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

GRADE SEVEN

Revised Edition 2005

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SAINT MARK

H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
FROM H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III
Deir Anba Rueiss, Ramses Avenue, ABBASSIYA,
CAIRO, EGYPT.
CABLE : ELANBARUEISS, CAIRO.

ΠΙΕΚΑ ΠΙΑΓΙΑΡΧΗΣ ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΗΡΟΣ
ΠΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ
بطريركية الاقباط الارثوذكس

Date / / 19
/ / 17

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الى الدينيه المباركيه القمص مرقس الياس عبدالمسيح
والقس تادرس يعقوب ملطى

سلام ومحبة وبعد ،

زارنى ابنانا د. فوقد وضعه المنهج المقترح لدارس التربية الكنسية بالمهجر. وقد درسنا معه الخطوط الاساسية للمنهج، دون الدخول فى التفاصيل. وأبديت له بعض ملاحظات عن جملة مناهج العقيدة والطقس ؛ وفى الواقع أنه الجهد المبذول جهد كبير جداً يستحق الشكر. ومع ذلك تحتاج دروس الكتاب المقدس الى زيادة. وسأرسل لكم ملاحظات اخرى بالتفصيل بمشيئة الرب .

فليبارك الرب كل ما قام به ابنانا فوقد من مجهود فى اعداد المنهج ، وفى جمع المادة ، وفى عمل الترجمة . وليبارك الرب أيضاً كل من اشتركوا فى العمل ، وفى المراجعة

وليكن هدفنا هو ما نستطيع الوصول اليه من كمال على قدر امكانياتنا ، ويمكنه تزويد المنهج أيضا بالصور المناسبة والتى تقربها كنيستنا من النواحى العقيدية والطقسية والتاريخيه

الرب معكم . كونوا بخير

٧٩ ٨

١٩٨٦/٨/٢٢ عيد القديسة العذراء

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
FROM H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III
Deir Anba Rueiss, Ramses Avenue, ABBASSIYA,
CAIRO, EGYPT.
CABLE : ELANBARUEISS, CAIRO.

+

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

Peace and love be with you.

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

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

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

May the Lord be with you. Be in peace.

Signed

Pope Shenouda III
22 August 1986
The feast of St. Mary

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Principal Goal of Christian Up-Bringing.

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

Therefore, children are beloved ones to Christ and are His friends with their simplicity and purity of heart. Christ called them, blessed them and asked His Disciples and Apostles after Him to take care of bringing up children and prepare the suitable environment for their spiritual growth.

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

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

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

The Starting Point in Achieving the Goal of Religious Upbringing.

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

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

The Difference Between Religious Education and Religious Upbringing.

We should not aim at providing lessons in the form of giving information, i.e. a mere religious education. In this case religious experience will never exceed the circle of

the mind and will never affect the heart and practice of the student. If we consider religious education as an element in religious bringing-up, we are in this case following Christ's plan in the development and building of the Christian personality. Christ with His example and His perfection gave us a model which should be followed and achieved. As for His teachings, they are meant to clear the way for us in order to follow them as examples and models.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About the Books in Your Hands.

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

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

1) The teacher must know the stage and the characteristics of growth of the children that he or she is teaching. A child who is 12 years old is different than a child who is 8 years old. The teacher must know the level of his/her students, their abilities to receive information that he/she is giving and the differences between the various abilities in the same class.

2) The positive participation of the students is very important during the lesson and the effectiveness of teaching. One of the key incentives for the student is to give importance to the lesson and have an effective communication with the teacher and, above all, to define clearly the purpose behind it and present the lesson in the form of problems that attract their attention.

3) The teacher must follow a psychological order of the facts he is presenting. Our Lord Jesus Christ used effectively the psychological method of teaching through His parables. The parables in their simplicity are drawn from the daily life of the people. We must emphasize here that the psychological method is not the only method of spiritual teaching. We should mention this method as one of the methods used. It is quite important to note that spiritual teaching must be imparted with certain goals in mind which are connected with the life

of the children and related to the problems they face. We should provide guidance that is mostly needed for them.

4) The teacher must present the lesson and illustrate it with relevant information and present it as a coherent unity without ambiguity or contradiction. He may use illustrations to help him explain what he means.

5) Application of Christian principles to the actual social life must be emphasized in every lesson. The teacher should use stories (from the Old or New Testaments or from church history or church books) to attract the attention of the students and show the Christian principle in an applied manner. The teacher also may divide the subject into stages or small subjects. A good practice is to summarize the lesson or better still, ask the students themselves to summarize it.

6) The manner of expressing the lesson to the students is also very important. A teacher who is living by what he/she teaches will definitely be more effective in giving his/her message across. A teacher who is teaching under spiritual influence with compatible emotions to what he/she teaches will be definitely more effective than a teacher who is giving information.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

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

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

His Grace Bishop Reweiss

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

His Grace Bishop Moussa

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

Fr. Tadros Malaty and Fr. Marcos Marcos

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

Dr. Fayek M. Ishak

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

Fr. Gawargious Michael and Fr. Mikhael Armanios

These two beloved priests chose the proper songs to match the subjects of the lessons. They also arranged the proof-reading of all the books with a chosen group of youth.

Fr. Makary Silwanis

This beloved priest made all of the arrangements for revising the previous Sunday School Program. He single-handedly arranged to have the new program available online. His computer skills were a key factor in all areas.

Tassoni Ragaa

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

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

There was a key participation from Heba Khattas in this revised version. She in total love and joy contributed with great efforts in typing, checking, proof reading and commenting. All these things by her own initiative despite all the other responsibilities that she had to do towards her family, her work and her study.

There was a key contribution from Marian Awad in this revised version. She proposed that the lessons for Grades 11 and 12 be totally redone in order to prepare the youth to face the challenges at the university level. This idea resulted in a huge change in the curriculum for these two grades, as well as in the writing of the "Contemporary Issues" book.

Ninette Bishay sang over 100 songs in order to make sure that all the lessons were accompanied by beautiful songs in a great language and tone.

Caroline Yassa typed many lessons for the author, mostly dictated over the phone, at times when his eyes were very sore from reading. Her efforts are greatly appreciated.

Comments and proof-readings of many of the youth are greatly appreciated.

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Marilyn Yassa
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Mark Botros
Peter Messiha
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Mina Elkatib
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Nivin Bishay
Kamilia Beshara
Marina Mouharib
Georgina Rizk
John Hanna
Irini Gad
Mohib Tawfik
Nadir Deif
Hidra Bastawrous

Fr. Rueiss Awad

TEACHER'S GUIDELINES:

HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM?

1. The teacher should realize that each lesson has been prepared to cover a specific point; starting from the title of the lesson to the end of it.

2. The teacher should read all the materials referred to in the lesson (i.e. the Holy Bible as well as any articles attached to the lesson), and then proceed by emphasizing all the points.

3. The teacher should enlarge the picture ahead of each lesson and use it as a visual aid as he or she is teaching the lesson.

4. The teacher should discuss the practical applications as he or she proceeds with the lesson.

5. The teacher should summarize the main points of the lesson with the students and give prizes.

FEATURES OF THIS SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

A COMPREHENSIVE SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

1. This Sunday School program was the very first program to be written in the lands of immigration. This work was initiated in 1974, and the first version was published in 1986. We thank our heavenly Father, Who has given us the opportunity to extensively revise and improve it, in 2005.

2. In this version of the program, any repetition that was in the previous program, has been removed, all lessons were upgraded in both coverage and depth. Moreover, a whole new book, on contemporary issues, has been added.

3. The contemporary issues book covers subjects that are important for children and youth in today's world. These lessons are optional. For churches with regular youth group meetings, these issues would best be discussed during those meetings. On the other hand, for churches that do not hold regular youth group meetings, those issues could be discussed as part of the Sunday School program.

4. This version of the program also includes lessons, which form a basis for a missionary service, a service that should in the ideal situation be practiced by every member of our congregation. The objective is that each child, every youth, and in the long run each Coptic individual can behave and act in a way, which is an embodiment of the teaching and tradition of the Coptic Orthodox Church. In other words, our congregation would become role models in their communities, who attract people to our Lord Jesus Christ through their good practices: sincerity, commitment, hard work and dedication, tolerance, forgiveness, and all the other good qualities that differentiate a good practising Christian from those who merely have a Christian education.

5. In this Sunday School Program, we depended heavily on the writings of H.H. Pope Shenouda III as a reference for most of the presented material.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE PREPARATION OF SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

A. What is a Sunday School Lesson?

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

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

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

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

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

Hence a Sunday School lesson is:

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

B. The Requirements for Sunday School Lessons

1. Humility in prayer before God.

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

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

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

   This is achieved through:

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

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

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

3. Aids of presentation.

   It is important that you transform your understanding of the lesson into a simple and clear presentation. It has been stated and proved that 85% of knowledge acquired is acquired through the sense of sight and visual learning as opposed to the 10% that is acquired through the sense of hearing. The rest of the knowledge acquired is done so through the other three senses.

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

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

C. Recording the lesson.

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

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

Purpose of the lesson:

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

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

References:

References could include:

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

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

Preface:

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

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

The Lesson:

The lesson could be divided into the following sections:

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

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

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

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

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

Inferences:

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

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

Bible Verse:

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

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

Homework:

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

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

INTRODUCTION

Teaching in Grade 7 (age 13 to 14 years)

(1) This age is characterized by an important mental development. A sense of cause and effect is developed, an ability to organize and classify and an interest in simple planning and carrying out a plan. We can see this reflected in their play.

(2) There is now a far more clear consciousness of "justice" than there has been before. The instinct of ownership was already present at an earlier age, but now there is a fairly clear understanding of what is "mine" and "not mine". Along with the sense of "law" and consciousness of "law breaking" there is a growth, a development of finer feelings: compassion, desire to protect someone weaker than oneself and acceptance of certain moral standards.

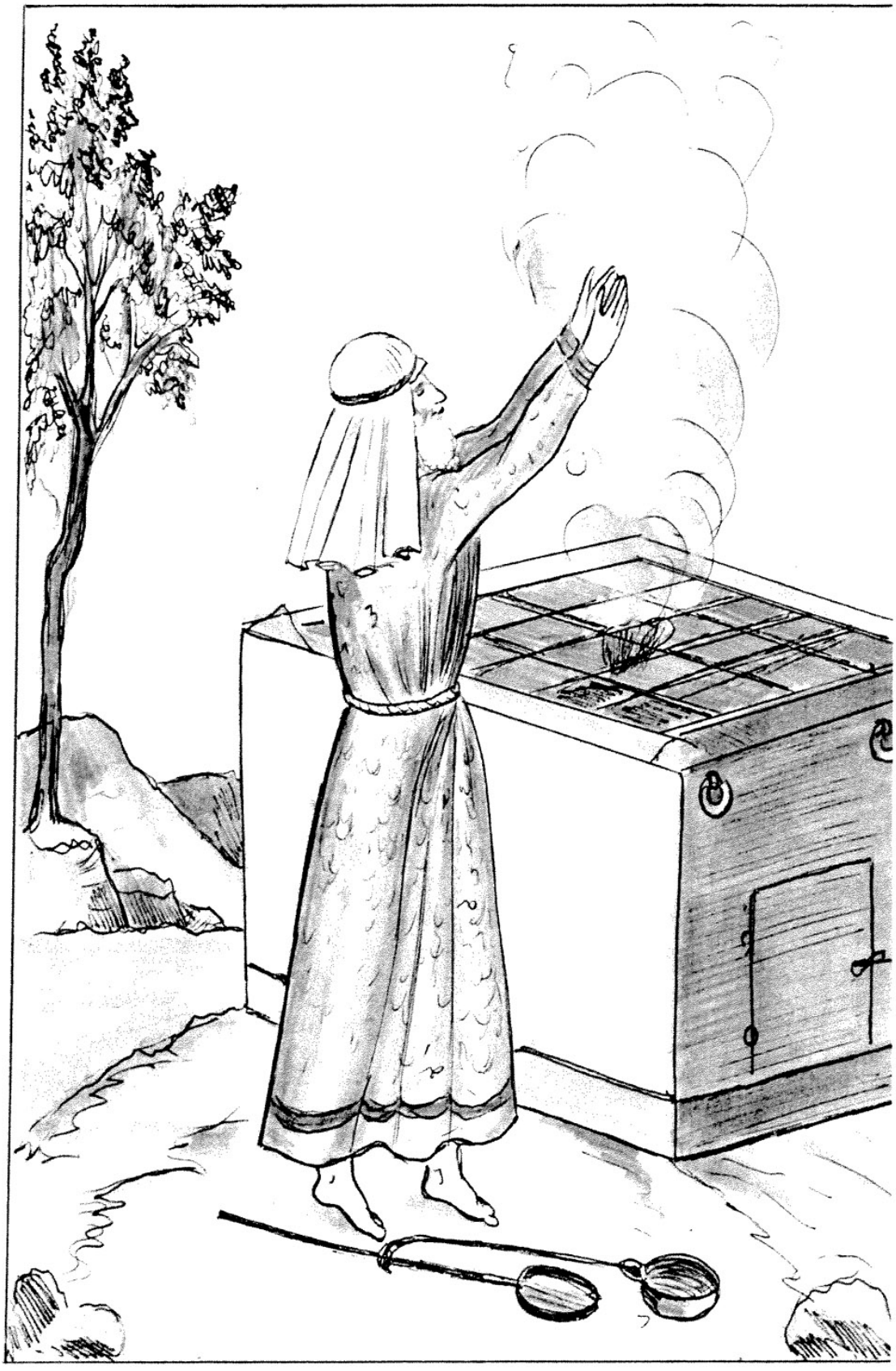
(3) Children in this age will show interest in cause and effect and, in listening to Bible stories, will show interest in God's plan for the world.

(4) The story must be given as a story without too many comments. Lessons should be accompanied by hymns and class activities as colouring, cutting and pasting pictures ... etc.

(5) Though it is too early to discuss with children the problem of suffering, and especially the suffering of the innocent, it is sometimes unavoidable. We can establish in their minds the image of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who was innocent and accepted suffering, but His suffering and death were not the end, but He rose from the dead. If the children have really assimilated the Passion and the Resurrection, we have provided them with a basis for a Christian. Approach to the problem of suffering and they will have to deal intellectually with it at a later age.

6) In addition to the above, the teacher should: start from simple to the more difficult facts, from known to the unknown and from general to specific and going back to the bigger picture.

Children should love the teacher, the class, and the lesson and come very anxiously to class.



SEPTEMBER
FIRST SUNDAY

LOT CHOSE FOR HIMSELF

Please read Genesis chapter 13, the attached material entitled "The effects of companionship," and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To show:
- ✞ When we have a choice to make, we should pray and ask God to choose for us.
- ✞ When we are given the opportunity to share things with people, we have to be fair and not select the best for ourselves.
- ✞ We have to be very choosy when it comes to friendship or companionship.

MEMORY VERSE:

“and built an altar there to the Lord” (Genesis 13:18)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✞ **The Call to Abram:**

  Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Abram is one of the descendants of Shem. The word Abram means "the honoured father" and God changed his name to Abraham which means, "Father of many nations" (Genesis 17:5).

  Abram lived in Ur of the Chaldees where people were worshipping idols. Abram migrated along with his father, Terah, his wife, Sarai, and his nephew Lot. They got as far as Harran when Terah died. Then the Lord spoke to Abram "Get out of your country ... to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you ... you shall be a blessing" (Genesis 12:1-2). So Abram took his wife, his nephew, all their servants and possessions and came to the land of Canaan. Then the Lord said to Abram "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the Lord, Who had appeared to him.

✞ Abram Separated from Lot:

As time went by, both Abram and Lot found that their herds increased so much that there was not enough pasture. Their herdsmen began to quarrel, so Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren" (Genesis 13:8).

Lot had accompanied Abram in his faithful trips. But there was a great difference between their hearts. Abram had a simple heart, full of love to God and people. Lot's heart had the love of self and the love of the world. In appearance Lot was accompanying the greatest father who was full of faith and obedience to God. But Lot's heart was closed. The time came that the weakness of Lot surfaced when he had the conflict with Abram. Both were rich, but Abram's heart was with God while Lot's heart was with the possessions.

Abram wanted peace. Even though he was the elder, he left the right to choose to Lot. Lot accepted to choose first. This shows the faithful heart of Abram and the materialistic heart of Lot. "And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord". (This was the status of Sodom and Gomorrah before the Lord destroyed them.)

Lot did not examine what kind of people were living in this land that looked like "the garden of the Lord". The Bible said, "But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord" (Genesis 13:13). This was a grave mistake that Lot did. We must examine what type of people we mingle with. We must keep away our friendships from people who have no faith in God. If we were preaching then it would be different. But in our daily lives we must be careful not to mix with wicked people.

The precious reward went to Abram who let the Lord choose for him. "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are - northward, southward, eastward and westward ... Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you. Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord." (Genesis 13:14-17) Everywhere, Abram was building two things: the tent to live in and the altar to present his offerings and prayers to God. In this same place "terebinth trees of Mamre", God and two angels visited Abram and promised him the birth of a son (Genesis 18).

Lot departed to Sodom and Gomorrah to live in the rich land with the wicked people. He lost all his belongings as God destroyed these cities because of the wickedness. Lot also lost his wife who became a pillar of salt because she looked back at the wicked area as the angels were rushing them out.

Abram went to the terebinth trees of Mamre to welcome God and two angels and to enjoy a life of sharing with God.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Our lives are in continuous motion: either towards Sodom where there is destruction or towards the terebinth trees of Mamre where God the Giver of Life exists.

(2) We must watch for the improvement of our lives.

(3) We must also be very selective when we choose our friends as they affect our lives to a great extent.

SONGS

JESUS I HAVE PROMISED

Jesus I have promised to serve Thee to the end
Be forever near me, my Master and my friend.
I shall not fear Satan, if Thou art by my side,
Nor wander away, if Thou wilt be my guide.

REFRAIN
Guide me, lead me, every day
Let me follow all the way
My rock of Salvation, Thou shalt always be
I make haste and always take refuge in Thee

Let me hear Thee speaking in words clear, and still
All the storms of passion and murmurs of self-will
Speak to reassure me whenever I fall
Speak and make me listen, O Guardian of my soul

Jesus Thou hast promised all who follow Thee
That in Thine own glory Thy servants shall be
Jesus I have promised to serve Thee to the end
So give me grace to follow, my Master and my friend

Let me see Thy footprints, in them plant mine own
My hope of salvation's in Thy strength alone
Guide me, call me, draw me , hold me to the end
And in heaven receive me, my Master and my friend.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Effects of Association with Others

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

A person is greatly affected by those whom he associates with....

How easy it is for a person to absorb their attitudes, thoughts and psychological condition.
If you associate with a person who always suspects, suspicion would soon get to your heart. The opposite happens if you associate with one who has deep faith; he might be able to plant this faith in your heart.
The one who has many fears, who always expects harm and evil, could easily spread fear among those who associate with him. But the courageous, who has a strong heart, strengthens their hearts and his courage and firmness flow to them...
It is enough for a group of people to have one person among them who very often complains, curses and grumbles from everything to live with hearts full of complaints and grumbling!!

This shows the effect of rumors and news on people....
These are also a kind of effective association whether through thoughts, opinions, news or feelings.
That explains the effect of friendship, kindness and marriage... add to that fellowship and neighbourhood. As the saying goes:

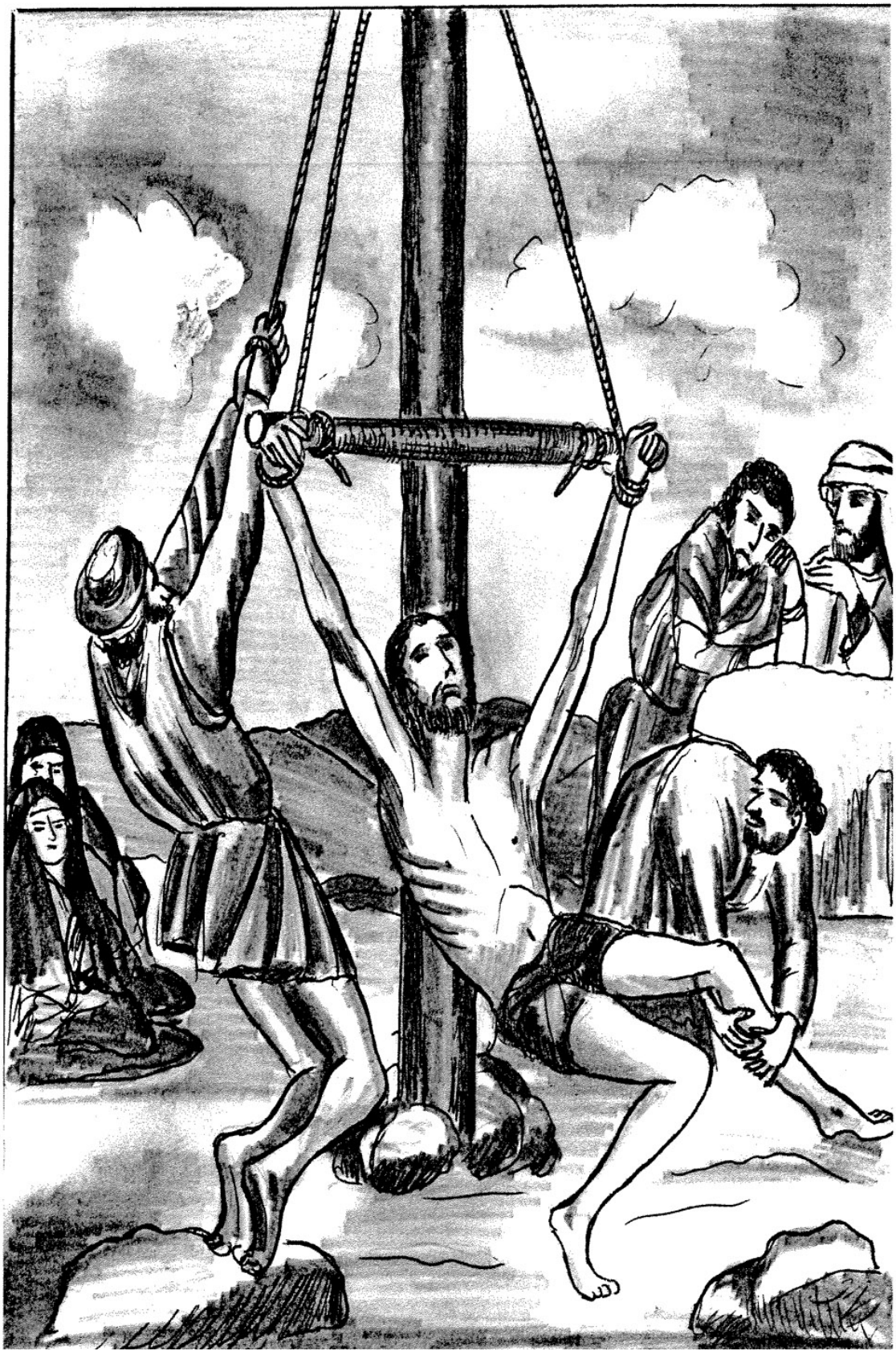
Ask about the neighbour before you ask about the house. And ask about the companion before you ask about the way.
Therefore, you ought to be careful in choosing your friends. Outline the limits of your relationship with friends, neighbours and those you associate with...

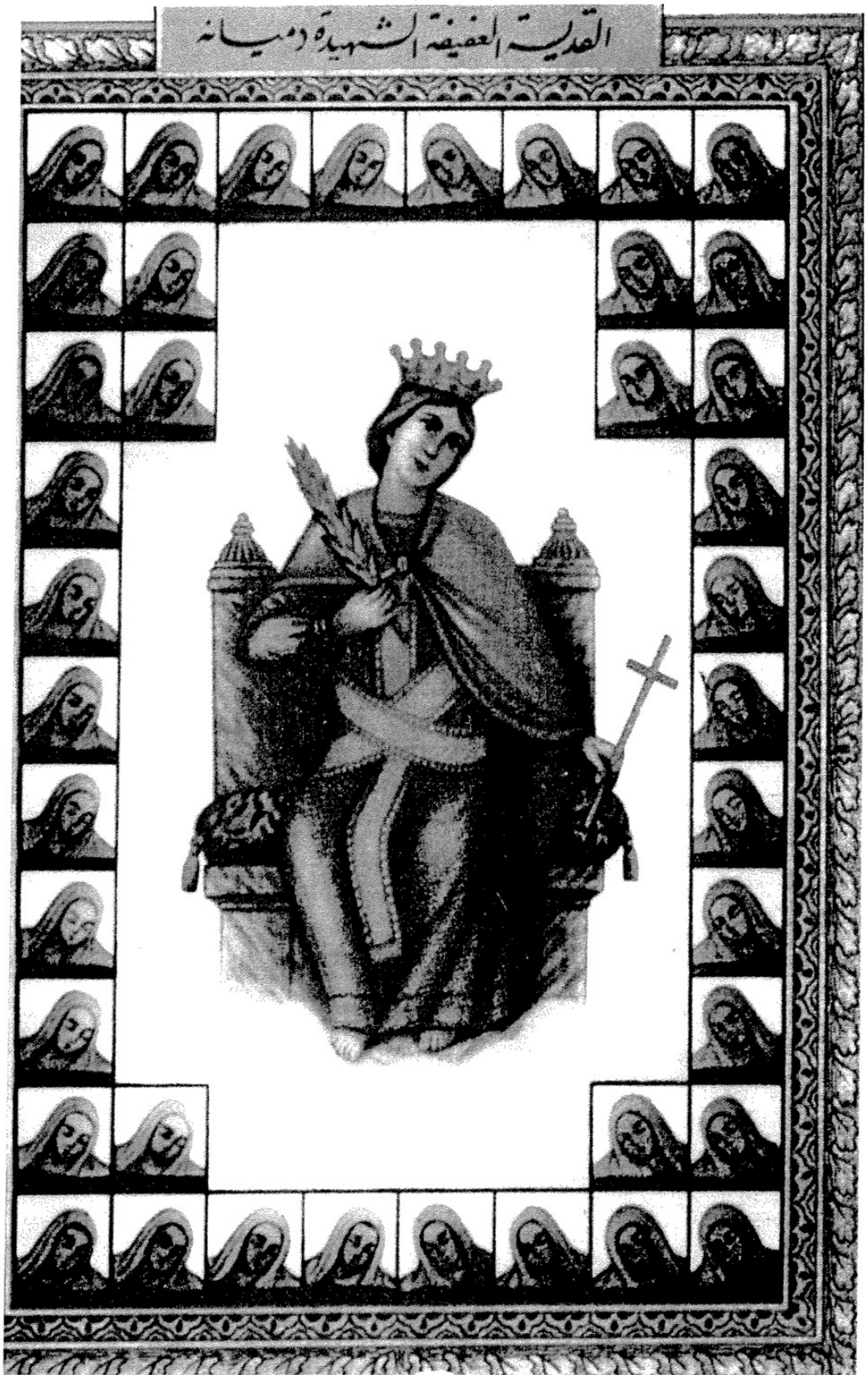
It would be even better if you associate with those who are better than you...
You will be able to benefit from them, as they could lift you up with them...
Do not think that you are too clever to be affected. Very few are those who do not get affected by people surrounding them...
Many a time one talks to you and you understand from his way and thought that it is carried from another friend that you know... !

