and join in praising God with all heart.



PRAISE



What is the most important thing in life? Is it to earn a living? To be saved and go to heaven? To serve God? I believe the answer is to praise God. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. **"Even every one that is called by My name: for I have created him for My glory," Isa43:7.** We are created to praise and glorify the Lord day by day. Our life should be a song of praise to the glory of God. Is praising God a selfish desire on God's part? Certainly not. Praise was the purpose for which He created us. We ought to voluntarily give praise daily.

THE MEANING OF PRAISE

Dictionary: Praise is to bestow approval upon; to honour; to worship; to glorify; commendation. The Hebrew word *yadah* means "to stretch out the hand," and is translated "praise." That is, to hold out the hands in reverence, to open the hands and let go of everything, just stand and praise God open-handedly.

Our problem is to let go of things, to let go of our problems and service and give ourselves to praising the Lord. We only praise something that we honour and prize highly. If we hold the Lord in the highest state of respect and admiration it will be easy to praise Him.

PRAISE IS OBLIGATORY

From angels: "Bless the Lord, ye His angels," Psa103:20, Psa148:2.

From saints: "Sing unto the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness," Psa30:4. "Let His saints give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness," Psa149:5. "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds," Psa149:5.

From nations: "O praise the Lord, all you nations: praise Him all you people," Psa117:1.



From children: "... out of the mouth of babes and suckling You have perfected praise," Matt21:16, Psa8:2.

From high and low: "Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth," Psa148:11.

From young and old: "Both young men and maidens; old men, and children," Psa148:12.

From all creation: "Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord," Psa150:6. God gets praise from: the heavens, the heights, angels, hosts, sun, moon, stars, the earth, dragons, deeps, fire, hail, snow, vapours, stormy winds, hills, mountains, fruit trees, cedar trees, beasts cattle, creeping things and birds (Psa148:1-10).

THE REASONS WHY WE PRAISE THE LORD

Because of God's majesty, "They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord," Isa24:14.

Because of God's glory, "Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord," Psa138:5.

Because of God's excellence, "Let them praise the name of the Lord: for His name alone is excellent, Psa148:13.

Because of God's greatness, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable," Psa145:3.

Because of the Lord's holiness, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord... who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders?" Exo15:11.

Because of God's wisdom, "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever: for wisdom and might are His," Dan2:20.

Because of God's power, "Be exalted O Lord, in Your power; we will sing and praise Your mighty deeds," Psa21:13.

Because of God's goodness, "Oh! That men would praise the Lord for His goodness," Psa107:8, 15, 21, 31. This is important for it is repeated four times.

Because of God's mercy, "Praise the Lord; for His mercy endures forever," 2Chr20:21. We are saved through His mercy.

Because of God's loving-kindness and truth, "... and praise Your name for Your loving-kindness and for Your truth," Psa138:2.



Because of God's faithfulness and truth, "O Lord, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will praise Your name; for You have done wonderful things; Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth," Isa25:1.

Because He has provided salvation, "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation," Luke1:68-69.

Because of God's wonderful works, "Praise Him for His mighty acts," Psa150:2; see also Psa107:8, 15, 21, and 31. These works include creation, redemption, consolation, just judgment, true counsel, keeping His promises, answered prayer, the hope of glory, and all physical, material, and spiritual blessings.

HOW TO PRAISE THE LORD

With the understanding, "Sing praises with understanding," 1Cor14:15, Psa47:7.

With the soul, "Bless the lord, O my soul: and all that is within me," Psa103:1.

With the whole heart, "I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart," Psa9:1.

With the lips, "My lips shall praise You," Psa119:171, Psa63:3.

With the mouth, "My mouth shall praise You with joyful lips," Psa63:3, Psa51:15.

With gladness, "And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped," 2Chr29:30. Not mere mechanical praise, but joyful, heartfelt praise.

With thankfulness, "Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving," (Psa147:7).

Continually, "My praise shall be continually of Thee," Psa71:6.

To the end of life, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live," Psa104:33.

More and more, "But I will hope continually and will yet praise You more and more," Psa71:14. The longer we live, more and more praiseworthy things come to us.

Day by day, "... and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord, day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord," 1Chr30:21.

We should praise the Lord in sickness, in adversity and in health and



prosperity. We should praise the Lord for anything and everything (Phil 4:6). The true Christian is one who can trust and praise the Lord even through blinding tears. It is enough to know that God plans and does all things well (Rom8:28).

Perhaps we realize that we have not praised enough. Pray that God will teach us to praise Him much more in the future, beginning today. **"O Lord, open Thou my lips," Psa51:15.** Cause me to praise You more and more.

Praise is the precious privilege of every Christian believer in Jesus Christ. Sing a great deal. This is one good way to praise the Lord. If people praise us for our accomplishments, let us be sure to pass the praise to Him. It is easy to praise one who is truly worthy of praise, and Jesus is worthy (Rev5:9). It is easier for His children to give God money or service than praise.

Praise is an attitude of the heart (1Cor10:31), whatsoever we do, we should do for His glory.



MIDNIGHT PRAISES EXPLAINED

Big Idea: Understanding the Psalmody

Bible Text: Exo15; Psa136; Dan3:25-90 (2nd Canonical Books), Psa149, 150, 151.

Bible Verse: Exo15:1 "Let us sing to the Lord for He is greatly glorified".

Students will

Know:

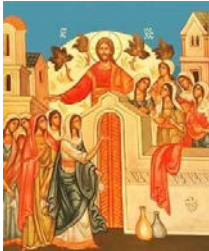
- ✕ the arrangement and spirituality of each part of the midnight praise:
- 1st hoas (canticle or praise): Exo15, joy for coming out of slavery (of the devil).
- Lobsh: explanation of the previous praise of Exo15.
- 2nd hoas: Psalm 136 of thanksgiving.
- Lobsh.
- 3rd hoas: the three young men in the furnace.
- Psali (hymn).
- Commemoration of the saints; intercession and prayer.
- Doxology of the saints.
- 4th hoas: Psalm 149, 150 and 151.
- Psali for the saint of the day.
- Theotokia: praise for the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- The Creed.
- Lord have mercy.
- Holy, Holy, Holy.
- Our Father.

Feel: Encouraged to do the midnight praises with excitement.

Do: Attend the midnight praises or part of it regularly as far as possible.



MIDNIGHT PRAISES EXPLAINED



Saint Basil the Great said that the work of praising attracts the service of the angels because this is part of their job and they come close to those who do the same as they do.

Little of the Coptic congregation hears about psalmody (Arabic: tasbeha) and far less know it and memorize it. The truth is, however, that many of the youth in these days have started to learn it and do it well. And we see this rise in our beloved Church and we hear about it in many cities and in the monasteries and outside of the borders of Egypt.

The psalmody is a deep spiritual symphony based in the order of the Holy Liturgy. It was placed through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is clear from the words of the psalmody, which are taken from the Holy Bible, mainly the Book of Psalms, and from its accurate and deep theological understanding. These can be found in either the theotokias or the psalis (which make up the psalmody), or in its tunes which move the emotions in the heaven of the spirit. Thus, a person is brought closer and closer to God and easily lifted towards the life of meditation in His attributes and works.

In order for us to enjoy more the prayer of praise, we must explain it and know its order. The midnight praises start with the prayer of the psalms of the midnight hours which are found in the Agpeya (the book of hourly prayers). Then follows the tune of "Ten Thino..." (long tune) then it is completed normally. "Ten Thino..." is composed of the parts said in the midnight prayers and those which are said after Psalm 50. "Ten Thino.." means "Let us rise O sons of light that we may praise the Lord of powers."

After this, "Tennav" is sung, which means "Let us look at the resurrection of Christ." It is said from the feast of the resurrection and during the 50 days after it; after that only on Sundays until the end of the month of Hatour. The praises of the psalmody begin with the **first hoas** (canticle).



The word hoas means praise. The first hoas consists of the praises of Moses and we can find it in the Book of **Exodus chapter 15**. When he and Israel crossed the Red Sea, and were saved from the hands of the Egyptians. This was the cause of joy and praising by the congregation. It also symbolizes every person who has come out of the strict slavery of the devil and from the bondage of this hard world. Anyone doing the psalmody, thus, praises with Moses saying, "Your right hand O Lord is glorified with power. Your right hand my Lord has defeated Your enemies."

Following the first hoas, the "**lobsh**" is sung. The lobsh is a song explaining the previous hoas, and it is sung in a long hymn and a beautiful melody.

Then the **second hoas** follows; it consists of **Psalm 135**. In the second hoas we thank God the Benefactor for His good and wonderful works; we meditate on all His creation; we thank Him for His creation, and we say "for His mercy endures forever." This phrase is repeated after every verse of the psalm.

Following the second hoas is another lobsh with its beautiful, easy tune and whose beginning verse is, "Let us thank Christ our Lord with the psalmist David the prophet."

The **third hoas** is the praise of the three saintly youths (Prayer of Azariah), which we find in **Dan3:25-90** in the Second Canonical Books. In it the three youths ask all the creation to join with them in praising God and blessing His Mightiness. Some of the praises are, "Praise the Lord you rain with the dew," "Praise the Lord you whales." So how come the unintelligent creation praises Him, while the intelligent creation that was created to praise God stands silent? "Let us praise Him and exalt Him above all forever," ("Hos erof ari ho oo shasf sha ni eneh"); this is the phrase in Coptic sung after every verse.

Following the third hoas is the "**Vatos Psali**" for the three saintly youths. All its words are in the Coptic and Greek languages. This psali (hymn) has a charming tune. It does not differ in its meaning from the meaning of the



hoas itself. Following is another Greek song for the three saintly youths, "Tenen", which is sung only during the month of Kiahk. Then follows another song for the three saintly youths, sung in a long and meditative tune, "Tenoweh ensok khih pen heet tirtf," meaning "We follow You with all our hearts."

Preceding these hymns is the **commemoration of the saints**. When we have become involved in praising God and glorifying Him, we have the participation of the Victorious Church with us. It is the souls of the saints who have preceded us to the paradise of joy, that come to support us and to accompany us in our continuous struggle against the world, sin and the weaknesses of the body. So we ask them to remember us in their prayers before the Throne of Grace.

As we sing, "Intercede (or pray) on our behalf that the Lord may forgive us our sins," we feel how sinful we are, and learn to be humble. We also notice the difference between an intercession and a prayer request. According to the teaching of the Coptic Orthodox Church, we ask the intercession of St Mary, the heavenly hosts, John the Baptist, and the 144,000 evangelical martyrs. This is due to the high level at which they are and because they have special favour before God. On the other hand, we request the prayers of the rest of the martyrs and the saints.

After the commemoration of the saints, we sing the **doxologies** (from the Greek word "doxa", meaning glory). The doxologies are the hymns in which we honour the Virgin Mary and all the saints. We remember also their virtues and their struggles in their spiritual lives. This is according to the teachings of the Church and the Holy Bible where the Lord said, "I honour those who honour Me." We also gain the blessing and help of these saints when we remember them in our praises. Usually we sing the Doxology of the Virgin Mary and after that we pick the various doxologies according to the various feasts of the saints and of the patron saint of the Church or the monastery or whichever we wish from other doxologies.

After we have gained the blessing from the Victorious Church and the



heavenly hosts we return once again to praising God whose name is sweet and blessed in the mouths of His saints. This is in the **fourth hoas**, which is composed of three psalms. According to the Coptic translation, these are **Psalms 148, 149, and 150**. These psalms express the state of joy, victory, and rejoicing from all the heart and from all the soul.

All that has been mentioned here is set and is sung every day in the psalmody without change. Starting from "Ten Thino" (Rise up O sons of light) until the end of the fourth hoas, all are sung the same way in every prayer of the midnight praises. On the other hand, the **psali** changes every day. There are seven psalis; each day of the week has one psali specific for that day. The word psali means hymn and, in the Psalmody, is organized around the name of the Lord Jesus, that is always repeated in almost every verse. On Sunday, we sing two psalis. The first psali is a hymn for the Virgin Mary and the second is about the name of the Lord Jesus. Thus we say at the end of the first verse, "My Lord Jesus help me." And after the second verse, "My Lord Jesus Christ help me." And these two phrases are repeated until the end of the psali.

The tune ending of the psali is a beginning for the theotokia. In the days of the "Adam", "Lipon Anshan tho ooti" is sung, which means, "and also if we meet for prayer let us praise the name of the Lord Jesus." In the days of "Vatos", the ending of the psali or the beginning of the theotokia is "Eshop an shan erepsalin." It means when we sing hymns let us say ... "O Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on our souls". "Adam tune" is for Sunday, Monday and Tuesday; "Vatos tune" is for Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

Then, we sing the **theotokia** which is a Greek word meaning, "The mother of God"; "Theo" means God and "tokos" means mother. In these "theotokias" are all the symbols of the Holy Virgin Mary in the Old Testament. In them also, there are the deep theological understanding about the truth (essence) of the Divine incarnation which is beyond human comprehension and about the nature of the virgin birth of our Good Saviour our Lord Jesus Christ of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary.



For each day of the week, there is a specific theotokia. The tune of singing the theotokias in the days of Adam is different from the tune of the Vatos days, as in the case with the psalis. The theotokias end with the lobsh which means praise, as we said earlier, with the exception of Sunday when the "lobsh" is replaced with a song instead. This song is "Nem ghar nen nooti" which means, "Who in the gods is like You O Lord." This is sung in the fifty days after Easter, then only on Sundays until the last Sunday in the month of Hatour. Before we end the theotokias, we sing "Nek nai o panooti" which means, "Your mercies O my God are countless", sung in the days of Adam; or "O pen chois Isos Pichristos," which means "Our Lord Jesus Christ", sung in the days of Vatos. Before this ending, the "Antiphonarium" of the day is read; it is a summary of the life-story of the saint of the day in which the psalmody is prayed. It has a Coptic beginning that is specific to it; then the saint's story is read.

And after the ending of the "theotokias" we pray the introduction to the Creed, "We magnify you O mother of the true Light..." and the **Creed** in full. After that we ask for God's mercies and we pray, "Kirieeleyson" meaning "Lord have mercy" along with the different prayer requests for our bodily, psychological, and spiritual life and proclaim our faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ the Rock of the ages. At its end we pray, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Hosts..." and "Our Father who art in heaven." Finally, the morning psalms are recited with their praise as an introduction to the morning "Raising of Incense".

At the end of praying the psalmody, we would have obtained great blessing and strength for our spiritual lives and joy, consolation and gladness that only those who have experienced it can realise its meaning. We call all in the love of the Lord Jesus to have the life of praise which the Fathers have instituted by the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our Coptic Orthodox Church whose love runs in our veins and with every beat of our hearts. To our Lord is all the glory and honour now and forever. Amen.

(Adapted from an article by His Grace Bishop Hedra of Aswan)



THE JESUS PRAYER

Big Idea: Learn to pray the prayer that stopped Jesus.

Bible Text: Luke 18:35-43

Bible Verse: Luke 18:38, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✘ The prayer of the blind man in Jericho.
 - ✘ The Jesus Prayer.
 - ✘ What is so different about it (Rom10:13).
 - ✘ Why pray it (Phil 2:5-10; John14:13; Acts4:12).
 - ✘ When to pray it.
- Feel:**
- ✘ Empowered by the Jesus Prayer.
 - ✘ Enjoy the warming presence of the Lord within us.
- Do:**
- ✘ Practice praying the Jesus Prayer.
 - ✘ Obey the commandment, pray without ceasing," 1Thess5:17.
 - ✘ Follow the advice of the Fathers of Church,
 - ✘ "Continue constantly in the name of the Lord Jesus that the heart may swallow the Lord and the Lord the heart, and that these two may become one."
 - ✘ Remember this is not achieved in a single day, but requires many years and much more.



THE JESUS PRAYER



"As Jesus drew near to Jericho a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging....."

To catch the true meaning of these words, one must remember that the "roadside" by which the blind man was sitting was the gutter of some street in Jericho. He was blind, and he was a beggar sitting in the gutter. To the people of Jericho he was the lowest of the low.

"... and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.' And he cried, '**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**' And those who were in front rebuked him telling him to be silent."

He knew of Jesus. He believed in Him. He cried out to Him in faith. But those around him rebuked him, "Quiet! The Master is busy! He's teaching a crowd of people. Do you think He would pay attention to you, a dirty, blind beggar wallowing in the gutter? How dare you trouble the Master; you a, nobody; you, the lowest of the low; you, the scum of the earth!" ... but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'"

He didn't give up. No obstacles, no discouragements could stop him. He had heard what Jesus could do and had done. And nothing was going to stop him from making contact with Jesus. He cried out even louder than before, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' And Jesus stopped."

Above all the noise of the multitude Jesus heard the lonely prayer of the blind beggar and He stopped. The Almighty Lord and Master of the universe was stopped by the prayer of a poor, blind forgotten beggar sitting in the gutter- a nobody! He commands that the beggar be brought to Him.

"'What do you want me to do for you?' He asks. 'Lord, let me receive my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God".

Let us talk briefly about the prayer that stopped Jesus: " **Jesus Son of**



David, have mercy on me"; for, certainly if this prayer stopped Jesus then, it can stop Him today.

The blind man's prayer altered but slightly is known today as the **Jesus prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."** It is one of the most commonly used prayers in the Eastern Orthodox Church. We read about it in that classic of Russian Orthodoxy, "The Way of a Pilgrim". This book is the story of an unnamed peasant who seeks out someone who will teach him how to fulfill the biblical command to "pray without ceasing."

He wanders through Russia and Siberia with a knapsack of dried bread for food and the charity of men for shelter. He asks many church authorities and religious people, but none can teach him how to pray without ceasing. He is about to come away from his journey empty-hearted when at last he meets a holy man who teaches him the Jesus prayer: "Lord Jesus..." From this man he learns that to pray without ceasing is "a constant, uninterrupted calling upon the divine name of Jesus during every occupation, at all times, at all places, even during sleep." He learns to repeat as many as 12,000 times a day without effort. The Jesus prayer becomes a constant, warming presence within him, and brings him great joy.

What is so different about the Jesus prayer? Prayer, to the average man, is asking God for something. The Jesus prayer is not this. It is an attempt- a scientific attempt- to change the one who prays. St John Chrysostom tells us how this can happen, *'I implore you, brethren, never to break or to despise the rule of this prayer: A Christian when he eats, drinks, walks, sits travels or does any other thing must continually cry: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me.' So that the name of the Lord Jesus descending into the depths of the heart, should subdue the serpent ruling over the inner pastures and bring life and salvation to the soul. He should always live with the name of the Lord Jesus, so that the heart swallows the Lord and the Lord the heart, and the two become one. And again: do not estrange your heart from God, but abide in Him, and always guard your heart by remembering our Lord Jesus Christ, until the name of the Lord becomes rooted in the heart and it ceases to think anything else.'*

Another Father of the Church says, 'Continue constantly in the name of the Lord Jesus that the heart may swallow the Lord and the Lord the heart,



and that these two may be one. However, this is not accomplished in a single day, and not in two days, but requires many years and much time.'

There is tremendous power in the name of Jesus. St Paul says, **"Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved," Rom10:13.** Again, he writes to the Philippians, "Christ Jesus... humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth and things under the earth," Phil 2:5-10. Jesus says in **John14:13, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."** St Peter says, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved," Acts4:12.

The power of the Jesus Prayer, then, lies in the name of Jesus, "the name that is above every name." Thus, the name "Jesus" alone can fulfill the need of one who prays when it is prayed with faith and with a life that is lived in obedience to Christ. For, as our Lord said, **"Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven," Matt7:21.**

Many times I wonder how the early Christian martyrs marched to their death so courageously. We cease to wonder about the source of their courage, however, when we consider the life of St Ignatius, the God-bearer, Bishop of Antioch, who was crowned in Rome with a martyr's death under the emperor Trajan. We read about him: 'When they were taking him to be devoured by wild beasts and he had the name of Jesus constantly on his lips, the pagans asked him why he unceasingly remembered that name. The saint replied that he had the name of Jesus Christ written in his heart and that he confessed with his mouth, Him whom he always carried in his heart.' The Jesus prayer gave him the power to face death victoriously.

The Jesus prayer can give us the same power to resist every evil thought and temptation with which Satan attacks us. For example, when Satan knocks on the door of the mind seeking entrance through some evil thought, send Jesus to the door and he will flee. Resist every temptation with the Jesus prayer. As soon as you feel that the stronghold of your soul is being assaulted by Satan, start praying the Jesus prayer constantly and with faith. Satan will flee. St John Climacus says, *'With the name of Jesus flog the foes, because there is no stronger weapon in heaven or earth'.*



Astronauts carry their own atmosphere with them when they enter the outer space. In like manner, it is possible for the Christian to create his own atmosphere or climate in the soul by the constant use of the Jesus Prayer; so that even though he lives in a sinful world, he will have the power to resist the world of sin which surrounds him.

In science almost every theory is tested in the laboratory. So it is with our Christian faith. It must be tested in the laboratory of life. Try this experiment. Let the last words you utter each night be the Jesus Prayer. Fall asleep with these words on your lips. What better way to end the day than with Jesus? And when you wake up in the morning, let the first words you utter be the Jesus Prayer. What better way to greet the day than with Jesus? During the day, whether you are talking, sitting, walking, making something, eating or occupied in some way repeat the Jesus Prayer, or the name of Jesus alone in love or adoration.

Try this experiment and discover for yourself what countless others have discovered. Among them Princess Illeana of Romania who writes, 'Prayer has always been of very real importance to me, and the habit formed in early childhood of morning and evening prayer has never left me; but in the practice of the Jesus Prayer I am but a beginner. I would, nonetheless, like to awaken interest in this prayer because, even if I only have touched the hem of a heavenly garment, I have touched it- and the joy is so great I would share it with others'. She tells how the Jesus prayer was helpful to her in surgery. "Jesus," she says, had been her last conscious thought before she went under anesthesia and the first word on her lips when she came out of surgery. It was wonderful to know, she says that even during the operation her unconscious mind had been praying the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy upon me a sinner."

For if we all fall asleep with the Jesus prayer, our unconscious mind (which never sleeps) will continue to pray and we will find ourselves waking up with this prayer on our lips. This is what happened to princess Illeana during her surgery. 'When I wake up in the morning,' she continues, 'it (the Jesus prayer) starts me joyfully upon a new day. When I travel by air, land or sea, it sings within my breast. When I stand upon a platform to face my listeners, it beats encouragement... At the end of a weary day, when I lay me down to rest, I give my heart over to Jesus: 'Lord, into Your hands I commend my spirit,' I sleep, but my heart, as it beats prays on: "Jesus" '.



DONATION - GIVING

Big idea: To understand the dimensions of the acceptable sacrifice of giving.

Bible text: Mark12:41-44, Mal 3:8-15, Jam1:27.

Bible Verse: ✕ Exo23:15, "None shall appear before Me empty handed"
✕ WSir4:10, "Be a father to orphans and be like a husband to their mother, you will then be like a son of the most high and He will love you more than He loves your mother".

Students will

Know:

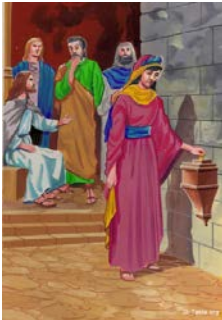
- ✕ That donation is a sacrifice and an important part of our worship (Psa103:1-14, 1John 4:10, Exo23:15, Heb13:16).
- ✕ That God asks us to give (Deut15:7-8, 10);
- ✕ The benefits of giving (Pro19:17, Acts20:35, Luke12:33, Matt25:34-40, Acts10:4).
- ✕ Things that hinder us from giving.
- ✕ To whom do we give (Gal 6:10, Matt5:42, Luke6:32-34).
- ✕ What to give
- ✕ How much to give (Matt5:20, Matt23:23).
- ✕ How to give.

Feel: Humble and obliged to give back to God some of His gifts.

Do: Give to the poor and to the Church.



DONATION - GIVING



There are three corners to our worship, namely, prayer, donation and fasting. The Lord says, **"The world is Mine and all its fullness,"** **Psa50:12**. The Lord God is our Benefactor who gives us freely and without measure (Psa103:1-14; 1John4:10; Rom8:32). You and I are simply stewards or managers of what He has given us.

GOD ASKS US TO GIVE

The Lord God tells us, **"None shall appear before Me empty handed,"** **Exo23:15**. Also in **Deut15:7-11**. Sirach, in his book of Wisdom, advises us saying, **"Be a father to orphans and be like a husband to their mother, you will then be like a son of the most high and He will love you more than He loves your mother,"** **WSir4:10**.

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury and beheld how people cast their gifts into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she put in all that she had, her whole livelihood," **Mark12:41-44**.

This story illustrates to us how the Lord views giving and donating to the Church. We also learn several lessons regarding this matter.

FUNDRAISING

St Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the Churches of Galatia, so you must do also. 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. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem," **1Cor16:1-3**.

Therefore there was a collection for the saints, but here we find St Paul neither indicated an amount that a person had to pay nor imposed a percentage for each to save. What St Paul indicated was that whatever everyone gave, he gave a gift which he would send to Jerusalem. Usually, a gift is given with love or affection or the person is obliged to give because



it is his duty to be grateful to God. He is indebted for a favour of God's kindness who gave him health, knowledge, wealth or kindness of heart. **"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver," 2Cor9:7.**

Thus we neither need a reminder to give nor do we need fundraising activity in order to persuade us to give, nor to advertise that the Church is in need for money or in need of our gifts. Indeed, it is unfortunate that the Church has to direct any fundraising activity to raise money. The essence of raising any funds stems from our lack of sharing and reluctance to give without being asked. We should understand that in giving we resemble our Lord for **"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom8:32.**

CASTING INTO THE TREASURY

We are also under a moral and legal obligation to give, for the Bible, our source of law, says "For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land,'" Deut15:11. "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God," Lev19:9-10. But when should one give? **"In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand," Eccles11:6.**

HOW TO GIVE

"Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly," Matt6:2-4.

The parable of the rich man is a powerful illustration of how foolish we are to think we own anything. Because the rich man took credit for his wealth and planned to hoard it, the Lord took his life (Luke12:16-21).

Copts are proud of St Anthony for he is the one who heard the deacon reading the Bible about what our Lord Jesus said to the rich young man, **"If**



you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me," Matt19:21. Instead of going away sorrowful as the rich young man, "for he had great possessions", St Anthony went and sold all that he had and gave it away to the poor. He became the father of all monks and a saint that most Apostolic Churches acknowledge.

St Luke told us in another story how the congregation/ Church, since her establishment, gave. "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet," Acts5:32-37.

Give back some of what God gave us (1Pet1:18-19, 2Cor8:1-15, 2Cor8:9, 1Chro29:14):

- With a loving spirit (John3:17-18, Song 8:17, 1Cor13:3).
- As our choice (2Cor9:7).
- In self-denial (Matt6:1-4, Col 3:23-24).
- Generously (2Cor8:2-5).
- Cheerfully (2Cor9:7).
- From a legal source of money (Mal 1:6-10).

THE REWARD

The angel of the Lord told Cornelius, **"Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God," Acts10:4.** "He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given," Pro19:17.

Thus, **" whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward," Matt10:42.**

Therefore we, as good Christians, should not wait for a fundraising activity to contribute our share and never forget our Lord's promise that, **"He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor," Pro22:9.**



THINGS THAT HINDER US FROM GIVING

- Pride (Deut8:11-14).
- Riches and possessions (Mark10:24).
- Desire for riches (1Tim6:9).

TO WHOM DO WE GIVE?

- Do good to all men especially Christians (Gal 6:10)
- Do good even to enemies (Luke6:32-36).
- Give to Church to promote the service and to look after the poor; to build churches and similar projects.

HOW MUCH DO WE GIVE?

- Without measure (Matt5:20, 42; Mal 3:8).
- With increased righteousness (Matt23:23).

WHAT TO GIVE?

- Food, money, clothing, church needs, building materials, etc. from a legal source (Mal 1:8).
- Spiritual needs, e.g. time, listening.

In general, we should attend to the needs of the body, soul and spirit of our brethren.



Would you consider yourself as a cheerful giver? Whether or not you would, I challenge you to ask the Lord, 'How much more would you like me to give?' Jesus said, **"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly," John10:10.** But to receive the whole measure of His provision, you must obey Him in all matters, including the command to give gladly and liberally.

Your generosity opens the door to His abundant blessing in your life, not just financially, but in every other area too. My friend, you cannot outgive God. Increase your giving, and allow Him to demonstrate His amazing ability to provide.

May the Lord reward everyone according to His generosity and may your treasure in Heaven increase ten, a hundred and a thousand fold, Amen.



THE JOURNEY OF LENT

Big Idea: It is a journey to the bosom of the Father.

Bible Text: Various

Bible Verse: **Matt6:33 "Seek first the kingdom of God."**

Students will

Know:

- ✠ God's will for their lives.
- ✠ The eight steps in the readings of the gospel on the Sundays of Lent that lead to the goal of the fast.

Feel:

- ✠ Eager to live and enjoy every step in the trip to the bosom of the Father.
- ✠ Enjoy their share of victory in the Resurrection of Christ.

Do:

- ✠ Read the respective gospel before coming to church on Sunday.
- ✠ Come to church early with an open heart.
- ✠ Have a 'Quiet Time' daily in the closet.
- ✠ Repent and confess.



THE JOURNEY OF LENT



When we worship God, we need to do so in the frame of God's will for our life. **What is God's will for our life?** After sinning, Adam and Eve and their children were cast out from the presence of the Father. They could no longer speak to God directly, but only through a sacrifice. God's children became alienated from Him. So, God the Son decided to redeem us in order that we could go back to the bosom of the Father. God would like me to be **His own child** (John1:12, 13); to follow His way, to have His image and aroma, to possess His strength and His humble and lowly heart.

God would like me to be **His bride** (2Cor11:2) that is a pure virgin bride in the mind and heart. My mind should be focused on Christ the giver of life to the whole world and my heart should be pure and consecrated for God.

God would like me to be **a partner in His divine nature** (2Pet1:4). To fulfil God's will for us is quite achievable. St Paul says, **"By the grace of God, I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me,"** Phil 3:12.

TRIP TO THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER

During Lent, the Church has organized for us a strong spiritual program to help us achieve God's will for us. The Sunday readings in Lent take us on a trip to the bosom of the Father. This trip consists of eight steps over eight Sundays.

First Sunday is **Preparation Sunday** (Matt6:4-7). The starting point is in your room. There, we close the door to the world and its desires. We pray to our heavenly Father in secret. In our room, we go right into our hearts and discover our sins, our weaknesses and our fears. We give our heart to Christ to purify it and comfort it. Preparation means counting the cost (Rom8:17).

Second Sunday is **Treasures Sunday** (Matt6:24-34). We submit our life to the Father. At the beginning of the trip, the Lord would like us to have a clear vision so that we do not falter between the two paths. We cannot serve two



masters. The Lord is asking: do you really worship One God? Who else beside God: desires, clothes, appearances, ego? Do you have any worries or fears? Seek you first the Kingdom of God and don't worry about anything because your heavenly Father knows that you need all things. It is a call to feel secure physically, emotionally and spiritually in the care of the Father.

Third Sunday is **Temptation Sunday** (Matt4:1-11). Faith in the Father gives us immunity against temptations. The devil would tempt us as he did Christ and then whispers, "if God is your Father, why would He allow suffering to come your way?" In the world we will have tribulations. However, we are sure of victory in Christ who conquered the world and its principle, the devil (1John5:4, 5; Rom8:37). We trust the love of the Father who **"gave His only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," John3:16.**

Fourth Sunday is **Sunday of the Prodigal Son** (Luke15:11-32). This is a call to repentance in the Bosom of the Father. We have all gone astray (Rom3:8-18). The Father is waiting for us to go back to Him. The Father is ready to accept us not because of our righteousness but because of His paternal goodness especially to His children who have gone astray. In your closet, experience the kisses of the Father when you fall into His bosom in repentance. Then you can regain the robe of righteousness and enjoy the festive dinner (the Eucharist).

Fifth Sunday is **Sunday of the Samaritan Woman** (John4:1-42). It is also called 'Mid-fast Sunday'. This is a call to worship the Father in Spirit and Truth. Obviously, the next step that follows repentance is to worship the Father who accepted me, washed my sins away and blessed me with His hugs and kisses. Prostrations express our love to the Father in reverence (John4:23).

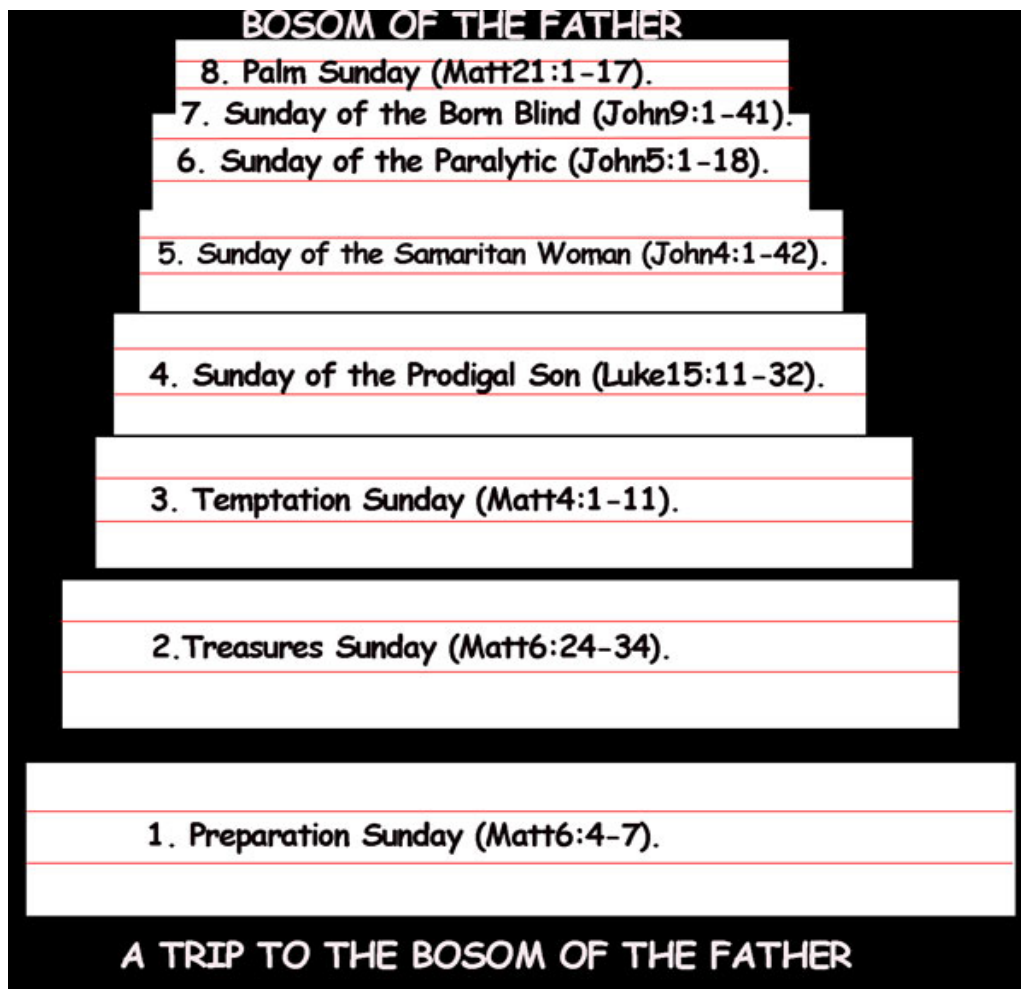
Sixth Sunday is **Sunday of the Paralytic** (John5:1-18). It is also called 'Sunday of the Lonely Man' who was given hope in the love of the Father even after 38 years. This is our eternal share through Christ. We all have spiritual ailments, somehow. By Baptism, we received adoption and became children of God (John1:12). The Love of the Father will never fail His children. He is always ready to accept us and heal us (John6:35-37).

Seventh Sunday is **Sunday of the Born Blind** (John9:1-41). It is also called



'Christening Sunday'. This is a call to obedience to the Father. As children of our heavenly Father, our spiritual eyes have been opened and we can see wonders in His laws. As we read the Bible, we are convicted of other areas in our heart that need repentance. Repentance then becomes a continuation of Baptism. It continually changes our heart and regenerates our mind. This discloses to us all the blessings of our Heavenly Father as we continue to obey Him with a contrite heart.

Eighth Sunday is **Palm Sunday** (Matt21:1-17; Mark11:1-11; Luke19:29-48; John12:12-19). Jesus enters Jerusalem (our heart) as a king. We reign with Jesus in the Kingdom of the Father. We follow Him to Golgotha. We die with Him. We rise again with Him. Because we are members of His Body, we will ascend to the Father with Him.





LAZARUS SATURDAY

The Holy Week falls between two resurrections, that of Lazarus and that of Jesus Christ. Lazarus' resurrection (in the flesh) symbolises our repentance. Sin leads to death and repentance leads to resurrection. **"The wages of sin is death," Rom6:23.** We need to repent to be able to carry the Cross with Christ during Passion Week, **"that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death," Phil 3:10.** By repentance, our hearts are purified, only then can Jesus come and dwell in us.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus enters Jerusalem as a Heavenly king; Jerusalem represents our hearts. By repenting we accept Jesus in our hearts as King, Lord and Saviour. We join the crowds crying, **"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," Luke19:38.**

The Resurrection of Jesus (in His Glorified Body) symbolises our eternal resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ. Those who repented and participated in the first resurrection (Baptism and Repentance) will have a part in the eternal resurrection.

THE GENERAL FUNERAL

The prayer of the General Funeral is performed at the end of the Holy Mass on Palm Sunday. This is because:

- Our focus during Holy Week is Jesus. So if someone passes away during this week, the Church does not hold funeral prayers.
- To participate in the suffering and death of our Lord. By accepting the water of the General Funeral, we make a covenant with the Lord to die with Him. **" I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me," Gal 2:20.**



THE LORD'S DAY

Big Idea: The true way to keep the Lord's Day.

Bible Text: Exo20:8-11.

Bible Verse: Rev1:10, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✘ The origin of the Lord's Day.
 - ✘ The concept of the Sabbath in the Old Testament.
 - ✘ Christ's attitude to the Sabbath Day.
 - ✘ The concept of the Sabbath in the New Testament compared and contrasted with the Old Testament Sabbath.
 - ✘ How Jesus kept the first Christian Lord's Day.
 - ✘ The Apostolic Church kept the first day of the week.
 - ✘ The true way to keep the Sabbath.

Feel: The importance of keeping the Lord's Day holy.

Do: Live this day and extra hours beside for the worship and work of God.



THE LORD'S DAY



The Lord's Day, Sunday, is a New Testament fact. The early Christians met on the first day of the week, the day that Jesus rose from the dead (John20:1). Other new significant New Testament events took place on the first day as well. Six of Jesus' eight post-resurrection appearances took place on the first day of the week. The day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the Jesus' followers, was also Sunday. Thus the first day of the week became the Christians' special day (Rev1:10).

Writing in the second century, **St Ignatius** says, *'Christians have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in observance of the Lord's Day, on which our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death'*. The resurrection, so central in Christian faith, marks a great shift, not only from Old Testament times, but also from Old Testament practices.

THE ORIGIN OF THE LORD'S DAY

The Lord's Day, Sunday, has its roots in the Sabbath of the Old Testament which sets aside the seventh day of the week as a day of rest (Gen2:2, 3). At the giving of the Law in Exodus20, Sabbath keeping became part of the Decalogue. The day commemorated the Lord's rest from His creating activity (Exo20:8-11) and served as a powerful image of Israel's covenant relationship with the Lord (Exo31:12, 13).

THE CONCEPT OF THE SABBATH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament Sabbath was a day of rest, not of sacrifice or worship. It was a day when beasts of burden, slaves and humans all rested. It was not associated with temple attendance or any religious observance.

In Lev23:26-32, the Lord asked Israel to observe the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement as a "Sabbath of solemn rest". This day may not occur every year on a Saturday. Again in Lev25:1-7, the Lord asked that a Sabbath year be observed. This was a year of rest for the land, during which no new crops were to be planted.



These aspects of the Sabbath were intended to provide Israel with the inner peace that comes from awareness that God is (exists) and that God is committed to care for His people. In addition, the Old Test Testament day of rest was associated with redemption, for it was a day on which Israel was to **"remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of them with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day," Deut5:15.**

The Old Testament day of rest also had a humanitarian aspect, for it provided for physical as well as spiritual rest. In Jesus' statement that God made the Sabbath for man (and not man for the Sabbath), we find an indication of God's concern for our total well-being and His desire to meet our physical as well as spiritual and psychological needs (Mark2:27, Exo23:10-12).

THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH UNDER THE LAW

- Even the servants and cattle were forced to rest (Exo20:10).
- No manner of work was to be done on the Sabbath day (Exo20:10). Food was cooked on Friday.
- No purchase was to be made on the Sabbath day (Neh10:31; 13:15-17).
- No burdens were to be carried on the Sabbath day (Neh13:19; Jer 17:21).
- No harvesting was to be done on the Sabbath day (Exo34:21).
- Death was the punishment appointed by God for those who broke the Sabbath. The man in Num15:32-36 who was found gathering sticks to build a fire was condemned to be stoned to death.

CHRIST'S ATTITUDE TO THE SABBATH DAY

The Saviour did many miracles of healing on the Sabbath day which angered the Jews and made them call Jesus a "Sabbath breaker."

- Jesus taught that He was Lord of the Sabbath. **"For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day" Matt12:8.** As Lord of the Sabbath day He was at liberty to set aside the seventh day and institute the first day of the week.
- Jesus taught that the Sabbath was made for man. **"And He said unto them, the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," Mark2:27.**
- Jesus taught that it was right to do good on the Sabbath day (Matt12:11). The sheep that fell into the pit on the Sabbath day should



be removed. **"Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath," Matt12:12.** And Jesus went on and healed the man with the withered hand in verse 13.

- **"Jesus went to the synagogue, as was His custom, on the Sabbath day," Luke4:16.**

HOW JESUS KEPT THE FIRST CHRISTIAN LORD'S DAY

- Jesus comforted weeping Mary (John20:13).
- Jesus walked seven miles with two disciples (Luke24:13).
- Jesus gave a Bible reading to these two disciples (Luke24:24-31).
- Jesus sent messages to the other disciples (Matt28:10).
- Jesus had a private interview with St Peter (Luke24:34).
- Jesus met with the ten disciples and ate with them (Luke24:36-45).

CONCEPT OF THE SABBATH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

At the beginning God rested when He completed the work of creation. God remains active, but in His activity, He is at peace. Because man became corrupt and died spiritually, He needed saving and revival. So the Lord had yet another piece of work to do, i.e. the salvation of man. This, He accomplished on the Sunday (Mark16:9; John21:19-29; Acts2:1-4; Col 2:16).

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH KEPT THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

Regular Church Services

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them," Acts20:7.

Sunday Church Collections

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him," 1Cor16:2. **"I was in the spirit on the Lord's day," Rev1:10.** That was Sunday, the first day of the week. Sunday, the first day of the week was chosen because Jesus rose from the dead on the first Easter Sunday morning, **"in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week," Matt28:1.** They went to the tomb and found that Jesus had risen. Jesus remained in the grave long enough to fulfil the Jewish Sabbath.

St Constantine the Great, the first Christian Emperor, honoured the Church's practice of celebrating the Lord's resurrection every Sunday by decreeing in 321 AD, that every Sunday would be a holy day. For Orthodox Christians, Saturday is still the Sabbath, the day on which the Church



especially remembers the departed, since Christ rested in the tomb on Great and Holy Saturday.

As the day after the seventh day (when God rested from His six days of creation) and as the day of Christ's Resurrection, Sunday early on came to be understood in a mystical way among Christians as the "Eighth Day"; it was the day of eternal rest (Heb4:1-11) in Christ's heavenly kingdom.

CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY

- The Sabbath is the seventh day and the Lord's Day is the first day of the week.
- The Sabbath commemorates God's creation rest while the Lord's Day commemorates a finished redemption (new creation).
- On the seventh day God rested. On the first day Jesus was very busy.
- The Sabbath commemorates a finished creation. The Lord's Day commemorates a finished redemption.
- The Sabbath was a day of legal obligation. The Lord's Day is for voluntary worship.
- The Sabbath was for the Jews and the Lord's Day is for the Church of Jesus Christ (Col 2:16).

THE TRUE WAY TO KEEP THE SABBATH DAY (Isa58:13-14)

- To delight in the Lord. Make it a special day of worship, prayer, and praise. We renew our awareness of our personal relationship with the Lord.
- To cease from your own pleasure. It is not a day for pleasure, sport, education, but a day to do His pleasure. Visit the sick for Him.
- To make it a day that honours the Lord. Six days we work and earn our living, but one-seventh of our time belongs to the Lord to be used for Him alone.