Many are like a mirror that gives you a reflection of the one who sits in front of it.!

Others get affected in a hidden way which can only be discovered after a while.
Some distinguished characters could be affected by their own attendants and helpers. One of those may be so influencing on that character that he becomes the key to him.

Poor is the man, for he is a sensitive apparatus picks up quickly...




القديسة العفيفة الشهيدة دميانة

SEPTEMBER
SECOND SUNDAY

EL-NAYROUZ FEAST
and The Martyrdom Of St. Demiana
Taking Our Spiritual Life Seriously

Please talk about martyrdom, the Coptic year that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of our faith. Also, please see the attached sheets entitled "In the Memory of our Martyrs, El-Nayrouz Feast", "The martyrdom of St. Demiana", "Seriousness" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To learn:
- ✞ That the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the faith and life of the Church.
- ✞ That we must honour our martyrs, follow their footsteps and ask for their prayers and intercessions.

MEMORY VERSE:

"while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Corinthians 4:18)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✞ **Please review the information about El-Nayrouz Feast. For example, the Coptic Year and number of months, the Church system (or rounds) during the Coptic Year, and the names of some of the martyrs that the children know.**

  The age of martyrdom: "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29).

  The establishment of Christianity in Egypt was not an easy task. But it came to be as a result of the love of many Christians who gave up their earthly lives in return

for the crown of martyrdom in heaven with Jesus, whom they loved more than their lives.

Martyrdom started when idolaters attacked the church in Alexandria in 68 A.D. and killed St. Mark the Apostle. This was followed by persecutions and sufferings of Christians all over Egypt. They faced all these tortures with joy and courage ever since.

☩ The Conflict between the Romans and the Copts:

Since the first century, the conflict between the Romans and the Copts started because of a conflict between two religions: Christianity and paganism. The majority of the Egyptians were Christians while the Roman rulers and their followers were pagans. The Roman emperors became enemies of the Christians who loved God more than anything else and adhered firmly to their Christianity.

When Christianity was spread among the Romans themselves, the rulers and the emperors, the conflict continued because these new Christians had a different belief than the Copts of Egypt. They continued to persecute the Copts.

Therefore, we can classify two periods of persecutions that the Copts in Egypt were exposed to:

(A) <u>Persecutions at the Hands of the Gentile Emperors:</u>

The Roman emperors viewed Christians in general as a threat to them. So, they persecuted Christians everywhere but particularly the Copts of Egypt. Because of their solid faith, the Copts were exposed to the most severe torture in the Christian world at that time.

☩ The Years of Diocletian:

The persecution of Christians reached its peak in the years of Diocletian (284-305 A.D.). In the year 302 A.D., he ordered the destruction of all churches, the burning of all church books and the confiscation of all the possessions of the Christians. When the Christians rejected these unfair laws, they were jailed, tortured and killed. The Copts showed the depth of their faith, love of the Lord Jesus and love of heavenly life. They were joyful to be worthy to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus. Because of the severity of the persecutions in the years of Diocletian, the Copts considered the year 284 (when Diocletian took over the government) as the beginning of the Coptic calendar. The Church celebrates the martyrs' feast (El-Nayrouz) annually.

☩ **St. Demiana is an Example of a Martyr:**

Please read the attached sheet. St. Demiana gained the crown of martyrdom and helped her father to win the crown of martyrdom as well.

(B) <u>Persecutions at the Hands of the Christian Emperors:</u>

The Roman emperors were not able to face the spread of Christianity and a lot of them became Christians. Emperor Constantine the Great became a Christian and his reign was a quiet period for the Christians. But it did not last long. The Roman emperors took sides and accepted the several heresies that the Church in Egypt rejected. Then they started to persecute the Copts. For example, in the years of St. Athanasius the Apostolic, the Romans tried to impose the Arian principles. The pope and the people after him rejected the Arians; St. Athanasius was exiled five times from his position as pope.

The Christian Romans continued to persecute the Copt until the Arabs invaded Egypt in 641 A.D. A new era and a new trouble started.

The faith that we have now has reached us through the, bloodshed of our ancestors. They believed that heavenly life is more important than earthly life: "It is better for me to depart and be with Jesus." Many people would like to reach Christ through easy ways. This is impossible. We must exert effort and suffer a lot for the sake of the Lord Jesus. We must carry the cross as our ancestors did and then succeeded through the narrow road.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We must be ambassadors of our Lord Jesus: "When they see your good work, they will glorify your father in heaven."

(2) We must never shy away from declaring our principles and adhering to them as children of God.

(3) We have to adjust our expectations. If we think that gaining a place in heaven is easy, we are wrong.

(4) We must take it serious and adhere to our faith no matter what the difficulties are.

(5) We have to do our part and God will help us to have a place in heaven.

SONGS

SAINT DEMIANA

This is the story of Demiana
a pretty girl called Demiana
Her heart filled with Lord Jesus
and she knew that He loved her

Her father governor Morcos
over the city of Borollos
Told her I wish you happiness
I want to see you soon married

Demiana said: "Dad, please hear me,
please try to understand me
I want the One Who created me
I love Him and He loves me".

Morcos then listened to Her
as she asked him to build her
A great castle he gave her
forty virgins living with her.

Demiana heard that her father
worshipped idols and left God.
She quickly went to her father
asking him about this rumor

How often Jesus guarded you?
Jesus never forgets you.
Think how much He has loved you
and what did you offer in lieu?

Morcos cried and regretted
and with courage admitted
Of his faith to our God
and was crowned in martyrdom.

After three years Demiana
received the crown of martyrdom
Blessed are you O Demiana
Help us, to reach His Kingdom.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

In the Memory of our Martyrs EI-Nayrouz Feast

The El-Nayrouz feast is the beginning of the Egyptian Year. The Egyptian Calendar is an ancient one. The Pharaohs created this system 5000 years before the birth of Jesus, naming its months after their ancient Egyptian gods. The Egyptian year has 13 months: Tout, Baba, Hatour, Kyahk, Touba, Amshier, Baramehat, Baramouda, Bashense, Baouna, Abiba, Messra and El-Nassey. Each of these months is 30 days long except the last month, El-Nassey, which is only 5 days long or 6 days.

Up until now, the Egyptian farmers use the Coptic calendar in their timing for agriculture.

The Egyptian calendar was only used until the French came to Egypt in the era of Ismaile Basha and introduced the Julian calendar (January, February, etc.).

During the region of Diocletian, in which the number of martyrs increased dramatically, the Egyptian Calendar adopted the name of the "Martyrs' Year" or the "Coptic Year".

These days, the Church celebrates the NAYROUZ FEAST which is also called the "MARTYRS' FEAST". This celebration continues for 17 days until the CROSS FEAST. During the Coptic Year (which is the Egyptian Year), the Church system (i.e. feasts, fasting and readings in the church), are divided into the following rounds:

Round #1:

This is the Nayrouz round in which the church celebrates the memory of the martyrs who established the Church on the basis of their faith and blood. (Tout)

Round #2:

The Church celebrates advent (Kyahk), which terminates at Christmas.

Round #3:

The Church celebrates the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ and the manifestation of the Holy Trinity (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). (Touba)

Round #4:

This round is for Jonah's fast and in preparation for the Great Lent. (Touba)

Round #5:

This round is for the Great Lent. (Amshier - Baramehat)

Round #6:

The Church celebrates Easter in this round. (Baramouda - Bashense)

Round #7:

This is mission month and the Disciples' fast. (Abib)

Round #8:

This round is for St. Mary's fast. (Messra)

Round #9:

This is the short month (Nassey), which contains the last few days of the Coptic year.

I hope you live these Feasts during the year as the Church celebrates these 9 rounds. Hence, you live in the system; remember it, learn from it and reap its blessings.

The Martyrdom of St. Demiana

A governor of one of the cities in Lower Egypt named Mark, had a daughter whose name was Demiana. When she was 15 years old she decided to dedicate her life to Jesus and not get married.

Her father built a palace for her to live in with 40 virgins spending the majority of their time praying. The king sent to her father Mark to come and worship idols. Her father was scared and kneeled to the idols. When his daughter Demiana discovered this, she went to her father and said: "I would have preferred to hear that you are dead, rather than hear that you kneeled to idols." She convinced her father that it would be better for him to be a martyr and live with Christ than live there worshipping idols and living with the devils.

Her father went to the king and declared his Christianity, then he gained the crown of martyrdom. When the king found out that Mark's daughter was the cause of his re-conversion, he sent soldiers to arrest her at her house. He began torturing her and cutting parts of her body. An angel used to come and heal her wounds. At the end, they beheaded her and she won the crown of martyrdom. There are churches in Egypt named after St. Demiana and many miracles are performed through her prayers.

Earnestness
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Perhaps our relationship with some people could be described as earnest. But would our relationship with God have the same seriousness?

Are our promises to God earnest? Are our personal decisions about our spiritual life serious decisions? Or do we promise and never keep our promise, decide and never take action, as if we are not committed to anything?

Are our vows to God firm and serious? Or do we take important pledges with God at critical moments of our life and when the crisis is over, we cancel these pledges or try to change them?

When we proceed to receive the Holy Communion, with wholehearted intentions to lead a holy life with God, do we keep this feeling or do we forget the undertakings of our hearts and seriously neglect the life of repentance?!...

Do we have a clear cut line that we firmly follow or are we like a feather that the wind shifts without seriousness?

Is this seriousness in the spiritual life bound to certain principles of purity without going astray and no slackness in the means of grace and serving without being slothful?

The Saints who repented, like Moses the Black, Augustine and Mary the Egyptian, were serious about their repentance. They never turned back to their old lifestyle, which they deserted with no return...

Those who formed friendship and companionship with God never betrayed this friendship. They seriously remained loyal to Him, feeling an emotional and practical commitment towards His love...

Those who are serious in their spiritual life are never moved by tribulations or temptations. They never forget that they are the temples of God and His Spirit dwells in them. They never forget that they are the children of

God and they must keep His image and example...

Those who are serious in their spiritual life show this seriousness in each aspect of their life: in their talk, their behaviour their service, their worship, their relationship with others and their firm stand towards the thoughts and feelings that fight the heart.

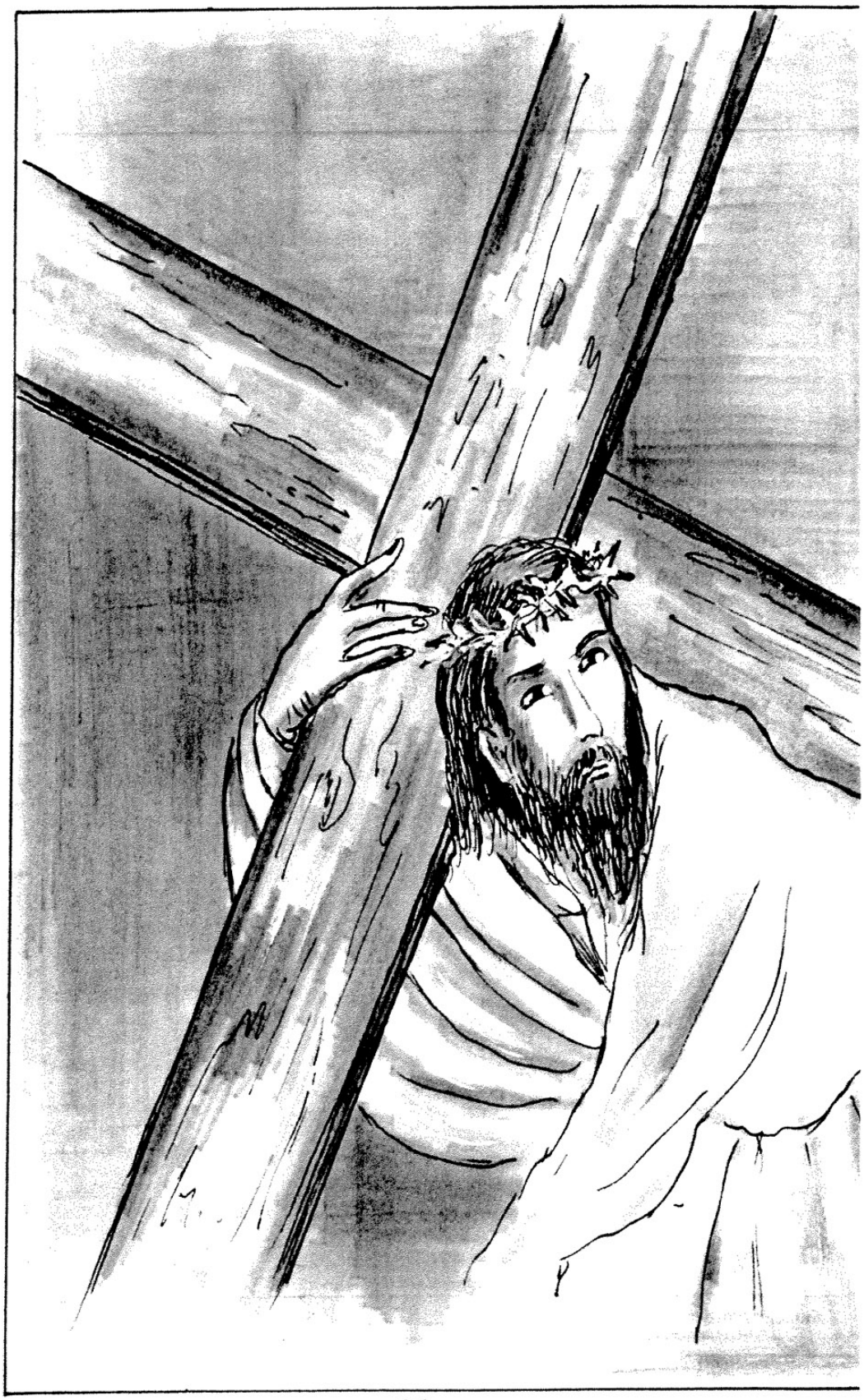
They have principles and they are committed to these principles.

Let us all then live in earnestness... It is one of the qualities of God's children. It is an evidence of steadfastness...

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

HOLY BIBLE

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



SEPTEMBER
THIRD SUNDAY

LESSONS IN HUMILITY

Please read Luke 18:10-14 and the attached material entitled "Righteous in his own eyes."

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To learn how to be humble, since humility is a requirement for spiritual growth. We must not feel that we are righteous in our own eyes. But rather we feel we are weak and in need of God's help.

MEMORY VERSE:

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles will be exalted" (Luke 18:14)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **Humility was Key to our Redemption:**
  - Since man fell through the sin of pride, it was fit for humility to prevail in the events of salvation. Man wanted to become equal to God (Genesis 3:5). Therefore, God became Man to overcome and heal man's pride: "but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, He fumbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:7-8).
  - Our Lord Jesus was born of a poor girl, in a manger, and in village that was considered minor in Israel. He taught a lesson in humility.
  - Our Lord Jesus also selected a humble prophet to prepare the way before Him. St. John the Baptist was born of a humble mother who said, "But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43).

- ✞ St. John the Baptist was very humble in his behaviour and his words. He was the greatest born of women; people crowded around him in awe. But he said: "I am not the Christ ... I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal straps I am not worthy to loose .... He must increase, but I must decrease."

✞ **In the baptism of our Lord Jesus, there are two acts of humility:**

1) Christ the Lord came to be baptized from one of His creatures. And what kind of baptism? It is the baptism of repentance. Christ did not need repentance because He "is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). But Jesus said, "for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness". (Matthew 3:15).
2) Jesus told John to "permit it to be so now". John replied, "I have need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" We must emphasize here that there is an essential difference between the humility of the Lord and the humility of St. John the Baptist. The humility of the Lord was that He: "made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant". This is true humility. The humility of humans is different. We are not as great as Him, to degrade ourselves and to give up our greatness. We are sand and dust, and what is lower than that? One of the saints: was asked about the meaning of humility and he said, "True humility means that man knows the reality of his being". That was what St. John the Baptist expressed when he told the Lord, "I have need to be baptized by You."

✞ **The Practical Meaning of Humility:**

- ✞ A humble person feels weak, sinful and unworthy of any praise from people. On the other hand the proud will say as the Pharisee did, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men - extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector" (Luke 18:11). **Please tell the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:10-14).**
- ✞ Many saints overcame Satan's temptations with humility. The Devil told Saint Makarius, "You overcame us with your humility". Humble people do not fall easily into sin because they feel their weakness and become careful; they always seek God's help to protect themselves. Therefore, they are always surrounded by the special grace of the Lord and He is very near to them.
- ✞ Our Lord Jesus invites us to be similar to Him in His modesty. He started the Sermon on the mountain by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is

the kingdom of heaven". To be poor in spirit is to be internally modest and not just modest in words while the heart is proud.

- ✞ In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus also taught us to be humble. Every time we say this prayer, we remember that we are sinners and that we need God's forgiveness when we say "And forgive us our trespasses."

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) "God, be merciful to me a sinner." I must put this statement in front of my eyes at all times so that I never forget that I am weak and that I need God's help.

(2) Any talent or gift that I have is from God, and in order for this talent or gift to stay with me, then I must be humble.

(3) We must truly obey our parents, our fathers of confession and our teachers. This will be an evidence of our humility.

(4) Do not feel you are righteous in your own eyes.

SONGS

O TAKE MY HAND DEAR SAVIOUR

O take my hand Dear Saviour and please lead me
Till at my journey's ending I'll dwell with Thee

REFRAIN
I need Thee, O Lord I need Thee
O bless me, my Lord I come to Thee

Thou Mighty God of ages O be Thou near
When the tempest rages I need not fear

When evening shadows lengthen the night has come
My faith heart Saviour strengthen and bring me home

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Righteous in His Own Eyes
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

+ The problem of Job was his being a righteous man and knowing that fact about himself. The Bible said about him that, *"... he was righteous in his own eyes. " (Job. 32:1).* So, perhaps for this reason, he underwent the known trials.

The trial continued with Job so long as he felt righteous in his own eyes, but it was taken away when he said to the Lord, *"Behold I am vile: what shall I answer you? I lay my hand over my mouth.. " (Job. 40:4) Also, "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know... therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. " (Job. 42:3 & 6)*

And when he repented in dust and ashes, the affliction was removed.

+ Therefore it is stated in the Bible, *"And lean not on your own understanding." (Prov. 3:5).*

It is also said, *"Do not be wiser than you are. " (Rom. 12:16). And "Answer a fool according to his folly. lest he should be wise in his own eyes." (Prov. 26:5)*

+ God wants us not to be wise in our own eyes, therefore he asked us to benefit from discipleship and counseling. It is said,

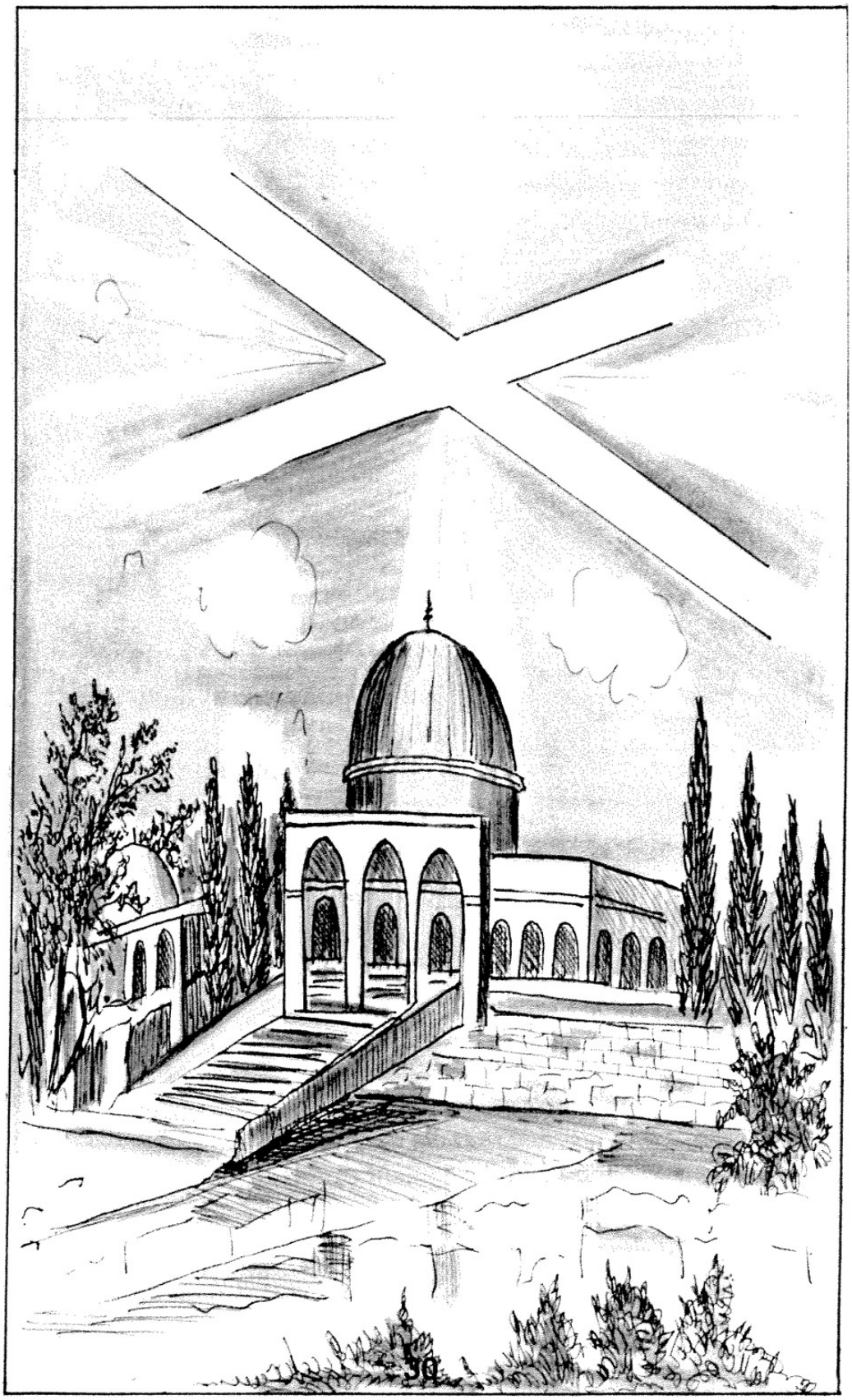
"Those who are without guide, fall like tree leaves. "

He also asked us to. obey and consult the grown-ups, the parents, the spiritual guides, the father confessors in particular and the elderly who have experience due to maturity of age.

In order not to be wise in your own eyes, consult others, and in order not to be righteous in your own eyes, remember your sins.

The upright in his own eyes does not accept blame from anyone and sees himself always right. He tries to justify or find excuses for all his mistakes and never admits that he made a mistake. Therefore he faults in pride, stubbornness, obstinacy and boasting.

He abides by his mistakes, does not change his conduct because he does not admit he is at fault. In the meantime, he loses God's help and might be forsaken from God's grace and falls down to feel his weakness...



SEPTEMBER
FOURTH SUNDAY

THE CROSS-DAY FEAST
"Strive to enter through the narrow gate"

Please read the attached sheets entitled "The Appearance of the Cross in the Sky", "The Cross-Day Feast", "The Cross in our life", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To realize:
- ☩ The importance of the Cross in our lives.
- ☩ Nothing good can be achieved except through efforts and struggle.
- ☩ The narrow gate leads to glory.