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WE BELONG TO GOD

Big Idea: We are not of this world

Bible Text: John17:6-17; 2Cor 6:14-17

Bible Verse: 1John2:15, 16, "Do not love the world or the things in the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of God is not in him. For all that is in the world- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life- is not of the Father but is of the world".

Students will

Know:

- ✕ That in Christ, we have a changed nature, a changed standing and a changed character.
- ✕ Four ways to abide in Christ:
 - By faith (2Cor1:24).
 - By Holy Communion (John6:56).
 - By keeping His commandments (1John2:24).
 - By love (1John4:12-16).
- ✕ That we must separate from the world (1John2:15, 16).
- ✕ Definition of the "world".
- ✕ God gives us all things to enjoy (1Tim6:7).
- ✕ To separate from the world.
- ✕ Basic rules to follow.

Feel: That we are different and special; not of this world.

Do: Continue to abide in Christ.



WE BELONG TO GOD



In the book of *Genesis*, we learn about the good creation of God. Adam and Eve were created in the image and after the likeness of God (Gen1:26). From the Scriptures we learn that "image" means knowledge, righteousness and holiness. Man was created with a free will; with moral and with spiritual qualities and could have resisted Satan. However, man chose to listen to the devil and disobey God. *Genesis 3* gives a full account of this awful tragedy in the history of man. As a result, man now is born a lost sinner, an enemy of God (Rom3:10, 23; Rom5:12). The whole human race became corrupt and was taken captive by the Satan (2Cor4:4). Fortunately, with the fall of man God promised a Redeemer and the plan to save us and regenerate our corrupt nature.

In Sin	In Christ
Our nature is corrupt (Rom7:18)	Our nature is regenerated (2Cor5:17)
We stand condemned (Rom3:19)	We stand justified (Acts13:38-39)
We are enslaved by the devil (John8:44)	We are adopted by God (Eph1:5)
We are evil (2Cor7:5; Tit1:15).	We are sanctified (1Cor6:11)

In regeneration our nature is changed; in justification our standing is changed; in adoption our position is changed; in sanctification our character is changed. Therefore as children of God we proclaim with St Paul:

- "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me," Gal 2:20.
- "You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men," 1Cor 7:23.
- "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God, and you are not your own," 1Cor6:19.

ABIDING IN CHRIST

We belong to God and therefore, we ought to abide in Christ and separate ourselves from the world. Four ways to abide in Christ are:

- By faith (2Cor1:24).



- By Holy Communion (John6:56).
- By keeping the commandments (1John2:24).
- By loving God and one another (1John4:12-16).

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD (John17:6-17; 1John2:15-16).

In John3:16 we are told that God loved the world and gave His Son to save it. Here the word "**world**" refers to the people, **the sinners** that inhabit the world. Jesus loved the world of sinners; and we Christians are also to love the sinners.

The Apostle John explains the meaning of the word "world" in 1John2:16, the very next verse after telling us not to love it. The "world" means "the lust of the flesh" and "the lust of the eyes" and "the pride of life". In other words, the word "**world**" means **this present world system which is controlled by Satan.**

There is no allusion to leaving the material blessings of this life. These blessings God give liberally and richly for all to **enjoy "... but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy," 1Tim6:17.** This would include innocent laughter, the play of children, clean social life, healthful recreation, the beauty of nature and the love of flowers. These cannot be unscriptural, worldly or sinful. To consider these wrong would make one an ascetic.

Jesus enjoyed nature. He spoke of plants, seeds and trees. Jesus social contacts were broad: with the family at Bethany; eating in the Pharisee's home (Luke7:36); the marriage in Cana (John2); resting in a quiet place (Mark6:31), etc. In fact, the Saviour was accused of being a gluttonous person, "**The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners',**" Matt11:16-19.

WHAT TO SEPARATE FROM

Separation is twofold: from sin and unto God.

- **Marriage between a believer and an unbeliever is forbidden,** "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers," 2Cor6:14-17. "Can two walk together, except they are agreed?" Amos3:3. This is a definite Scriptural principle that does not change with the passing ages.
- **Separate from all unrighteousness,** "... for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?" 2Cor6:14. Some believe business



partnership between believers and unbelievers is forbidden by this verse.

- **Separate from all works of darkness**, "... and what communion has light with darkness?" 2Cor 6:14. The Christian is indwelt by Christ, the Light of the World.
- **Separate from Belial**, the old devil, "And what concord has Christ with Belial?" 2Cor6:15. The Christian is indwelt by the Son of God.
- **Separate from infidels**, "...or what part has he that believes with an infidel?" 2Cor6:15. We must separate for we can have no fellowship.
- **Separate from idols**, "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" 2Cor6:16. A Christian is God's temple, indwelt by the Lord Himself.
- **Separate from false teachers** that dispute about primary doctrines, "... from such withdraw thyself," 1Tim6:5. See also 1Tim1:4; 4:7; Gal 3:2.
- **Separate from heretics** (2John9-11). Do not allow such in the home.
- **Separate from all known forms of sin and immorality** (liquor, etc.) (1Pet1:16).

SOME GENERAL RULES TO FOLLOW

Consider the following guidelines:

- If my action causes my brother to stumble, then I must not do it. "Therefore, if food makes my brother to offend, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble," 1Cor8:13. St Paul was willing to deny himself the harmless pleasure if it hindered his testimony.
- Seek guidance from God by prayer and Bible study regarding a particular issue. Strive always to have a clear conscience before God and man (Acts24:16).
- Whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. "And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God," Col 3:17. Can I do this thing (chew betel nut, dress like a star or celebrity) to God's glory? If the answer after prayer is "No," then that thing becomes sin to me (Jam4:17).
- In all things use sanctified common sense. God is reasonable and desires to reason with you on the matter. "Come now, and let us reason together," Isa1:18.
- I must separate from anything that harms my body physically, mentally or emotionally. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," 1Cor6:19, 20.



- Is it pleasing to Jesus Christ? Would Jesus do this thing? If He would not do it, then I must not do it. "... Christ ... leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps," 1Pet2:21.
- Will it strengthen my testimony? Will it weaken my testimony?

SOME HELPFUL SCRIPTURES

Contemplate the following verses:

- **Rom12:2**, "And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This is the plain command of Scripture.
- **Jam4:4**, "Adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?"
- **Heb11:13**, "...confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Think of Moses, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Heb11:25. Think of Demas, "For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed," 2Tim4:10.
- **2Cor6:17**, "Therefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and do not touch what is unclean; and I will receive you."

THREE BASIC RULES TO FOLLOW

If a certain point is troubling us, apply these three rules. Let it be very personal.

- I must separate from anything that is designed to overthrow my faith in God, such as infidel or atheistic clubs, communist organizations, etc.
- I must separate from anything that would destroy my testimony. My testimony is one of the most priceless things that I possess here on earth.
- I must separate from anything that would debase my morals and lead me to sin. If cards lead me to gambling, then I must leave them. If dancing causes me to have impure and unholy desires, then to me that thing becomes sinful.

The secret of a victorious life is our identification with Christ. The indwelling Christ lives in the heart and life of each believer for the purpose of becoming Lord and Master of that life. Let our desire be **"I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me"**, Gal 2:20.



A LIFE OF OBEDIENCE

Big Idea: Obey God and leave all the consequences to Him.

Bible Text: The Book of Jonah.

Bible Verse: Acts 5:29 "We must obey God rather than men".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✘ To seek the Lord's guidance when making decisions.
 - ✘ Disobedient biblical characters.
 - ✘ Why did Jonah act as he did.
 - ✘ Jonah's prayer.
 - ✘ Jonah's lack of divine perspective makes his repentance a greater problem than the repentance of Nineveh.
 - ✘ Faithful biblical characters.
 - ✘ Requirements to obey the Lord.

Feel: The need to let go and let God.

Do: Obey the Lord and leave all the consequences to Him.



A LIFE OF OBEDIENCE



HOW DO YOU MAKE DECISIONS?

May be you try to determine what will benefit you the most. Perhaps you strive to please or impress others. You may let emotions take control or attempt to make rational decisions based on the facts.

Wise men and women seek the Lord's guidance when making decisions. They eliminate choices that violate the Word of God. Then they listen for the Father's specific directions for their particular situation or circumstance. They learn to obey God and leave all the consequences to Him. There is nothing more important in life than following Jesus Christ and trusting Him to take care of you.

DISOBEDIENT BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

Imagine how different the stories in the Bible would be if mankind knew what disobeying God would cost. **Adam and Eve** would never have eaten of the forbidden fruit. The **nation of Israel** would have chosen to fight for the Promised Land the first time around instead of wandering in the desert for 40 years. After seeing Bathsheba bathing, **David** would have turned away and walked back inside. He would have realised his sin with her was going to affect the whole nation. If **Jonah** had known how miserable he would be in the belly of the great fish, he would have willingly travelled to Nineveh to preach the Word of God.

The Devil tells us that we can get away with disobeying the Lord, that we will be the one exception to the rule. But the Bible says, "**Be sure your sin will find you out,**" Num32:23.

WHY DID JONAH ACT AS HE DID?

In his patriotic zeal, Jonah put his country before his God. Founded by Nimrod, great-grandson of Noah (Gen10:6-12), Nineveh was for many years the capital city of the mighty Assyrian Empire. At the height of its prosperity, Nineveh was a "great city" (Jon1:2, 3:2) with a population of



120,000 (Jon4:11). It would have taken a traveller three days to go around greater Nineveh, with its numerous outlying suburbs, and a day's journey to reach the centre of the city (Jon3:4). Assyrian kings were cruel and ruthless. This pagan nation had invaded and pillaged the homeland of the Israelites on numerous occasions.

When Jonah visited Nineveh about 760 BC, the prophet wanted the city destroyed- not saved, because of its wickedness. Instead of heading 500 miles, north east, to Nineveh, Jonah decided to go west to Tarchish (Spain), 2000 miles away. Of all the people and things mentioned in the Book of Jonah i.e. the storm, the lots, the sailors, the fish, the Ninevites, the east wind, only the prophet himself fails to obey God.

When Jonah asked to be thrown out in the raging sea, he was not repentant, even though he acknowledged that he was wrong. Rather, Jonah was suicidal. Wrongfully, he trusted his own knowledge and judgements about God's compassion and mercy. In other words, he did not trust the Lord.

On the other hand, the Lord uses a creative series of counter measures to save Jonah and the Ninevites. God prepares a great fish to **preserve** Jonah and deliver him on dry land. In the belly of the fish, Jonah prays and repents. His prayer is a composition of a few psalms (Psa3:8; 31:22; 42:7; 69:1). This reflects the importance of learning and praying with psalms. Jonah promised to obey. The Lord reminded Jonah that the message and mission has not changed (Jon3:2).

As he proceeds through the city, his one sentence sermon brings incredible results. Once again, Jonah's weakness controls him, he knew God's character and hoped to see the Ninevites destroyed. He became greatly disappointed at God's mercy. However, the Lord cared for the salvation of Jonah whose lack of divine perspective made his repentance a greater problem than that of the Ninevites.

FAITHFUL BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

Noah was asked to build a massive boat, which made him the laughing stock of the town. But he was ready when the flood came.

Moses, a desert nomad, had to appear before Pharaoh, the leader of a



powerful civilisation, and demand freedom for the Israelites. Ultimately, however, the people were allowed to go.

Joshua was told to march around Jericho for seven days instead of relying on the military tactics he knew. And God destroyed the enemy.

David honoured God by refusing to harm His anointed king, Saul. As a result David was made king at just the right time.

Jehoshaphat obeyed the Lord when the Aramites attacked Judah. God promised that He would give His people the victory. As Judah's choir sang songs of praise, the enemy destroyed themselves in confusion, and Jehoshaphat's army did not have to fight.

Nehemiah asked the Babylonian king for supplies to rebuild Jerusalem, and received all he needed, including guards to help him safely reach his city.

Daniel and his three friends in captivity, refused to eat meat because it was not prepared according to the Hebrew dietary laws. Yet they still looked healthier than all the other young men.

Peter cast his net in the middle of the day at Jesus' command. Consequently, he caught an enormous amount of fish. More importantly, he saw Christ for who He was, and ultimately became one of the most influential apostles.

Peter and the apostles refused to stop preaching about Jesus, even though they were threatened with flogging and imprisonment (Acts 5:29).

God called **Paul** to follow Jesus. This meant accepting the theology of the people he had been persecuting, the first Christians. Because he chose to obey God and take the gospel to the Gentiles, he became the most influential apostle.

In every case, the Lord showed Himself faithful to those who were willing to follow His commands. Our role is to obey God and leave all the consequences to Him.

THE REQUIREMENTS

What does it take for us to obey the Lord? We must **believe** that God is sovereign; He controls all things at all times (Psa 103:19). Even when we don't understand, you and I must trust that God will work for our good in every situation (Rom 8:28). We must **love** Him. In fact, the Bible says we show our love for the Father by obeying His commands (1 John 5:3) and not just when they are convenient and desirable. We also must **listen** to Him. When you pray, don't do all the talking. Make time to hear what He has to say. **Obeying God**



takes courage. Following His will often leads to conflict. You must be willing to do what is right anyway. Fully **surrender** to Him. Otherwise, you can't expect the Lord to turn every circumstance in your life to good.

THE RESULTS OF OBEDIENCE

Following God leads to great **reward**. The Lord told Joshua that he would prosper if he meditated on the Word of God and obeyed Him completely (Jos 1:8). You may not be considered a success in the eyes of the world, but you will experience **personal victory** if you follow His will.

Obedying the Father brings **peace and joy**. No matter what happens around you, God can bring serenity and happiness. Suffering is another thing you and I can expect when we follow the Lord's will for our lives. God uses our suffering to **change the world**. And in the midst of conflict and difficulty, **we develop spiritually**, growing more like Christ.

Obedience always brings **blessing**. What is a blessing anyway? It is anything that is an expression of God's goodness and love towards us. Answers to prayer, miraculous provision and unexpected favour are some examples. We easily recognise these as God's gifts. Sometimes He chooses to bless us in different ways. But we can be assured that obedience to Him always brings blessing.

In conclusion, when you need to make an important decision, don't rely primarily on your own reasoning, the opinions of others, or even what worked in the past. Get on your knees before the Lord and pour out your heart to Him. Spend time prayerfully reading His Word. Take time to listen for His voice, and then follow His specific guidance for your life.

Obey God and leave all the consequences to Him. If you will take this one principle to heart, you will have the awesome privilege of watching the Lord accomplish great things in and through you.



CONSECRATION

Big Idea: Consecration is acknowledging the Lord's ownership of our lives and hearts.

Bible Text: Luke9:57-62

Bible Verse: 1Cor6:19-20, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"

Students will

- Know:**
- ✘ The meaning of consecration (1Cor6:19, 20).
 - ✘ Intelligent Christianity lends itself to service, gladly and unreservedly (Luke9:57-62).
 - ✘ What am I to consecrate? (Rom12:1).
 - ✘ Characteristics of the consecrated heart (Deut30:6).
 - ✘ Results of consecration (Rom12:2).
- Feel:**
- ✘ That the consecration is a daily and moment by moment process of yielding to the Lord by the indwelling Spirit (Rom2:28, 29)
- Do:**
- ✘ Never fear the consequences of consecration.
 - ✘ Be renewed and think as God thinks.



CONSECRATION



The word "**consecration**" means to devote, separate, dedicate or set apart for the service or glory of God. Consecration does not mean conversion or a state of sinless perfection. Consecration is not necessarily a sudden impulse or emotion developed in excitement.

Consecration is simply the soul trusting wholly in Jesus, no holding back in reserve. It is giving ourselves up to Christ forever as bought with a price, no longer my own, **"...who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" 1Chr29:5.** "Who is willing?" God presents an opportunity to us to offer ourselves to Him. God will never cross the threshold of human responsibility. "Willing to consecrate": consecration is an act of the will. I must make a decision. It is not necessarily volunteering for full time service, though that may develop.

Service is definitely one aspect of consecration. Basically, it should be worship. If we have been truly redeemed, then it is only reasonable that we give Him our puny service. Intelligent Christianity lends itself to service, gladly and unreservedly. This is clearly indicated in the discussion Jesus had with three people, as recorded in Luke9:57-62.

Consecration is abdicating the rulership of our lives in favour of King Jesus. The **"I"** yields to the authority of Christ as Master. Who is boss in your life?

WHAT AM I TO CONSECRATE?

My body

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service," (Rom12:1). My body must be given to Him to use as He desires, whereby He may get more glory. Our bodies are not our own. They have been redeemed by Christ with His blood.

- Give Him our physical strength. Praise God for health and use it for Him.
- Give Him our feet to run errands of mercy, to take the Gospel to someone.
- Give Him our hands to do works of benevolence and lift the fallen.
- Give Him our eyes to seek out the needy and the perishing.



- Give Him our ears to hear the cry of the distressed and seek them for Him

My time

He must govern the use of my time. Let Him arrange the program, Interruptions then will come from Him. My study time, my work time, my play time, must be counted as sacred. Let Him guide you moment by moment in this matter (Eph5:16, Col 4:5).

My talents

Whether I have one or two or five or ten talents, let them all be for Him.

- Ability to speak, to preach, to teach, to minister the Word of God.
- Ability to sing, play an instrument, lead a choir or orchestra; let it be for His Glory.
- Ability to write books, poems, articles, Christian stories. Write for Him.
- Ability to pray, to be an intercessor, a prayer warrior. This is one of the greatest talents.
- Ability in leadership and organisation. This is much needed in the Church today.
- Ability to be a good follower, to assist others, to carry out programs.
- Ability as manifested in my vocation: nurse, teacher, electrician, shopkeeper, etc. All for His glory.

My possessions

We gladly present to Him our gold, silver, all that we possess. Not only give Him the tithe but give Him everything.

My heart

This is what He wants more than anything else. The heart is symbolical of the inner man, the real self. "...but first gave their own selves to the Lord...", 2Cor8:5.

Consecration means giving everything that I have to the Lord, but giving myself first, that is, deny self (Luke9:23-25).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONSECRATED HEART

It is a circumcised heart (Deut30:6, Rom2:28, 29). Circumcision is an outward sign of the law, valuable only when accompanied by interior conversion and love for the Lord. A circumcised heart is one where all the



extras in 1John2:16 are cut off. It is being dead to the world (Rom12:2, 1John2:15-16).

It is a heart wounded with love (SSong5:8). Love becomes the throbbing urge to serve in every condition and in spite of afflictions for the glory of the beloved Lord. As the bride tastes the sweetness of the bridegroom bestowed upon her, she calls out **"Bring me into the house of the wine, set love before me. Strengthen me with the cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am wounded with love,"** SSong2:4-5.

RESULTS OF CONSECRATION (Rom12:2).

- A life that is not conformed to this world. It is not a worldly, selfish life
- A life that is transformed by the renewed mind. The renewed man thinks as God thinks, with eternity and eternal values in view.
- A life lived harmoniously in the will of God, happily following His plan for me.
- A life that is acceptable. God's will is never obnoxious. This life will surely be acceptable both by God and by man.
- A life that is good. It will be beneficial. Never fear the consequences of consecration. Men and women will rise up and call you blessed because you obeyed God.
- A life that is happy, joyous, victorious, because it was lived in the perfect will of God, the One who created me and redeemed me with His precious Blood.

SPIRITUAL ANTHEM

As little children we would dream of Christmas morn
All the gifts and toys
We knew we'd find but we never realised
A baby born one blessed night
Gave us the greatest gift of our lives

We are the reason that He gave His life
We are the reason that He suffered and died
To a world that was lost He gave all He could give
To show us the reason to live

I've finally found the reason for living
It's in giving every part of my heart to Him
In all that I do every word that I say



I'll be giving my heart just for Him
For Him

We are the reason that He gave His life
We are the reason that He suffered and died
To a world that was lost He gave all He could give
To show us the reason to live



GROWING IN THE SPIRIT

Big Idea: Growing is a non-stopping process in the life of the believer.

Bible Text: Phil 3:12-13.

Bible Verse: Psa92:12, "the righteous will flourish like palm trees; they will grow like the cedars of Lebanon".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✘ The need for growing
 - ✘ Growing Church
 - ✘ Growing Service
 - ✘ Growing Faith
 - ✘ Growing Prayer
 - ✘ Growing Love
 - ✘ Growing in the Spiritual Struggle
- Feel:** As we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, our spiritual capacities enlarge.
- Do:** Be filled with the Spirit for the abundant life and for a fruitful service.



GROWING IN THE SPIRIT



One of the characteristics of life is growth. In the parable of the "growing seed", Jesus explained that the Kingdom of God is like **"the plants that grow and bear fruit; first the tender stalk appears, then the head full of grain"**, Mark4:26-28. Plants grow progressively. Likewise **"the righteous will flourish like palm trees; they will grow like the cedars of Lebanon,"** Psa92:12. In the gospel according to St Luke, we read about John the Baptist, that **"the child grew and developed in body and spirit,"** Luke1:80. Jesus Himself **"grew both in body and in wisdom, gaining favour with God and men,"** Luke2:52.

THE NEED FOR GROWING

Growing is a non-stopping process in the life of the believer. St Paul asks the believers not only to walk in the path of the spirit, but they are **"to run to win the prize"**, 1Cor9:24. **"And they will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary, they will walk and not grow weak,"** Isa40:31. St Paul fought the good fight of faith, preaching, teaching and suffering. He, even, **"was snatched to the third heaven and into Paradise and heard unspeakable things"**, 2Cor12:2. Yet he said, **"I do not claim that I have already become perfect. I keep striving to win the prize for which Christ Jesus has already won me to Himself. Of course, my brothers, I really do not think I have already won it; the one thing I do, however, is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead"**, Phil 3:12-13.

Hence, we can see that the life of faith continues progressively towards God and towards the spiritual goal which is eternal life and perfection. The Lord commands us **"Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect"**. As we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, our spiritual capacities enlarge. We are not yet "perfect". We often stumble and fall into sins, including sins of which we may not be conscious at the time. There are many sins of omission also, things we should be doing or attitudes we should be having, but they have not become part of us yet. Part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of these sins and bring us to true repentance. There may also be new tasks or challenges that God gives us, and this should always cause us to seek afresh the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.



However, that we repent, confess, work with Grace and cooperate with the Holy Spirit is not enough. We have to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph5:18) until **"Christ will make His home in your hearts through faith"** and **"you come to know His love, although it can never be fully known, and so, be completely filled with the very nature of God"**, Eph3:17, 19. To be filled with the Spirit is not an option, but a necessity. It is indispensable for the abundant life and for fruitful service.

St Paul tells us that growth is brought about by God Himself, **"I planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase,"** 1Cor3:6-7. If the human will plants and waters, then God will make the plant grow. While we persevere and grow, our spirit will be ablaze, but once we feel tired and lazy, we will stop growing and our spiritual glow will be put off.

GROWING CHURCH

Not only do the individuals have to grow, but the Church as a whole has too. This was requested by the Lord Jesus when He told His disciples, **"but when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be witnesses for Me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth,"** Acts1:8.

The Church grew and extended to all nations first through the evangelism of the twelve apostles and the seventy disciples. After the Resurrection, 500 joined the disciples; at Pentecost 3000 believed, and 5000 accepted the faith after the miracle of healing the lame man (Acts3:2-11, 4:4). **"And so the word of God continued to spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem grew larger and larger and a great number of priests accepted the faith,"** Acts6:7. Towns and many countries as a whole, in time, accepted the faith, thus fulfilling the Lord's command, **"Go throughout the whole world and preach the gospel to all mankind,"** Mark 16:15. **"Go then to all peoples everywhere and make them My disciples,"** Matt28:19.

GROWING SERVICE

Your service to the Lord grows and spreads from within yourself to include all members of your family. Then you can proclaim with Joshua, **"As for my family and me, we will serve the Lord,"** Jos24:15. As you and your family glorify the Lord by living lives that honour Him, you can also glorify Him, by serving God among your friends, colleagues and



acquaintances. Gradually you grow in the service of the Lord until you become an evangelist wherever you go and to anyone you meet. **"In this powerful way, the word of the Lord kept spreading and growing stronger, many churches were built and they grew in number," Acts19:20.**

GROWING FAITH

"We must thank God at all times for you, because your faith is growing," 1Thess1:3, St Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. There are many kinds of faith. **"By grace you have been saved through faith", Eph2:8.** By the grace of saving faith, we can believe God will do whatever He has promised to do in His word. All Christians have the grace of faith. However, faith in 1Corinthians12 is a very special gift the Holy Spirit gives at His good pleasure and it can be of varying degrees.

Jesus described a gift of faith which is strong and which effects things beyond man's power; **" if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there', and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you," Matt17:20.**

There is also "little faith" which doubts (Matt16: 8) and "weak faith" which stops us from believing (Mark9:24). St Paul asks the Romans to **"judge yourself according to the amount of faith that God has given you," Rom12:3.**

Faith has the capacity to grow in depth to include all areas in your life. Our faith increases in strength day by day as we experience fellowship with the Lord Jesus. We can trust that the Lord will give us more of His gift, **"for whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance," Matt13:12.** As you grow in faith, you should also grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2Pet3:18), and in His love (Col 1:10).

GROWING PRAYER

As you grow in the love of God, you will also grow in prayer i.e. communicating with God. This growth can be lengthwise i.e. increasing gradually the period of time you spend in prayer until you can fulfil the Lord's command to "pray without ceasing". Growth in prayer can also be depth wise, i.e. you pray with love, with reverence, with understanding, with



faith, with attention, until finally you reach the depth of prayer in the Spirit.

GROWING LOVE

As you grow in the love of God, you will also grow in the love of people. There should be no distinctive mark of the Christian than love. **"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another," John13:35. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren," 1John3:14.** You grow in this love until you "love your enemies", and reach the *agape* love. Agape love is "the highest and noblest form of love which sees something infinitely precious in its object". You continue to grow in loving your enemies until you can give yourself for them.

God's greatest demonstration of *agape* love was at the Cross where He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins, **"for when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were sinners Christ died for us," Rom5:6-8.**

Since we are to love as God does, believers should have *agape* love. This is a love which reaches out to all, wives, husbands, children, neighbours, and even people we have never met on the other side of the world. It will include those who are easy to love, because they are like us, and those who are hard to love, because they are so different. It will even extend to people who have harmed us or brought sorrow to us.

GROWING IN THE SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

In our struggle against sin, we must resist to the point of being killed (Heb12:4). We must not be afraid of anything we are to suffer. The Lord promises, **"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life," Rev2:10. "I will not rest or sleep, until I provide a place for the Lord..." Psa132:4-5.** We grow spiritually through the conflicts, tribulation, temptations and trials and so on, that afflict us slowly or rapidly.

The very important requisite for growth in the Spirit is humility. If you are satisfied thinking that you have reached your goal, you cannot see a need for growth. On the other hand, if you say with St Paul, "I do not claim I already succeeded or have already become perfect", then you will strive to grow in order to become perfect.



SANCTIFICATION

Big Idea: Sanctification is the will of God for every believer.

Bible Text: Col 1:2; 1Thes5:23-24; Phil 3:12-14.

Bible Verse: Heb12:14, "Follow peace with all men, and to be holy, without which no man shall see the Lord".

Students will

Know:

- ✕ The meaning of sanctification
- ✕ The author of sanctification
- ✕ The means of sanctification
- ✕ That sanctification is progressive (Phil 3:12-14, Eph4:17-24)
- ✕ The fruit of holiness (Rom6:22, Eph4:25-32, Eph5:1-4)
- ✕ Perfection is the result of sanctification (Heb10:14)
- ✕ How to retain a sanctified walk (Jam4:7)

Feel: A longing in your heart for holiness, for sanctification, for purity, for Christ-likeness, for a greater conformity to the image of God's Son.

Do:

- ✕ Confess to Him your sin; your need to:
 - seek out the sin;
 - judge it;
 - cast it away;
 - pray for cleansing;
 - pray for strength to live a holy life.
- ✕ Be faithful in regular seasons of Bible readings, prayer, witnessing and living for others.



SANCTIFICATION



Sanctification is the will of God for every believer (1Thess4:3). In regeneration (Baptism) our nature is renewed; in justification we are no longer condemned i.e. free of the bondage of Satan; in sanctification our character is changed. Sanctification shows the fruit of a justified life. Sanctification and holiness are the same in essence.

THE AUTHOR OF SANCTIFICATION IS THE HOLY TRINITY

- By God the Father (1Thess5:23-24).
- By God the Son (Eph5:26).
- By God the Holy Spirit (2Thess2:13).

MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION

- By the Word of God (John17:17).
- By the Blood of Christ (Acts13:12).
- By chastisement (Heb12:10-11).
- By yielding to God (Rom6:19).
- By our struggle (Eph4:22-24, 2Cor7:1).

To be sanctified, spend much time with the Word of God, it purifies and cleanses. The Word reveals the sin, the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanses it away and the result is sanctification.

SANCTIFICATION IS PROGRESSIVE

We, too have a part in sanctification. Our part is seeking out the sin; judging it, casting it away, praying for cleansing; praying for strength to live a holy life. Daily we must appropriate Christ as our sanctification; daily we must claim His holiness, His faith, His love, His grace. The process of Christian growth requires our free-will commitment to walk in righteousness; a process implying intimate relationship with the Lord.

The Holy Spirit does not reveal all of our unchristian-likeness at one time; that would be too discouraging and would lead to despair. The moment that something is revealed we should seek cleansing and continually pursue a path of progressive sanctification. Some day we will be holy without one grace missing; mature and perfect. This wonderful experience will be ours when Christ comes and our bodies are changed. Then we shall be like Him, perfect and holy (1John3:2). St Paul was pressing on towards that future



perfection, while daily perfecting his earthly progressive sanctification (Phil 3:12-14). The secret of a holy life is the continuous appropriation of the Saviour's holy life. Our degree of sanctification is in relation to our appropriation of the Lord (Jam1:22-25). While spiritual grace makes man heavenly, righteousness is a gift and a goal, a present reality and a promise to be striven for.

Jesus prayed in **John17:19**, "**And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified**". If Jesus Christ needed to be sanctified then I certainly need to be sanctified too. How could He, the Holy Son of God be made more holy? A possible answer is in **Rom15:3**, "**For even Christ pleased not Himself**"; always pressing for something better. It behoves us as disciples to press on, ever on, ever upward, to be more like Him.

Is there a longing in your heart for holiness; for sanctification; for purification; for Christ-likeness; for a greater conformity to the image of the Son of God? Confess to Him your sin and your need and He will satisfy the deepest longings of your heart. At what price? Part with sin and uncleanness for "**by one offering, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified,**" (Heb10:14).

THE FRUIT OF HOLINESS

"But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life," Rom6:22 (also Eph4:25-32; 5:1-4). The way we live affects our relationship not only with God but also with each other. We cannot be content to root out the weeds mentioned in Eph4:31; we must plant good fruit as well.

HOW TO RETAIN A SANCTIFIED LIFE

- Live a life of implicit obedience to the Holy Spirit.
- If you fail, immediately confess to God and He will instantly restore you.
- "Resist the devil and he will flee from you," Jam4:7.
- Be faithful in regular seasons of Bible reading, prayer, witnessing and serving others.

Sanctification guarantees us an inheritance beyond the grave (Acts26:18). Do not look within and be discouraged; look up and be encouraged. **"Faithful is He that calls you, who will also do it," 1Thess5:24.**



SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Bid Idea: Understanding the meaning of spiritual awakening and what it involves.

Bible Text: Jonah1:4-11

Bible Verse: Eph5:14, "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light".

Students will

Know:

- ✧ The literal and biblical meaning of 'sleeping' and 'awaking'
- ✧ Messages from the Holy Spirit to wake us up
- ✧ How to avoid deviating from the goal of the service

Feel: The need to wake up from the sleep of bad habits and formality of worship.

Do: Respond to the messages of the Holy Spirit and not harden our hearts as in rebellion (Psa95:7-8).



SPIRITUAL AWAKENING



Jonah was fast asleep during the storm, in spite of the screams and crying of the people on board the ship. The captain came to him and said, **"What do you mean sleeper? Arise and call on your God,"** Jon1:5.

WHO IS A SLEEPER?

Literally, a sleeper is someone who is not active, i.e. dormant and does not think. Spiritually, a sleeper is someone who is dead (Mark5:38-41). With closed eyes, a sleeper is in the dark, or in the tomb, and evidently one who cannot see. To awake is to become active and sober (1Pet4:7, 5:8; Rom13:11; 1Cor15:34; 1Thess5:6). To awake is to become alive according to **Eph5:14**, **"Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light"**.

As a teenager, Fr Armia Bolis was as rebellious as ever. He would not listen to the good advice of his mother to stay away from bad company who did not have the love of God in their hearts. He was too confident and thought he was wise enough to selectively have fun. One summer, he told his mother that he would not be restricted and wanted to enjoy a good time with his friends by the seaside in Alexandria. His mother could not stop him and resorted to prayer. In Alexandria, he indulged in youthful fun with his friends.

One afternoon, he came across an elderly family who were friends of his parents. They insisted that he came over to their place for dinner. Reluctantly, he agreed. As dinner was being prepared, he asked to have a rest seeking to run away from boredom. He was offered a folding bed in the sitting room. He closed the door and sat sleepless on the bed. As he looked around, he noticed a big book on the table. It was the Holy bible. He picked it and decided to read to kill time. He opened the Bible at a page in Ephesians chapter five. On this page, verse 14 was underlined in red. It read, **"Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light," Eph5:14.**

Fr Armia Bolis wondered to whom this verse was addressed. He closed the Book and lay back on his bed. As he did that, he slightly hit his head on the edge of the bed. Suddenly, it became very dark and he could not see



anything. He started crying and imploring the Lord to help him regain his sight. He acknowledged his sins and asked for forgiveness and mercy.

Immediately, the whole room lit up and a man stood by him saying, "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light". At this stage, Fr Armia could see himself swimming in the sea which was full of swimmers. Fr Armia questioned the man whether he was addressing him. The man confirmed. So Fr Armia asked why he was picking on him when everybody else was swimming. The man answered because I was sent to you.

At this stage, the man disappeared and Fr Armia could hear his mother praying for him. The man reappeared and Fr Armia asked who he was. He said "I am Paul the Apostle" and disappeared again. Fr Armia regained consciousness. When he opened his eyes, he found the Bible in his lap and tears flowing from his eyes and heard the hosting family calling on him to have dinner. He could hardly eat. After he left, he told his friends that he was going back to Cairo to his family. That was his awakening point. He made a U turn and started a new life dedicated and submitting to the Lord.

Naturally, a seed contains the potential for life. However, this life remains dormant in the soil i.e. inactive until it finds the right conditions for growth. Similarly, we were born again of the Holy Spirit and water in Baptism and we received the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. Yet many of us are sleeping i.e. inactive or dead to sin and bad habits. The Holy Spirit is eager to help us awake, i.e. repent of our sins, and produce in us the fruit of the Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AT WORK

The Holy Spirit continues to send us messages and signs to wake us up. We may resist or harden our hearts. In the case of Jonah, the tempest, the captain, the lots, the sailors all were messages for Jonah to repent. Nevertheless, he could not read them properly. The sailors asked Jonah, **"What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"** Jon1:11, for the sea was growing more tempestuous. And he said to them, **"Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that his great tempest is because of me"** Jon 1:12. Jonah was convicted of his sin, but would not repent. He still chose to die. But God **"desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"**, 1Tim2:4.



Judas Iscariot was a case of hopelessness, too weak to change, too proud to repent. On the whole, Jonah was given another chance. Then, he repented of his disobedience and proclaimed, "**Salvation is of the Lord,**" **Jon2:9**. He had hope that he will be saved (Jon2:4), trusted that God heard him (Jon2:2, 7) and acknowledged that he cannot escape from God (Jon2:2). He also acknowledged his ignorance.

Jonah's main problem, however, was his pride and honour. This produced a hard heart and concentration around self. God used a plant, a worm, and a wind to teach Jonah a lesson in compassion. Jonah's emotions shifted from fierce anger (Jon4:1) to despondency (Jon4:3) then to great joy (Jon4:6) and finally to despair (Jon4:8). In a humorous but meaningful way, Jonah is forced to see that he has more concern for a plant than for hundreds of thousands of people. God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth," 1Tim2:4, even Jonah. Jonah's lack of a divine perspective makes his repentance a greater problem than the repentance of the people of Nineveh.

We need to wake up and repent. Repentance involves:

- acknowledging our mistakes and sins,
- having a contrite heart,
- trusting that the Blood of Christ is capable of forgiving our sins, and
- confessing our sins in the hearing of a priest.

As servants, self and pride can make us deviate from our goal in the service. Then it is harder for us to come back on track. To prevent deviation, we should:

- pray and ask for wisdom and guidance;
- ask the Lord to make the lesson a message for us before (or as well as) the kids;
- when we hear His voice we do not harden our hearts as in the rebellion (Psa95:7, 8).

As we obey, repent and humble ourselves before God, He will give us the joy to have an obedient and repentant class and to see them grow in the Spirit.

Note: Spiritual Awakening is called by some Churches "being born again". According to our Orthodox faith, we are born again in Baptism (John3:5).



IF I WERE GOD, I'D END ALL THE PAIN

Big Idea: God must have loving reasons for permitting suffering and God must have a plan for it.

Bible Text: Jam5:7, 8.

Bible Verse: 1Pet1:5-7, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, may be found to praise, honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✕ All the religious worldviews about suffering
 - Hinduism: suffering as balance.
 - Buddhism: all pain is an illusion through which we must restrain ourselves.
 - Islam: all suffering-causing events are moved by God who is the "Unmoved Mover".
 - Atheism: suffering is just natural, the unhappy by-product of a universe driven by the random intersection of time and space.
 - ✕ The Bible treatment of suffering
 - Question God (Psa22).
 - Why does a loving God permit evil and suffering?
 - ✕ What will God do about it?
 - Renewal of the cursed world (Gen3:17-19; Rom8:19-21; Rev21:1-5; Isa11:9).
 - Evidence is Christ's Resurrection.
 - ✕ What has God done about it in the past that brings comfort in the present (Isa63:9; Psa22; Mark15)?
 - The Cross (Heb2:18; Heb4:14-16).
 - Sympathize with those who suffer (Acts14:22; Rom5:3; 2Cor4:17).
 - ✕ Invitation to God's mercy

Feel: Comforted that we can have victory in the cross of Christ.

Do: Hope and endeavour to encounter Christ during hard times.



IF I WERE GOD, I'D END ALL THE PAIN



All human societies have known suffering and evil. Thus, all major worldviews have had to come to grips with the resulting questions.

In **Hinduism**, suffering is explained essentially as pay-back or balance. Every experience of suffering such as famine, disease, rape, earthquake, poverty and so on is understood to be the operation of 'Karma', the universal principle by which all actions of the past are balanced out by events in the present. Hindus, of course, believe that all living beings are reincarnated in bodily form until one's individual 'Karma' allows one to escape physical existence and attain 'nirvana'. Hinduism does not attempt to solve the problem, but rather explains the phenomenon of suffering. Why suffering? It is the response to action which leads to response.

In **Buddhism**, all suffering and pain is an 'illusion' through which we must train ourselves to see. Our experience of suffering was intimately related to our desire or affection for the things of the world, for example, a beggar's desire for a better life, or the affection we feel when losing a loved one. A Buddhist does not question suffering but says "I am not enlightened".

In **Islam**, all suffering-causing events are moved by God, the 'Unmoved Mover'. The cause of all suffering is not found in any fact, or external to God. Suffering thus becomes an opportunity for the faithful to submit to Allah's indisputable will, and to reaffirm the central creed that Allah is 'the Cause of all Causes'. Why suffering? Do not ask. For a Muslim to question suffering is a blasphemy.

In **Atheism**, suffering is just natural, the unhappy by-product of a universe driven only by the random intersection of time and space. Everything that happens in the world, whether good or bad, happens without any design and without any thought of us at all. Why suffering? It is blind pitiless indifference. Questioning suffering for an Atheist is meaningless.

In **Christianity**, one of the most striking elements of the Bible's treatment of suffering is the way it endorses our right to question God, to plead with Him for some kind of response to our predicament. **Psalm 22** begins "My



God my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? Oh my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer; by night and I am not silent”.

WHY DOES A LOVING GOD PERMIT EVIL AND SUFFERING?

The account in Genesis 1-3, shows that human beings from the very beginning, misused their divinely sanctioned independence as rational beings and sought to become autonomous, that is a law unto themselves, without reference to the Creator (Gen 3:6). So the long and tortuous story of the human will began; men and women made in God's image defying their Maker for an imagined personal gain. This first act of the defiance is played out every day in the lives of each one of us, for example tread on someone else, withhold resources from the poor, pursue illicit pleasures, retaliate when threatened etc... The result is tyranny, betrayal, poverty and violence.

WHY WOULD NOT GOD INTERVENE?

In so doing God will be overriding our will; God will be accused to be a tyrant. On the other hand, God's intervening makes us robots; God will reduce our human dignity. As a result we would not be truly living. Because of this God-given independence, we are able to say,

- **No** to the ways of the Maker,
- **No** to justice and peace,
- **No** to sharing resources with the poor,
- **No** to equal rights for all,
- **No** to daily human kindness.

THE PLEDGE OF JUSTICE

The Bible's answer is that God will do something; He will step in. He has set a day at the end of history when His anger against all the tyrannous acts of men and women will be poured out in full, on 'the Day of Judgement' (Rev 20:11-12).

God's pledge to wounded humanity is that on the Day of Judgement, He hears their cries for justice and console them by bringing His Justice on every evil act (2Pet 3:7-9). Because God's personality is a unique blend of pure justice mixed with boundless patience, mercy and love, He has set the Day of Judgement at the end of history. This delay in judgement when He will right all the wrongs, gives us all a chance to experience the mercy and renewal.



THE RENEWAL OF ALL THINGS

Genesis chapter 2 tells us that the world that God has made was very good. It was a perfect world where people lived in harmony with God, each other and the creation. This good world was supposed to progress with humanity taking care of the creation. When people turned their back to God, things were mucked up in such a way that they could not proceed in the intended way. The "fall" therefore brought thistles, thorns, volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones and disease (Gen3:17-19).

"Cursed is the ground because of you," Gen3:17. A 'curse' is a pronouncement of judgement. Thus in biblical thought, the earth bears the scars, as it were, of the traumatic rift that has occurred between us and God; it contains our ever-present reminder that the Creator is displeased with our defiance of Him.

What, if any, are God's intentions towards this state of affairs (disordered nature, chaos)? There is hope. The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay (Rom8:19-21, Rev21:1-5) and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. **"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Isa11:9.** This current world convinces us of God's ability to re-create the universe (new creation). The Resurrection of Christ convinces us of His intention to do just that.

Creation --> Falling of man --> Redemption --> Judgement --> New Creation

In the Christian faith, the answer is that God has entered into our suffering and even embraced death. God has taken death into His experience and still remains God. That is an answer that doesn't explain suffering, but says that in the midst of suffering that God in Jesus has conquered and transformed it.

THE CROSS

In willingly allowing the forces of evil to come down on Him with all their might, Jesus has taken on the darkness and defeated the one who has power over death (Heb2:18; Heb4:14-16). It is this fact, that God entered our world of flesh and blood and pain and tears, which tells us that human suffering mattered to God and that He understands. He stands with us in our pain (Acts14:22, Rom5:3, 1Cor10:13, 2Cor4:17). **"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to help those who are**



tempted," Heb2:18.

THE INVITATION TO MERCY

On the Cross God not only stands alongside us, He stands in our place; Jesus became a substitution for us. Jesus's death, therefore, is God's invitation to experience not just His comfort, but His mercy as well (John2:1-2). Through the death of Christ all my shame is transformed into hope - hope that despite my guilt, the God of the universe invites me to enjoy His mercy now. **"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need," Heb4:16.**

The Day of Judgement was delayed precisely so that those who respond to Him during the merciful interval between 'creation' and 'new creation' may experience both the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of the universe.

(Adapted from "If I were God I'd end all the Pain" by John Dickson)



PURITY OF THOUGHT

Big Idea: The beginning of sin is a thought.

Bible Text: Jam1:14-16.

Bible Verse: Phil 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy meditate on these things".

Students will

Know:

- ✘ An open mind
- ✘ Assessing our thoughts
- ✘ Three monks
- ✘ How to keep our thoughts pure

Feel: The importance of having pure thoughts.

Do: Apply Pope Shenouda's advises to attain purity of thoughts.



PURITY OF THOUGHT



AN OPEN MIND

As Miss Crandle entered the classroom, David mumbled, "Oh no, not again! Where does she come up with all her silly ideas? Why can't Miss Crandle be a normal English teacher, if there is such a thing?"

"Stop mumbling, David" instructed Miss Crandle, "and come join us in the circle".

David's mind rushed with thoughts, "Why can't she call me Dave like all my other teachers do? I wonder how she would like it if I called her Matilda? What a weird name! But it fits both her looks and her personality".