MEMORY VERSE:

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ☩ **General Review about the Cross:**
  1. Describe the apparition of the shining Cross in the sky three times (see attached sheets).
  2. Describe the finding of the Cross (on which the Lord was crucified) by St. Helen (see attached sheets).
     - ☩ The Cross is a sign of strength and glory. When a person crosses himself or herself, Satan cannot hurt him or her in any manner.
     - ☩ Our Church celebrates two feasts for the Cross every year. The first feast is 16 days after the Nayrouz feast on the 16th of Tout. (Tout is the first month

of the Coptic Year). The second Cross Feast is on the 10th of Baramhat, (the latter being the seventh month of the Coptic Year).

- ☩ The Cross is taken from a tree. The sin of Adam and Eve was related to a tree. Hence, salvation was gained by Jesus' crucifixion on the Cross. Therefore, the Cross is a sign of love.
- ☩ The Cross was what bridged the gap between Heaven and Earth
- ☩ Everyone should carry or wear a Cross, and always keep a Cross in his or her room and look at it during prayer.

☩ **Carrying the Cross is Taking the Narrow Road:**

- ☩ St. Paul said, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).
- ☩ The way to which we were invited is the way of sufferings. So many people like to reach Christ by the simple route. This is impossible because it is necessary to work and suffer for the sake of God. Our Lord Jesus said "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24).
- ☩ Everyone has a Cross that must be carried without complaint. Whoever does not carry his Cross and follow Christ cannot be one of His disciples.
- ☩ The Cross takes several forms: persecutions, sickness, struggles in spiritual life, suffering from enemies, or wars of Satan.
- ☩ Our Lord Jesus Christ faced the Cross during His life on Earth. He was good to everyone and received wickedness in return from many people. They said about Him, "He is a Samaritan and has a devil's spirit", "He eats and drinks wine", "He loves the tax collectors and the sinners and He is against the Laws of Moses and against the authorities". Our Lord Jesus Christ carried this Cross and did not defend Himself. He was insulted and met the insults without even opening His mouth.
- ☩ What about us? If we feel injustice in our lives, are we quick to complain? We should not. If people called us names in school because we are not participating in their wicked actions (if any), are we going to give up and follow them? We should not. Are we going to complain that the Cross is so heavy in our lives? We should not. We should only thank the Lord for making us worthy to carry the Cross with Him. We must also seek God's help and strength.

- ✞ Our Lord Jesus Christ chose the narrow way; He carried His Cross not only at the time of Golgotha but also during His life on earth. Despite all of that, He was content enough to spread his joy to others.

✞ **The Cross is the External Appearance of True Internal Glory:**

- ✞ St. Paul said, "If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:17).
- ✞ Behind the cross there is Resurrection. Without the Cross there cannot be Resurrection and victory.
- ✞ As we walk with our Lord Jesus in the narrow road, He gives us internal blessings, joy and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, namely: "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control" (Galatians 5:22). Remember, Peter and John were jailed and beaten because they healed a lame man and were preaching to people about Jesus (Acts 4:1-37).
- ✞ After all those sufferings, " they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name". (Acts 5:41).
- ✞ We must never forget that behind the cross there is glory; in other words, the Cross is the external appearance of internal glory. A good example for this is a student who studies hard and is then rewarded at the end of the year.
- ✞ If the Cross is not beneficial for us, our Lord Jesus Who loves us, would not have given it to us. Christianity does not exist without a Cross. Hence, there is no Christian without a Cross.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us search for the cross in our lives. When we find it, we should carry it thankfully and then we will receive all the blessings of the Resurrection in our lives.

(2) We must resist peer pressure, maintain our values and do our best to stay out of the World's temptations.

(3) We must say no to devil. We have to be strict with ourselves, our sexual desires, our pride, our actions and our thoughts.

SONGS

SHERE PI ESTAVROS

Christ has come to us — from heaven to save us
With His blood He redeemed us — Shere pi estavros

Because Jesus loves us — He came and lived with us
He died for us — Shere pi estavros

He was crucified — and obtained victory
With wondrous authority — Shere pi estavros

The cross is my life — my strength and my hope
The starting of my prayer — Shere pi estavros

A lot of the saints — with the sign of the cross
Conquered the devil — Shere pi estavros

They moved many mountains — and the dead arose
Exactly as He said — Shere pi estavros

And I am their son — proud of the cross
I will follow them — Shere pi estavros

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Appearance of the Cross in the Sky

This happened THREE times:

1. The **FIRST** time the Cross appeared, it did so in the sky for Emperor Constantine the Great to encourage him before he set out to war. He and his officers saw the Cross like a pillar of light in the sky surrounded with the following words: "With this [the Cross] you will conquer." Constantine was encouraged, became a Christian, went to war and was victorious.
2. The **SECOND** time the Cross appeared, Julius Caesar saw it on the doors of the city of Antioch. It appeared in the East like a pillar of light, startling all those who saw it.
3. The **THIRD** appearance was to all the people of Jerusalem. This occurred during the sacred days of the Fifties' Feast. To be exact, it happened on the 8th of May, 351 AD, at 3:00 PM. A huge Cross appeared in the sky on Golgotha stretching to the Mountain of Olives. It was very clear and was seen not only by one or two, but by all the people of the city. It remained visible for many hours, shinning brighter than the sun's rays. All of the city came out to behold the apparition; they were astounded and scared, but with great joy witnessed the heavenly scene. The old and the young, men and women, Christians and non-Christians, people from all places were praising Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

The Cross-Day Feast

On the Cross-day Feast we celebrate the appearance of the glorious Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. When the Jews discovered the numerous miracles occurring at Jesus' tomb, they were infuriated and asked everyone in the Jewish country to collect all of their waste and put it on top of the tomb. They continued to do that for over 200 years until a huge pile of filth was formed. Saint Helen, the mother of King Constantine, journeyed to Jerusalem and asked about the location of the Cross.

Nobody could tell her. That was until she met an old man who told her that the Cross was underneath the pile of dirt. She then ordered the removal of the dirt and cleared out the holy cross of Jesus Christ. Then she built a church on that Cross and all the Christians went to visit the Cross and the church.

St. Helen did that because she loved the Cross since it had appeared to her son, King Constantine, before he went to war and he won.

The Cross In Our Life
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

On the occasion of the feast of the Cross, we mention the following points:
+ Our first relationship with the Cross starts by baptism, where our old Adam is crucified so that sin will never enslave us.

+ The Church has carried the Cross during the martyrdom period and in all the persecutions that followed it during the lapse of time...

+ The beauty of the Cross is that the Church carried it with joy and patience,... without any complaint or grumbling...

The Cross changed into a longing that the Church desires and proceeds towards.

The way in which the Christians received death puzzled the pagans. It was a reflection of the Christians' faith in eternal joy and disdain of the world, with all its pleasures and enjoyments...

The prisons turned into temples, where hymns and prayers echoed from the Christians who were joyful to receive death...

+ The third field where we carry the Cross is a narrow gate...

A person might constrain himself for the sake of God. He isolates himself from the world and all its desire. He disclaims everything for God's sake... by fasting, devoutness, self control and enduring others' offences.

+ The Cross of weariness could also be included in this field...

One toils in one's services for God and labours in (crucifying the flesh with its passions), as the Apostle says, *"He toils in struggling and crucifying the thought and overcoming oneself,* knowing all the time that he *will receive his own reward according to his own labour. "*
(I Cor 3:8)

Christianity could never be separated from the Cross....

The Lord Jesus told us plainly that "... *In the world you will have tribulation"* and he also said, *"and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. "* (Mt 10:22)
+ We welcome and rejoice with the Cross, and see our strength in it. As the Apostle said, *"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* (I Cor. 1:18)

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

HOLY BIBLE

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

OCTOBER
FIRST SUNDAY

THANKSGIVING TO GOD
Let us Give Thanks to the Beneficent at all times

Please read Luke 17:11-19, Psalm 103, the attached sheets entitled "The Prayer of Thanksgiving" and "The Lord Takes Care of Paul in the Ship and the Island", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
Let us be thankful to God at all times because He is beneficent. Even when we go through problems we should continue to thank God because He can change bad things to good things for us.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 103:2)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **Let us Thank, not Complain:**
  - Our Lord Jesus Christ established Thanksgiving, as an element in our relationship with God. As He established the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2-4), He also established thanksgiving when He said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me" (John 11:41).
  - **Please read here Luke 17:11-19 and Psalm 103.**
  - In our Church, the Thanksgiving Prayer commences every service: Vespers, Matins, Divine Liturgies, Weddings, Baptisms, etc.

✞ **We Thank the Beneficent:**

- ✞ God is the Beneficent, therefore, we thank Him. Whoever does not believe that God is the Beneficent cannot be thankful. Therefore, it is necessary for us to live a life of thanksgiving to believe that God is the Beneficent.
- ✞ God always does good. He does not do anything except good. St. Paul said: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28). A person, who lives in the love of God, sees, meets and accepts everything for good.
- ✞ We thank the Beneficent. He did good with us in the past, He is doing good with us now and He will do good with us in the future. He does good with us in our righteousness and in our sinfulness. He does good because of His love and mercy, not because we deserve goodness.
- ✞ The goodness that God works for us is emanating from Him even if it does not appear to be so. If you go to a doctor and he/she prescribes medicine that tastes sour, you accept it, believing that it is good for you because it is given by the doctor. In the same manner, there are things that appear difficult or bad, but in fact God turns it to be good. Remember Jonah inside the great fish. Who can believe that while Jonah was inside the great fish that that was good? But it turned out to be good for Jonah and for the people at Nineveh (**Please mention the story in more detail**).
- ✞ We may often have experiences in our lives that do not agree with what we like. We become sad and frustrated. But if our lives are with God, He will turn everything to be for the good of us.
- ✞ Let us be thankful to God because He gave us the Holy Spirit: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) In our daily lives we must be thankful to God at all times. The worst thing is for a person to be a complainer about anything good or bad, large or small. If we love God, we must trust that He will do good for us, as He has been doing all along.

(2) We must never lose hope and thank God even at difficult times. During the difficult times we should look ahead that God will change these difficulties for our goodness sake. Thus we should rejoice and be thankful at all times.

SONGS

AMEN AMEN AMEN

Amen Amen Amen; Ton
Thanaton so kyrie
Katangelomen: Ke teen
Agiian soo anastasin: Ke
Teen ana lee epsin so
Entees oo ranis se e molo
Goomen. Se e noo men
Se evlo goomen se ev
Kharis tomen kirie; ke theo
Meta soo o theos emon.

Amen Amen Amen :
Your death O Lord we proclaim.
Your holy resurrection and
Ascension we confess.
We praise You, we bless You
We thank You, O Lord, and we
Entreat You, O our God.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let us give thanks to the beneficient and merciful God, the Father of our Lord, God, and Saviour, Jesus Christ, for He has covered us, supported us, preserved us, accepted us unto Him, had compassion on us, sustained us, and brought us to this hour.

Let us then ask Him, the Almighty Lord our God, to keep us in all peace this holy day and all the days of our life.

O Master, Lord, God Almighty, Father of our Lord, God, and Saviour, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee upon every condition, for any condition, and in whatever condition, for Thou hast covered us, supported us, preserved us, accepted us unto Thee, had compassion on us, sustained us and brought us unto this hour.

Wherefore, we pray and entreat Thy goodness O Lover-of-Mankind. Grant us to complete this holy day and all the days of our life in all peace with Thy fear. All envy, all temptation, all the workings of Satan, the intrigue of wicked people, the rising up of enemies, hidden and manifest, do Thou cast away from us and from Thy people, and from this, Thy holy place.

Whereas of things that are good and useful do Thou grant unto us, for Thou art He who gave us the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and every power of the enemy: and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Through the grace and mercies and love-of-man of Thine only Begotten Son, our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ, through whom is due unto thee glory and honour power together with Him and the Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver, who is consubstantial with Thee now and ever, and to the age of all ages. Amen

The Lord Takes Care of Paul in the Ship and the Island

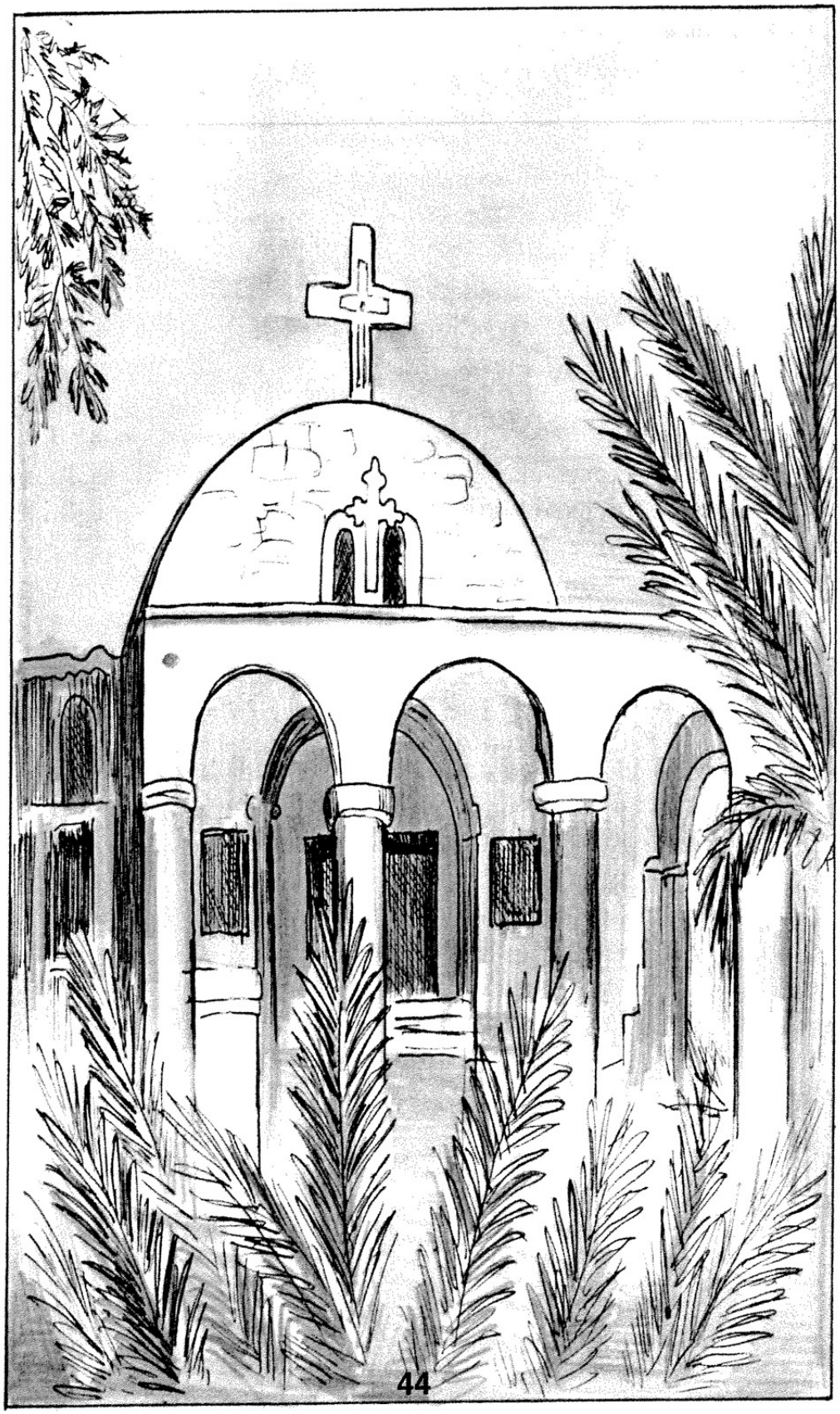
St. Paul because of his love to the Lord Jesus suffered a lot in travel, in facing persecution, and the Lord saved him from all other dangers.

- **On the Ship:**

While St. Paul and the people travelling with him by sea had lots of troubles for fourteen days, Paul was praying to God to save their lives. After fourteen days, he asked them to eat and feel good because the Lord showed him through an angel that He will save them. So the Lord saved everyone in the ship because of Paul.

- **On the Island:**

After they arrived at the island, Paul gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on fire when a viper came out and was fastened to his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another: No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live. He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.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OCTOBER
SECOND SUNDAY

THE CHURCH THE HOUSE OF GOD (I)
The Mystery of the House of God

Please read Psalm 84:1-7, Genesis 28:10-19, the attached sheets entitled "The Mystery of the House of God", and "The respect required in attending the church," and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To illustrate the glory of the house of God and that it is a very unique place from all other places in the world.

MEMORY VERSE:

"How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of Hosts" (Psalm 84:1)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **Introduction:**
  - **Please read Genesis 28:10-19.**
  - In this reading we note that it is the first mention of the expression "House of God" in the Holy Bible: "Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place ... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the Gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:16-17). From this we can realize the meaning of the church:
    1. This is the house of the Lord.
    2. This is the gate to Heaven.
  - In Psalm 48, David describes the blessedness of dwelling in the House of God "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house".

- ✞ Then David describes the feeling of a person going to church "My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord". Are we anxious to go to church? What do we feel while we are going to the house of God? Are we glad and thankful that the Lord is opening His house for us? David says, "I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord"' (Psalm 22:1).
- ✞ The church is a source of joy, peace and comfort when we come to meet God.
- ✞ When we worship God, it should not be out of duty or routine, it should be our voluntary action to gain the free gift of the Holy Spirit given to us by God.
- ✞ In the House of God, we assemble with the angels and participate with them in praising the Lord.
- ✞ In the House of God we treasure the benefits of the Holy sacraments. For example, in the sacrament of the Holy Communion, we are united with the Lord Jesus through His Body and Blood. Please mention other examples of the sacraments' blessing that we receive from the Church.
- ✞ We must respect the House of God and understand the meaning of the various liturgies prayed in it.
- ✞ The Secret behind the Glory of the House of God is the Work of the Holy Spirit.

✞ **The Establishment of the Church:**

The first church was established on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and the Disciples who met in the Upper Room, praying in one spirit. Three thousand people were converted on that blessed day after the sermon of Saint Peter. The number of the faithful increased day after day; so many Jews and Gentiles believed in Christ and accepted the preaching of salvation.

So, the birth of the Church was dependent on the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and the Disciples. It was then natural that the Holy Spirit affected the church, as a whole just as the Apostles and Disciples were affected.

✞ **The Effect of the Holy Spirit on the Church**

This effect appeared in many forms, some of which are mentioned below.

a) Life of Sharing:

"Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common" (Acts 2:44).

✞ Spiritual Sharing:

"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Jesus taught us "Take, eat; this is My body ... Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant" (Matthew 26:26-28).

✞ Materialistic Sharing:

"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" (Acts 4:32).

b) Strength During Persecutions:

"In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

c) Preaching to the Whole World:

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

✞ **Sayings of the Fathers about the Mystery of the House of God:**

+ Please read the attached notes in the class.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We must be thankful to have a church where we gather around God who loves us and whom we love.
(2) In the church, we present to God all our prayers and receive from Him, through the Holy Sacraments, all our needs.
(3) We must take all the necessary steps to maintain full respectability to the house of God.

SONGS

PSALM 150 (regular tune)

Praise God, in all His saints
Praise Him, in the firmament of His power.
Praise Him, for His mighty acts.
Praise Him, according to the multitudes of His greatness.
Praise Him, with the sound of the trumpet
Praise Him, with psaltery and harp
Praise Him, with timbrel and chorus
Praise Him, with strings and organs
Praise Him, with pleasant-sounding cymbals
Praise Him, upon the cymbals of joy.
Let every thing that has breath praise the name of the Lord our God. Alleluia
Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Now and forever and to the ages of ages, Amen Alleluia, Alleluia
Glory be to Thee, our God . Alleluia.
Glory be to our God. Alleluia
O Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hear us and have mercy upon us.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Mystery of the House of God

How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts!

My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord.

My heart and my flesh cry out for the Living God.

Even the sparrow has found a home, and the sparrow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O Lord of hosts, My king and My God.

Blessed are they who dwell in Your house. For better is a day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere.

PSALM 84

Amidst the violent storms of the world, and under the pressure of ceaseless temptations, the Psalmist pauses to think. The sparrow has found a home to settle and the swallow a nest to protect its young but where would she find a place to dwell, and shelter to inhabit!

No other place can compete with the altars of God, the Lord of hosts, to please the heart and comfort the body. There, the ground beneath one's feet escapes; the materialistic world in its total disappears from sight, and the soul emerges to Heaven, her abode. As if by the wings of the Spirit, one is lifted up to the Divine Throne to visualize God, the King and beloved confidant.

Embracing Him and leaning across His chest, one casts all burdens and whispers all secrets, communing with Him, kindly approaching Him, hearing His voice and participating in His glories.

Tertullian expresses such a magnificent liberty that is utilized by the assembled church, by saying: "We assemble in a meeting ... so that we might surround God with our prayers, as if by force arms. Such violence is pleasing to God."

Indeed, worship in the House of God is far from a duty or routine exercised by a group of believers. It is, in fact, an urge to practice their own right to accept the free gifts of the Holy Spirit. Worship is entrance into the Lord's green pastures, immersed in the spring of life giving water. There, believers eat of the heavenly banquet, drink from the chalice of salvation and enjoy the mysteries of God's everlasting love. The Spirit gratifies them so that they desire nothing but to be in God's presence. In their state of content, they no longer seek for themselves as much as they do for others. They ask for presidents, ministers, councillors, bishops, presbyters, deacons, monks, all ministers of the Church, the sick, travelers, prisoners, the distressed, the dead and so on. They even pray for animals, plants, waters and the winds! How remarkable!

There, in the House of God, all hearts are drawn up to heaven; instead of focusing on their personal needs, believers are, broadened with love, requesting salvation, peace and renewal for every existing creature.

In the church, also called the "House of Angels", believers join the angels in their heavenly liturgies, prayers and hymns. They remain permanently in their company, rehearsing the praise of the new hymn in angelic wording. In his book ‘the Shepherd 2’, Hermans writes that angels rejoice at the sight of the heavenly tower of God being completed in us, offering praise to God for the consistency of establishing the spiritual church body.

Undoubtedly that the secret behind the glory of the House of God lies in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is active in people's lives. St. Augustine calls Him "The Spirit of the Church who overflows with every gift upon her members". This is also expressed by the words of St. Irenaeus: "Where the church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there exists the Church and every grace".

The prime function of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church is to shape Her in the image of Christ, Her Creator, so that, ultimately she can become an exact copy of Him. Hence, the Holy Spirit prepares Her for eternal marriage and qualifies Her for the eternal glories ... In other words, the risen Christ is transfigured in Her life and His qualities are revealed in Her. Along these lines, we present some sayings of the holy fathers:

"It is solely through the Holy Spirit that Christ is formed in us and imprints on us His own features and, so, makes the beauty of the Godhead come alive again in the nature of man."

ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA IV

"The Holy Spirit is the Life-giving odour of Christ, a living and effective odour, superior, attracting all creations to Him in order to take part of God's superior nature."

ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA V

"When we drink of the Spirit, we are substantially drinking Christ."

ST. ATHANASIUS VI

In effect, when Christ, the Son of Righteousness, shines on us with His Spirit, we no longer live in the shadow of darkness, but abide in His luminous ways. As a productive start, we must overflow love to others, serve them in humility and yearn for their salvation! By the Spirit we are brought to the cross so that everybody longs to die with Christ on behalf of all mankind.

Lastly, in the House of God, we do not just get in touch with God and the heavenly and earthly creatures. We are granted additional insight even into non-living materials, and, as a result, we recognize all surroundings as holy and blessed. The wheat is no longer bread, but it is transubstantiated into the Lord's Body through the Holy Spirit, and likewise, wine becomes the Lord's Blood. The rising incense represents pure prayers ascending to the divine throne by angels, and the Spirit sanctifies the oil. Furthermore, the gold, silver, precious stones, wood, paper, textiles and even the bricks and sand become holy when they are used to construct and furnish the holy House of God. Thus, physical materials are also utilized to be in the service of heavenly things.

So far, we have introduced the mystery of the House of God, which we aim to understand through our study of the church building.

The emphasis is, however, not the abstract ritual concepts or architectural developments as much as it is to cover the true spiritual aspects of the House of God. This way, we can practice them in our daily lives.

Manners At Church
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

+ You come to church with a special spiritual readiness:

In olden times they used to come reciting the psalms on their way, as for example, *"I was glad when they said to me: Let us go into the House of the Lord. " (Ps. 122:1); "How lovely is your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts. " (Ps. 84:1); "My soul longs for the courts of the Lord. " (Ps. 84:2), "One thing I desired of the Lord that I will seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. " (Ps. 27:4); "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house. They will still be praising You. " (Ps. 84:4).*

+ A person enters the church saying, *"But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship towards Your holy temple. " (Ps. 5:7);* so he worships and sits in reverence...

+ Among the rules of respect of the church, it is not permissible to sit at the time when you must be standing...

+ It is not allowable to enter the church with newspapers or magazine's in your hand; and a worse thing is to keep yourself busy with them...

+ It is not permissible for anyone to raise his voice, but for necessity, he may speak in a faint or whispering voice.

+ No one can engage himself looking here and there but ought to concentrate his senses and mind on the prayers, contemplations and listening as if he were standing before God.

+ In reciting the chorus and the tunes, it is not allowable to raise one's voice over the others or be different from them in the tune.