"Today we will be working on our oral communication skills. Each of you will have an opportunity to express what you are thinking. Try to be clear, accurate, and honest. I won't be grading your performance, so relax".

"Relax she says! How can I ever relax in her class? She jumps on every little mistake I make. She's such a crab! I wish I could shove my English book right down her throat. Maybe that would keep her quiet, for a few minutes anyway," responded David in his mind.

"James," said Miss Crandle, "I'd like you to be the first to share with the class what you are thinking".

"I'm glad she called on Jim Parker. He deserves it. He's such a show off. He makes me feel like such a loser in gym classes. He's always doing things better than I. It makes me so mad! I'd be so happy if Jim would break his leg. Of course I'd be even happier if I could do the breaking," David continued in his line of thought.

"What are you thinking, Lucille?" asked Miss Crandle.

"Thinking? Are you joking, Miss Crandle? Lucy McNaulty can't think. She doesn't have an ounce of brain in her head. She has trouble just spelling her



name. The only thing she can do well is make everyone look smart. I bet if I would lock her in the closet, no one would even notice she's gone," thought David.

"You're next David," instructed Miss Crandle. "Just relax. Let your thoughts flow into words. Open your mind and share with us what you're thinking".

What sort of a person do you think David is? What do his thoughts reveal about him? Clearly David's thoughts were hatred, jealousy, pride and cruelty.

ASSESSING OUR THOUGHTS

Although our evil thoughts might not always hurt others, we can be hurt. The more we allow evil thoughts to flow uncontrolled, the more powerful they will become, making them harder to control. Evil thoughts are contagious and can very easily spread to our speech and our actions. Solomon wrote, **"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he," Pro23:7.**

Some people are not concerned about their thoughts because they are private. However, when we read the Bible, we feel the need to be concerned. Jesus said, **"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart," Matt5:28.** And in 1John3:15, it is written, **"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."** Here God is saying that evil thoughts are equal to actions in His sight.

Hatred=Murder and Lust=Adultery

Are your thoughts pleasing to God? What are some of the things that influence the way we feel and think? Are they magazines, radio, television, friends, music, parents? If a person regularly listens to music, reads magazines and watches TV shows which talk about adultery and boy/girl friends, what do you think their thoughts towards the acceptability of these practices would be?

The reality is that if we are not careful, the more we are exposed to something, the more immune we become to it. For example, the more we watch violence on TV, the less shocked we become when we see it happen in reality. St Paul advises us, **"And do not be conformed to this world, but be**



transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God," Rom12:2.

The beginning of all sin is a thought. St James tells us that in Jam1:14-16, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and is enticed. Then when desire has conceived it gives birth to sin; and when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived my brethren." Remember what the Lord said, "For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light," Mark4:22. This shall come to pass, in front of all the generations of people that have ever lived, on the Day of Judgement for all the things which we have not confessed.

THREE MONKS

Three monks met outside their cells, each wearing their black garments and each holding a stick to help him walk; nobody knows what's inside their hearts expect the Creator who created them. The three monks went for a walk at sunset, when they happened to see another monk coming out of his cell, walking towards the village, where other people live in the busy world.



The first monk thought, "Poor monk! He left his place of worship to go and live in the world to gain some money." He thought thus because he loved money. The second monk thought, "This monk has left his cell, hiding under cover at night to go to the world and enjoy his desires. How disgraceful he is." He thought thus because his heart was not pure, and his desires always conquered him. But the third monk, whose heart was full of love, "love that does not think evil", silently praised him thinking, "O monk, how glorious you are, you have left your cell to be with God in the quietness of the place and the calmness of night. You are so close to your Creator, I hope to be like you."

Fooling people is easy. Fooling God is impossible. People cannot see the thoughts of our minds, but God can. And to God our thoughts are equal to actions. In God's sight, our thoughts count. God gave us our minds to use. We are stewards of our thoughts. To be faithful stewards, we must commit our minds to God. We must allow God to be master of what we think.



The way to protect our thoughts is by keeping our minds busy on good things. **"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praise-worthy meditate on these things," Phil 4:8.** Keeping our minds, actions and bodies pure is not easy. That is why we need to invite God into our hearts and lives to help us, keeping forever in our minds God's promise: **"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which He has promised to those who love Him," Jam1:12.**

HOW TO KEEP OUR THOUGHTS PURE

A chaste and pure person should be pure in body and soul, in his thoughts, senses, feelings, and even in his dreams and imagination. A man should give careful attention to the purity of his thoughts as his mind belongs to God. As we take care of the purity of our hearts in order that God may dwell in them, so we must take care of our minds too. The divinely inspired Holy Bible says, **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength," Mark12:30.**

A person who lets his heart be occupied with sin gives proof that God does not live in his heart, as thoughts arise from the inside of the heart. The Holy Bible says, **"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things," Matt12:35.** The law does not take your thoughts into account, but God judges you according to your thoughts. Hence, our conscience is stronger and deeper than the law, for the person who takes care not to commit a sin by thought will find it difficult to do wrong in deed or action. Thus the purity of thought becomes a means for the purity of the human being as a whole.

If you wish to have a pure mind, keep far away from the means that cause the corruption of thought. Keep away from all things that bring to your mind a sinful thought. Such thoughts may come as a result of unsound readings, wicked things that are heard, or due to a sinful environment, bad company



or wicked friendship. An evil thought may arise from another evil thought. Keep away from all this so as to keep your thoughts pure.

Evil thoughts may arise from desires or evil lusts within the heart. In fact, desires and thoughts co-operate; each of the two may be a cause and a result. An evil thought may **bring** about a wicked lust, and wicked lust may give birth to a wicked thought. On many occasions your thoughts may be expression of your desires. Try to clear out your heart from evil desires, then, your thoughts will consequently be purified.

Thoughts and lusts may give rise to dreams or imaginations, as you may dream of the things that you think of, or that you long for. In this way a man may sometimes be responsible for his dreams; and in as much as a man's heart and thoughts are purified, so will his dreams be purified. If you dream of something against your thoughts and desires, you may be disturbed and wake up quickly, and you will not be able to continue your dream for a long period.

On some occasions, evil thoughts may merely be a fight on the part of the devil against you, to disturb the quietness of your heart and destroy your peace. Not all evil thoughts are wars from the devils; there is a great difference between the war of thoughts and falling by thought. In case of an evil thought that is merely a fight from the devil, your heart will revolt against this thought and you will try with all your determination to drive it away, get rid of it and not accept it at all. Falling by thought, however, is completed when a man will be contented with the wicked thought or will be enjoying it; he may even try to keep harbouring this thought for a long time, and he may be annoyed if something occurs to break it up. My advice to you is to oppose wicked thoughts and escape from them.

If an evil thought attacks you, try to occupy your mind with something else or run away from it. You may think of something else that is deeper so as to divert the course of your thinking. You may occupy yourself with the reading of something interesting so that your thoughts may be diverted from that wicked issue to the topic of reading. You may pray in secret. And raise your heart to God to keep the evil thought away from you; and if all these methods are not effective, you may occupy yourself with some manual work



or talk with anybody to drive away the thought.

Be cautious not to yield to the wicked thought as this is treachery against God on your part, and association with the enemy. Your escape from the thought as soon as it comes to your mind is much easier than your attempt to run away from it after you have kept it for a certain period because as long as the thought continues in your mind, it will exercise its mastery over you and will subject your will to its attraction, until you become a slave to it and fulfil its desire. If the thought continues with you, it may be changed into an emotion, a desire, or a lust; it may develop into an attempt at fulfilment, and thus you may be degraded from a sin of thought to a sin of action.

An evil thought may come as a result of idleness according to the saying, "The mind of an idle person is a convenient place of work for the devil". An active person controls his thoughts; he directs them according to the kind of occupation in which he works. A hardworking student directs his thoughts in the way of his studies; a scientist is occupied with science, an athlete with physical exercises, a monastic with worship; but a person who spends his time in idleness will have his mind exposed to evil thoughts; he does not control his thoughts but his thoughts direct him.

My advice to you is to take the first step; you should orient your thoughts and not let them take advantage of you and direct you. Thought can be a weapon in your hand and it can be a weapon against you; let it be your friend and not your enemy. You should know that the greatest and most useful projects were originally an idea, and all great humanitarian deeds began as an idea. Let your ideas be a treasure for yourself and for others. Let your thoughts be a blessing for the society in which you live. If you cannot make your thoughts a source of benefit for yourself and for others, at least do not let them be a cause for the loss of your eternity and the purity of your heart.

Do not wait until the evil thought comes to your mind and you find it difficult to resist, but you should take the initiative and occupy your mind with righteous subjects. Try to possess a treasure of holy meditations and divine thoughts, a treasure of feelings of love towards God, so that your



mind may be ashamed of those thoughts and feelings if the devil attempts to defile it or let it fall.

Be always occupied with what is beneficial and keep in mind that God reads and examines your thoughts. Therefore, you should be ashamed of yourself whenever you give way to sinful thinking. And if you fall into evil thought, do not despair and keep up that thought, but you should rise quickly and redress your thoughts.

May God be with you, granting you purity of thought as a holy gift!

(Adapted from a lecture by H H Holiness Pope Shenouda III).



WORLD TEMPERED MORALITY

Big Idea: Understanding the new morality of the twenty first century in the light of the standards and moral codes set by God Almighty.

Bible Text: Rom1:18-28.

Bible Verse: Rom1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men".

Students will

Know:

- ✧What is morality
- ✧The new morality
- ✧Immorality
- ✧God's standard of morality

Feel:

- ✧The answer to the new morality lies in a clean heart, made so by the cleansing blood of Christ.

Do:

- ✧Accept that our liberty in Christ as liberty to resist all immorality and never as a license to cater to the lusts and whims of the flesh.



WORLD TEMPERED MORALITY



Morality distinguishes between good and evil. It applies to behaviour - what we do. It also applies to individuals - what kind of people we are. Moral behaviour promotes good; people are moral if their intentions and behaviour promote good. Immoral behaviour and immoral people cause harm.

Morality cannot exist in space or in the ocean because where there is no consciousness, there is no awareness of consequences. Among animals there is little or no understanding of consequences. The cat may be dimly aware if it does not kill the mouse it does not eat, but that is not understanding in the human sense of the word. The killing of the mouse is good for the cat's welfare and bad for the mouse's, but in itself it is not a moral or immoral act.

Morality only comes into existence with human consciousness and action. Humans are unique because

- we are conscious of ourselves and other human beings;
- we recognize the consequences of our actions on others and others' actions on ourselves;
- we can change our actions to minimize or exaggerate those consequences; and
- we can communicate with others to change actions and consequences.

In other words, only human beings can identify actions and consequences as good or bad for themselves or others. Only human beings have a sense of morality.

Morality begins with the character of God. There is no other foundation for it. And the sort of morality that really matters depends on the sort of God that really exists, not any old gods such as humans have dreamed up over the centuries. This is the God who created the universe and who revealed Himself through His dealings with His chosen people and who came Himself into our human existence in the Person of Jesus Christ.

This God that Christians believe in is, first of all, **personal**; He is not just some impersonal 'force' behind the universe. This God has revealed to us that He exists in three Persons we know as 'Father', 'Son' and 'Holy Spirit',



who have always existed in loving relationship with one another. Thus the New Testament can declare that **"God is love," 1John4:3**. He has always been love and His purpose in creating humans was that He desired other personal beings with whom He could share that love.

As God is personal, He therefore created us as autonomous 'persons', people with intelligence, feelings and the ability to make decisions. Though we share many characteristics with the animal creation, the Bible is very clear that we are more than that. We have been given a spiritual side to our nature that enables us to have a personal relationship with the living God. Because we were created for the prime purpose of enjoying relationships, both with God and with one another, then it stands to reason that whatever 'morality' is, it must be **relational**. Whatever helps towards good relationships, either with God or other humans, must be "good". Whatever hinders those relationships must be "bad".

The second important character of God is that He is **holy**, which sums up the perfection of God as described in the Bible: He is perfect in His love, in His justice, in His faithfulness and any "good" quality you can think of. He is altogether untainted by evil in any form. One of the metaphors the Bible uses to describe good and evil is that of light and darkness. Thus St John in his first letter can say, **"God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all," 1John1:5**. When God gave His people the Ten Commandments at Mt Sinai, then He was giving them standards that expressed something of His own character. Jesus later summarized them as "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" and "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark12:29-31).

THE NEW MORALITY

We are living in the last days; times when men are trying to change the standards and moral codes that have been set centuries ago by God. God is holy and just and changes not; neither will His standards adapt to meet the imaginary "progressiveness" of the twenty first century. The so-called 'new morality' professes to restate codes of conduct in the light of modern knowledge and science, when actually it is "retrogression" (Rom1:18, 24, 28). Proponents of the new morality suggest two "alternative lifestyles":

- for unmarried people to live together as husband and wife on a "trial marriage" basis to test their ability to live happily together;
- for married people to go outside the marriage bond and enjoy extramarital relationships to satisfy their unfulfilled lust.



This teaching says that if one indulges in these sexual experiences (in or out of marriage) that it will give you the ability to feel at one with the universe and with God! What utter irreprehensible nonsense. They say that right and wrong are relative terms, with the standard being the *desires* (needs) of *man* rather than the strict codes of *the law*. They say that sex is an expression of love and should not be prohibited or curtailed. Homosexuality (or lesbianism) is merely an expression of love between members of the same sex, and therefore should be legalized in order to let people express themselves to one another in a way that seems the most natural.

In the name of compassion the new morality condones adultery, fornication, etc. However, the command of the Lord still stands, **"You shall not commit adultery,"** Exo20:14 and **"You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery,"** Mark10:19.

In Romans1, St Paul spells out clearly the moral consequences of turning away from God. Three times he declares that, as a result of rejecting the truth of God that He has clearly made known in His creation, **"God gave them over**

- **in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity (Rom1:24),**
- **to shameful lusts (Rom1:26)**
- **to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done (Rom1:28).**

St Paul then gives the end result of this process: **"They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them,"** Rom1:29-32. As the mathematician-philosopher Pascal observed, *"It is better to believe in a judgmental God, for if He does not exist you lose nothing, but if He does, you could lose for eternity"*.

IMMORALITY

The word "Immorality" does not appear in the scriptures but it has two basic meanings in today's use.

Sexual impurity

- **Adultery:** sexual union when at least one partner is married(Exo20:14)



- **Fornication:** sexual union of unmarried people (Acts15:20)
- **Effeminacy:** for a male to become like a woman soft and delicate (1Cor6:9)
- **Masturbation:** "abusers of themselves with mankind," (1Cor6:9)
- **Inordinate affection:** doting love that is immoderate, excessive, intemperate and disordered, evil sensual appetite (Col 3:5; 1Thess4:5)
- **Homosexuality:** the sin of sodomy, Gen19:5; men sexually involved with men (Rom1:26-27)
- **Lesbianism:** women sexually involved with other women (Rom1:26-27)
- **Unclean thoughts:** lewdness; licentiousness (Judges20:6)
- **Nakedness:** the state of undress follows immorality and idolatry (Exo32:25) ; caution against short skirts, low neck-lines, tight clothes that reveal the contour of the body, and immodest bathing suits(1Tim2:9, 10).

Falsehood and deceit

- **Cheating:** giving short change and poor measure (Amos8:5)
- **Dishonesty:** shame, deceit, unfairness, unchaste (2Cor4:2)
- **Bribery:** fire to destroy bribery (Job 15:34, Isa33:15)
- **Gambling:** the prodigal son wasted his substance with riotous living (Luke 15:13)
- **Corruption:** (2Pet2:19, Rom8:21)
- **Extortion:** to exact unlawfully (1Cor6:10, Matt23:25)
- **Fraud:** keeping back wages by trickery (James5:4; Psa10:7)

GOD'S STANDARD OF MORALITY

We have been called to glorify God in our bodies (1Cor6:20), and this can only be done as we maintain the standards of holiness and righteousness set in the Holy Bible, particularly in the Ten Commandments. The new morality and all immorality are condemned, **"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," Rom1:18.** The Apostle Paul rebuked the Church of Corinth because of immorality (1Cor5:1), for a member had his stepmother as his wife.

God's standard of morality is set forth in 1Pet1:15, **"But as He who has called you is holy, so you be holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, 'Be holy for I am holy' (Lev11:44; 19:2; 20:7)".** This standard is also set forth in the Sermon on the Mount, **"Be therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect," Matt5:48.**

As Christians, we have been called on to renounce the 17 works of the flesh enumerated in Gal 5:19-21; and to bear the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit in



Gal 5:22, 23. The lusts of the flesh will pass away but he that does the will of God will abide forever (1John2:17). St Paul advises **"neither be partakers of other men's sins. Keep yourself pure," 1Tim5:22.** This would include both external purity i.e. committing acts of immorality) but also internal purity in the realm of the mind (Matt5:28).

LIBERTY IN CHRIST

In conclusion new morality is imprisoning society in sin. The so-called new morality is putting women back hundreds of years by giving a free rein to the lusts of evil men. The answer to the world tempered moralities is not only theological but personal. It lies in a clean heart cleansed by the precious blood of Christ "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin," 1 John 1:7, 9; in commitment to the will of God to abstain from fornication (1Thess4:3)

Let us accept our liberty in Christ as liberty to resist all immorality and never as license to cater to the lusts and whims of the flesh.





HOMOSEXUALITY

Big Idea: Understanding homosexuality from an Orthodox Christian perspective.

Bible Text: 1Pet2:1-22.

Bible Verse: Prov14:12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end leads to death".

Students will

- Know:**
- ✘ An Orthodox theology of sexuality
 - ✘ Instruments of creation
 - ✘ Blessed marriage
 - ✘ Homosexuality
 - ✘ Clinical and pastoral considerations
 - ✘ Temptation
 - ✘ Justifying a homosexual lifestyle: secularism
 - ✘ A pastoral reflection
- Feel:**
- ✘ Better informed about the appeal for homosexual marriage and how to overcome it.
- Do:**
- ✘ Believe and convince others that we are called to live according to God's commandments, and the struggle the homosexual might have in conforming himself to God's commands can become a pathway to holiness.



HOMOSEXUALITY



AN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY OF SEXUALITY

All sexuality and sexual behaviour is based on divine love; a love that is beyond any human feeling, empathy, or ethical standard, and even approaches the essence of God Himself. St John tells us "... **for love is of God ... God is love,**" 1John4:7, 8.

This love is also given to man to experience and apply in relationships with his fellow man. Because love has its source and origin in God who is love, it can only be appropriated and applied in accordance with God's will.

The Persons of the Holy Trinity commune among themselves in love. This love is the foundation of the creation; the *cause* by which creation came into being. Adam was created to commune with God. Genesis reveals that with the creation of Adam and Eve, man was created with two modes of being: male and female. **"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them," Gen1:27.** Male and female were created for communion with each other, thereby reflecting the intercommunion within the Persons of the Holy Trinity. **"Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him," Gen2:18.**

Christian anthropology sees the male as the appropriate complement for the female, and the female for the male which includes moral boundaries of the sexual dimension of male and female intercommunion: " ... **a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh,**" Gen2:24. Here we have the first reference to biblically ordered sexuality. These limitations are further elaborated later on and include prohibitions against adultery and homosexuality.

It is important to note that sexual union is ordained by God and thus deemed as good. This includes all the constituents that make this union possible including sexual desire. However, like all human desire, sexual desire must be directed into appropriate channels and expressions. **St**



Maximus the Confessor told us: *'Scripture does not forbid anything which God has given to us for our use; but condemns immoderation and thoughtless behaviour. For instance, it is not forbidden to eat or beget children ... but it does forbid us to fornicate.'* Further, for St Maximus (and indeed the entire Christian moral tradition) marriage and sexual activity are united. The Holy Church Father continued: *'we are required by the commandments to love God and our neighbour, to love our enemies, not to commit adultery ... when we transgress these commandments we are condemned. But we are not commanded to live as virgins, to abstain from marriage ... '*

St Maximus' comments about virginity and abstention from marriage presuppose that marriage consists of male and female. Unmarried people are expected to remain chaste, to refrain from sexual activity. St Maximus sees marriage as more than a concession to weakness, that is, marriage was not instituted because people might be unable to restrain from sexual activity outside of marital union, but also for the procreation of the human race and thus a fulfilment of the commandment that mankind should create new life. In other words, both states of being - married or single - are ordained and thus blessed by God.

In our day effort is being made to create a moral parity between heterosexuality and homosexuality. Sanctioning homosexual marriage would go a long way in removing the moral prohibitions against homosexual behaviour. Gay marriage advocates borrow the moral teachings and assert they apply equally to homosexual. In other words, just as heterosexual activity is to be relegated to heterosexual marriage, so too should homosexual activity be relegated to homosexual marriage.

HOW IS THE CHRISTIAN TO UNDERSTAND THE APPEAL FOR HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGE? Persons with a homosexual orientation are invited to use their struggle as a means of sanctification. In scripture homosexual behaviour is not blessed by God and specifically prohibited: **"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination," Lev18:22;** and St Paul teaches **"... because they exchanged the truth**



about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men ..., " Rom1:25-27. This is not the same thing as saying that a person who struggles with same-sex desire has lower value in the eyes of God. The focus is on the behaviour, not the person.

Rather, same-sex desire is likened to a handicap, a condition that necessarily closes off some choices that might otherwise be available, such as the paralytic who can't walk, or the deaf man who cannot hear. This is a hard saying and may strike the ear as fundamentally unfair, even harsh. But we are called to live according to God's commandments, and the struggle the homosexual might have in conforming himself to God's commands can become a pathway to holiness.



INSTRUMENTS OF CREATION

Because the sexual dimension of male and female intercommunion has a physical component, the male and female sexual organs are also part of God's creativity and thus subject to a higher understanding of the nature and purpose of man outlined in Genesis. The sexual organs of the male and female function complementarily, although the term "function" here means more than an anatomical symmetry. From the Orthodox Christian perspective, the term has a moral dimension that elevates the anatomical function to the higher purposes of God. Pleasure is certainly an important and blessed part of sexual union. Yet, sexual union exists for more than pleasure. Other aspects exist including the procreation of the human race, greater knowledge of and commitment towards the spouse, and others.

Indeed, the body is the vessel through which salvation is appropriated and experienced. Take for example the "overshadowing of the Holy Spirit" on St Mary that made possible the conception and birth of Christ. Jesus was



nurtured in the womb of St Mary and entered the world through the birth canal just as most people do. Here we see the anatomical dimension - a human body created of matter - functioning in a holy way, i.e.: the birth of the Son of God into the world.