+ It is appropriate to come to church in decent clothes worthy of the house of God. Also, those who are partaking of the holy communion, must take off their shoes, and women cover their hair and do not put make up.

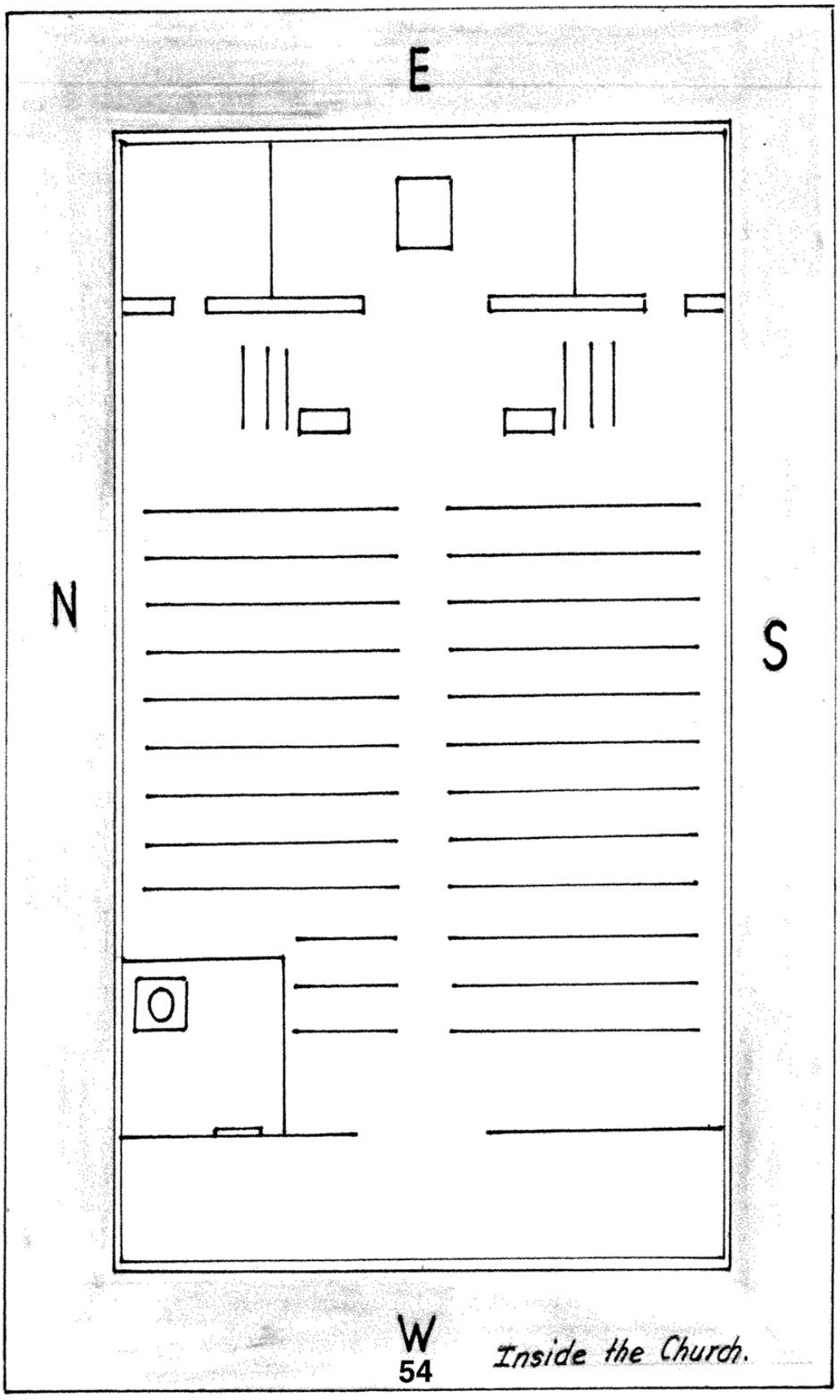
+ It is not permissible to leave the church except after hearing the final blessing and dismissing from the priest, especially on the days of the Holy Mass.

+ One ought to come early to the church, for the Lord says, *"And those who seek Me diligently will find Me. " (Prov. 8:17).*

+ A person who will partake in communion is supposed to attend the early raising of incense (Matins) or at least at the presentation of the offertory and hearing of the absolution of the servants.

+ It is improper to crowd together during communion or when taking (BARAKA)... but to go forward in order, giving preference to one another...

NOTES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Inside the Church.

OCTOBER
THIRD SUNDAY

THE CHURCH THE HOUSE OF GOD (II)
The Church's Building and Orientation

Please read the attached sheets entitled "Orientation in the Early Church", "So that we remember", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

☩ To understand why we pray towards the East and why our church is built with its sanctuary in the East. When we pray towards the East we remember many things that are beneficial for our spiritual life.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

☩ **Introduction:**

Our God likes discipline, not disorder. In the feeding of the multitude, our Lord Jesus asked His disciples to let the people sit down in groups of fifty so that the food could be distributed in an organized way. Therefore, although prayers can (and should) be from the heart to God, Who dwells in our hearts, and are independent of time or place, whether at church or at home, while worshipping we are expected to observe order and discipline. One of these orders is the way that the Coptic Church is built facing the East; the worshippers also face the East.

☩ **Orientation in the Church:**

Coptic churches are usually built in the form of a basilica, but, in the case of the ancient churches of Cairo, rebuilding, additions and alteration have often considerably modified the original structure.

A Coptic church comprises our distinct parts: the narthex located at the west end; the nave, the chancel, and finally at the east end; the sanctuary.

Orientation is not only observed in liturgical services, but also in private prayers. In the Liturgy of Baptism, the candidate for baptism renounces Satan and all his

works; then the candidate is asked to face the East to profess his/her belief in the Holy Spirit.

✞ **The Theology of "Orientation":**

1) Christ is our East: (see attached sheets)
   Our Christ is called "the East" (Zak. 6:12).

2) Reminds us of the Lost Paradise: (see attached sheets)
   "We are seeking the ancient homeland, the paradise that God planted in Eden, towards the east".

3) Waiting for the Parousia (Advent) of Christ: (see attached sheets)
   Orientation is correlated with the last advent of Christ in which He will escort us to His heavenly kingdom.

4) A Symbol of Rebirth, Hope and Light: (see attached sheets)
   Every time we stand towards the east to pray, we remember the beginning of our new life in baptism.

5) Looking Towards the Cross: (see attached sheets)
   Christ was facing the west while hanging on the cross. We meet Him when we look to the east.

6) Orientation of Graves: (see attached sheets)
   It is interesting to note that orientation was not only observed in worship and church buildings, but also in the old Christian graves. The dead, therefore, are like a large army looking at Christ.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Every time we pray, we should look towards the East. This reminds us, among several things, that our true homeland (Paradise) awaits us; we must make every possible effort to reach Paradise.
(2) God wants us to remember certain things. Forgetting those things will be harmful for us. Similarly the church would make us remember certain things for our spiritual benefits.

SONGS

Psalm 150 (regular tune)

Praise God, in all His saints
Praise Him, in the firmament of His power.
Praise Him, for His mighty acts.
Praise Him, according to the multitudes of His greatness.
Praise Him, with the sound of the trumpet
Praise Him, with psaltery and harp
Praise Him, with timbrel and chorus
Praise Him, with strings and organs
Praise Him, with pleasant-sounding cymbals
Praise Him, upon the cymbals of joy.
Let every thing that has breath praise the name of the Lord our God. Alleluia
Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Now and forever and to the ages of ages, Amen Alleluia, Alleluia
Glory be to Thee, our God . Alleluia.
Glory be to our God. Alleluia
O Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hear us and have mercy upon us.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

To Keep In Mind
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

God wants you to keep in mind certain matters, which are important and not to be forgotten.

+ His commandments: He said to Joshua, the son of Nun, *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. " (Josh. 1:8)* He therefore, summed up the Law in the book of Deuteronomy. The Old Testament was divided to be read in the Synagogues on Saturdays, in order to be remembered by the people. A copy of the Law was to be given to the new king to remind him.

+ In order to remind us, God set down feasts and festivals to remember Him, as in the Feast of the Passover.

+ God does not want us to forget the salvation which was completed by the blood of the Lamb, so He made it a yearly feast.

And in order not to forget His help in sending the Manna, He kept some of it in the Ark of the covenant in the tabernacle.

And in order not to forget the crossing over the Jordan, Joshua took twelve stones and laid them down there, in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests stood. (Josh. 4:8-9).

The High priest also had to bear the names of the people in the breast piece on his heart in order not to forget them.

+ Also the church puts some facts before us to make us remember and to learn for them; for example:

The benefit of remembering God's love for us, which appeared in giving Himself for us on the Cross. The church performs a yearly commemoration in the Passion Week. Moreover a weekly commemoration is made on Fridays to remember the sufferings of Christ and His Crucifixion besides the daily prayer of the sixth hour which reminds us of His crucifixion for us.

+ Also, because remembering death is beneficial, the Prophet David says, *"Lord, make me to know my end, and what the measure of my days, that I may know how frail lam."(..)*

+ For the benefit of its children, the church reminds them of the death in the Compline, and of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ for judgment, in the midnight prayer.

+ Besides, in the canonical hours, in the readings as well as in the Holy Mass, the church reminds us of many things which are profitable to our life.

+ Sermons are reminders of matters previously known by us.

+ I wish we would remember, otherwise, we will be lost through forgetfulness and unawareness.

The Church Building and Orientation

Orientation in the Early Church:

No doubt, communicating with God is distinguished by its intimate nature. It takes place right within our hearts, where we meet our closest and hidden Friend Who dwells in our inner souls. It is, by nature, a ceaseless contact that is not bound by time or place, whether at home, on the road, at work, at church, etc. However this reality must also be coupled with the fact that our God likes discipline and hates disorder. Thus, during our worship, whether at His church or at home, we are expected to observe order and discipline.

This explains the reason for orienting worship towards a certain direction, both in the Old and New Testaments. Before Christianity came into being, prayers were offered towards the Temple of Jerusalem as the place of the "Presence of God". On the other hand, the Church of the New Testament oriented its liturgical as well as private devotions towards the East.

According to the apostolic constitutions, "the church must be oblong in form and pointing to the East". Such a tradition was mentioned in the writings of many early Fathers such as St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, and was almost invariably observed in early churches. Churches of the second century in Syria, for example, used to point out the direction of East to their worshippers by hanging or inscribing a cross on the wall facing them.

The apocryphal documents also refer indirectly to this early tradition. We read in the apocryphal 'Acts of Apostles' that St. John of Zebedee "took a cross of wood and placed it up towards the East and kneeled and was praying". The same document continues to relate a story of the conversion of a multitude of people by the same Apostle, which was followed by a prayer towards the East. The people turned their backs to the West and fell down on their faces before the cross to the East. They wept and said, " We worship You, Son of God, who was suspended on the Tree".

Furthermore, in the Liturgy of Baptism such a tradition was observed in the Early Church. First, the candidate renounced Satan and all his works; then he/she would be asked to face the East to profess his/her belief in the Holy Trinity.

Orientation, towards the East during prayer was very common and apparently confused the pagans, who misunderstood it. To that effect, Tertullian said: "Some assumed that the sun is the God of Christians, because it is a well-known fact that we pray towards the East, or perhaps we make Sunday a day of festivity".

Orientation was not only observed in liturgical services but also in private prayers. We read about St. Arsanius; he was accustomed to commence his prayer

at sunset on Saturday and finish it when the sun rose opposite him on the following morning.

The Acts of Martyrs and Saints recorded that whenever possible martyrs and saints oriented themselves towards the East on their departure from this world.

Now it is probably the time to query the significance of orientation in our worship and constructing our churches.

✞ The Theology of Orientation:

1. Christ is our "East":

It is not unreasonable for us to pray towards "the East", for our Christ is called 'the East' (Zechariah 6:12) and the "Sun of Righteousness and Justice"; He shines continuously upon us to destroy darkness (Matthew 4:2).

In addition, the early fathers had some interesting thoughts on this point. For example, Origin says that we should pray eastward in order to indicate that the soul is oriented towards the dawn of the Light, the Sun of Justice and salvation, the Sun who shines upon the New World, i.e., the Church.

St. Ambrose also says that during baptism, candidates should look towards the East to see Christ face to face.

In brief, we can say that our persistence in orientation during our worship is a sign to indicate our eagerness to face the Lord, giving our backs to the darkness of sin and earthly pleasure. Thus, whenever we celebrate the liturgy, we hear a deacon exhorting us to look towards the East to see Emmanuel, our God, present upon the altar.

2. Reminds us of the Lost Paradise:

St. Basil the Great says: "It is according to an unwritten tradition that we turn to the East to pray. But little do we know that we are thus seeking the ancient homeland. The Paradise that God planted in Eden, towards the East".

To the same effect, St. Ephram the Syrian says: "The Jews looked to Jerusalem in their prayers, for it was their holy country. As for us, Paradise is our country, which was in the East. Therefore we are ordered to look towards the East during our prayers".

Thus, in orienting our churches towards the geographical east and not towards Jerusalem, we have definitely substituted the heavenly Jerusalem for the earthly one. The words of Fr. John Damascus carry the same meaning that orientation refers to looking forward - towards our eternal country.

Lastly, St. Gregory of Nyssa assures us that such a notion of orientation helps the soul to repent and to seek the kingdom of God in her worship.

3. Waiting for the Parousia (Advent) of Christ:

Orientation is distinctly correlated with the Parousia of the Lord, or His last Advent, in which He will escort us to His heavenly kingdom. The Lord declared that His advent looks like the lightning; appears from the East and shines upon the west (Matthew 24:27). Also, on the day of the Lord's Ascension, the angel informed the disciples that the Son of Man will come again from the East as He did in His Ascension (Acts 1:11).

It should not be surprising, then, that the Didascalia Apostolorum states: "For it is required that you pray towards the East, as you know that it is written: 'Give praise to God, who rides upon the heavens of heavens towards the East' (Psalm 68)".

Fr. Methodius of Olympia describes the state of the church, oriented towards the East and waiting joyfully for the coming of her Bridegroom by saying:

From the Brightness of heaven, O virgins, the sound of a voice makes itself heard, awaking the dead.

Towards the Bridegroom it says, Let us all go in haste, clad in our white garments, our lamps in our hands, to the EAST.

A similar hymn was also written by St. Ephram the Syrian. He says:

When Christ appears from the East, His Cross will appear before Him like a standard before the King!

4. Symbol of rebirth, hope and light:

St. Clement of Alexandria links the East to our spiritual day of rebirth. He comments that every time we stand up for prayer towards the East, we remember the beginning of our new life that we have obtained in baptism.

As a result, by every sunrise believers' hopes are renewed so that they pray to their God the following words:

“Let us enjoy a fresh start…May the light of Your face shine upon us, and enlighten us with the light of Your divine knowledge. Make us children of Light, children of daytime…Enlighten our minds, hearts and our understanding, O Lord of all…"

MORNING PRAYER

5. Looking Towards the Cross:

Another point of interest that has been raised by St. Athanasius is that Christ was facing the West while He hung on the Cross. Thus, by looking towards the East in our prayers, we meet the Crucified Lord face to face.

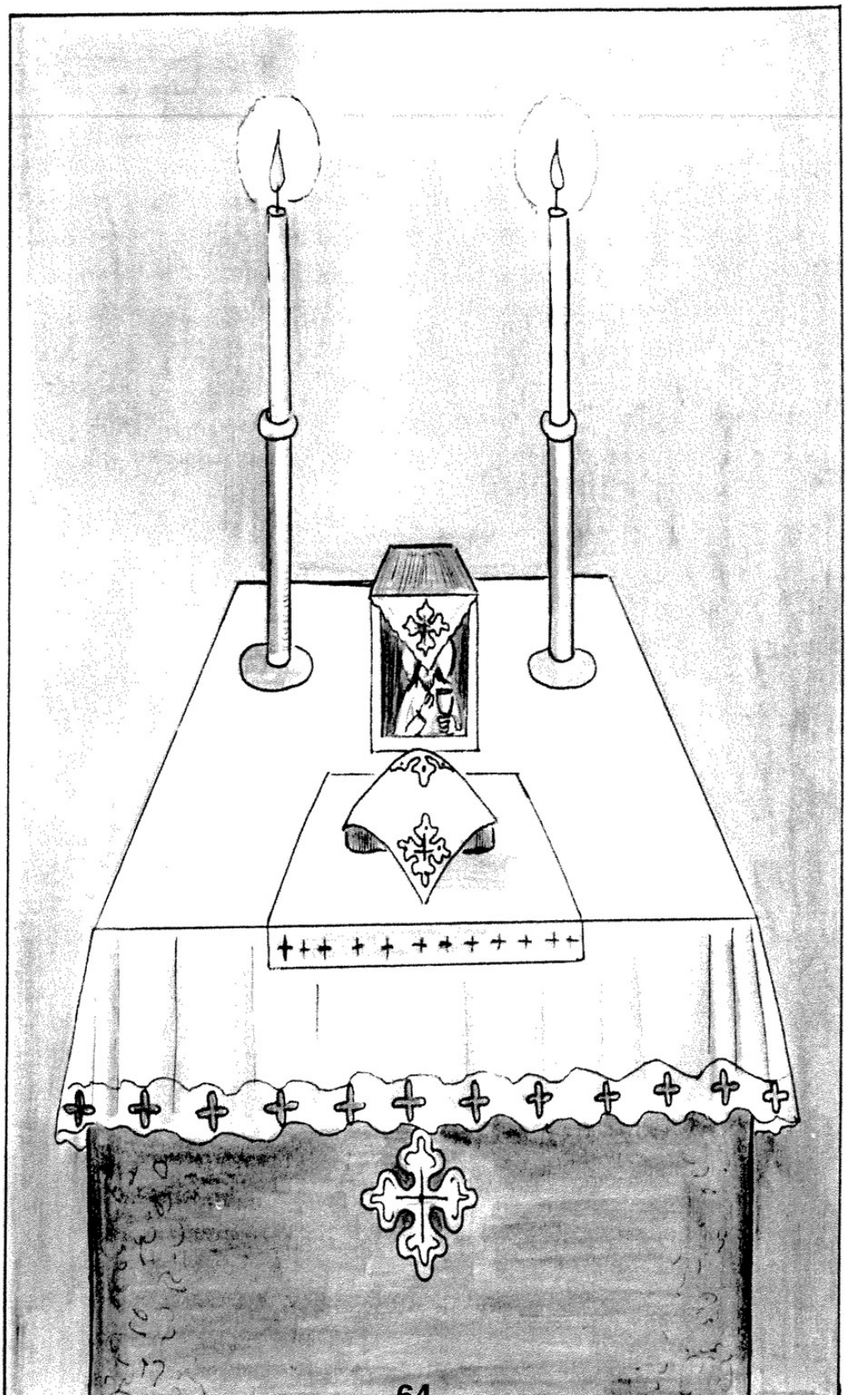
Perhaps this reasoning is behind the tradition of fitting Icons of Christ on the eastern wall of our churches.

✞ **Orientation of Graves:**

It is rather interesting to note that orientation was not only observed in worship and church buildings, but it was also introduced in the old Christian graves. On this phenomenon Jungmann remarks that, in the majority of the old cemeteries in the villages of his country i.e. in Tyrol and Austria, graves were built to orient the dead bodies to face the East. He comments: "The dead, therefore, are like a large army looking out for Him, Who was risen, and waiting for His call when He will summon them also to the Resurrection." It is certainly a meaningful symbolism. This symbolism was expressed over the entrance of one of the larger cemeteries in Tyrol; by one single word "RESURRECTURIS".

It may well be that orientation of the dead was copied from the preceding martyrs and saints, upon departing from the world. It was said that St. Mary on her departure, "turned to the East and prayed in a heavenly language and then lay down, still facing Eastward".

Once again, the apocryphal "Acts of St. Paul" records: "Then Paul stood with his face to the East and lifted up his hands unto heaven, and prayed for a long time ... and then stretched forth his neck without speaking." Now we are acquainted with the factors that led to the orientation of early church buildings, particularly in Egypt. Evidence is readily accessible in the ancient churches of Egypt, upon which Butler remarks that there in every case, the orientation of the altar towards the East, is evident beyond any shadow of doubt. However, the conditions of the site could deviate the building slightly from the true East.



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OCTOBER
FOURTH SUNDAY

THE CHURCH THE HOUSE OF GOD (III)
The Sanctuary and the Altar

Please read the attached material and give the lesson with emphasis on the points given below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To understand the meaning of the Sanctuary, the altar and all related things in them. That we would like to explain the relationship between the altar and the Sanctuary and also between the Sanctuary and heaven.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **The Plan of a Coptic Church:**
  - Coptic churches are usually built in the form of a basilica, but, in the case of the ancient churches of Cairo, renovations have often considerably modified the original structure.
  - A Coptic church comprises four distinct parts: at the west end the narthex, the nave, the chancel and, finally, the sanctuary.
  - In the narthex of some ancient churches there is a deep oblong tank, sunk in the floor, and now covered over with boards. This tank was formerly used for the Service of the Blessing of the Water on the Feast of the Epiphany; now, a portable basin is used for this service.
  - The nave is normally divided into three parts by a double colonnade, the northern aisle being reserved for women. In ancient churches, at the western end of the nave, there is usually a Mandatum Tank, a shallow rectangular basin, sunk in the floor, and now covered by boards. This tank was formerly used for the Foot Washing Service on Maundy Thursday and on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. Today, again, a small portable basin is used for this service. Near the eastern end of the nave is the ambon or pulpit, which is usually set against the colonnade of the northern aisle.
  - At the east end of the nave is the choir which was formerly separated from the nave by a screen. The choir extends across the whole breadth of the church. It

contains seats for the singers and also two candelabra and lecterns, from which the readings are read. One or more steps lead from the chancel into the sanctuary.

- ☥ Only men who are serving in the Liturgy are allowed to enter the sanctuary, and then only after having removed their shoes. The sanctuary is separated from the rest of the church by a solid wooden screen, in the center of which is a door before which a curtain hangs.
- ☥ Along the top of this screen there is usually a row of icons. In ancient churches these screens are beautifully carved and inlaid with ebony, ivory and cedar wood. On each side of the door there are two small windows. In some churches, sanctuary lamps are hung before this screen, and sometimes ostrich eggs are suspended between them. In front of the sanctuary door, which is opened for Divine Service, is hung a richly embroidered curtain.
- ☥ The sanctuary usually has three domed chapels, each with its altar. The altar is placed in the east. The central chapel is dedicated to the saint after whom the church is called, and contains the main altar. The northern and southern chapels are used on the saint's feast day, or whenever there is more than one celebration of the Divine Liturgy on the same day, since, according to the canon law of the Coptic Church, neither the altar nor the eucharistic vessels and vestments may be used twice on the same day for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.
- ☥ Behind the main altar there is a tribune with a throne for a bishop and seats for the officiating clergy. In the niche behind the throne there is usually a sanctuary lamp, known as the perpetual lamp.
- ☥ The altar, which invariably stands clear in the middle of the chapel, is a four-sided mass of either brickwork or stone.
- ☥ The top of the altar contains an oblong rectangular sinking, about 2.5 cm. deep, in which there is a loosely fitted consecrated altar-board. The latter is a plain piece of wood carved with the device of a cross in the center, and the Coptic letters A and W below it. The Greek initials IH.XP.YC.-OC., i.e. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are carved at the four corners.
- ☥ Above the altar there is a lofty wooden canopy resting on pillars. Beneath the dome of this canopy there is usually a painting of Christ as Pantocrator, surrounded by the Cherubim, the Seraphim and emblematic figures.
- ☥ The altar has three coverings. The first is a tightly-fitting case of linen or cotton, which reaches down to the ground; the second is a red silk covering likewise reaching the ground, with an embroidered cross on each side; the third is a white linen cloth placed on the table of the altar and hanging down about 15 cm. On all four sides. At each of the four corners of the altar there is

a candlestick, those on western side being shorter than the ones on the eastern side.

- ☩ In the middle of the altar is the ark, a cubical box of about 28 cm in height and 25 cm in width, the top of which is closed with hinged flaps. On the sides of this ark are paintings, the usual subjects being the Last Supper, the Holy Virgin Mary, an angel, and the saint to whom the church is dedicated. The chalice is placed in this ark from the beginning of the Divine Liturgy until the end of it. The only other objects that may be placed on the altar are: a copy of the Gospels (which is enclosed in a silver case) a manual cross used for pontifical blessings, and the incense-box.
- ☩ The baptistery is normally situated at the upper end of the northern aisle now. But in many ancient Coptic churches, it was situated near the main entrance to the church. Its form is either square, round or octagonal. In olden times three steps had to be descended to reach the baptistery from the church aisle. The font is a circular basin sufficiently deep to allow the priest to immerse the infant in water, while pronouncing the baptismal formulary.

☩ **The Sanctuary Represents Heaven:**

- ☩ In the third hour of prayer of the Agpeya, we say "whenever we stand in Your holy sanctuary, we consider ourselves as they who abide in heaven". So, the sanctuary represents heaven itself or God's residence among His heavenly creatures and saints.
- ☩ In our Coptic church the sanctuary is related to the altar to such a degree that the words, "sanctuary" and "altar" are interchangeable.

☩ **The Niche:**

- ☩ The Niche is the apse that represents the eastern wall of the sanctuary, which surrounds the tribune. It is often occupied with the icon of the Lord Jesus Christ coming on the cloud, carried by the Cherubim and the Seraphim, as well as the four living creatures with the twenty- four heavenly Presbyters offering incense. Thus, in this sense, the Niche represents the bosom of God for the Lord longs for His church, and she waits for His coming.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We must be spiritually well prepared to enter the sanctuary because it represents heaven.

(2) All the arrangements inside the church building is organized by the church which is inspired by the Holy Spirit. We must abide with it.

SONGS

I LOVE MY BEAUTIFUL CHURCH

I love my beautiful church
Where I find my joy

the house of our Lord
and everything I need

Jesus comes to stay with us
Giving everyone His blessings

granting us His help
and the heavenly peace

We see the holy saints
Praying always for those here

and the martyrs gather around
who are asking for their help

In front of the altar
Together with the deacons

Abouna is praying there
and it will be then in Heaven

In the liturgy we pray
The Holy spirit also comes

and the angels are there
blessing us in His power

We share the feast of His Body
And before we leave the Church

drink His Blood given for us
everyone takes Orbana

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Sanctuary

☩ Heaven of Heavens

The Sanctuary, as viewed by the Orthodox Church, represents heaven itself or God's residence place among His heavenly creatures and saints. It was defined by Fr. Germanius as "the dwelling of Christ, the King of all, sitting on the throne with His Apostles".

Moreover, and specifically, in the Coptic Church, the sanctuary is related to the altar to such a degree that the sanctuary can sometimes be called "altar". Such a correlation reveals a vital aspect in our faith; namely, the inter-correlation between heaven and the cross. Simply, it would not be possible to be acquainted with heaven without the altar.

This reality was symbolically declared in the old Testament. Ever since their entry to the promised land and the establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem, the symbol of heaven, the Jewish people were committed not to erect, nor offer a sacrifice outside Jerusalem. Offenders were excommunicated from the congregation and consequently lost their heavenly crowns! As if it was the wish of God to emphasize the inseparable nature of the sanctuary and the altar, or heaven and sacrifice. Through the altar's sacrifice the gates of heaven were opened and the cross became part of the Eternal life.

In the light of this understanding, we are bound to realize that our heavenly life cannot be isolated from crucifixion with Christ, and our joyful hope is coupled with our spiritual struggle.

☩ The Need for Altars

It may be logical for somebody to raise the question:

Why do we need an altar now, since all animal sacrifices have been substituted by the ultimate and unique sacrifice of Christ upon the cross?

The answer of this question is readily extracted from both the Old and New Testaments:

- ☩ Prophecies of the Old Testament clearly pointed out to the future establishment of the altar of the New Testament, which is not solely related to Jerusalem, nor confined to a certain nation.

For example:

A. The words of Malachi the prophet assure from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the sun, My Name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto My Name, and a pure offering...

   Surely, that would not apply to incense and oblation offering as practiced in the Old Testament, since it was only permitted in Jerusalem, and conducted by Hebrew priests alone.

B. To the same effect, but more specifically about the Lord's altar in Egypt, Isaiah the Prophet foretold: “In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt...The Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering.” (Isaiah 19:19-22)

- ✞ The Lord Himself spoke about the altar in the New Testament when He stated, "If you bring your gift to the altar..." (Matthew 5:23).
- ✞ In a comparison between the Christian worship and that of the pagans, St. Paul the Apostle warned, "You cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons" (1 Cor. 10:21).

  Undoubtedly, referring to the pagans' altar as the "table of devils" can only suggest that 'the Lord's table is the Christian altar.

✞ The Altar and the Sacrificial Act

The Christian altar has been subject to attempts, which aim to deprive it from the sacrificial act. They furnish their reasoning on the ground that early Christian altars were made of timber, and were generally known as Tables as if the Christian altar was just an ordinary table and no real sacrifice was involved.

We have already verified the sacrificial act in our Christian worship, bearing in mind that the Sacrifice of Eucharist is but a spiritual and bloodless one. The sacrificial act was known to the church ever since the apostolic age, as the apostle says, "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat" (Heb. 13:10).

The Coptic Altar

(1) The Coptic altar takes the shape of approximately a cube, which resembles the Tomb of the Lord. In that, it varies considerably from western altars that till recently consisted of a plate fitted upon one pillar, and sometimes four or five pillars.

(2) It is invariably detached and stands clear in the middle of the Sanctuary, a practice that had been copied from the heavenly altar as mentioned in the Book of Revelation. St. John says, "And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God" (Revelations 9:13).

During the service, the presbyter walks around it, offering incense and secretly praying the litanies of peace, fathers and gatherings, as if he asks for the church, her ministers and congregation before the Divine Throne, or as if the Divine Throne descends among the assembled church to receive her persistent supplications about the fulfillment of her message, namely bringing the entire world unto Him.

On the contrary, western altars are often placed directly adjacent to the eastern wall; a tradition that came into light towards the second part of the middle centuries.

(3) Often it is made of stone, marble or brick, but exceptions exist. For example, in the new Cathedral of St. Mark at Cairo, a bronze altar is in use, which was presented to our church from the Russian church. Other wooden altars appear in overseas and in some temporary churches within Egypt.

(4) It must be hollow so that relics of saints can be kept inside or beneath it. Nevertheless, recent trends tend to keep these relics in a container next to the icon of the saint to enable the people to kiss it and receive their blessing.

On the eastern side of the altar there exists a small opening showing an interior recess or cavity, which was used during persecution to hide the Holy Gifts when necessary.

(5) In the Coptic Church, the choir is usually raised three steps above the rest of the Nave, while the sanctuary is often raised one step above the choir. Yet the altar is never raised above the sanctuary, but is fitted directly on its ground, as directed by the divine commandment (Exodus 20:26).

Exceptions to this were found in the desert churches, where the altar is constructed on a step or a platform above the floor of the sanctuary.

The philosophy behind this rule seems to be that the gates of heaven are opened before the presbyter upon his entry to the sanctuary. Hence there is no need to ascend on a platform to offer the sacrifice lest he should fall into vainglory, counting himself above his spiritual brothers and children.

(6) It is known that Coptic altars are bare of any form of engravings, even shapes of the cross, following the divine commandment that the use of tools in the formation of

the altar will pollute it (Exodus 20:25). All relevant ornaments appear at the canopy that surmounts the altar.

The Niche

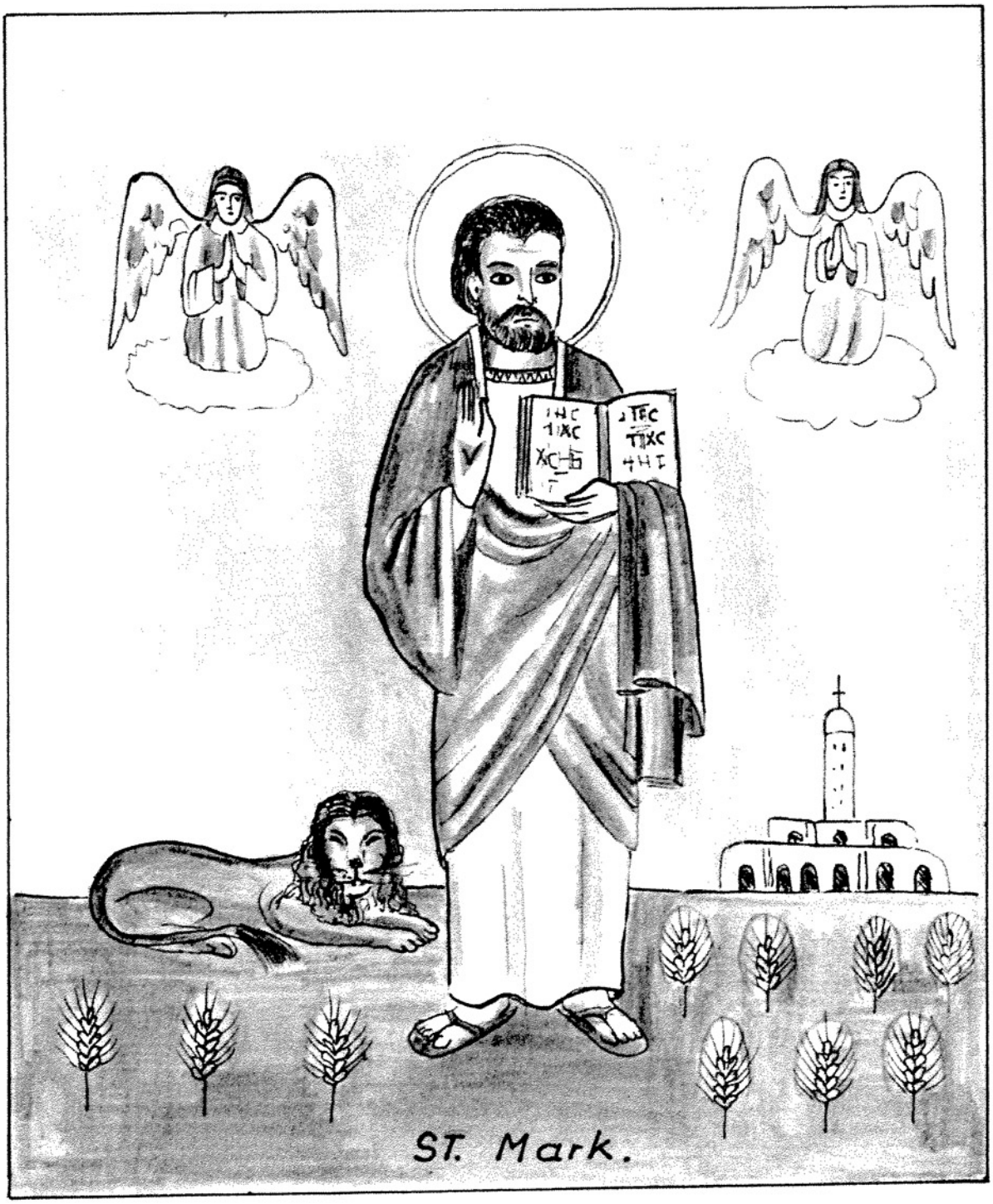
The Niche is the apse that represents the eastern wall of the sanctuary, which surrounds the tribune. It is often occupied with the icon of the Lord Jesus Christ coming on the cloud, carried by the Cherubim and the Seraphim, the four Living creatures, with the twenty-four heavenly Presbyters offering incense. The Lord appears holding the planet earth with one hand, for He is the Almighty one, and the pastoral rod with the other hand, for He is the Shepherd and Redeemer who liberated men from the captivity of sin.

Thus in this sense, the Niche represents the bosom of God, for the Lord longs for His church, and she waits for His coming.

In front of this icon, a sanctuary lamp that is permanently lit, is fitted. It is known as 'the Perpetual lamp' and represents the star which appeared to the wise men and guided them to where the Lord was born.

Directly above this icon, in most cases, there is a small window (aperture), from which the sun beams enter at sunrise.

NOTES


ST. Mark.

OCTOBER
FIFTH SUNDAY

THE CHURCH THE HOUSE OF GOD (IV)
The Icons

Please read your notes, texts, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To show that the icons in their authentic reality hold an evangelic message. We would like to explain the importance of the Icons in the church.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified" (Galatians 3:1)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction:**

When we look carefully at the icons, we do not stop at looking at colours, wood or the beauty of the art. We must raise the thinking behind colours and material to the person in the icon. Then by looking at the icon of a Saint, for example, we read the story of his or her life at a glance loaded with new feelings from his or her enlightened life.

The picture of a Saint is his/her name and signature which he/her left on earth as a witness for Christ. As you accept his/her icon, you accept the Saint and you also accept the Lord Jesus who sent him/her.

The icons that we see on the walls of the church have special prayers for their consecration during the Divine Liturgy. During this consecration the Bishop anoints these icons with the holy myroun that is the seal of the Holy Spirit. Remember that this holy myroun is used for people right after their baptism. In

the consecration of the icons as well, the Bishop blows from his mouth the blow of the Holy Spirit so that the icon gains strength from the Holy Spirit for healing and accepting of prayers. With all these prayers and consecration, the icon takes a holy status in the church and takes a special honour. Then we can kneel, respect, present incense and worship the person of God in it.

But for the icon, which is not consecrated with the anointment of El-Myroun and the blow of the Holy Spirit, we only respect the Saint in it but we should not kneel or present incense or anything as we do when we worship God.

There is no surprise then when you see the faithful in the church come to the icons in full respect and touching the icon with their fingers seeking blessings from God and the holy myroun with which the picture was consecrated. The holy myroun carries traces from the ointment with which the Body of the Master Christ was anointed.

The miracles that happen through the holy icons are due to three factors: faith of the sick person, intercession of the Saint in the icon and the strength of the holy myroun.

- **Historical Glance about the Icons**
  - **In the Old Testament:**
    - God prohibited making pictures or statues because the Jews could not make a difference between Veneration and worship "You shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything ..... you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I [am], the Lord your God." (Exodus 20:4-5). However, God designed the Tabernacle as a whole and it came as a superb icon exhibiting heaven "As Moses was divinely instructed when the was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain" (Exodus 25:40).
    - The Bronze serpent was a source of healing: "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live'. So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived" (Numbers 21:8-9).
  - **In the New Testament:**
    - "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (Colossians 1:15).

- ✞ "…who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We must learn from the icons several lessons in our lives.

(2) We must also respect and honour the icons, especially the consecrated icons.

SONGS

I LOVE MY BEAUTIFUL CHURCH

I love my beautiful church
Where I find my joy

the house of our Lord
and everything I need

Jesus comes to stay with us
Giving everyone His blessings

granting us His help
and the heavenly peace

We see the holy saints
Praying always for those here

and the martyrs gather around
who are asking for their help

In front of the altar
Together with the deacons

Abouna is praying there
and it will be then in Heaven

In the liturgy we pray
The Holy spirit also comes

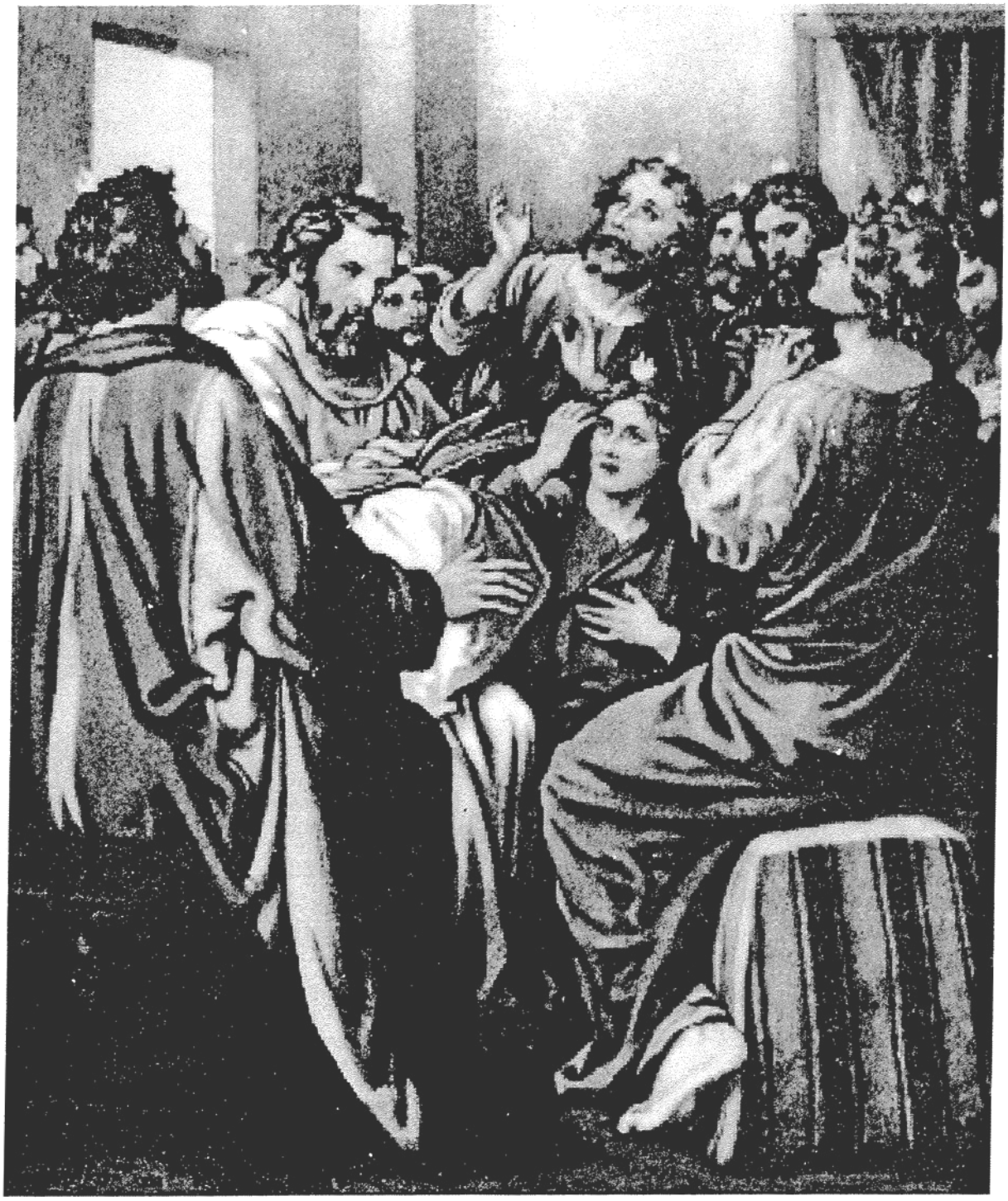
and the angels are there
blessing us in His power

We share the feast of His Body
And before we leave the Church

drink His Blood given for us
everyone takes Orbana

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.



NOVEMBER
FIRST SUNDAY

THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (I)
"Patience" (Long suffering)

Please read Galatians 5:16-26, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
This is the first lesson in a four-lesson series on the fruits of the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we will focus on patience (Long suffering) as a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

MEMORY VERSE:

> **"Sir, let it alone this year also" (Luke 13:8)**

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction:**
In Galatians 5:19-23, St. Paul compares "the works of the flesh" with "the fruit of the spirit". "The works of the flesh are evident which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissension, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control".
In the Grade Five and Six Program we covered the fruits of "love, joy, peace and kindness". Let us review them briefly.

1) Love
Love is the basis for all virtues. St. Paul describes the practical side of love: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is

not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

2) Joy

Christianity is the message of joy. St. Paul said, "And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 1:6).

3) Peace

Peace comes from love and joy. St. Paul said, "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

4) Kindness

Kindness is the opposite of aggressiveness. It is one of the qualities of the saints; St. Paul said, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering" (Colossians 3:12).

As Christians, who have accepted the Holy Spirit when we were baptized and have received the sacrament of Chrismation, the evidence that the Holy Spirit is working inside us is to show the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. In this lesson we will concentrate on patience or long-suffering as a fruit of the Holy Spirit given to us from God.

☩ **The Meaning of Patience or Long Suffering:**

It means to be slow to get angry, it is the ability to withstand the false accusations of others. Our Master Christ gives us the deepest example in long-suffering.

At the end of every hourly prayer in the Agpeya, we pray to God, referring to Him as "the Christ, our God, who is long-suffering, plenteous in mercy and compassion".

☩ **God is Patient with Us:**

Please read Luke 13:6-9. In this parable the owner of the vineyard gives the unfruitful fig tree another chance: one more year.

Peter denied our Lord Jesus, but our Lord gave him enough chances to repent. In fact, our Lord Jesus gave Peter special attention to help him, with great patience, to repent and become one of the faithful disciples.

Our Lord Jesus was very patient with Jerusalem: "How often I wanted to gather your children together...." (Matthew 23:37).

✞ **The Result of Not Using God's Patience:**

After Jesus tried so many times with Jerusalem and they did not accept.... He said, "See! Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38).

In the same way, God loves us and He is patient with us but this does not mean that we abuse God's patience and delay repentance. In fact the patience of God is to lead us to repentance.

✞ **We Must be Patient with Others:**

If we are patient with other people, we must not get angry at them. When the heart is full of anger or the heart lacks of love, then we become impatient and fail to cooperate or even understand people.

✞ **Up to what limit we must be patient:**

Please read Matthew 18:15-22. Peter asked the Lord Jesus "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22). The intention here is not the numbers, but is actually meant to be almost infinite.

Patience in discussions with others. The Christian person announces his or her opinion in love and kindness. If you have a friend at school or a younger brother or sister at home who is causing troubles for you, you have to be patient with him and do not get angry.

A good example for patience is "Job". He was tempted and lost everything. His wife became impatient and said to him to forget about God and die. But he replied to her: you talk like an ignorant; do we accept good things from God and we get angry when we get bad things. Job stayed patient until God gave him back all what he lost twice.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) In dealing with others we must not get angry. We must practice patience by having an open mind. We must pray that God give us patience as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

(2) If we are passing through difficulties, instead of focusing on them and become afraid or sad, let us learn to divert our attention and focus on God and His love for us. This way we will become happy, peaceful and more patient.

SONGS

WHEN THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart
I will love as Jesus loves

When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart
I will pray as David Prayed

When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart
I will preach as Peter preached

When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart
I will serve as St. Paul served

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book

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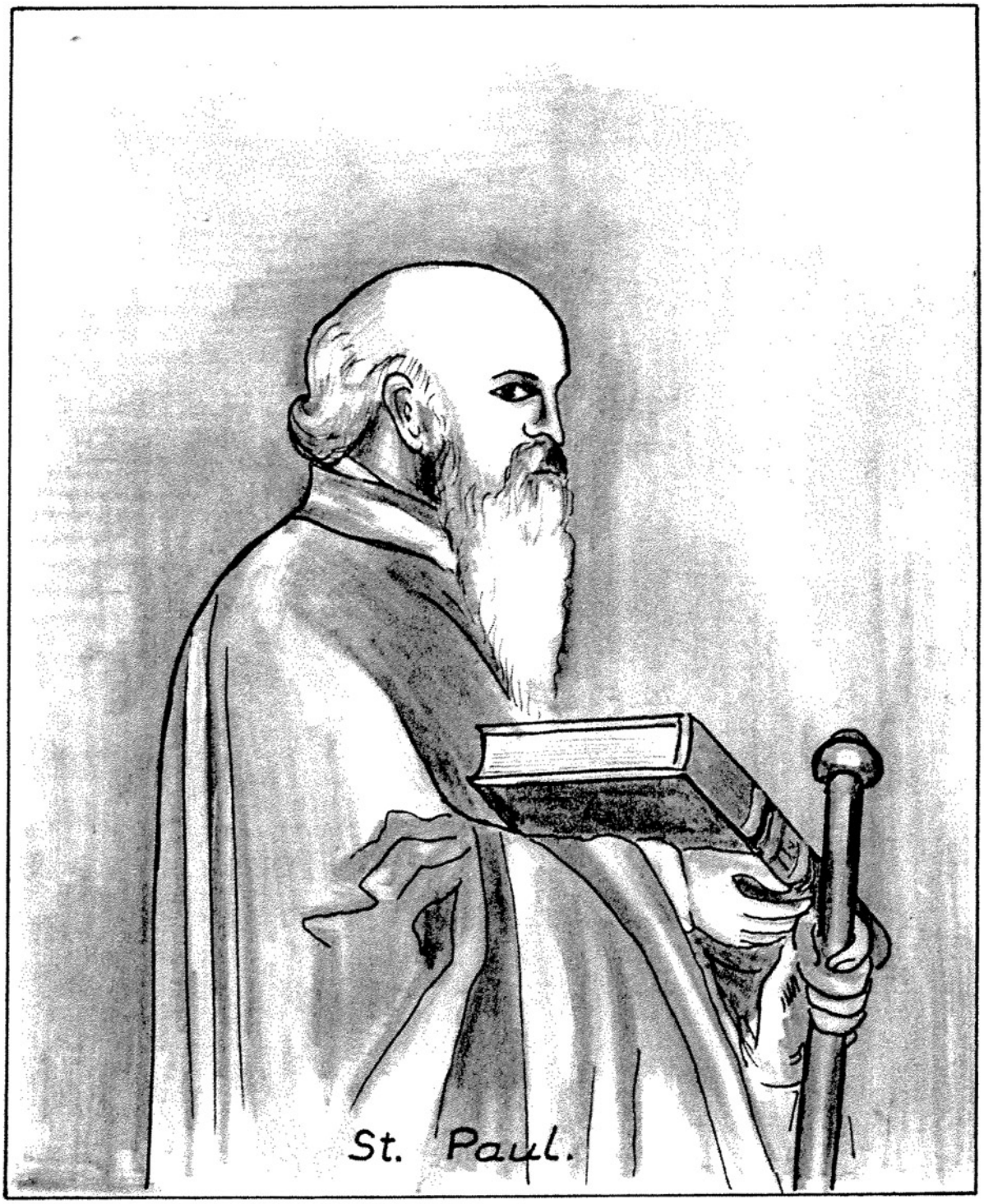

St. Paul.

NOVEMBER
SECOND SUNDAY

THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (II)
"Kindness, Goodness and Gentleness"
(How to deal with people?)