Properly understood, the sexual dimension of life replicates the creative work of God in the world. In our day, this awareness is dim. Man is defined by his sexual desires, rather than his aspirations to channel and regulate those desires into the moral structures by which stable and enduring human relationships are created and nurtured, and through which the purposes of God can be accomplished.

How, then, are we to understand sexual relations in the proper moral terms? It starts with the example of Christ's love for mankind. Jesus Christ is the full and complete expression of the love of the Father for His creation. Christ came in order to restore the ruptured communion for which man was created to share with God; a restoration that required that the death caused by Adam's sin to be overthrown. It was a sacrifice of the first order since Christ was not under the same penalty of death as Adam and all mankind because He never sinned. The sentence of death was not upon Him, thus His entry into death was completely voluntary.

Christ's love was selfless. St Paul taught that such selflessness must also exist in marriage. Spousal love is a self-emptying love that models the exhortation of Christ: **"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it," Matt16:25.** He refined this exhortation to conclude that marriage replicates the relationship between Christ and the Church: **"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..." Eph5:25.**

For Orthodox Christians heterosexual marriage then, is the only proper social context for sexual relationships because:

- marriage is the only place where the self-emptying love necessary for creative communion between male and female can take place; and
- marriage is the only union capable of creating new life. Marriage in this context is more than a sociological arrangement. Rather, it



is *sacramental* in context, and thereby partakes in some measure of God Himself.

Any type of sexual activity that is not based on self-giving, self-emptying, committed, and creative love is impure and will inevitably become self-cantered (and often manipulative and degrading) and thus impure. Love always has as its centre the good and welfare of the other.

In this context St Paul wrote, **"The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body," 1Cor6:13.** As God's love is not casual, crude, rude and self-cantered; so too, sexual love should not be this way. As God's love is giving, emptying and creative, so too, should sexual love be. Each person has to live a spiritual life in love and devotion, and this leads to a sexual life whole and pure and pleasing to God. If sexual union is to be Godlike, it is to be blessed and sanctified in marriage. The question of childlessness brought on by natural causes may arise. For example, a couple may be biologically impaired to procreate, or were a victim of an accident. In such cases the fruit of self emptying love can still exist by adoption or Diakonia to others in Christ's name. The purposes of marriage according to scriptural and patristic evidence can be summarized in four points:

- the birth and care of children,
- the mutual aid of the couple,
- the satisfaction of the sexual drive,
- growth in mutuality and oneness.

In a blessed marriage the intent to procreate children would be present. Such intent between two persons of the same sex would be impossible.

BLESSED MARRIAGE

The Orthodox Church views marriage as a process with stages. The spiritual direction of couples that are planning to marry takes into account these stages with the goal of improving the marital relationship. While details as to when the creative act of procreation will take place are the responsibility of the couple, yet the scriptures, moral tradition, and teachings of the Fathers are clear that sexual union is a creative act in



which the biblical mandate that the "two shall become one flesh" is fulfilled. Children are the natural fruit of the love of a blessed conjugal union. This end is impossible in autoeroticism, casual heterosexual unions, and homosexual unions. NOTES

HOMOSEXUALITY

It should be made clear immediately that homosexual orientation is not a mental disorder and is not in of itself sinful. Further, there is probably a subset of those who practice homosexuality by choice. For these individuals there may have been some social learning and/or other factors that led them into this practice. However, there is scientific evidence that there are biological factors involved in some other subsets of those who have a homosexual orientation as well (Camperio-Ciani, Corna, Capiluppi, 2004; Savic, Berglund & Lindstrom, 2005). Camperio-Ciani estimates at this time 20% of the variance in sexual orientation can be attributed to genetic factors, while the other 80% await further specification and probably include other biological factors as well as social and emotional elements.

Heterosexual studies show there is in the current scientific literature strong support that there are male/female differences in *strength of attraction* between the sexes. Males are more strongly and quickly aroused by multiple females; females are more strongly and deeply aroused by a male to whom they are bonded and who protects them. The Church Fathers, not knowing the terminology of modern psychology, used the term "passions" to describe our bodily dispositions, and include both the object of the attraction as well as the strength of the attraction itself in their definition. That the passions may have a biological component is indicated by the Church Fathers in their teachings on how the passions work. **St Macarius the Great** wrote: "*We can cultivate the ability to discern right and wrong if we understand the three movements which lead to passion: The first is a natural movement, inherent in the body, which does not produce anything sinful or burdening to the conscience, but merely lets it be known that it exists in the body -- such as hunger.*" In simple terms this means that thoughts may come to us involuntarily, often suddenly. However,



until we engage these thoughts with our will, they constitute neither virtue or vice but merely disclose the inclination of our will.

Sexual orientation and desire easily fit this model. This is another reason why the term biological substrate may be appropriate in discussing sexual orientation and the passions may be appropriate. However, these concepts of the Holy Fathers are pastorally and clinically useful in dealing with both homosexual and heterosexual individuals attempting to live a life in Christ.

CLINICAL AND PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Christian standards of conduct exist irrespective of sexual orientation. A heterosexual male for example, despite inclinations and predisposition to multiple females is called by God to be bonded with one woman in marriage. As Christians we are called to overcome them - to be cured of them as a spiritual affliction - and live a life in Christ. A homosexual has the inclination, the passion, toward same sex activity but his vocation is to overcome such a passion. It is a difficult struggle, but with God's grace all things are possible as St Paul exhorts us, **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," Phil 4:13.** There is no good research that indicates sexual orientation can be changed, unless the designated person is clearly motivated to do so.

Homosexual behaviour, especially oral sex, is becoming increasingly common among pre-teens and teens as indicated in a recent study sponsored by the United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, (<http://www.afajournal.org...>). The majority of these behaviours could be considered experimentation common among the individuals in the age group. As with situational homosexual experiences, any psychological and pastoral intervention would deal with the cognitive, emotional and spiritual consequences of these behaviours.

TEMPTATION

The Church Fathers are clear on the dangers of exposing oneself to the object of one's passionate desire. Returning to the heterosexual example,



St John Cassian stated, *"The way to keep guard over our heart is immediately to expel from the mind every demon-inspired recollection of woman - even of mother or sister or any other devout woman - lest by dwelling on it for too long the mind is thrown headlong by the deceiver into debased and pernicious thoughts. The commandments given by God to the first man, Adam, told him to keep watch over the head of the serpent (Gen3:15), that is, over the first inkling of the pernicious thoughts by means of which the serpent tries to creep into our souls. If we do not admit the serpent's head, which is the provocation of the thought, we will not admit the rest of its body, that is, the assent to the sensual pleasure which the thought suggests-and so debase the mind towards the illicit act itself".*

The monastic rule warned against homosexual temptation as well as outlined in the ordinances that guided the governing of monasteries. For example, one rule stated: *"...it is not proper for beardless boys to live in the monastery and concerning other necessary causes,"* clearly a recognition that some monks struggled with same-sex desire, and by prohibiting young boys from monastic life, temptation would be easier to manage. **Other counsels** include: *"In wanting to be saved, therefore, let us move far away from them as from a flame. Let us not turn towards them in a house or in a place where no one sees us. Let us sit far away from them on benches ... lest in some way looking in their faces, we get the seed of lust from the Adversary ... Let us not believe the deceitful thought, which suggests to us that this is not tempting".* **St Ephraim** wrote: *"It is a great calamity for boys to be in a coenobium. Even if we converse with them about chastity, we are stabbed in the heart".*

JUSTIFYING A HOMOSEXUAL LIFESTYLE: SECULARISM

Secularization is a direct attack on what has been passed down by Christ to His Church. According to St Paul, Christians are to put on the mind of Christ (Phil 2:6). St Paul's exhortation is fundamental to Christian moral awareness, codified in the Great Commandment to love God and neighbour, which draws from the uniquely apostolic proclamation that God is love. Throughout the centuries, these apostolic teachings were believed and



lived. A Tradition emerged centred around and drawn from this apostolic message that has come to be known as "the mind of the Church." This phrase implicitly asserts the authoritative character of Tradition in questions of faith and morals. Secularism on the other hand, subjects the Tradition to foreign criteria drawn from and inextricably bound to the assumptions that shape modern culture, thereby undermining the authority of Tradition. Secularism, in other words, is a break with the past.

A way of concealing this attack on the Church is to base it on human rights principles that are fundamental to modern society. A good example is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948. The first sentence of Article 2 states: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." On the surface these principles seem unassailable. However, what happens when moral license is defined as a right? What happens when appetites rather than reason reign? Sentimental love and fairness now replace the self-emptying, sacrificial and creative love revealed to us by the Holy Trinity.

VOCATION

Holiness depends on doing the will of God. The psalmist tells us, **"Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord,"** **Psa4:5**. St. Paul wrote, **"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose,"** **Rom8:28**. Often it is difficult to understand why we have the trials and temptations that we do. Think of Abraham. Even though the command to kill his son Isaac seemed incomprehensible, yet he obeyed (and was stopped by God before Isaac was killed): **"And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and**



bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. Then Abraham put forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son," **Gen22:7-10.**

The same obedience is reflected in the words of the Theotokos (Mary) when she responded to the angel Gabriel's request to bear the Son of God, **"Let it be done to me according to your word," Luke1:38.** From this submission to the will of God came Emanuel (God with us).

The supreme example is the struggle of our Lord before His passion and death on the cross. Speaking to the disciples accompanying Christ in Gethsemane, Jesus said, **"My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch.'** And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, **'Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt,"** **Mark14:34-36.**

Often the cross we must carry is the struggle to overcome passions. This struggle becomes a vocation because through it salvation is appropriated as Christ is borne in those who struggle for purity. This is the life chosen for them by God. And what a heavy cross this can be!

St Symeon the New Theologian taught, *"Whoever strives to mortify his own will should follow the will of God; and in the place of his own will he should put God's will ... he should carefully observe whether what he has grafted has healed over so as to make a single tree, and whether it has grown and flowered and borne good, sweet fruit in such a way that he no longer recognizes the earth into which the seed was sown ... If through fear of God you cut off your own will - inexplicably, for you do not know how this happens - God will give you His will ... and you will be given the strength to fulfil it. The grace of the Holy Spirit operates these things: without it, nothing is accomplished."*

St Symeon drew the connection between same-sex struggle and vocation: *"If after we have committed ourselves to some form of ministry within the Church ... and the Spirit should then direct us to some other*



ministry or work or activity we should not resist ... He [God] wants us to advance, moving always toward the realization of something better, acting in accordance with His will and not our own."

A PASTORAL REFLECTION

It is important for persons to strive for self-understanding in spiritual, psychological, and biological terms, and have the faith and commitment in God to do all they can to fight the good fight through asceticism, prayer, counselling, the holy mysteries (sacraments) of the Church and all other available means the Church gives us. Again, those, who say fulfilling sexual desire is no more than acting "according to nature", are advised that all God's children are called to conform their sexual behaviour to the commandments of Christ. A heterosexual man has to overcome his inclination toward multiple females. A homosexual has to overcome his/her inclination towards others of the same sex. All people are called to conform their lives to the will of God and thereby partake of the way of salvation.

"Hate the sin but love the sinner" is a common phrase first attributed to Gandhi and reveals how Christians should approach their neighbour. Who is our neighbour? All mankind! To love the neighbour however, means to walk in truth towards them, to do what is right for them, to affirm what is good and holy on their behalf. This includes not countenancing sin by naming it as something else. No one who follows Christ can sanction the secular sell-out to sin in adultery, fornication, gay-lesbian marriage or sexual relationships, polygamous marriage, and so forth. Gay marriage and any other unblessed sexual activity in thought word or deed is not the love that Christ extolled. For the Christian, God has revealed His will to us concerning sexual behaviour and anyone who champions a rule other than the one revealed to us is not living a life in Christ.

(Adapted from an article By Fr. George Morelli)





ADDICTION

Big Idea: Discussion of the various types of addiction we are exposed to in the twenty first Century and how to live in the freedom of the glory of God's children.

Bible Text: 1Pet3:13-17.

Bible Verse: 2Pet2:19, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage."

Students will

- Know:**
- ✕Drug addiction
 - ✕Alcohol addiction
 - ✕Sexual addiction
 - ✕How to overcome an addiction to porn as a teenager
 - ✕Gambling
 - ✕Freedom from addiction
- Feel:**
- ✕Spiritually and scientifically informed about the devastation brought about by the various addictions we can be trapped in.
 - ✕Confident in the grace of God to help us avoid or recover from addiction.
 - ✕We can live normal and happy lives without ever gambling, taking illicit drugs or drinking alcohol.
- Do:**
- ✕Not to be exposed to, or provoked by, these addictive Activities.
 - ✕Help others do the same.
 - ✕Seek help spiritually and professionally before it is too late.



ADDICTION



Addiction is a compulsive need. What starts as a pleasurable experience turns into an uncontrollable destructive craving. Some people become addicted to alcohol, drugs, sex, food and gambling.

Substance dependence, commonly called **drug addiction**, is a user's compulsive need to use drugs in order to function normally. When such substances are reduced or are unobtainable, the user suffers from withdrawal. **Drug addiction** is a state of periodic or chronic intoxication produced by the repeated consumption of a drug (natural or synthetic). Its characteristics include:

- an overpowering desire or need (compulsion) to continue taking the drug and to obtain it by any means;
- a tendency to increase the dose;
- a psychic (psychological) and generally a physical dependence on the effects of the drug; and
- detrimental effects on the individual and on society.

Drugs known to cause addiction include both legal and illegal drugs as well as prescription and over-the-counter drugs, according to the definition of the American Society of Addiction Medicine. These are classified as:

- Stimulants (psychical addiction, moderate to severe; withdrawal is purely psychological and psychosomatic) :
 - Amphetamine and methamphetamine
 - Cocaine
 - Caffeine
 - Nicotine
- Sedatives and hypnotics (psychical addiction, mild to severe, and physiological addiction, severe; abrupt withdrawal may be fatal):
 - Alcohol
 - Barbiturates and glutethimide
 - Benzodiazepines, particularly alprazolam, flunitrazepam, triazolam, temazepam, and nimetazepam,
 - Z-drugs like zopiclone have a similar effect in the body to



benzodiazepines

- Methaqualone and the related quinazolinone sedative-hypnotics.
- Opiate and opioid analgesics (psychical addiction, mild to severe, physiological addiction, mild to severe; abrupt withdrawal is unlikely to be fatal):
 - Morphine and codeine, the two naturally occurring opiate analgesics
 - Semi-synthetic opiates, such as heroin (diacetylmorphine; morphine diacetate), oxycodone, buprenorphine, and hydromorphone
 - Fully synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, meperidine/pethidine, and methadone.

Addictive drugs also include a large number of substrates that are currently considered to have no medical value and are not available over the counter or by prescription.

The addictive potential of a drug varies from substance to substance, and from individual to individual. Dose, frequency, pharmacokinetics of a particular substance, route of administration, and time are critical factors for developing a drug addiction.

ALCOHOL ADDICTION

We know alcohol makes many people feel good, and that it affects the brain, but new research goes a step further by tightening the focus on areas of the brain most likely affected by alcohol.



The new brain imaging research may lead to a better understanding of alcohol addiction and possibly better treatments for people who abuse alcohol and other drugs. Investigators say they have identified specific differences in how the so-called reward center of the brain responds to alcohol in heavy and light drinkers.

In both groups, drinking alcohol caused the release of naturally occurring feel-good opioids known as endorphins in two key brain regions associated with reward processing. But heavy drinkers released more endorphins in response to alcohol, and they reported feeling more intoxicated than the lighter drinkers after drinking the same amount of alcohol. The findings suggest that people whose brains release more natural opioids in response to alcohol may get more pleasure out of drinking and may be more likely to drink too much and become alcoholics.



The Cycle of Addiction

The "cycle of addiction" contains three debilitating elements: chemical need (at the physiological cellular level), learned habit (chronic drinking/using behaviour and associations), and denial of both need and habit.



THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION

The cycle of alcohol addiction usually develops over a period of years. Cycles have been found to be much shorter with other drugs, especially cocaine. In all cases, however, the addiction becomes "Priority One," a separate issue from everything else. And as it progresses, it begins to negate everything else.

The Cycle of Sobriety

The cycle of addiction can be successfully replaced by another cycle: the cycle of sobriety. This cycle contains three essential elements: acknowledgment of one's addiction to alcohol or drugs (you may have euphemistically called it "a problem"); acceptance of one's addiction; and prioritization of sobriety as the primary issue in one's life.



THE CYCLE OF SOBRIETY

The Sobriety Priority, applied daily, gradually weakens booze and drug associations, halting the cycle of addiction, allowing time for new associations to form as one experiences life without addictive chemicals. As one continues to "make peace" with the facts regarding his or her arrested addiction—that is, as one continues to recognize alcohol and drugs as a non-option—one comes to prefer a sober life-style; one longs to preserve it, to respect the arrested chemical addiction, and to protect the new, sober life.

Sexual Addiction

Sexual addiction is best described as a progressive intimacy disorder characterized by compulsive sexual thoughts and acts. Like all addictions, its negative impact on the addict and on family members increases as the disorder progresses. Over time, the addict usually has to intensify the addictive behaviour to achieve the same results.

For some sex addicts, behaviour does not progress beyond compulsive masturbation or the extensive use of pornography or phone or computer sex services. For others, addiction can involve illegal activities such as



exhibitionism, voyeurism, obscene phone calls, child molestation or rape. Sex addicts do not necessarily become sex offenders. Moreover, not all sex offenders are sex addicts. Roughly 55 percent of convicted sex offenders can be considered sex addicts. About 71 percent of child molesters are sex addicts.

Sex offenders act not for sexual gratification, but rather out of a disturbed need for power, dominance, control or revenge, or a perverted expression of anger. More recently, however, an awareness of brain changes and brain reward associated with sexual behaviour has led us to understand that there are also powerful sexual drives that motivate sex offenses.

A sex addict will continue to engage in certain sexual behaviours despite facing potential health risks, financial problems, shattered relationships or even arrest. Sex addiction also involves compulsive searching for multiple partners, compulsive fixation on an unattainable partner, compulsive masturbation, compulsive love relationships and compulsive sexuality in a relationship.

Increasing sexual provocation in our society has spawned an increase in the number of individuals engaging in a variety of unusual or illicit sexual practices, such as phone sex, the use of escort services and computer pornography. More of these individuals and their partners are seeking help.

The Potential Negative Effects of Viewing Online Pornography

Viewing pornography, especially in an ongoing way, can have potentially detrimental effects on children, and may be motivated or perpetuated by loneliness, isolation and compulsion.

In the absence of any context, and without having learned about or known healthy sexuality, children may experience depictions of sex as confusing and take the images they see to be representative models of adult behaviour. They are thereby introduced to sex before they are ready through images they do not understand, which often involve sexual deviations, and sex detached from relationship or meaning, responsibility, and intimacy. Children are most at risk when they are repeatedly exposed to images that are overstimulating and potentially addictive. If viewed compulsively and accompanied by sexual release through masturbating,



Internet pornography can have a desensitizing effect, requiring greater intensity and frequency as well as causing deviant sexuality to seem like the norm.

Cybersex addiction functions in a similar way to any other addiction, leading to a cycle of preoccupation, compulsion, acting out, isolation, self-absorption, shame and depression as well as distorted views of real relationships and intimacy. However, not everyone exposed to pornography becomes addicted to it.

Teens that are most susceptible to addiction are those who cannot rely on parents to provide a consistent source of contact and comfort to help them regulate their emotional state. Such families include, but are not limited to, those where a parent may suffer from an addiction - including alcohol - or fail to be emotionally available for other reasons. Children from these families are vulnerable - they often have low self-esteem and feel alone. They learn not to trust or depend on others and find ways to comfort and stimulate themselves which do not involve people and which are reliably available to them and within their control.

Another danger that teens are exposed to online is unwanted **sexual solicitation**. Teens are the most vulnerable of any age group to such unwanted sexual advances which involved invitations to meet offline, asking teens to talk about sex or answer sexual questions, or asking teens for sexually explicit photos.

A related hazard for teens online involves "**sexting**" - sending sexually explicit photos usually over cell phones or sometimes over the Internet. Sexting is most commonly engaged in by teens with their peers and usually involves peer pressure. Sexting often creates an expectation of "hooking up" (sex) on the part of the recipient, and increases the pressure to have sex, and likelihood of it occurring, during the next encounter.

Sexting is risky in this way and, also, because it often leads to unforeseen reputation disasters that may be irreparable. This often begins with a photo sent to a boyfriend or potential boyfriend, which then - unbeknownst to the sender - is passed around and forwarded to the recipient's friends and "contacts," like a chain letter spreading out of control. In addition, these photos can resurface later on and be used for blackmail or to wreak



havoc on a person's career.

To keep teens out of harm's way, the key is being their ally and helping them collaborate with you in wanting to be safe. If you are not on the same side, your teen will find a way to outsmart or work around even the best technology and well-thought out rules. Remember the relationship you have with your child and his perception of you as trustworthy and reasonable are the most protective factors against all the dangers faced by teens today.

How to Overcome an Addiction to Porn as a Teenager

Like any other destructive behavior that disrupts your everyday life, watching porn can be an addiction. Here are some tips on overcoming it.

1. Recognize that you are capable of forming new habits and breaking old ones. It can be a long process, but you absolutely can change your behavior if you wish to.



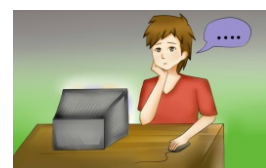
Remind yourself that you are stronger than your addiction, and don't punish yourself too harshly for relapses - remember that recovery is a road, not something you can snap your fingers and achieve.

2. Cut off your sources. Remove temptation by getting rid of your access to pornography. Here are some more specific ideas:



- If you watch porn on DVDs, scratch them up with a pen or paperclip before throwing them away.
- If you use magazines, tear out individual pages and put them through a paper shredder, or burn them (in a safe location, such as an all-concrete driveway or a fire pit).
- If you use the internet, take extra precautions. Resolve that you will only use your computer in commonly-frequented areas, such as a family room or kitchen. Set up parental controls on your internet browser, and have someone else put in the password for you. (If you use a PC, you can also block your frequently-visited sites by editing your hosts file on a Windows system editing hosts file.) Overall, try to limit your internet time so that you don't find yourself surfing around when you're bored.

3. Know your triggers, and learn to avoid them. Take note of the situations that tempt you the most and also put space between you and them. If certain songs or video games get you in a lusty mood, put them away for awhile.





You may need to steer clear of the pool with the lovely sunbathing ladies or young handsome men for a few weeks.