Please read the attached material entitled "How to deal with people?", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
This is lesson two in a four-lesson series about "the fruits of the Holy Spirit". In this lesson we learn how to deal with people having the fruits of the Holy Spirit working in us.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly…And whatever he does shall prosper" (Psalm l: l-3)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction:**

As a Christian who has the Holy Spirit inside me, I must "walk in the Spirit". The Holy Spirit must show real signs in my every day life "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22). In this lesson we will concentrate on "kindness, goodness and gentleness". These three fruits of the Holy Spirit are related. It is important to emphasize here that the personal attributes obtained as fruit of the Holy Spirit (e.g. kindness, goodness and gentleness) far exceeds those obtained from the world.

☩ **Kindness:**

Kindness is the reverse of aggressiveness or severity and this is what St. Paul is explaining. "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: 'on those who fell, severity; but toward you; goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off' (Romans 11:22). St. Paul also mentioned that kindness is one of the characters of the Saints "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering" (Colossians 3:12).

In the Sermon on the mountain, our Lord Jesus Christ in the "beatitudes" mentions that the people who are kind or merciful will gain the mercy of God "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

Examples of people who were very kind:

☩ St. Mary was so kind when she visited Elizabeth to help her during her pregnancy.

☩ St. Bishoy, one time while he was rushing with a group of monks towards the monastery to celebrate a feast, they met a very old man who asked them to carry him to the church. All the monks rushed to the monastery leaving the old man except St. Bishoy. St. Bishoy preferred to carry the old man to the church and be late. He carried him and walked slowly to the monastery. When they reached the gate the old man became very light and disappeared. This old man was the Lord Jesus. Our Lord Jesus appears and blesses the kind people.

☩ **Goodness:**

Kindness results in and is related to goodness. Goodness is the behaviour of doing good. St. Paul said, "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" (Romans 15: 14).

Judging other people does not go with goodness. When we judge other people and look at their sins, this becomes an evidence that we do not love them.

One of the monks committed a sin and a council was held to judge him. They invited St. Moses the black. He refused repeatedly but because of their insisting he went and carried a bag full of sand with a hole in it and entered the council room. When they saw him they asked, "What are you doing?" He said I am carrying my sins at my back and coming today to judge other people. On hearing this, they left the monk who sinned and did not judge him. This is

"goodness" from St. Moses the black: he taught the other monks a lesson and did not judge another monk.

Looking only at my mistakes and sins, seeking God's help and doing my best against the devil as well as helping others, go hand in hand with goodness.

Examples:

The parable of the "Pharisee and the tax collector" (Luke 18: 10-14) and the Canaanite woman who won the mercy of Jesus on her daughter by her good words and her good feelings (Matthew 15: 22-28).

✞ **Gentleness:**

"Gentleness" is related to meekness. A person who is gentle does not get angry with people. The gentle (or meek) individual is quiet. Our Lord Jesus said "Blessed are the meek. For they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). The Lord Jesus Himself was described that He "does not speak loudly and no one hears his voice in the street". Jesus also said, "Learn from Me because I am meek and humble in heart."

Our Lord Jesus was very gentle in all his treatments especially with the sinners; for example: with the Samaritan woman when He met her beside the well, He said to her, "you have replied correctly" . When she said that she had no husband, He was very gentle with her.

Explain, “Blessed are the meek (or the gentle), for they shall inherit the earth”. A meek individual does not treat other people in an aggressive way. All people feel comfortable to talk or live with a meek individual. When this individual's journey on earth is completed, his friends and all the people who dealt with him still remember him. Even after he left the world by years and years, his name is still mentioned and remembered by all the people because he was meek. That is what it means by "They shall inherit the earth". On the reverse an individual who is tough and aggressive with people, they would like to forget about him soon. As the Bible said in Proverbs "The memory of the righteous lasts forever."

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

✞ Kindness, goodness and gentleness as fruit of the Holy Spirit must be real and coming from the heart and not just an external behaviour.

SONGS

WHEN THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart
I will love as Jesus loves

When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart
I will pray as David Prayed

When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart
I will preach as Peter preached

When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart
I will serve as St. Paul served

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

How To Deal With People?
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

There are many ways which enable you to succeed in dealing with people and winning their hearts. By that, you can lead them, through love, to spirituality, as the Bible says: "And he that wins souls is wise. " (Prov. 11:30)

1. In your own life, present the ideal that people are longing for.
2. Do not seek what people have, and they will love you. Do not make others feel that you are their rival who wants to take what they possess or what they are trying to obtain.
3. Endure other's weaknesses and win him by your patience, forgiveness and open-heartedness. He will surely regret what he has done to you when he sits by himself.
4. Praise others and make them aware of your appreciation. Make them feel that you know their good deeds and admire them.
5. Respect others and treat everyone politely, not only the elders or those you are obliged to regard, but also the young and those who are younger and lower in grade than you.
6. Work for building people, not destroying them.
7. Do not repeatedly rebuke people, and if you have to do it, try not to hurt or mistrust anyone. Do not pick on them for a word or action and avoid making them feel that you stand out as a critic or enemy to them.
8. Find excuses for others and try your best to defend them in a rightful way, not through hypocrisy.
9. Be always ready to give and sacrifice and whoever you can't help, offer him a nice word, a smile, or a real compliment. Be up to your duties to all without failing.
10. Treat people with modesty and humility delicacy and gentleness. Gentleness is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit as the Apostle says in Gal.5 : 22, "But
the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness... "
11. Understand people and help them to understand you, quietly and with a good spirit. By doing this, you'll be able to live with them in mutual understanding, love and peace.
12. Share in people's joys and sorrows, "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. " (Rom. 12:15) Do not miss a chance to comfort people's hearts.

Moses

NOVEMBER
THIRD SUNDAY

THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (III)
"Faithfulness"

Please read Hebrews 11:6-40, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
This is lesson three in a four-lesson series about the fruit of the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we focus on faith as a fruit of the Holy Spirit inside the heart of the believer that leads his or her life.

MEMORY VERSE:

"And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith " (1 John 5:4)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **Introduction:**
  - Life of faith in God is the corner stone of a righteous life leading to a peaceful life here on earth and to eternal life. Faith is established on full obedience of God and accepting all things from Him, even the unseen. This acceptance is only possible by the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul said "But without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6).
  - **Please read Hebrews 11:6-40** which shows some of the heroes of faith in the Old Testament. Examples of these faithful people are Noah, Abraham and Moses.
  - Please summarize their lives of faith as mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11. The faith in their hearts showed clearly in their actions.

- **Faith is the Only Solution:**
  - A question is frequently asked, “How can a person overcome the world with all its attractions and influences?” This question was so difficult to the wise and philosophers but the children of God know the answer in a very simple way. Faith is the only answer.
  - A person who is born from God overcomes the world with his or her faith. Where are then the world's problems and lusts? These problems disappear because of the faith in God and giving our life in His hands in full trust that He takes care of it. Faith is passing over from the touchable to the untouchable things. It is passing from death to life.
  - Faith is the firm belief in God, the kingdom of God and eternity. A man from the world is struggling with the contradiction between earthly and heavenly things and by faith has only one priority: heaven and eternity.

- **Examples of Faithfulness in Our Church:**
  - St. Stephen "being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). The people around him wanted to put an end to his life, but the faith inside him was beyond their limited view and he saw his future in heaven.
  - The church proved that it is living above all the persecutions by faith. Thousands and thousands of martyrs defied the sword with their faith. They won their eternal life and also attracted many people to Christianity.
  - The monks gave a great example of their faith. They left all what they had and possessed nothing. They dedicated all their life for the Saviour.
  - The church in the Apostolic age proved that victory over the materialistic things is by faith. The faithful gave up their money and stood in front of God free from relying on anything that secures the future. In every generation the faithful are rejected because of the truth and they are persecuted because of the word of God. But they come out with complete joy because they were made worthy to suffer for the Holy name of the Lord.
  - With faith we can get eternal life, enjoy the salvation of the Lord and the heavenly crown. We hope to have faith so that we do not become like the rich people who rely on the possessions they have.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us learn from the great multitude of saints in our church to live the life of faith: depend and rely on the hands of God to lead us to heaven.
(2) Let us pray for God to strengthen our faith. Let us be simple and submit our life in God's hands.

SONGS

YOU ARE MY HIDING PLACE

You are my hiding place
you always fill my heart with songs of deliverance
Whenever I am afraid
I will trust You
I will trust You
Let the weak say I am strong
In the strength of the Lord

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Faith

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Faith is not just a set of rigid beliefs that we learn by from theology and teachings of the church. But faith is rather a deep inner conviction and complete confidence in God, His attributes and His work.
Our faith in God, His existence, care and protection gives us inner peace and comfort in the heart and in the mind. It gives us confidence that as far as God exists. He cares about us more than we do about ourselves. Therefore we have to live in this peace and continue in it.

The faithful never becomes disturbed because anxiety contradicts faith... faith in God's love, care and protection...

If one believed in God's existence everywhere, one would have an inner feeling of the holiness of any place, since God is always there. As he feels secure in the presence of God, he also feels the necessity to be precise in all his actions, knowing that God sees, hears and observes all his deeds...

In every sin, one says with the righteous Joseph, *"How then can 1 do this great wickedness, and sin against God? (Gen. 39:9).*

One's faith that God reads one's thoughts and knows the secrets of his heart, his intentions and feelings; such faith grants him modesty in his thoughts and feelings, making him bashful of God who examines all these emotions...

One's faith in the world to come and the day of judgment when he gives an account of all his deeds, thoughts, feelings and sayings, makes him sure of this perishable world. One then sees the need to be prepared for that fearful day working for eternal life after death...

One keeps this thought in his heart saying with David, *"Lord make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. " (Ps 39:4)*
Faith is not just to be mentally convinced but is an action inside the heart, to lead one through his whole life...

It is not a specific moment where Man accepts God. It is a life-time job, where one lives in confidence that, *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. "* (Heb 11:1)

Therefore, the word faith in most cases means the whole Christian life with all its beliefs and deeds...

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

HOLY BIBLE

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

St. Mena.

NOVEMBER
FOURTH SUNDAY

THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (IV)
"Self-control"
Review of the Life of "St. Mena"
(in commemoration of his martyrdom feast)

Please read Galatians 5:16-23, the attached material entitled "Exercise in self-control", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
This is lesson four in a four-lesson series on the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Self-control is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Christian self-control is deep from inside and not only from outside.

MEMORY VERSE:

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness" (2 Peter 1: 5-6)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **Introduction:**
  - Self-control is not only a good social character but is also a gift of the Holy Spirit. An individual who is full of the Holy Spirit will have the ability of self-control with the help of the Holy Spirit to a much greater extent than a normal man of the world.
  - Self-control means the ability to say "No" to the things that are not agreeable with the commandments of God. Give examples in our society and how to say no to the various things, like parties, smoking, saying untrue things and only caring for the money and materialistic things. "And those who are Christ's

have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24). This means full control on our bodies.

- ✞ The Christian self-control is deep inside and not only from outside behaviour "Or 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? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20). This means we have to control our desires and our bodies.

✞ **How do we achieve Self-Control?**

(1) Realize:

First we have to realize that the Lord Jesus Christ is the way and life. We belong to Him, so we have to follow His footsteps in our lives. In addition, without the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we must realize that self efforts are inadequate. St. Paul said, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

(2) Efforts:

We have to try our best to have self-control. As a first step, we must put in our minds to control our tongues. St. James said, "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless" (James 1:26).

(3) Prayers:

We must ask God to give us strength, self-control and wisdom. St. James said, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5-8).

(4) The Strength of the Word of God:

We cry to God in our prayers and God answers our concern in his Holy Bible. St. Paul advised his disciple Timothy "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of

God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

(5) Repentance and Confession:

We have to declare our sins to the father of confession and be determined to stop. Repentance does not mean, for example, that I feel I am lying and I try to stop lying. But repentance in the Christian meaning is standing against one's desires, getting to the bottom of the causes and the roots of the evil things, and removing it. The father of confession can help a lot in this area with guidance of the Holy Spirit to Him.

The word repentance in the Greek language is "Metaniah" which means that man leaves his previous thinking and rise to a new thinking that is according to God's will. St. Paul said, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

(6) Communion:

We get complete forgiveness and our ability for self-control increases. Our Lord Jesus said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56).

✞ **Review of St. Mena's Life:**

***Note: Please ask them first what do they know about St. Mena's life?**

- ✞ A great Saint and Martyr.
- ✞ A young man, only 24 years old at his martyrdom.
- ✞ Emphasize the virtue of self-control in St. Mena's life. • A man of miracles.
- ✞ A brave Coptic soldier who received three crowns: one of martyrdom, the second of celibacy and third of ascetic life.
- ✞ We celebrate his feast on the 24th of November.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Self-control is an evidence of spiritual maturity and it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

(2) We must cooperate with and give guidance to the Holy Spirit inside us so that He works and gives us spiritual maturity and self-control.

(3) We have to exercise our self-control in various situations of anger, emotions, lusts, thoughts…etc.

SONGS

SAINT MENA

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." (Mat 10:28)

St. Mena the martyr
Always among us

beloved of Jesus
we truly love you

Oh hero you were not afraid
You called with courage

in front of the crowds
"Oh my Lord Jesus“

Through the sufferings
You stood unyielding

you kept our strong faith
Jesus gave you strength

Your happiness was great
Angels carried you

when they killed you
to the eternal joy

The martyrdom's crown
Intercede for us

you received from God
before our Lord

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Exercises on Self-Control
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DECEMBER
FIRST SUNDAY

THE PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS IN OUR CHURCH

Please read the attached material entitled "Doxology for Kiahak", "Nights of Prayers", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To learn the Christian way of preparing for Christmas in our church.

MEMORY VERSE:

"'Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst' says the Lord" (Zechariah 2:10)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **The Coming of Christ was the Desire of All Nations:**

The Israelites' keen desire about the coming of Christ and His salvation of mankind was expressed in the prophecies in several verses of the Old Testament:

"You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up your strength, and come and save us" (Psalm 80:1-2).

"Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, we have waited for You; the desire of our soul is for Your name and for the remembrance of You. With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:8-9).

"My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning - Yes, more than those who watch for the morning" (Psalm 130:6).

In addition of other prophecies to those previously mentioned, our Lord Jesus Himself expressed that same keen desire of the fathers in the Old Testament when He said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Therefore, all nations were waiting for the Saviour to come.

When we prepare to celebrate for the happiest occasion in Man's life, the birth of Christ, we must rejoice and be exceedingly glad. The birth of Christ is not a historical event that happened about 2,000 years ago and that is it. The birth of Christ was the beginning towards His birth in your/our heart(s) and in your/our life. Our Lord Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).

✞ **Our Church's Liturgy for the Month of Keiahek:**

a) The church in its celebration before Christmas aims at emphasizing the important events of the occasion and to refresh the memory of the people of these events that happened before the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. This will positively affect their feelings, prayers and spiritual life.

b) The Gospel readings in the four Sundays before Christmas are taken from the gospel according to St. Luke Chapter l, which focuses on the events before the birth of our Lord Jesus.

c) The Hymns are selected to focus on the joyful events before Christmas.

✞ **Before the Reading of Acts:**

"Hail to you O Gabriel the great Archangel. Hail to the announcer of the good news to the Virgin Mary".

✞ **After the Gospel:**

For the first and second Sundays "We greet you with Gabriel; the angel saying: Peace be with you O filled with grace; the Lord is with you. This is why we honour you; O mother of God; pray to the Lord; to forgive us our sins".

For the third and fourth Sundays "You deserve to be honoured; with your cousin Elizabeth "Blessed are you among women; and blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus.", "This is why we honour you; O mother of God; pray to the Lord; to forgive us our sins".

☩ **Part of the Fraction for Advent is:**

"You sent your Only Begotten son Who abides everlastingly in your bosom, Jesus Christ, the Word and True Light. He was conceived immaculately in the Virgin Womb and was born of the ever-virgin St. Mary. The angels praise Him and the heavenly hosts chant unto Him, saying: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Your holy glory."

☩ **The Keiahek Nights Known as "Seven and Four Praises":**

During the Keiahek month, which is the month just before Christmas, the church celebrates on Saturday nights for several hours, the Keiahek special prayers, songs and hymns.

This is composed of: Midnight prayers, the four canticles, "Howces" and the seven "Theotokias". The word "Howce" is a Coptic word, which means "Praise". The word "Theotokia" is from the Greek word, "Theotokos" which means "the mother of God". The seven "Theotokias" of the seven days of the week are all used on the Saturday Keiahek night.

So, the Keiahek night is a night of prayers and joyful hymns most of which are for the Virgin Mary who gave birth to our Lord Jesus Christ.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We must learn to spend a night in prayers and singing. This will help us to grow in our relationship with the Lord.

(2) The spiritual way of preparing for Christmas is distinctly different from that of the world. We must not participate in the materialistic type of celebrations that precedes Christmas.

SONGS

DOXOLOGY FOR KEIAHEK

☩ For if I talk about you: the cherubim chariot: my tongue will never get tired from glorifying You.

☩ For I, indeed go to: the house of David: to gain a voice by which: I can utter your honour.

☩ For God has stood: at the borders of Judea: and has given his voice cheerfully: and the tribe of Judea accepted it.

☩ The Virgin is the tribe of Judea: who has given birth to our Savoir: and after His birth: she remained virgin.

☩ And with the voice of. Gabriel the angel: we give hail to you: O Mary the mother of God.

☩ Hail to you from God: Hail to you from Gabriel: Hail to you from us: we magnify you saying, Hail to you.

☩ Gabriel the Holy Angel: announced the virgin: and after he saluted her: he strengthened her saying:

☩ Fear not Mary: For you have found: favour with God: you shall conceive: and bear a son.

☩ And the Lord God: shall give to Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever.

Vigils

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Among the beautiful things in our Church is the Vigil..

It started as a throught among the ministers and quickly spread among the people. No church neglects it especially in the nights of Koiak. Also, it became an established custom at the New Year's Eve.

Every church does its utmost to prepare an interesting spiritual pogramme for the night of prayer, to help the believers to be vigilant and keep their thoughts, feelings and hearts within the spiritual act.

The programme includes prayers from The Agpeya, other prayers, hymns, chants, spiritual readings, sermons, questions and answers.

And some churches present some hymns, sung by their choirs.

The night ends with Raising of Incense, celebrating the Holy Mass and partaking of the Holy Communion. Then the people leave feeling that they had spent a spiritual night with God, which matter encourages them to request its repetition.

The idea of the nights of prayer is very old. The Lord Jesus Himself put its basis as He used to spend the whole night praying. It also has roots in the Old Testament, as David the Prophet says, *"Behold bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who by night stand in the house of the Lord... Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and bless the Lord. "* (Ps. 134:1-2).

The church divided the midnight prayer into three divisions or watches. The monks are used to perform the midnight prayer in the rites of Praising hymns, but, for the people to spend the night in prayers is a great evidence which shows the spirituality of the church.

While the world spends its nights in fun and pleasure, the church stays up to pray....

Wakeful with God, lifting the hearts of its children to Him....

Participating with the angels and the spirits of the Saints in praising.

The martyrs and confessors - even when in prison - spent the whole night in prayer. Also, Paul the Apostle used to do so.

The prayers of all these people were a kind of preaching too; which gives an idea of the God-loving and prayer-loving heart...

It is nice to train our children to keep awake during the nights of prayer. They will take an example from their parents as well as from the church and the picture will be engraved in their minds and hearts.

DECEMBER
SECOND SUNDAY

THE FULLNESS OF THE TIME:
The Birth of John the Baptist
and the Birth of Jesus are Announced

Please read Luke 1:5-38, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
Review the two events and make sure all the details are known. The emphasis here is on "the fullness of the time".

MEMORY VERSE:

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4: 4-5).

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **The Birth of John the Baptist is Announced (Luke 1: 5-25):**

When the fullness of the time became near and the time has come for God to incarnate and it was necessary for someone to come before Him to prepare the way in front of Him, the Lord sent Gabriel the angel to preach the good news to Zacharias. Zacharias and his wife were described as: "…righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). Do we accept all the commandments of God? Or do we select only what we think is suitable for us? We must walk in all of the commandments of God.

✞ **The Birth of Christ is Announced (Luke 1: 26-38):**

At the fullness of the time, God sent Gabriel the angel to St. Mary to tell her "you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shall call His name

Jesus…will be called Son of the Highest". Mary answered "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

Observe the greetings of the angel to St. Mary and her modesty "Behold the maidservant of the Lord".

✞ The Fullness of the Time:

The subject of the "fullness of the time" has its meaning in the events leading to the birth of Jesus Christ and has its meaning also in our lives and our relationship with God and people.

God promised Adam and Eve with salvation. But this salvation has been fulfilled at the fullness of time. God was preparing everything for the birth of His Son Jesus Christ. He had to prepare the pure Virgin who was humble and can withstand all these glories. He had to prepare John the Baptist who was like an "angel" to prepare the way in front of Him. He had to prepare the people to accept the incarnation and the salvation by the many prophecies and the symbols that were mentioned in the prophets' books. The people would be able then to accept the subject of salvation and the death of a pure person on behalf of a sinful person. The people can then accept a statement like this "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Therefore, all these preparations for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ was necessary and it had to be done gradually to suit the understanding of the people. Then all the events are compatible and happen in a fully coordinated manner.

God in His wisdom selects the time that He finds to be suitable. We cannot appreciate His wisdom but we must accept it "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:7).

The principle of the fullness of the time is also clear in nature. When we put a seed in the ground, it must take its time and go through various phases until it becomes a plant. We cannot rush it. Also the baby in his mother's womb has to take his or her time until the time becomes right for him or her to be born. We cannot rush that also.

In the story of Joseph we find a good example for the fullness of time in our lives. His brothers insulted him and threw him in the well. Joseph was sold as a slave and was very honest in Pharaoh's palace. With a false accusation he was put in jail. Years went by and God did not interfere to help Joseph. Joseph asked the chief butler saying "But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me, make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house" (Genesis 40:14). "Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him"

(Genesis 40:23). He forgot Joseph for two years. Then at the fullness of time which was selected by God sent help and saved Joseph. It was the best timing, in the best occasion that transferred Joseph from jail to rule all over Egypt and became the second man after Pharaoh.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) The suitable time for things to happen is not according to our understanding, but according to the Divine wisdom that is unlimited. We must not rush things.

(2) We have to abide with all the commandments of God not only what we like to abide with.

(3) When the event is great, the preparation for it must be great. The coming of the Messiah to our world is very great and took ages of preparation.

SONGS

THE FIERY BUSH

REFRAIN

The fiery bush that Moses had seen in the wilderness
Burning with fire from within and the bush was not consumed

a figure of the blessed Mother of the light who carried the Divine Ember
Nine full months in her womb, with a perpetual virginity.

I open my mouth and speak about the hidden mysteries
And honour Mary, the Mother of the Light *Blessed are you among women*

Gabriel announced to her the incarnation of the Word
She carried her Lord in her womb *Blessed are you among women*

David, you father , spoke of you with prophetic sayings
The God of gods became your son: *Blessed are you among women*

You are the Mother of your creator who came to save the human race
He came and de=welt in your womb *Blessed are you among women*

The forgiver of all sins the source of all blessings
He loved our race and took our form *Blessed are you among women*

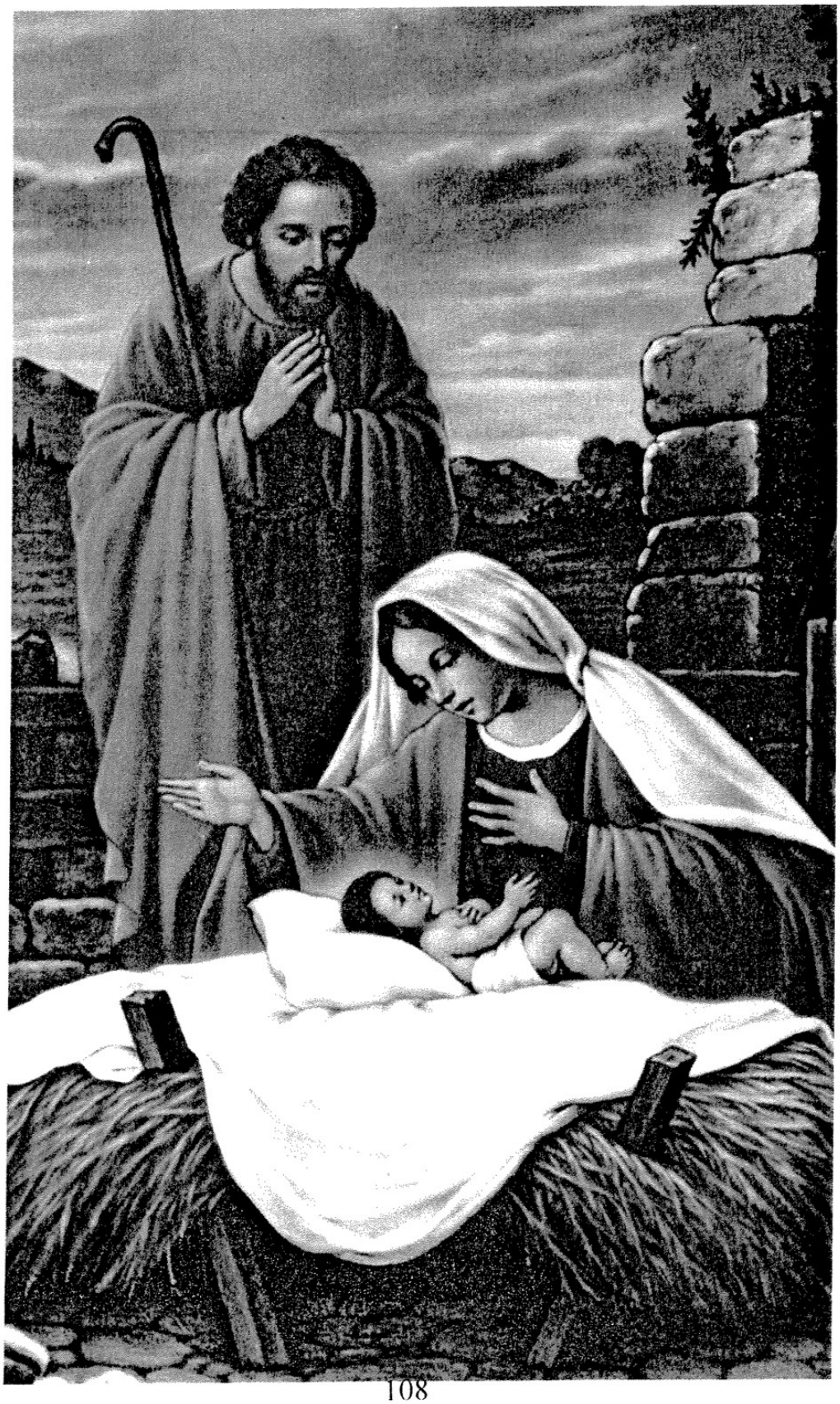
He bowed down the heavens and descended to earth
While still in His Father's bosom *Blessed are you among women*

Of all people, who has obtained what you received, O Mary?
All generations proclaim and say *Blessed are you among women*

O virgin Mary, we bless you, and praise by day and night
The One Who chose your goodness *Blessed are you among women*

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.