- Recognize situations where it happens. When you're bored? Hurt? Angry? Alone? Tired?
- Don't worry about giving up socializing, music or video games forever. Once you've become stronger and overcome your addiction, you can safely get back into these things. For now, though, you need to guard yourself from things that might lead you to seek release from porn.
- If at all appropriately possible, avoid being alone late at night.

4. Take up a new hobby to replace the time you spent watching porn.

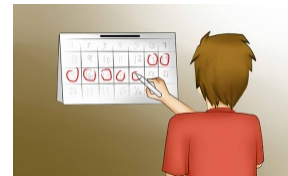
Don't just let the time you would have spent watching pornography just stay empty. Instead, find ways to fill the lulls in your life so that you no longer have time for porn. Get into a hobby you've always wanted to try, such as an art or a team sport. Or, decide to spend the time on self-improvement - whether it's working out, reading, volunteering, or contributing to your life in some other way.



Whatever you choose to do with your new spare time, it should be something you're proud to tell other people. Taking an activity you're ashamed of and replacing it with something that makes you feel accomplished will speed your recovery.

5. Mark how long you can go without watching porn.

Keeping track of your progress can help remind you how far you've come. For every day that you go without it, make a mark on the calendar. Try to keep a long string of marks.



6. Don't be too harsh on yourself if you relapse.

Understand that recovery is difficult, and it probably won't be perfect. If you do relapse, accept your moment of weakness and use it to make your determination stronger. Don't spend time shaming or punishing yourself over it, though - those actions take time that you could be using to build a more productive and appealing life outside of viewing pornography.



7. If you still have a problem, seek professional help. Talk to your school counselor or psychologist or medical doctor. If you are a religious person, it may be





helpful to speak to a member of your clergy.

Additionally, pornography addiction can be a sign of **depression**.



- Be brave. More people than you might think deal with pornography addiction. Odds are that if your counselor, psychologist or clergyman has been doing this for awhile, they've probably dealt with someone else in the same situation as you. Gather your courage and trust this person to help you.
- Realise that this is not only a spiritual issue but a bodily one as well.

GAMBLING



While the Scripture does not specifically address the subject of gambling, it provides us with a number of principles that can guide us on this issue:

- The Bible warns us to stay away from the love of money:
 - ❖ **"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs," 1Tim6:10.**
 - ❖ **"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'" Heb13:5.**
 - ❖ **"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money," Matt6:24.**
- Scripture also encourages us to stay away from attempts to "get rich quick" (Pro13:11; 23:5; Eccles5:10). Gambling most definitely is focused on the love of money and undeniably tempts people with the promise of quick and easy riches apart from constructive labour or work that is truly beneficial to society. God has given us each abilities and with training we can become productive members of society and of the body of Christ. Gambling seeks to bypass this process.
- Again, the Bible teaches us that while we might be free to do many things, all things are not profitable and we should not be brought under the control or power of anything other than the reign of Christ in our



lives (1Cor6:12; 10:23). Gambling can be addictive, and like all addictions can be devastating for the person and his family.

What Would The Bible Say About Casinos And Lotteries?

The casino is an exciting place to visit. Players visit the casino for different reasons. Some take the time to learn the skills needed to play the games with the primary goal of winning money. The majority of players visit the casino for entertainment. Playing the games is an enjoyable experience and the lure of winning money adds to a player's excitement. Some players enjoy the adrenaline rush and experience a high that accompanies the thrill when they risk their money on the games. For some this feeling can be seductive and alluring and some players succumb to the darker side of gambling, addiction. When the thrill of the game outweighs everything else, the player has crossed over the line from player to addict.

Casinos use all sorts of marketing schemes to entice gamblers to risk as much money as possible. They often offer inexpensive or even free alcohol, which encourages drunkenness, and thereby a decreased ability to make wise decisions. Everything in a casino is perfectly rigged for taking money in large sums and giving nothing in return, except for fleeting and empty pleasures.

Lotteries, racing and sport betting attempt to portray themselves as a way to fund education and/or social programs. However, studies show that lottery participants are usually those who can least afford to be spending money on lottery tickets. The allure of "getting rich quick" is too great a temptation to resist for those who are desperate. The chances of winning are infinitesimal, which results in many peoples' lives being ruined.

Can betting/lottery proceeds please God?

Many people claim to be playing the lottery or gambling so that they can give the money to the church or to some other good cause. While this may be a good motive, reality is that few use gambling winnings for godly purposes. Studies show that the vast majority of lottery winners are in an even worse financial situation a few years after winning a jackpot than they were before. **Pro13:11** says, **"Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow."** Few, if any, truly give the money to a good cause. Further, God does not need our money to fund His mission in the world. God is





sovereign and will provide for the needs of the church through honest means. Neither does God need or want money that was "stolen" from the poor in the temptation for riches.

FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION

God's Answer for addiction is **freedom in Christ**. The truth is that freedom has been provided for every child of God; **it was for freedom that Christ set us free** (Gal 5:1). The finished work of Christ has provided freedom for every believer, **"for we know that old self was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be down away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin," Rom6:6, 7**. Jesus said you will know the truth and the truth will set you free (John8:32). When a person knows the truth they will experience freedom in Christ, **"for an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2Pet1:11**.



Freedom is your birthright as a child of God. **Don't settle for less!** Jesus declared **"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed," Luke4:18**.

Scripture teaches clearly that the finished work of Christ provides freedom from not only the penalty of sin, but the power of sin. Our belief is that a person who understands who they are and what they have in Christ will not engage in self-destructive addictive behaviour as a lifestyle, **"having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," 2Pet1:4**. In other words they will live in peace, joy and freedom from addiction.

We can live normal and happy lives without ever gambling, taking illicit drugs or drinking alcohol. Even the most genetically vulnerable person will function well without ever being exposed to, or provoked by, these addictive activities.



YOU SHALL NOT MURDER

Big Idea: Made in God's image, we have no right to destroy our own life, or permit others to do so, whatever our situation.

Bible Text: Matt5:21, 22.

Bible Verse: 1John3:15, "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer".

Students will

Know:

- ✘ Acts equivalent to murder
- ✘ Life is a gift from God
- ✘ Euthanasia
- ✘ Abortion

Feel:

- ✘ More informed about the moral and spiritual aspects of the Sixth Commandment of God.

Do:

- ✘ Surrender to the will of God trust His infinite wisdom in all circumstances.



YOU SHALL NOT MURDER



"Then God formed man out of the dust from the ground, and breathed in his face the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Gen2:7. God is the real and only owner of our souls. Therefore, only He has the right to terminate man's life at any time and in whichever manner He likes, whether natural death, because of a disease, by fire He brings down from heaven, in a flood or killed by their enemies.

When God says, **"You shall not murder," Matt5:21,** He means that you should not murder others or yourself by all kinds of killing. There is murder by deed, thought, intention, by a whim of the heart or verbally. Celestial law is broader than the civil law which only punishes for an actual crime or for a murder attempt. The intents of the heart will be judged by God on the Last Day of Judgement (Matt5:28; Rom2:16). Killing can be physical, moral, psychological and spiritual.

ACTS EQUIVALENT TO MURDER

Man is spiritually liable for the mere thought of killing even though he may never intend to perform the real act of killing. He may meditate on how to kill someone or how to urge others to kill him. He may end up imagining that person already killed in front of him, which makes him feel happy and satisfied. Alternatively, a man may not think of killing another person but he may wish to see him dead and may be happy if he dies. Nevertheless, he is spiritually guilty and in danger of judgement (Matt5:21).

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord Jesus Christ considered anger to be equivalent to murder; **"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgement'. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement," Matt5:21, 22.** Hatred is considered murder according to 1John3:15, **"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer"**.

Moral killing includes defamation, slander and unfair criticism and sarcasm. Verbal abuse, humiliation and insults are considered violation of the Sixth Commandment; **"their tongue is an arrow shot out," Jer9:8.** Injustice and all kinds of cruelty result in lowering the morale of a person and denigrating his psychological status. Practically speaking, anyone offending



another is indirectly killing him through a destructive effect on his body cells and mental well-being.

Spiritual killing includes the stumbling block (Matt18:6, 7) and negligence in pastoral work (Ezek3:17, 18) and bringing up children in the faith (Deut6:6, 7). By committing sins a person kills himself spiritually for **"the wages of sin is death," Rom6:32**. Neglecting the spiritual means of prayer, studying the Word of God and doing the Sacraments of Confession Holy Communion weakens the soul. As a result, a person follows the whims of his body and indulges in the lusts of the world. This is spiritual suicide.

LIFE IS A GIFT FROM GOD

The Bible teaches that humans, male and female, are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen1:27; James3:9). Therefore, the dignity of each man and each woman is this image and likeness. Not just Adam and Eve, but each individual ever since has been personally created by God (Mal 2:10). Personhood is never measured by age, stage of development, or mental, physical or social skills (Exo4:11).

The Hippocratic Oath states, 'I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. Similarly, I will not give a woman an abortive remedy'. These words, penned approximately four centuries before Christ, still hold immense relevance today. Hippocrates, often considered to be the father of medicine, was a student of ancient Greek philosophy and reasoning. Hippocrates' Oath encapsulated the position of many of the Greek philosophers in condemning suicide, notably Pythagoras, and became the standard of ethics for doctors to follow.

Medical students in many Western countries are still required to take the above 'Hippocratic Oath'. The anti-abortion clause, however, at least in Australia, has been conveniently (and tragically) removed, a reflection of the secularization of our evolutionized culture. Modern medicine has all but abandoned the principle of the sanctity of human life that Hippocrates enunciated, and which is also found in the Genesis account of man being made in God's image. For example, today abortion is considered by many to be a 'pregnancy choice' rather than the destruction of another human being. Medical treatments are withdrawn from patients on the basis that they lack 'quality of life', rather than considering whether the treatment will help the person get better or preserve their life until the natural end.



The belief that we have evolved from simpler creatures is often used to justify the rejection of God as Creator and hence the rejection of His authority through His Law. Without God, life becomes purposeless. Disability, suffering and the terminal stages of life are viewed as meaningless. This is a contributing cause to the 'culture of death' that is affecting the Western world in areas such as medicine and healthcare, where people's lives are dependent on others.

EUTHANASIA (Adapted from an article by Dr Mathew Piercy)

The increasing acceptance of euthanasia is part of this shift in mentality towards the 'culture of death.' The truth is that people have lost their sense of what it means to be human. Life, instead of being a precious gift, becomes evaluated according to its 'quality.' A person whilst young, active and productive has a high 'quality of life', yet once this person becomes old, disabled or dependent, the quality is reduced, and his or her life may no longer be considered to be worth living or protecting. Without the possibility of recovery, disability or dependence on others become grounds for the termination of that person's life. Such an act rejects the essential aspect that our life is not our own to take.

Made in God's image, we have no right to destroy our own life, or permit others to do so, whatever our situation. The story of Job in the Bible recounts how he refused to 'curse God and die' despite this counsel being given to him many times. This was because Job feared God and understood that only He has the authority to give and to take life. Even if all joy is taken out of life, as was the case with Job, this still would not justify the taking of life. Even in the depths of suffering, God's image remains, and life remains an intrinsic good, worthy of protection and support.

The Christian Church, and indeed society in general, should never accept the lie that euthanasia represents 'a good death.' Euthanasia, in its real sense, represents a profound rejection of the gift of life, and hence of the Giver Himself. Instead, there should be recognition that man, being made in the image of God, has intrinsic value and dignity from conception to natural death. The decline of respect for life in Western culture is one more symptom of the tragic foundational shift away from a biblical worldview to one based on the evolutionary humanism.

ABORTION (Adapted from an article by Randy Alcorn)

Can we tell the moment of each person's creation by God? Science offers a clear answer that perfectly complements the teaching of Scripture. Every



indication is that the moment of each person's creation is the moment of his conception. Before that moment the individual (with his unique DNA) did not exist, and from that moment he does. **Human life is present throughout this entire sequence from conception to adulthood** and that any interruption at any point throughout this time (including using the morning pill) constitutes termination of life.

The Bible gives theological certainty to this biological evidence. Job graphically described the way God created him before he was born (Job 10:8-12). The person in the womb was not *something* that might become Job, but *someone* who was Job, simply a younger smaller version of the same man. To Isaiah God said, **"This is what the Lord says: he who made you, who formed you in the womb," Isa44:2**. Isaiah was not just a "potential person" but an "actual person" while in his mother's womb. Psa139:13-16 paints a graphic picture of the intimate involvement of God with a preborn person. God created David's "inmost being," his soul, not at birth but before birth. David says to his Creator, **"You knit me together in my mother's womb"**. Each person, regardless of his parentage or handicap, has been personally knitted together by God in the womb. All the days of his life have been planned out by God before any have taken place (Psa139:16). The Lord tells Jeremiah, **"before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet," Jer1:5**.

Every person sinned "in Adam," and is therefore a sinner from the moment his life begins (Rom5:12-19). David says he was not simply a sinner from birth, but **"sinful from the time my mother conceived me," Psa51:5**. Who but an actual person can have a sin nature? Rocks, trees, animals, and human tissue do not have moral natures. Morality can be ascribed only to a person. That there is a sin nature at the point of conception proves there *must* be a person present at the point of conception.

To the writers of the New Testament, like the Old Testament, whether born or unborn a baby is a baby, a person is a person. When Rebekah was pregnant with Jacob and Esau, **"The babies jostled each other within her," Gen25:22**. The word "babies" is the same Hebrew word used for already-born children. The preborn John the Baptist responded to the presence of the preborn Jesus, when Jesus (judging by the time it would take Mary to get to Elizabeth) was no more than ten days beyond his conception (Luke 1:41). Since implantation doesn't begin until six days and is not completed until ten days, it is probable that Jesus was not even fully



implanted in His mother's womb when the preborn John responded to His presence.

Scripture says that St Mary **"was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit."** The angel told St Joseph, **"what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit,"** **Matt1:18-20**. To be pregnant, even at the very earliest moments after conception, is to be *with child*, not simply with what might become a child.

When did the incarnation take place? Where did God first become flesh and dwell among us? Christ became flesh when the Holy Spirit conceived a child in Mary; that was at *Nazareth*, nine months before she travelled to Bethlehem.

In light of the full humanity of the preborn child, we must do nothing to take his life (Exo20:13). Furthermore, we should do all in our power to protect his life (Pro24:11; 31:8-9). God jealously maintains his sole prerogatives over human life and death, **"Now see, I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and make alive,"** **Deut32:39**; also 1Sam2:6. To take that power into our hands is literally to play God.

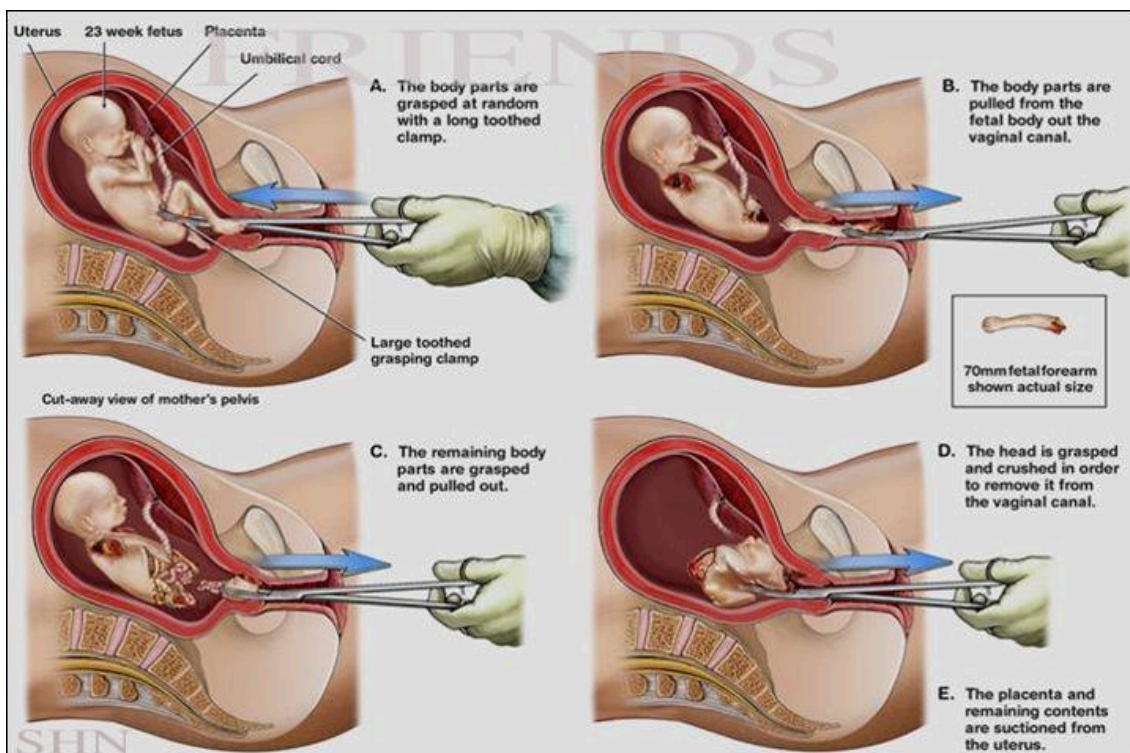
Christians throughout church history have affirmed with a united voice the humanity of the preborn child and the duty to protect him. *The Didache*, a second-century catechism for young converts, states **"Do not murder a child by abortion or kill a new-born infant,"** *Didache* 2.2. *Tertullian said, "It does not matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to the birth. In both instances, the destruction is murder,"* *Apology*, 9.4. **Jerome** called abortion *"the murder of an unborn child,"* *Letter to Eustochium*, 22.13. **Augustine** warned against the terrible crime of *"the murder of an unborn child,"* (*On Marriage*, 1.17.15). **Origen, Cyprian, and Chrysostom** stood alongside every prominent theologian and Church leader in condemning abortion.

Jesus called the children to him and said, **"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these,"** **Luke18:15-17**. The biblical view is that children are a blessing and gift from the Lord (Psa127:3-5). Modern society treats children as inconveniences and liabilities—the less of them the better. We must learn to love children as does God, who **"defends the cause of the fatherless,"** **Deut10:18**. He calls on us to do the same: **"Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue**



the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked," Psa82:3, 4.

It is clear what Bible-believing Christians should *think* of abortion. As we contemplate what we should *do* about it, we might begin with the words of our Lord Jesus: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me," Matt25:40.





CHRISTIAN VIEW OF IVF, CLONING AND CREMATION

Big Idea: God is the giver and maker of life. He is the Creator; He has the full right to dictate how His creations are treated.

Bible Text: Psa139:13-18; Rom9:20-21.

Bible Verse: Jer10:2, "Thus says the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen."

Students will

- Know:**
- ✘ Should Christians use in vitro fertilization (IVF) and other methods of assisted reproduction?
 - ✘ Arguments against cloning
 - ✘ Should Christians cremate?
- Feel:**
- ✘ God made you a three-part being - body, soul, and spirit - and God created all three parts for Himself. Every part of your existence, including your body, should be dedicated to His glory (1Cor6:20).
- Do:**
- ✘ You have no right to use any part of God's creation as you wish.



CHRISTIAN VIEW OF IVF, CLONING AND CREMATION



In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) and Other Methods of Assisted Reproduction

Much of the drive for IVF comes from an understandable desire to have a biological child of one's own. Many Christians have asked if IVF is acceptable. The scriptures indicate that we are unitary beings made in the image of God at the point of fertilisation when the egg and sperm unite to form a unique new individual. So if we are human beings, body and soul, from fertilisation, then we deserve protection, as it is wrong to kill innocent human beings (Exo20:13).

The arguments to justify IVF are as follows: You really do not count as a human being until you have implanted in your mother's womb, 5 to 7 days after fertilisation in your mother's fallopian tube. There is also a claim that up to 80% of embryos do not implant. Therefore you do not count until implantation. This is the view of the World Health Organisation that claims the "pregnancy begins at implantation". However the argument would be the same as saying that if under 5 year olds had a mortality of 80% then children under 5 years of age are not human. So to deny the human embryo personhood prior to implantation just because of their death rate is just nonsense. Biblically, this is invalid (Luke1:41). The preborn John the Baptist responded to the presence of the preborn Jesus, when Jesus (judging by the time it would take Mary to get to Elizabeth) was no more than ten days beyond His conception and probably was not even fully implanted in His mother's womb.

So how many embryos die to produce a healthy child? Some studies in Australia and New Zealand show that around 96 embryos die or are killed for 4 live births. The reasons for this massive loss of life are many. Firstly the woman is given very powerful drugs to over stimulate her ovaries. Sometimes up to 10 eggs can be harvested. They are then placed in a petri dish, with a culture medium and mixed with sperm. When fertilisation occurs the doctor looks to see which ones appear to be developing normally. All the abnormal ones are discarded and die. Only the good-looking ones are implanted in the wife's uterus. Then you have the dilemma of how many to



place in the womb. In the UK this is limited to three. If many of the embryos look healthy, and only 2 or 3 are placed in the womb, then the others are frozen. If the first cycle does not produce a born child, then the frozen embryos are thawed. Many die just as a result of the thawing process.

Thus, having a child would be built on the destruction of its brothers and sisters. Or, you are left with the enormous dilemma of what to do with the frozen embryos. It is absolutely immoral and unethical to experiment on them even for the noblest of purposes. The embryo has the same dignity as a person.

When the embryo grows in a womb other than that of the wife (a surrogate mother) then the process of bearing the child requires the participation of a third party. This situation is not accepted by religion as it is unethical for a woman to lend or rent her uterus. It also creates a legal problem: which of the two women has the right to claim the child as being her own. On the other hand, the mother-child affiliation can be severely disrupted psychologically.

Where the wife's ovum is fertilised by means of a sperm that does not belong to her husband (artificial insemination by donor) or when the ovum is provided by another woman (ovum donation), the child is genetically either not related to the father, or to the mother. This is similar to what happens in adultery, with the one difference that adultery has not actually taken place physically and is rejected from the religious point of view.

In the case where the ovum, not belonging to the wife, is fertilised by a sperm, not belonging to the husband (whether the sperm and the ovum are those of a married couple or not), the child is genetically related neither to the husband or wife, even though they are considered his parents from the social point of view. This is called 'prenatal adoption'; adoption has taken place after the fertilisation of the ovum and before the child is actually born. Would then a married couple request an embryo with special genetic specifications concerning its sex, mental abilities and appearance?

God is the giver and maker of life (Psa139:13-18). **"Behold children are a gift from the Lord; the fruit of the womb His reward,"** Psa127:3. Man is trying to take the place of God by making babies. Going down the IVF route can lead to much more heart ache than not having children.