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DECEMBER
THIRD SUNDAY

MARY'S SONG OF PRAISE
The personality of our Lord Jesus

Please read Luke 1: 39-80, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To study St. Mary's visit to Elizabeth. The emphasis here is on the personality of our Lord Jesus Christ as St. Mary mentioned it in Luke 1: 49-55. We are also supposed to be Christ-like.

MEMORY VERSE:

> **"And His mercy is on those who fear him" (Luke 1:50)**

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction:**

St. Mary's visit to Elizabeth has a lot of lessons for all generations who are seeking a good example of love and expressing the love in merciful actions. Mary's trip shows that when a person is filled with the grace of the Lord, he or she becomes active and continuously does good.

As St. Mary entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth "The baby leaped in Elizabeth's womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit". When the words of St. Mary came to the ears of Elizabeth, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and the baby John the Baptist was also filled with the Holy Spirit. Only few words from St. Mary who was described by Archangel Gabriel as "highly favoured one" had this effect. This shows us that whatever we say has an effect on other people either, constructive or destructive. We must be careful to say only constructive things. When the Archangel Gabriel preached to St. Mary about the

birth of our Lord Jesus, he said about Him "...call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

☩ **The Lord's titles and characters as mentioned in St. Mary's Song of Praise (Luke 1:49-55):**

"For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and Holy is His name" (Verse 49).

Our Lord Jesus is "God Incarnate" and He is mighty. He created everything: heaven and earth and everything in them. Everything is easy for Him. St. Paul said "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Romans 1:20).

When we ask God something, even if it looks impossible for us, it is quite easy for Him to do. "And Holy is His name". God has no sin in Him. St. Paul said "For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). As our Lord Jesus is Holy, He also wants us, His children, to be holy. He wants us to reject Satan and all his darkness and fill our hearts with the true light of our Lord Jesus.

"And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation" (Verse 50).

Our Lord Jesus described Himself as "The Good Shepherd". "The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Our Lord Jesus during His ministry by flesh on earth was very merciful. He was merciful to the sinner woman who was caught in adultery and the Jews wanted to stone her, He was merciful to the Samaritan woman, he was merciful to the right hand robber and he was merciful in all His miracles. "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

"He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts" (Verse 51).

Our Lord Jesus gives His gifts and declares His mysteries to the humble, "I Praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babies. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight". Therefore, the proud cannot take the blessings of God, because "He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts".

"He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly" (Verse 52).

There are several examples in the Bible that show applications of this verse: the Lord accepted David who was modest as a king and rejected Saul who was the king and did not obey God, He selected St. Mary who was very poor and very humble and made her the mother of God and He selected His disciples, who were entrusted to spread Christianity all over the world, from among fishermen and very simple people.

"He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty" (Verse 53).

The people who feel hungry and in need of the grace of God have been given good things. On the other hand the people who are dependent on their money and do not feel that they are in need of God, were sent away empty handed. Indeed, their money cannot help them gain peace and happiness here on earth nor gain eternal life.

"He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever" (Verse 54-55).

The Lord has established a covenant with Abraham "I will establish My covenant with him (i.e. Isaac) for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him" (Genesis 17:19).

Also the Lord has promised David "The Lord has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it: I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body" (Psalm 132:11).

All these promises of the Old Testament, were fulfilled when our Lord Jesus Son of God came and took our flesh to save us. This verse (Luke 1:55) shows that St. Mary had a full realization that the baby she conceived by the Holy Spirit is the Messiah and the Saviour whom God had promised to the fathers.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) St. Mary declared some of the titles and the characters of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must be humble in all the activities of our lives to gain the blessings of God.

(2) Let us review our thinking and patterns of life whether we are proud and depending on materialistic things or we are lowly and depending on the mercy of God.

(3) Each one of us must try to become Christ-like. We must pray to God seeking that.

SONGS

THE FIERY BUSH

REFRAIN

The fiery bush that Moses had seen in the wilderness
Burning with fire from within and the bush was not consumed

a figure of the blessed Mother of the light who carried the Divine Ember
Nine full months in her womb, with a perpetual virginity.

I open my mouth and speak about the hidden mysteries
And honour Mary, the Mother of the Light *Blessed are you among women*

Gabriel announced to her the incarnation of the Word
She carried her Lord in her womb *Blessed are you among women*

David, your father, spoke of you with prophetic sayings
The God of gods became your son: *Blessed are you among women*

You are the Mother of your creator who came to save the human race
He came and dwelt in your womb *Blessed are you among women*

The forgiver of all sins the source of all blessings
He loved our race and took our form *Blessed are you among women*

He bowed down the heavens and descended to earth
While still in His Father's bosom *Blessed are you among women*

Of all people, who has obtained what you received, O Mary?
All generations proclaim and say *Blessed are you among women*

O virgin Mary, we bless you, and praise by day and night
The One Who chose your goodness *Blessed are you among women*

Recitation Curriculum:

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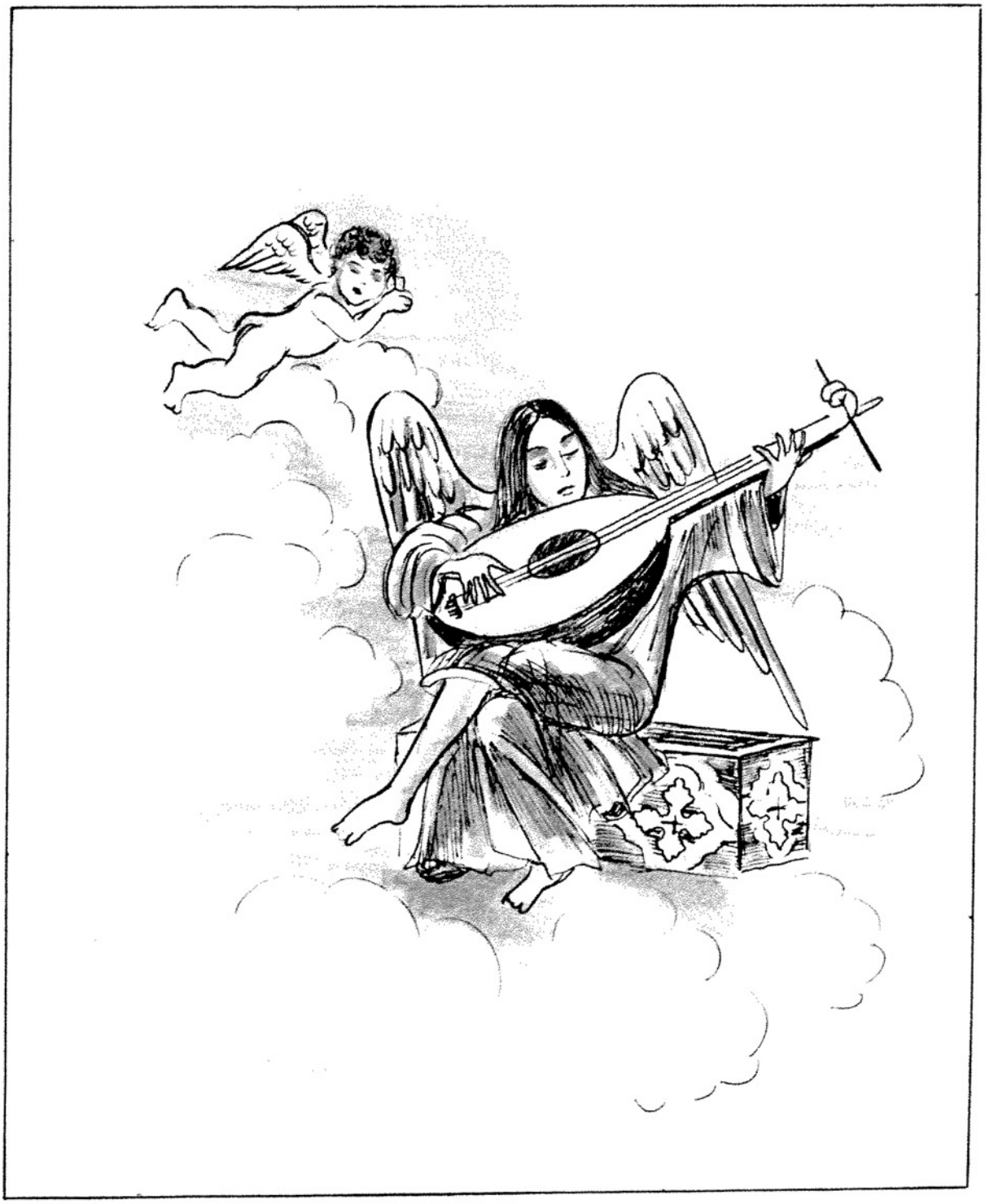


DECEMBER
FOURTH SUNDAY

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Christmas songs, preparation for Christmas party and preparation for the new year: thank God for the previous year, preparation for the New Year.

JANUARY
FIRST SUNDAY

THE NEW YEAR
(Life of Repentance)

Please read Luke 15:11-32, the attached material entitled "Repentance and its completeness", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To apply the life of repentance now and live with it all through next year and the rest of our lives. **True repentance needs commitment**.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrew 3: 7-8)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction: In the Beginning of a New Year:**

What did we do last year? What are we going to do this coming year for the benefit of our souls and for the kingdom of God on earth? What are we going to do for the sake of the day in which we are going to give account in front of God on what we have done?

How about our hearts, were they pure? Did we live our lives last year according to God's commandments?

The end of a year and the beginning of a new one is a good time to review our strategy in life. The strategy in life must be based upon developing a strong relationship with God. Step number one in this direction is to repent and the life of repentance becomes our resolution for the New Year.

✞ Meaning of Repentance:

The person regrets his bad actions and knows that these bad actions are not only harmful to himself but they also go against God's commandments. He must know that he is wrong without giving himself any excuse and be ready to stop doing those bad things.

He must be determined to stand against his lusts to remove them from his heart.

The word repentance in the Greek language is "Metaniah" which means that man leaves his previous thinking and changes his thinking to a new one; as St. Paul said, "…be transformed by the renewing of your mind…" (Romans 12:2).

✞ How can a person repent?

First he must know his sins. To know his sins he must sit quietly with himself and review all his actions. Then he will realize that he did so many mistakes. The person is then on the road to repentance and soon he realizes that sin is his enemy. In order to repent, the person must give up depending on his own human ability and depend totally on God who can change him from inside. Coming back to God (i.e. repentance) is the work of God inside us and only the Holy Spirit can cut the evil things from its roots and all the darkness inside us is replaced by the light of God.

There are however, specific steps that one can do from his part to hand himself to the Holy Spirit to do the change:

a) Soul Searching:

The person must start by searching his situation to realize his miserable state and that he needs God badly "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger" (Luke 15:17).

b) Thinking of the Outcome of Sin:

The person must realize that sin deprives him from his peace here on earth and from his eternal life as well. St. John Chrysostom said "If you remembered your sin God will not make mention of it. But if you forget your sin God will not forget it".

c) Remembering God's Great Love to the Sinners:

God loved me and gave Himself up for me on the cross. Therefore, He will definitely accept me "I will arise and go to my, father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you". So the lost son had total confidence of the love of his father.

Now is a good time to review what we did last year and decide on some resolutions.

✞ **We Must not Delay Repentance:**

If the sound of the Holy Spirit came to your heart and you felt anxious to repent, do not delay even for a few minutes. It is possible that the incentive to repent will go away if you waited and you search for repentance and do not find it. Also if you delayed repentance, the devil will get ready for you and make a big war against your repentance because he knew already your intention to repent. "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart".

Many people who defer repentance never repent at all. Every time you defer repentance it means that you reject to make peace with God and prefer to be away from Him and you do not care about His love for you.

✞ **After We Repent We Must Go and Confess:**

As the sick man needs a doctor to give him medicine, also a sinner (and we are all sinners to various degrees) needs his father of confession to help him get over his sins and prays for him. Also when we confess we hear from God through the father of confession that our sins are forgiven.

✞ **How many times do we need to repent and confess?**

We need to repent everyday and review what we did, regret the bad things and ask God to help us to stop.

We must confess as frequent as can be seen by the father of confession: once a month or once every three weeks and so on.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us make the life of repentance as our resolution for the New Year.

(2) The importance of repentance stems from the fact that without it, salvation for us cannot be fulfilled. "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

SONGS

AGIOS O THEOS

" Holy , Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa 6:3)

Agios O theos
Agios Athanatos

Agios Ees-shiros
Amen. Alleluia

Holy, God, Holy
Holy, Immortal, Holy

Holy, Mighty, Holy
Amen. Alleluia

Alleluia is a word
Everywhere it is heard

that means praise ye the Lord
Amen. Alleluia

In all the universe
They praise Him with this verse

in heaven and on earth
Amen. Alleluia

Michael and Gabriel
They all praise Him as well

Raphael and Souriel
Amen. Alleluia

The heavenly Cherubim
They too glorify Him

and the mighty Seraphim
Amen. Alleluia

And the twenty four priests
And the four incorporeal Beasts

seated on golden seats
Amen. Alleluia

And all of God's
Animals and vegetation

from every race and nation
Amen. Alleluia

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Repentance and its Perfection

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Repentance has levels and steps that one follows:

1. The first step is the feeling of being in a bad condition and the desire to hange it. It is like what happened to the prodigal son, who came to himself and found that he is about to die of starvation. He found that the perfect solution is to return to his Father.

2. The second step is leaving sin and keeping away from all the ways that lead to it. What is meant by leaving sin is not to leave a particular sin but sin in general. At this point one starts to discover himself.

The more one grows in the spirit, the more he discovers new faults that he never realized before. Then he tries to get rid of them. He needs to pass various stages of purifying the self, till it returns to God's image.

3. In a life of repentance, leaving sin must be permanent and firm, with no return, so was the repentance of the Saints. We never heard that Augustine returned to sin once more. The same with Moses the Black, Mary the Egyptian and Pelagia.

Repentance, in the lives of all these Saints was a confirmed turn to God without returning to sin.

4. **The perfection of repentance, as the Saints said, is not just leaving sin, but hating it.**

The one who actually leaves sin, but continues longing for it in his heart, has not really repented. His heart has not yet repented. He is bound to have a relapse with action as well. Nevertheless, the heart is the basis. And the Lord says, "My Son, give me your heart. " (Prov 23:26). So repentance must be from the heart, and the heart becomes for God.

5. Such a repentant person cannot sin again, because all his feelings and desires become opposed to sin and would not accept it. Besides, he would not need to strive to keep away from sin. He automatically stays away from it because of his hatred to it.

6. **Real repentance must have fruits.**

As the Bible says, *"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance. " (Mt. 3:8)* And the first of these fruits is love for God which possesses the heart, changes the life and bears fruits of righteousness.

JANUARY
SECOND SUNDAY

THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

Please read Matthew 2: 1-12, John 1: 1-5, the attached material entitled "The Incarnation of the Word of God", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To try to understand the meaning of the incarnation of the word of God, and its effect on man. It is an honour and obligation to be a Christian.

MEMORY VERSE:

"And the Word became flesh" (John 1:14)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction:**

Start by reading Matthew 2:1-12 about the birth of the Lord Jesus and the joy of the wise men.
Then explain what is the meaning of the Incarnation (please read John 1:1-5) as follows:

✞ **Definition of the "WORD":**

The Greek expression for the "**WORD**" is "**LOGOS**" and it has no correspondence in other languages. LOGOS is the correct word and it means mind or wisdom or doctrine. The Gospel of St. John used the "Word" with this meaning about 36 times. Therefore, the "Word" is the image inherent in God who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, as St. Paul explained (Hebrews 1:3).

Also St. John said, "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:3-4). The Word has the same Divine nature, for He is eternal from the beginning "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

☩ The Word Became Flesh:

"...great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). God sent his only begotten Son the true "LOGOS" born from the **Virgin Mary** through the **Holy Spirit**.

Therefore Jesus is not a prophet but He is God Himself appearing in the flesh.

He came and took our flesh, announced His love for Adam and for ourselves and then He brought us to the kingdom of God.

Through the Incarnation we have met God. When Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus answered "Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father".

☩ The Incarnation is a Declaration of God's Love:

As God loved man and created him to enjoy happiness, love, and the Divine glory He came and took man's flesh and was incarnate to bring back to man the holy life, which he lost, and to give him Resurrection from the dead. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

☩ The Incarnation and Man:

As human nature was corrupted, St. Athanasius the Apostolic says that repentance could not satisfy the justice of God for Adam's sin. In addition, repentance cannot change the nature of man, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil…Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:14-18).

Since death was intimate to Adam's flesh, therefore, it was necessary for life to become intimate to the flesh so that when the flesh is clothed with life, death is then cut off.

✞ **The Meeting of Man with God:**

Through the Incarnation of God, man was able to meet God and this will continue to be so. St. Paul said "...by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh..." (Hebrews 10:20). Through Christ we can reach the Father. In Jesus Christ, man looks and sees God and the Father looks and sees man.

✞ **The end of the animal offerings:**

St. Paul said "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). The body of Christ became the only acceptable Lamb Who entered the Holies and found eternal salvation "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

✞ **Appearances of God in the Old Testament Before the Incarnation:**

God appeared (just as appearances not incarnation) to Abraham (Genesis 18), to Lot (Genesis 19), to Jacob (Genesis 28 and 32), to Moses (Exodus 3), to Joshua (Joshua 5) and to Samuel (1 Samuel 3).

But in the incarnation, which is the declaration of Christ about the heavenly Father, happened in the fullness of time when the Virgin Mary gave birth to the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) The incarnation of Christ changed the image that the people knew about God. God became near to man after He was hidden from Him because of the sin.

(2) With the Incarnation of Christ all nature was renewed. God came to our world from heaven to raise us to Him. He took our image to give us His image. He dwelt among us in our land to make us able to dwell with Him in heaven. "At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (John 14:20).

SONGS

WHAT CHILD IS THIS

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Lk 2:14)

What Child is this who laid to rest
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet

on St. Mary's lab is sleeping
while shepherds watch are keeping?

CHOROUS:
This: this is Christ the King
Haste, haste to bring Him laud

whom shepherds guard and angels sing
the babe, the son of St. Mary

Why lies he in such mean estate
Good Christians, fear for sinners here

where ox and ass are feeding?
the silent word is pleading

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh
The King of kings salvation brings

come, peasant King, to own Him
let loving hearts enthrone Him

FINAL CHOROUS:
Raise , Raise the song on high
Joy, joy for Christ is born

the Virgin sings her lullaby
the babe, the Son of St. Mary !

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Incarnation of the Word of God

By St. Athanasius:

When God the Almighty was educating mankind through His own Word, He perceived that they, owing to the limitation of their nature, could not of themselves have any knowledge of their Artificer, the Incorporeal and Increate. He took pity on them, therefore, and did not leave them destitute of the knowledge of Himself, lest their very existence should prove purposeless. For of what use is existence to creature if it cannot know its Maker? How could men be reasonable beings if they had no knowledge of the Word and Reason of the Father, through Whom they had received their being? They would be no better than the beasts, had they no knowledge other than of earthly things; and why should God have made them at all, if He had not intended them to know Him? But, in fact, the good God has given them a share in His own Image, which is, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and has made even themselves after the same Image and Likeness. Why? Simply in order that through this gift of God's likeness in themselves they may be able to perceive the Image Absolute, that is the Word Himself, and through Him to apprehend the Father; which knowledge of their Maker is for men the only really happy and blessed life.

But, as we have already seen, men, foolish as they are, thought little of the grace they had received, and turned away from God. They defiled their own soul so completely that they not only lost their apprehension of God, but invented for themselves other gods of various kinds. They fashioned idols for themselves in place of the truth and reverenced things that are not, rather than God Who is, as St. Paul says, "worshipping the creature rather than the Creator". Moreover, and much worse, they transferred the honour, which is due to God to material object such as wood and stone, and also to man; and further even than that they went.

Indeed, so impious were them that they worshipped evil spirits as gods in satisfaction of their lusts. They sacrificed brute beasts and immolated men, as the just due of these deities, thereby bringing themselves more and more under their insane control. Magic arts also were taught among them, oracles in sundry places led men astray, and the cause of everything in human life was traced to the stars, as though nothing existed but that which could be seen. In a word, impiety and lawlessness were everywhere, and neither God nor His Word was known. Yet He had not hidden Himself from the sight of men nor given the knowledge of Himself in one way only; but rather He had unfolded it in many forms and by many ways.

God knew the limitation of mankind, you see; and though the grace of being made in His Image was sufficient to give them knowledge of the Word and through Him of the Father, as a safeguard against their neglect of this grace, He provided the works of creation also as means by which the Maker might be known. Nor was this all.

Man's neglect of the indwelling grace tends ever to increase; and against this further frailty also God made provision by giving them a law, and by sending prophets, men whom they knew. Thus, if they were tardy in looking up to heaven, they might still gain knowledge of their Maker from those close at hand; for men can learn directly about higher things from other men.

Three ways thus lay open to them, by which they might obtain the knowledge of God:

1. They could look up into the immensity of heaven, and by pondering the harmony of creation, they come to know its Ruler, the Word of the Father, whose all-ruling providence makes known the Father of all.

OR

2. If this was beyond them, they could converse with holy men, and through them learn to know God, the Artificer of all things, the Father of Christ, and to recognize the worship of idols as the negation of the truth and full of all impiety.

OR

3. The third choice, they could cease from luke-warmness and lead a good life merely by knowing the law. For the law was not given only for the Jews, nor was it solely for their sake that God sent the prophets, though it was to the Jews that they were sent and by the Jews that they were persecuted. The law and the prophets were a sacred school of the knowledge of God, and the conduct of the spiritual life for the whole world.

So great, indeed, were the goodness and the love of God. Yet men, bowed down by the pleasures of the moment and by the frauds and illusions of the evil spirits, did not lift up their heads towards the truth. So burdened were they with their wickedness that they seemed rather to be brute beasts than reasonable men, reflecting the very Likeness of the Word.

What was God to do in the face of this dehumanizing of mankind, this universal hiding of the knowledge of Himself by the wiles of evil spirits? Was He to keep silent before so great a wrong and let man go on being thus deceived and kept in ignorance of Himself? If so, what was the use of having made them in His own Image originally? It would surely have been better for them always to have been brutes, rather than to revert to that condition when once they had shared the nature of the Word. Again, things being as they were, what was the use of their ever having had the knowledge of God: Surely it would have been better for God never to have bestowed it, than that men should subsequently be found unworthy to receive it. Similarly, what possible profit could it be to God Himself, Who made men, if when made they did not worship Him, but regarded others as their makers? This would be tantamount to His having made them for others and not for Himself. Even an earthly

king, though he is only a man, does not allow lands that he has colonized to pass into other hands or to desert to other rulers, but sends letters and friends and even visits them himself to recall them to their allegiance, rather than allow His work to be undone. How much more, then, will God be patient and painstaking with His creatures, that they be not led astray from Him to the service of those that are not, and that all the more because such error means for them sheer ruin, and because it is not right that those who had once shared His Image should be destroyed.

What, then, was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God, but renew His Image in mankind, so that through it men might once more come to know Him? And how could this be done save by the coming of the very Image Himself, our Saviour Jesus Christ? Men could not have done it, for they are only made after the Image; nor could angels have done it, for they are not the images of God. The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was Him alone, the Image of the Father, who could recreate man made after the Image.

JANUARY
THIRD SUNDAY

HE WAS CALLED JESUS

Please read Luke 2:21-39, the attached material entitled "God's love for us", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

- The church is celebrating the circumcision feast. On that day "He was called Jesus".
- What does that name (Jesus) mean?