ARGUMENTS AGAINST CLONING

There are many arguments against cloning, especially against cloning humans. These include scientific issues, the practicality of cloning and religious objections.

Scientifically, we see that a large percentage of cloning efforts end in failure. For example, it took hundreds of attempts to clone Dolly the sheep. Often clones don't live as long as sexually reproduced animals, possibly because the genes taken from adults are more likely to have undergone mutations.

Another scientific argument is that genetic diversity helps provide the "pool" of variations available for a robust human population. It is commonly known that inbreeding animals constantly can result in reduced variations and an increased risk of genetic defects. An example is hip dysplasia in pure-bred dogs. Mutts tend to be more adaptable and healthier.

Practically, it is far easier to reproduce naturally than to create individuals through cloning. And it is vastly more practical to have a child within the context of marriage and a family than in a laboratory.

According to **religion**, every human life is precious in God's eyes; whether cloned or created naturally, it deserves to live as a valuable member of God's kingdom. Just as each member of a pair of identical twins has a soul, so would a clone. Those who favour cloning humans argue that we could produce more geniuses and thereby improve life for everyone through their contributions. There is no proof that someone who is genetically identical to Albert Einstein, for example, would be a genius or would use his genius for socially acceptable ends. Upbringing and environment could turn an Einstein clone into another Adolf Hitler. Some argue that we could produce clones to provide "spare parts" for people who need transplants. It would be no more ethical to use a clone for that purpose than it would be to use your next door neighbour.

There are two passages in the Bible that bear directly on the issue of **men playing God**. The first is in Genesis 3:5, when Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden of Eden for taking fruit from the tree of knowledge and presuming to be like God and obtain God's wisdom. Also, in Genesis 11 is the story of the Tower of Babel. Humans, with the help of a common language, were on the verge of building a tower all the way to Heaven. But God did



not approve: "The Lord said, 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other'," *Gen11:6, 7*. Taken together, the arguments against cloning seem to outweigh any good that could be obtained from the process.

SHOULD CHRISTIANS CREMATE?

God's judgment on Adam at death was to return to the ground from which he had been taken (*Gen3:19*). God had created him from the dust of the ground, not from the ashes of a campfire. He was to return to dust (*Eccl3:20; Dan12:2*) not be turned into ashes. "Dust to dust," though not found in that form in the Bible, is yet true; but "ashes to ashes" is not true! Cremation is devil worship by profanely desecrating the human body, which is a good gift from God. Since Jesus died for His elect's bodies, they have yet another reason not to cremate (*1Cor6:19-20, 1Cor10:20-22*).

God made you a three-part being - body, soul, and spirit - and God created all three parts for Himself. Every part of your existence, including your body, should be dedicated to His glory (*1Cor6:20*). You have no right to use any part of God's creation as you wish. He is the Creator; He has the full right to dictate how His creations are treated (*Rom 9:20-21*). Whether in life or in death, you owe full bodily obedience and honour to God (*Matt 10:28*), for He is Lord of your body, as well as your soul and spirit (*Rom14:7-9*). Whether eating or drinking in life, or the care of your body after death, you should do all things to His glory (*1Cor10:31*). You shall soon give an account to God of everything you have done in and to your body (*2Cor5:10*).

Jesus Christ died for all three parts of each of His elect; therefore there is a second compelling reason to treat the body of a saint in a way that shows faith and truth. Not only has the God of heaven created your body, He has also redeemed your body. Jesus Christ died to purchase your body from sin, and you have no right to cremate it; your body should be dedicated to magnify Jesus Christ by life or by death (*Phil 1:20*). You are not your own. Your body was bought for the great price of Jesus Christ's blood, so you should glorify God in your body, whether by life or death. God owned you as His creature, and but He also owns you by having bought you from your sins. You do not glorify God by burning His creation in a pagan practice from hell (*1Cor6:19, 20*).



Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, Who dwells in you. You cannot connect your body to harlots while living, so why should you connect it to Hinduism at death (Col 3:17)? The body is good enough for God to occupy it; you should not consider it such a despicable thing as to be burned to ashes in a rite taken from devil worship. The Lord Jesus Christ, Who was buried and rose from the dead Himself, will soon return and raise all dead bodies from the ground, for the resurrection of life or the resurrection of damnation. The doctrine of the resurrection, both of the Lord and of His elect, is a key doctrine of Christianity (1Cor15:1-58), and it is clearly denied and/or profaned by the hopeless and pagan burning of dead bodies, as if there is no future for them.

"Thus says the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen," Jer10:2. God condemned the unnecessary burning of bodies, especially for child sacrifice (2Kgs16:3; Jer7:29-34; Ezek23:37); but He also condemned the Moabites for cremating the king of Edom (Amos2:1). Burning was used only for very severe judgment of exceptional crimes or to desecrate and pollute something (Acts19:18, 19). There is a burning coming in the future (Luke17:28-30), when God will burn up this planet and its wickedness and then cast them into the lake of fire (2Pet2:6; Jude1:7; Rev14:11; 20:15).

Due to Jesus Christ's victory over sin, death, the grave and hell, believers only go to sleep in Jesus when their bodies die. Though their bodies may decay, they will be raised and changed into glorious spiritual bodies at the resurrection; but it is His work to dissolve their bodies for the resurrection, not ours to burn it. Why in the world would another Christian want to burn a fellow believer while he sleeps? Death is not the end of the body! It is only waiting for its great change at the resurrection! (1Thess4:13-15).

Due to Jesus Christ's victory over sin, death, the grave and hell, believers are planted in the ground to come forth with glorified, spiritual bodies. It is either hopeless ignorance or profane rebellion that would cause them to burn the seed of their future! Death is not the end of the body! It is the planting for a new body! (1Cor15:35-58). If God's preservation of bodies, souls, and spirits to the coming of Jesus Christ was an important prayer of Paul (1Thess 5:23-24), then why would we want to desecrate our bodies with a pagan ritual at death? How could we make such a prayer ourselves while burning each other's bodies? For consistency's sake, let us honour and preserve our bodies.



Whether by precept, principle or example, true saints measure everything they do by the Word of God. They do not need a direct verse stating the obvious, if there are plenty of principles and indirect verses to condemn a thing. The Bible easily forbids cremation by exalting burial of the body and condemning any profaning of the body, denial of the resurrection, or learning the way of the heathen.

In the **Old Testament**, we have many examples:

- **Abraham**, the friend of God and the father of the faithful, purchased the first family cemetery, and many family members were buried there by oaths and promises. Consider these many examples well, as this is the clear practice of the sons of God (Gen15:15; 23:1-20; 25:9-10; 35:8,19,29; 47:29-31; 49:28-33; 50:1-14).
- **Joseph** wanted his bones carried out of Egypt, so he could be buried in Canaan, though they had to keep his embalmed body in a coffin for about 200 years until the Exodus. It would have been so much simpler to carry an urn of his ashes to Canaan (Gen50:24-26; Exo13:19; Josh24:32).
- **God buried Moses himself**, since he wanted to hide the body. He could have simply cremated it, but He was not in the habit of pagan rites, especially for His friends and devoted men! And though there was no marker in a cemetery, Moses was buried (Deut34:5-8; Jude1:9).
- **Eleazar**, the son of Aaron the high priest, was buried in a family plot on property owned by his son Phinehas (Josh24:33).
- **King Saul's** decapitated and defiled body was burned, but it was still buried. Even criminals who had been put to death were to be buried.
- **Achan** and his family, though stoned and burned for their terrible sin, were buried under a pile of stones (Deut21:22-23; Josh7:24-26; 1Sam31:8-13; 2Sam2:5, 6).
- **David**, a powerful figure and type of the Lord Jesus Christ, was carefully buried; and the location of his tomb was still well known 1000 years later in Jerusalem (1Kin2:10; 11:43; Acts2:29; 13:36).
- **John the Baptist** was buried, though Herod's men of war had cut his head off and given it away for a birthday present. Why did the disciples not just leave the body for the jailors to dispose of it? Why did the disciples not just cremate the headless corpse? Why was it still important to his disciples to bury John's decapitated body? (Matt14:1-12; Mark6:14-29).

The **New Testament** era was no different; Christians buried their dead.

- **Martha and Mary buried Lazarus** (John11:17).



- Even the sinful **Ananias and Sapphira** were buried after lying to the Holy Ghost. And the family or friends of Steven also buried him (Acts5:1-11; 8:2).
- **The Lord Jesus Christ** of Nazareth was buried, and that should be good enough for any true disciple of His, for true disciples want to follow His holy example. Even though his body had been mangled, and there was no funeral, they still took the pains to prepare his body for burial and place it in a very secure tomb (Isa53:9; Matt27:57-60; Mark15:43-46; Luke23:50-53; John19:38-42; Acts13:29; 1Cor15:4).
- Women anointed Jesus' body with costly spices, before and after He died. And He was buried in the tomb of a rich believer, which he had purchased for his own burial. Even after His body had been dead three days, it was still important to honour it (Matt26:12; 27:57-60; Mark16:1; John12:1-8).
- **Bible baptism is a burial** (Rom6:4), when it is done correctly by immersion, because it presents an outstanding picture in water of burial and resurrection, as God intended. If you choose to cremate the dead, you should forget about baptism as an ordinance, for you are denying and rejecting the truth of the resurrection that baptism portrays.

Not having a proper burial was once a disgrace, which is why great pains were taken to give relatives or saints a proper burial. Burning a body is incredibly profane (Eccl 6:30; Jer22:18-19). Cremation was once nauseating to Christians, but modern ones have compromised with the world so much they no longer see any difference. Men naturally love their bodies, which they show by cherishing and nourishing them. But burning a body, even after death, shows a person without natural affection, similar to the sin of sodomy. Only pagans that despise the body can do it.

Blinded by the devil, Hindus burn the hair, face, flesh, and body of their parents, spouses, and children to their gods! Then they cast the ashes in a sacred river! Hindus are lost pagans - total rejecters of the true God and gospel of Jesus Christ - and they popularized cremation. They do not think the human body is any more important than the grasshopper or sparrow body they will inhabit next. They have no hope, truth, or wisdom at all. Cremation cannot be separated from pagan worship historically, as it originated and was perpetuated by pagans. Pagans had numerous explanations for the soul and the body, and they believed fire had benefits for their soul. Hindus, wanting to get to their next body, sought to destroy the first.



Cremation is devil worship, by desecrating and destroying a good gift from God in a pagan practice copied from the darkest nations and tribes on earth. It does not matter what your motive or reasons might be, for the devil is behind all false worship (1Tim4:1). The devil's name is Apollyon in Greek and Abaddon in Hebrew, both of which mean destroyer. Harming the body in life or death is devilish in origin. Destruction, hate, and murder are his trademarks. It is devotion to the devil to take a body and offer it in sacrifice to Satan through a crematorium's oven. It matters little what you think you are doing; you are engaged in the devil's religion.

Judas was a good example of what the devil thinks of life and the body. The devil was a liar and murderer from the beginning, and we should recognize his evil influence. Burning a body to ashes is what will happen to him and his children in an eternal hell (Matt25:41). Christians are not to even touch the things of pagan religion or befriend this world and its ideas, philosophies, or practices (Eph4:17-19). We are not to learn the way of the heathen.

The Roman Catholic Church endorsed the modern rush to cremation, having granted permission for it in 1963 and authorized masses for it in 1997. They did this in spite of official condemnation of it with severe penalties in 1886 and 1892. Americans did not cremate until 1876 in Washington, PA. This was 234 years after the Pilgrims arrived. There were only 28 cremations during 1876-1884. It became popular in the last 30 years, when the nation rushed after the Beatles (African beat and Hindu influence) and many other pagan influences.

Pagan Americans abort the body by numerous cruel methods at the beginning of life, so we should not be surprised that they cremate it at the end of life. They are pagans from start to finish. They have no regard for human life or respect for the human body; personal convenience and economics are far more important. **What corrupted their thoughts so greatly? The acceptance of evolution as the source of life did.**

Rather than follow pagan Hindus or Americans and burn bodies in denial of Jesus Christ and worship of the devil, let us follow the martyrs that carefully collected the bodies of saints from the Coliseum floor and buried them in the subterranean tombs of the catacombs. Their souls are under the altar of God waiting for the resurrection, when they will reclaim their bodies to rule the world and destroy their enemies! (Rev 6:9-11; 19:11-21).



Praise the glorious God of heaven! Jesus Christ is coming soon to raise all the dead, whether buried or cremated. Those that have followed false gods or disobeyed the gospel will be consigned to everlasting torment, and those that have honored the body for Christ's sake and waited for the resurrection will be ushered into heaven.

The conclusion is simple. Cremation is devil worship and rejection of Jesus Christ and His gospel. Though whitewashed by Roman Catholics and sanitized by modern crematoriums, the true followers of Jesus Christ will have nothing to do with it. His ministers and churches will not allow it, and they will speak boldly against it. Besides, we have seen and learnt about numerous cases where the bodies of saints have been miraculously preserved from decay for centuries after their death until the present day. The body of St Pishoy (4th century) is still intact and so is the body of St Sidhom Bishay, St Marina and the martyrs of Akhmim to mention a few.



The Body of St Pishoy



VICTORIOUS LIVING

Big Idea: Faith brings us to the Lord Jesus, not only to obtain the forgiveness of sin, but also that we may every moment enjoy the power which will make it possible for us, to abide in Him and overcome the world.

Bible Text: Rom8:31-39

Bible Verse: John16:33, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world".

Students will

Know:

- ✘ Living in a fallen world
- ✘ A victory through suffering
- ✘ Christ's inseparable love
- ✘ Victory in Christ

Feel:

- ✘ Assured that nothing can separate us from the love of God because God is love.

Do:

- ✘ As believers, we live and abide according to what the Word of God says, not by what the circumstances say.



VICTORIOUS LIVING



We fell from our original position in the Garden of Eden. We now live in a fallen world dominated by inordinate passions. All creation is no longer oriented towards God and "groans" under the consequences of sin (Rom8:22). St John advises us, **"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever," 1John2:15-17.**

To live in a fallen world means we struggle with sin on a daily basis. We experience heartache and pain. We witness natural disasters and staggering loss. Injustice, inhumanity, and falsehood seem to hold sway. Discord and trouble are commonplace. None of this was God's original plan for humanity. However, **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom8:31-39.**

St Paul says to us, "You will face these in life. You will be opposed from all directions as a Christian. The devil and the ungodly may take away your freedoms. The world may tolerate you less and less - because you confess the name of Christ, and obey His laws, and keep the Lord's Day holy, and do all the other things your Lord requires of you. In fact, the ungodly may even take away your life itself. You might end up being "slaughtered," (verse 36). These things are real. But will any of these things separate us from the love of Christ? No matter how difficult your life is because you are a child of God, you will never lose the love of Christ. Never!

We can also be fearless when we face troubles in life. For His love will



protect us from all that would seek to take us away from Him. His is a love that will never let us go. Jesus comforts us, **"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," John16:33.**

We also find encouragement in **Psa34:19,"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all"**. However, we must understand, our deliverance and victory may not always mean the immediate alteration of our circumstances. God may not always choose, or be at liberty, to change some external circumstances immediately. Instead, He will change you internally so that you can "endure" the circumstances. This is what St Paul meant when he said he could be "content" regardless of what state he found himself (Phil 4:11).

Despite our circumstances, we can have victory and peace in our heart, with the patience to endure until He alters our situation. **"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us, Rom8:31.**

And in every time of trouble, we can know we have a loving Saviour and Lord Who sends those things upon us. It might not seem like it at the time. We might struggle to understand how all things are done in love, and for our good. But we don't need to understand. For we walk by faith, and not by sight. We believe that He in love has arranged all things wisely, and perfectly, for our good.

In fact, we can also know something more; that instead of anything taking us away from the love of Christ, everything that comes our way is directed by Christ to draw us closer to Him. All these things sanctify us. They bring us nearer to the heart and love of the Son of God, Who laid down His life to save us.

A VICTORY THROUGH SUFFERING

Joni Eareckson wrote: 'One hot July afternoon in 1967, I dove into a



shallow lake and my life changed forever. I suffered a spinal cord fracture that left me paralysed from the neck down, without use of my hands and legs. Lying in my hospital bed, I tried desperately to make sense of the horrible turn of events. I begged friends to assist me in suicide. Slit my wrists, dump pills down my throat, anything to end my misery!

Paralysis was God's plan?

I had so many questions. I believed in God, but I was angry with Him. How could my circumstance be a demonstration of His love and power? Surely He could have stopped it from happening. How can permanent, lifelong paralysis be a part of His loving plan for me? Unless I found answers, I didn't see how this God could be worthy of my trust.

Steve, a friend of mine, took on my questions. He pointed me to Christ. Now I believe that God's purpose in my accident was to turn a stubborn kid into a woman who would reflect patience, endurance and a lively, optimistic hope of the heavenly glories above. **"And we know all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose," Rom8:28.**

A new perspective

My wheelchair used to symbolize alienation and confinement. But God has changed its meaning because I have trusted in Him. Now my wheelchair symbolizes independence. It is a choice I made and one that anyone can make. I have discovered many good things that have come from my disability. I used to think happiness was a Friday night date, a size 12 dress, and a future with Ethan Allen furniture and 2.5 children. Now I know better. What matters is love.

Good things for the future

I live with the heightened awareness that better things are coming. The good things in this life are only a foreshadowing of more glorious, grand things in heaven.

Living with hope

If you are looking for peace, there is a way to balance your life. No one can be perfect, or have a perfect life. But every one of us has the opportunity to experience perfect grace through a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Thank God often that Christ is in your life, that He will never leave you and that you have eternal life. As you learn



more about your relationship with God, and how much He loves you, you'll experience life to the fullest'.

CHRIST'S INSEPARABLE LOVE

The love of Christ is the all important thing for the child of God. The important thing is not: "Am I ever going to overcome my present struggles?" Nor is it our health. Nor is it that things go well in our families, so that there are no tragedies, no terrible sicknesses, and no sudden deaths. But the all-important question the child of God asks is, "Will anything separate me from the love of Jesus Christ?" We need that love. And we need to know that we have it. The child of God will even say this: "I can bear to lose everything else in life! But I could never bear to lose the love of Christ! Never!"

VICTORY IN CHRIST

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1John5:3-5.

Faith brings me to the Lord Jesus, not only to obtain the forgiveness of sin, but also that I may every moment enjoy the power which will make it possible for me, as a child of God, to abide in Him and to be numbered among His obedient children of whom it is written that, as He who has called them is holy, as they also may be holy in all manner of conversation. Everything depends on whether or not I believe on the whole Christ, with the fullness of His grace, that he will, not now and then, but every moment be the strength of my life. Such faith will lead to an obedience which will enable me to **"walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work... strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power," Col 1:10, 11.**

It is possible to cast all our care on Him daily, and to enjoy deep peace in doing it. It is possible to have the thoughts and imaginations of our hearts purified in the deepest meaning of the word, through faith. It is possible to see the will of God in everything, and to receive it, not with sighing, but with singing. It is possible, in the inner life of desire and feeling, to lay aside all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil-speaking, every day and



every hour. It is possible, by taking complete refuge in divine power, to become strong through and through; and where previously our greatest weakness lay, to find that the things which formerly upset all our resolves to be patient, or pure, or humble, furnish today an opportunity, to make sin powerless. These things are divine possibilities, and because they are His work, the true experience of them will always cause us to bow lower at His feet and to learn to thirst and long for more. We cannot possibly be satisfied with anything less than - each day, each hour, each moment, in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit - to walk with God.

O Christian, only believe that there is a victorious life! Christ, the victor, is your Lord, who will undertake for you in everything and will enable you to do all that the Father expects from you. Be of good courage. Will you not trust Him, who has given His life for you and has forgiven your sins, to do this great work for you? Along with the deepest conviction that there is no good in you, confess that you see in the Lord Jesus all the goodness of which you have need, for the life of a child of God; and begin literally to live **"by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal 2.20.**

Just as it is impossible for a man whose eyes have not yet been opened in Baptism to see that Christ can at once forgive his sin, so is it also with faith in the assurance that there is in Christ a sure promise of power to accomplish all that God desires from his child. Just as, through faith, we found the fullness of forgiveness; so through a new act of faith, a real deliverance from the dominion of the sin which has so easily beset us is obtained, and the abiding blessing of the continuous experience of the keeping power of Christ becomes ours. This faith obtains a new insight into promises the meaning of which was not previously understood:

- **"The God of peace ... make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ," Heb13.20, 21.**
- **"Unto him that is able to keep you from falling ... be glory and majesty," Jude24, 25.**
- **"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, you shall never fall," 2 Pet1: 10.**
- **"To the end He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness," 1Thess3:13.**
- **"But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil," 2Thess3:3.**



The answer to the question, of how we attain to it, is simple. All is in Christ. **"Thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ," 2Cor2:14. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us," Rom8:37.** All depends on our right relationship to Christ, our entire surrender, perfect faith, and unbroken fellowship with Him. But you wish to know how to attain to all this. The full enjoyment of what is prepared for you in Christ may be yours through: a new discovery of sin; a new surrender to Christ; a new faith in the power which will make it possible for you to persevere.

Victory is that inner peace of God which surpasses all understanding (Phil 4:7). It's the joy of the Lord which is our strength (Neh8:10). It is that inner confidence that overcomes discouragement, doubt and unbelief. It is the assurance that God is in control, and as we love the Lord and live a life wholly consecrated to Him, we know all things and circumstances are somehow working together for our good. **"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," Rom8:28.**

God wants all His children to live a victorious life. However, this is only possible through the walk of faith. **"...this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith," 1John5:4.** Faith is that which makes us overcomers against all the trials and circumstances of this world. A victorious life of faith no longer lives by feelings, emotions or circumstances. It is no longer manipulated by the emotions of discouragement or depression. As believers, we live and abide according to what the Word of God says, not by what the circumstances say. **"We walk by faith and not by sight," 2Cor:5:7.** This walk of faith is what brings victory.

Remember and follow the Apostle Paul's example. He knew adversity at its worst (2Cor11:23-28), but also knew that circumstances need never threaten the joy and victory of the believer. He wrote, **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us," Rom8:35, 37.**



“When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even His enemies to be at peace with him,”
Pro16:7.

BOOK 3

LOGIN TO FAITH

In the third and final volume of this much needed set, the author begins with the core of Orthodox Christian salvation and builds upon it a detailed picture of the life founded upon that faith, in worship and in living as a Christian in a confusing modern world. Orthodox Christianity is not just about believing, or even about doing, but about being the image of God. An excellent guide for those embarking upon a life of service to God and to their fellow human beings.

Fr Ant (Fr Antonios Kaldas)