MEMORY VERSE:

"And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus" (Luke 2:21)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **Introduction:**

  On the day of circumcision (i.e. eight days after Jesus was born) two things happened:

  - Jesus was circumcised.
  - He was called Jesus.
  - When our Father Abraham in the Old Testament was circumcised he was given a new name Abraham instead of Abram. Abraham means Father of a great number of nations.
  - According to Jews' customs, a child is given a name on the same day of his circumcision. He was called Jesus as was told by the Angel to the Virgin Mary before Jesus was conceived with "...you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus" (Luke 1:31).

- ✞ As the Angel appeared to Joseph and told him, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; and she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:20-21).
- ✞ The name Jesus was frequently used by the Israelites. The name Jesus in Hebrew is the same as Joshua and the same as Hosea. Joshua in the Old Testament was a symbol for the true Saviour. As Joshua completed Moses' work, our Lord Jesus has completed all the Laws with grace and truth. And as Joshua led the people from the poor land to the promised land, so our Lord Jesus was the only One who carried the church from death to the glorious freedom of the children of God. Also, as Hosea was in the new altar which was built after the captivity, also our Lord Jesus is our great Priest Who intercedes on our behalf in heaven.
- ✞ After the birth of our Lord Jesus, the Christians refused that any man be called Jesus. St. Paul's friend who was called Jesus, was given the name "Justus". Therefore, the name Jesus became dedicated to our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.
- ✞ Jesus means Saviour of His people from their sins. The saving from the sins is a complete action consisting of three parts: facing the Power of sin, forgiveness of the sin and freedom from its consequences.

1) Jesus Saved us from the Power of Sin:

- ✞ Mention the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10).
- ✞ "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).
- ✞ This means that God comes to us (as He came to Zacchaeus) and gives us strength to overcome the sin. The only thing is that we have to do as Zacchaeus did, i.e., run to Jesus and try our best to see Him, know Him and develop a fellowship with Him.
- ✞ "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

2) Forgiveness of Sin:

It is a complete forgiveness by God the Father through the blood of Jesus on the cross, when we take communion we eat and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus, abide In Him and we are accepted in the heavenly kingdom. "I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside" (Zechariah 10:6).

3) Saving from the Consequence of Sin:

The consequence of sin is death. Jesus saved us from sin and there is no power of death over us. Death became just a passage from this world to a better life. St. Paul said, "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We must follow the head of our salvation who has the glory for ever.

(2) No one can gain salvation without the name of Jesus.

(3) We must believe in Him and follow Him even to the cross; and as He defeated death we can also defeat death.

SONGS

SILENT NIGHT

Silent night! Holy night!
Round you Virgin Mother and Child
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night! Holy night!
Glories stream from Heaven afar
Christ, the Saviour, is born!

Silent night! Holy night!
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth

All is calm, all is bright
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace

Shepherds quake at the sight!
Heavenly hosts sing, Alleluia
Christ, the Saviour, is born!

Son of God, love's pure light
with the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

God's Love For Us
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Because of God's love for us, He considers us part of Him, as He says, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. " On 15:5)* **And He also says,** *"... we are members of his body. " (Eph 5:30),* or He is the head and the whole Church is the body. Again He says, *"Abide in me, and I in you, as the branches abide in the vine. " (Jn 15:4)* He also says about us to the Father, *"I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one. " (Jn 17:23)*

+ How beautiful is the expression in the Bible about God's love for us, in saying, *"... partakers of the divine nature. " (2 Pet 1:4)* **And also,** *'... the communion of the Holy Spirit. " (2 Cor 13:14)* Of course it is not a communion in the nature and essence but in work. Therefore, St Paul says about himself and his friend Silas, *"For we are God's fellow workers. " "For we are God's fellow workers." (1 Cor 3:9)*

+ One of the aspects of God's love for us is the friendship that developed between Him and our human race. For example, Abraham was called, "El-Khalil" the friend of God, and Enoch, about whom it was said, *"And Enoch walked with God; and he was not for God took him. " (Gen 5:24)* Moses, too spent forty days with God on the mountain. The twelve Disciples are also another example, the way the Lord associated with them...

+ It is also beautiful how God made His delight in the sons of men...

And He, the unlimited, humbled Himself for the human beings, who are limited, and associated with them. He also appeared to them and talked to them through mouth to ear.

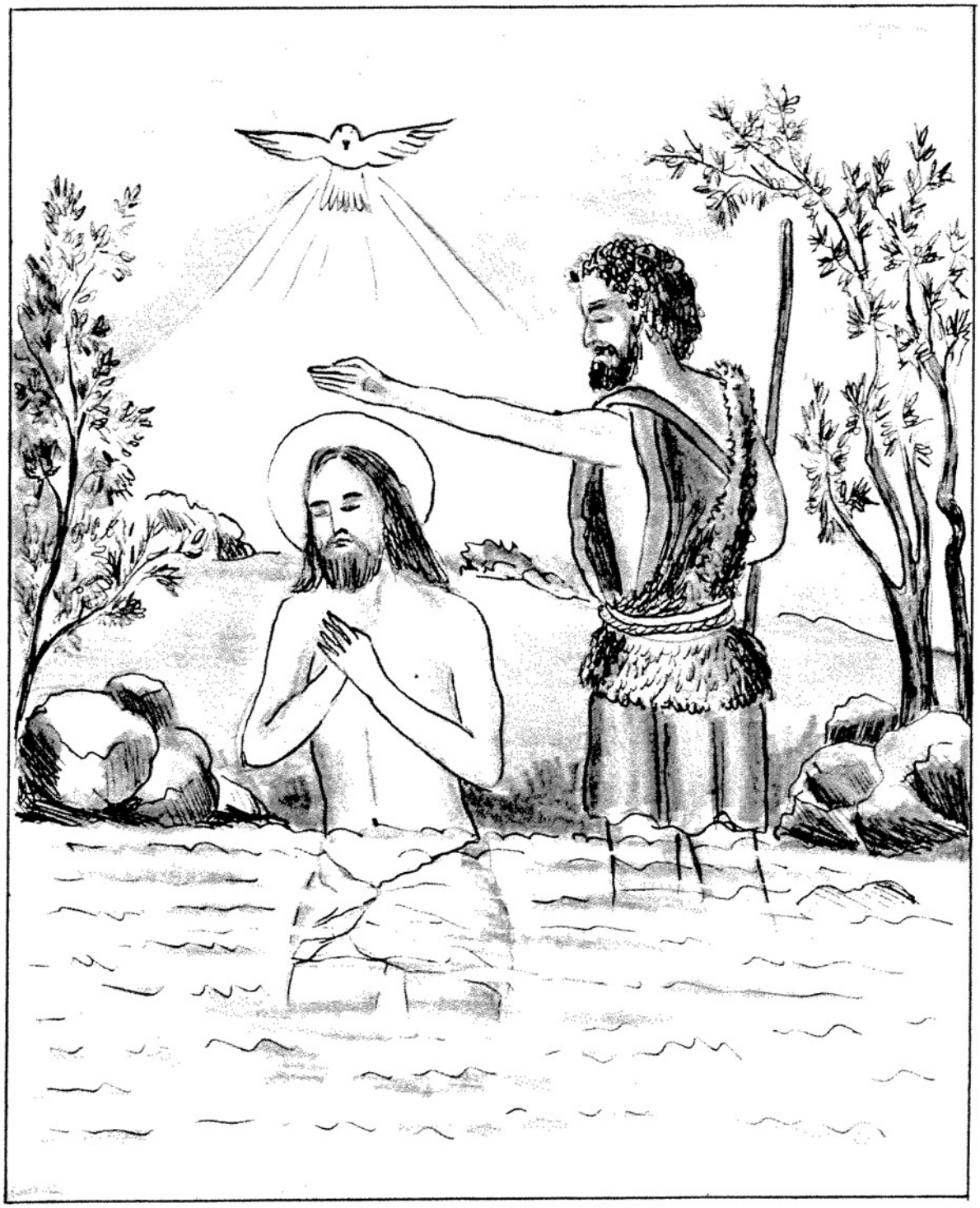
+ It is also due to God's love for us all that these amazing ways of care which history tells us occurred, such as the split of the Red Sea, the Manna in the wilderness, the water flowing from a rock, looking after Elijah during the famine, delivering Peter from prison and Daniel from the lions' den and the three youths from the burning furnace... beside many other stories that have no end.

+ As a sign of God's love for us He has given us these beautiful promises:'

"I have, inscribed you on the palms of my hands. " (Is 49:16), "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. " (Mt. 10:30), "I will give you a new heart,", (Ezek 36:26), And no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (Jn 10:29) and, "I go to prepare a place for you. " (Jn 14:2)

+ The gifts we are granted are an evidence of God's love for Man.

The gift of eternity, of the resurrection as in the body of His glory and the several gifts of the Holy Spirit... Blessed by God in His love.



JANUARY
FOURTH SUNDAY

EPIPHANY
"AMONG THOSE BORN OF WOMEN THERE HAS RISEN NO ONE GREATER THAN JOHN THE BAPTIST"

Please read Matthew 3: 133-17, Matthew 11: 11-12, John 1: 18-34, the attached articles "The Baptism of Jesus Christ", "In the wilderness and calmness", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To learn:
- ✞ What made John the Baptist so great?
- ✞ What were the features of his personality?

MEMORY VERSE:

"Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✞ **Introduction:**

  Describe in detail what happened when John the Baptist baptized the Lord Jesus and the manifestation of the Holy Trinity.
  The word Epiphany, a derivative from the Greek language, can be translated in Latin by "Manifestation".

- ✞ **The Life Style of St. John the Baptist Versus the Present Life Style:**
  - ✞ The simplicity in his cloth and his food is a blessed model that is totally different in nature from the luxury that we live in today "Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey" (Matthew 3:4).

- ✞ The long solitude in the wilderness is a good model when compared with the troubled and busy life style that we see today. We hear a very common expression "we do not have time, we are too busy" even too busy to pray or meditate or even read the word of God. "So, the child (John) grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel" (Luke 1:80). How did he live in the desert since his very early childhood without a helper or someone to talk to? We do not know. All what we know from his life style that we got through the Holy Bible and the church traditions that, he lived for about thirty years in the desert. He lived in the total and perfect care of God. God raised him up in the desert until the time became due for him to appear to Israel to do his job in preparing of the way for the Lord Jesus.
- ✞ His courage and clarity can be rarely found in today's ways of manoeuvring, and false communication. John the Baptist came with his message in a strong and clear way "The voice of one crying in the wilderness 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight'" (Matthew 3:3). Remember that John the Baptist stood in front of King Herod when he wanted to take his brother's wife as a wife for himself, and said to him: It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. This incident entitled him to gain the crown of martyrdom for the sake of witnessing to the truth.
- ✞ Him being filled with the Holy Spirit, since he was a babe is a model that is distinctly different from our weak spiritual life. We all have gained the Holy Spirit inside us since we were baptized. If we are giving the leadership in our life to the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit will become active inside us. On the other hand, if we keep disobeying the voice of the Holy Spirit inside us, He is going to be like a quenched fire without any fruits in our lives.
- ✞ His humility, especially in his baptism for our Lord Jesus, is a good example for everyone of us to be humble and to know his real self, be modest and never get carried away and feel proud.

✞ **Personality of St. John the Baptist:**

- ✞ John's personality belongs to the covenants. We can consider him the last prophet of the Old Testament and is one of the major New Testament's personalities. He came to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah the Son of God.

✞ **St. John was Great by the Declaration from Heaven:**

- ✞ The angel said to Zecharias "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord" (Luke 1:15). And Jesus said that John is the greatest "among those born of women" (Matthew 11:11).

- **He was Considered as an Angel:**
  - "I send my messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You" (Matthew 11:10). A messenger from God is an angel.

- **He was Filled with the Holy Spirit Before he was Born:**
  - "He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). As a result of this, he leaped with joy inside his mother's womb.

- **The Greatest Achievement in St. John's Life:**
  - He baptized the Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan River and saw the manifestation of the Holy Trinity, and the Holy Spirit descending from heaven as a Dove, the Voice of God the Father from heaven saying "This is My Beloved Son" and the Son of God standing in the Jordan River.

- **The Message of St. John the Baptist:**
  - In the speech that he delivered to the Pharisees and Sadducees, we find him saying "Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father' ...now the axe is laid to the root of the trees" (Matthew 3:7-10). It is a very strong message to these people who, as John prophesied, rejected and crucified the Lord Jesus. He also warned them to repent.
  - His message served as a preparation for the hearts of people to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, "I indeed baptize you with water, but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16). He declared while he was looking at Jesus "Behold the Lamb of God" (Luke 1:36). Indeed Jesus was the Lamb of God who carried on Himself the sin of the world.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. The personality of St. John the Baptist is an excellent model for everyone of us. He was strong, he said his opinion clearly in every situation and his life style was away from earthly lusts. Let us take a step forward today and start by improving our lives through prayers and have a Christian attitude.

2. Living in a quiet atmosphere will help us to be peaceful and to grow spiritually through having an effective prayer and meditation. So take time off from the busy world and stay with God alone.

SONGS

THE EPIPHANY

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mat 3:17)

On Epiphany every year
We celebrate once a year

we are happy with one accord
the baptism of our Lord

On the Jordan shores there stood
Preaching, teaching, all good

John the Baptist baptizing
the people repent , sin despising

Jesus came to John the saintly
He said "No, I am not worthy

asking him to be baptized
I am in need to be baptized"

Jesus stood in the Jordan
John saw the Holy Spirit

to be baptized by John instead
as a dove above Christ's head

There opened were the heavens
This is My Beloved Son

the voice of the Father heeded
in whom I am well pleased

We are immersed in baptism
Our sins are forgiven

three times in holy water
new birth we have with our Father

Alleluia, Alleluia
Jesus Christ the Son of God

Alleluia, Alleluia
was baptized in the Jordan

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

IN THE WILDERNESS AND QUIETNESS

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Amidst the hustle and bustle of life, with its many worries, how beautiful it is for one to devote even a little time, to sit with God, in an atmosphere of contemplation, prayer and open his heart to the Lord.

Here one resorts to calmness and quietness...

It is appropriate, when talking to God, to be alone with Him...

For this reason, God moved Abraham from his own country and people, to the mountain where he became alone with God... There, he had to build the Altars...

In the seclusion of the Holy Mountain, Moses spent forty days alone with God, till he took the Law and the Commandments and the instructions on how to build the tabernacle.

Also in the seclusion of the mountain, the Lord Jesus met with His Disciples and sometimes He took them to an isolated place...

The prophet Elijah, was trained in the quietness of Mount Carmel.

John, the Baptist, was brought up in the wilderness for thirty years.

The Prophets were also trained in quietness a calmness.

Moses, before he became a prophet and was chosen by God for leadership, spent forty years in quietness. He stayed far from Pharaoh's palace, with all its clamour and politics...

The Lord Jesus, Himself, inspite of the unlimited tranquillity deep within Him, and the eternal relationship with the Father, He set the example for us by staying alone on the mountain for forty days in a state of quietness with the Father, before He started His public ministry.

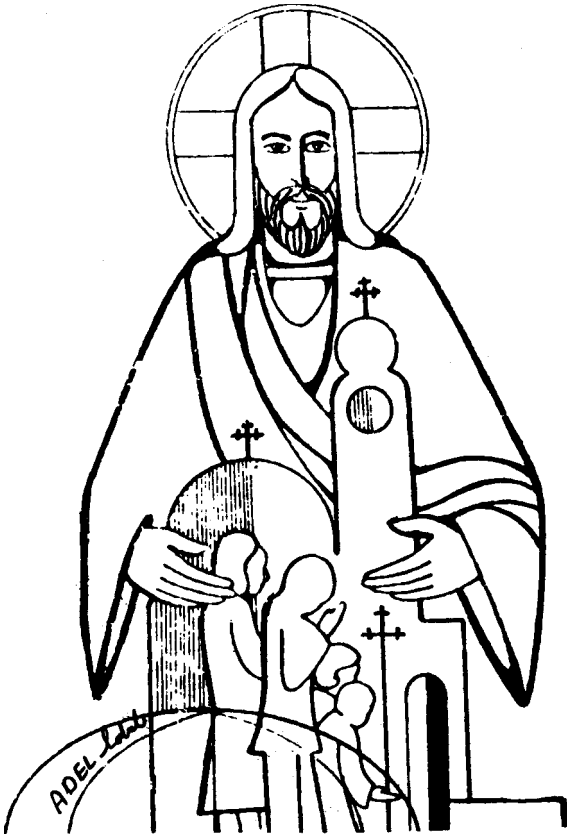
The mountain had its place and position in the life the Lord, as goes the beautiful saying of the Bible, *"And everyone went to his own house. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives" (Jn 8:1)*

The garden of Gethsemane was a place of quietness as calmness for Christ, where He spent periods of contemplation.

Mary, the sister of Martha, was an example of the life of quietness, sitting calmly at the Lord's feet. As for her busy and worried sister, who was far from the life of quietness, the Lord rebuked her by saying, "Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed." (Lk 10:40-41)

Then, will you search for the centre of quietness in your life?

Are you worried and troubled about many things….. And when will you calm down.... When?



EPIPHANY*

The Baptism of Jesus Christ
January 19 (according to the Julian Calendar)

✞ **Geographical Setting:**

At the very end of the Jordan River and just before it pours its waters into the Dead Sea, there is a shallow area in the river that could be crossed by wading called now the ford of 'Bethabara' (the crossing way). There, for many years merchants and travellers from Arabia, Persia and India have crossed the river on their way to Jerusalem, Egypt and Africa. It is a very rugged spot. During the summer, the heat is terrible, the air is heavy and the surface of the Dead Sea is in the colour of lead. There too was located the lost cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (read Gen. 13-19). The smell of sulphur still hangs in the air as if to remind man forever that "...the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

Winter is a bit better because a cooling breeze blows down the Jordan Valley in the evening to replace the heat of summer.

✞ **Introduction:**

In this unfriendly spot of land, one day, a prophet or a messenger of God appeared around the year A.D. 30. He was a strange, rough looking man. His only garment was a camel skin caught at the waist by a strip of leather. His food was locusts and wild honey.

The message of that man was not more attractive than his appearance. He cried to everyone who passed by and, out of curiosity, stopped a moment to listen: "The reign of God is about to begin. Right now, God has His axe set ready at the base of the tree of your life. Unless you repent of your wicked ways, and submit your life to His rule, He will chop you down and throw you into the fire".

However, there was a happy side to his preaching. Everyone, who truly repented would be forgiven. But, how would the repentant be forgiven?

The messenger did not explain. Instead, he led his hearers to the river's edge and dipped their sweaty, dust-covered bodies into the refreshing water. Just as the water of the Jordan River cleansed their bodies, so God would clean their filthy, sin-stained souls. The Prophet called this 'baptism'. That is why we call that messenger of God 'John the Baptist'.

✞ **Crowds Came to John the Baptist:**

In the early Jewish tradition, and until the coming of the Messiah, God used to send every hundred years or so a prophet to preach to the Jews to return back to their God and to foretell about the coming of the Messiah, the Saviour who would release them from their bondage. When John the Baptist appeared at the Jordan River, it was more than 300 years since the Jews had a prophet to tell them, "Thus saith the Lord..." The Jews were waiting for either another prophet or the Messiah Himself. Therefore, the word spread like fire through the land, "There is a new prophet preaching at the Jordan ford. There is a message that has come from God."

✞ **The Baptism of the Messiah:**

People crowded to see and listen to the new prophet. Among the crowds were the rich and the poor, the officials of the church and those of the government, the sophisticated and the plain ordinary people. As they listened, their consciences awoke and they remembered their past sins. They rushed into the water to be baptized by John...to be cleansed from their sins.

One day, someone asked another, "Can this by the promised Saviour, the Messiah?" In few minutes, everyone was asking the same question. Right away John answered, "I am only a voice crying in the wilderness, a voice preparing you for the coming of the Saviour. Soon, someone will come after me, someone greater than I am that I am not fit to untie His shoes. He will baptize you with the fire of the Holy Spirit."

Among the crowds, there was a stranger from a far away city called Galilee. He also stepped into the water to be baptized. But this particular man was different from all other men. This man alone had no sins. He is the only man who dies not need to be baptized. Why then does he join the wicked and the sinners at the water's edge? This thought came to John himself, and the Baptist said to Jesus Christ, "It is I who needs baptism from You, and yet You come to me?" But Jesus insisted...Do you know why? Because Jesus is carrying on His back a heavy burden...all the sins of all those people who ever lived or will ever live who trust in God's salvation. That is why He is called The Saviour.

Something else happened at His baptism. After His emersion from the water, as Jesus stood up, suddenly above His head, as if a crack happened in the sky, and the Holy Spirit descended in the shape of a dove and rested on Him; and God the Father Himself said, "This is My Son, the Beloved, My favour rests on Him" (Read Matthew 3 and Luke 3).

✞ **Epiphany in the Orthodox Church:**

We in the Orthodox Church, consider this event, the Baptism of Jesus Christ, one of the major Feasts of the Church. It is called the 'Epiphany' which is a Greek word that means 'showing forth' or 'manifestation'. In this event, Jesus Christ was not only declared by God the Father to be His only begotten Son; but also it shows forth the three Persons of the Holy Trinity; the Father speaks from heaven, the Son in the Jordan River being baptized, and the Holy Spirit descends from heaven taking the shape of a dove.

On the Eve of Epiphany, and just before the Divine Liturgy, a special service is held in the Orthodox Church. It is called the 'Lakkan' which means 'the blessing of the water'. This is to commemorate the blessing of the water of the Jordan by having Christ baptized in it and by having the Holy Spirit descending on our Lord. In this service, the priest asks God's blessing of this water. He says, "Bless this water that is set before thee and give it the blessing that you gave to the Jordan by the descent of the Holy Spirit...Let it be a fountain of blessing, a holy gift, a healer of the sickness of the body and the soul...and a blessing to the homes...". At the end of the service, the priest blesses the people with that water by crossing their foreheads three times.

Note: This article was originally written by Fr. Marcos Marcos and printed in the Building magazine, January 1982. It is hereby reprinted by permission of the author.

JANUARY
FIFTH SUNDAY

CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST (I)
(also Remembering of St. Anthony's feast)

Please read in class the attached material entitled "Christ in the Eucharist - I", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
This is lesson one of a three-lesson series about "Christ in the Eucharist". In this lesson we like to appreciate our precious liturgies that kept for us our faith, doctrine and traditions.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

☩ **Glossary of Terms Used in this Series:**

- ☩ **"El-Koddas"** - it is a Hebrew-Syrian word entered into the Arabic language in the 10th century.
  1) It means "makes holy" and it refers here to the prayers which are held during the Divine Liturgy to make Holy the bread and the wine.
  2) It also means the reading from the scriptures and the sacraments.
  3) The word "El-Koddas" is used to refer not only to the Eucharist (i.e. the offering of the bread and the wine) but also to other services, for example El-Koddas of Baptism or El-Koddas of El-Lakan.

- ☩ **Liturgy** - it is a Greek word and it has the same meaning as the word "Koddas" but it is more popular. In general, the word Liturgy means the service in which a priest, a deacon and congregation are participating.

- ☩ **Mass** - this is used by the Catholic Church to refer to the principle part of the service of the Liturgy.

- ☩ **Doxology** - it is a prayer of glory to God. The Doxologies are in the Psalmody book.

- ☥ **Theotokion** - it is a hymn in honour of the Theotokos (the Mother of God).

- ☥ **Anaphora** - it means "lift up" for the church is ascended to heaven through the celebration of the Eucharist.
  - ☥ The Egyptian liturgy is the oldest in the world.
  - ☥ The majority of our liturgies have not changed since the 5th century. Our Egyptian liturgies kept the Apostolic and patristic spirit of the liturgies.

☥ **The Coptic Church uses three liturgies:**

1. The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. Please bring our church service book and review it briefly with the students.
2. The Liturgy of St. Gregory
3. The Liturgy of St. Cyril (St. Mark)

☥ **Major Outline of the Coptic Liturgy:**
This has two major classifications:

a) The liturgy of time: This includes the daily prayers (Vespers, Matins, etc.), the weekly prayers (Doxologies, Theotokians, etc.), monthly (as the monthly feast of the Virgin Mary, Archangel Michael etc.) and yearly (as in the yearly feasts and fastings).
b) The Eucharist: It consists of three services: the offertory, the catechumens and the anaphora. These will be explained in more detail in the rest of the series. Please review the life of St. Anthony because his feast is celebrated on Jan. 30.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- ☥ Our Coptic Divine Liturgy did not get affected by all the recent world ideas and the materialistic changes that are happening from generation to generation. It kept the Apostolic and Church Traditions. Hence, it is the best service that the church can offer for us and we must honour it, abide by it and benefit from it.

SONGS

THE PRIME DOXOLOGY

We worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
Hail to the Church the house of the angels

Hail to the Virgin who brought forth our Saviour
Hail to Gabriel who brought her good news.

Hail to Cherubim Hail to Seraphim
Hail to all the heavenly orders

Hail to John the great fore-runner
Hail to the twelve Apostles.

Hail to our father Mark the Evangelist
The destroyer of the idols.

Hail to Stephen the first martyr.
Hail to George the morning star.

Hail to all the choirs of the martyrs.
Hail to Abba Anthony and the three Macarii.

Hail to all the choirs of the cross-bearers
Hail to all the saints who have pleased the Lord

Through their prayers O Christ our king
Accord to us mercy in thy kingdom.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Christ in the Eucharist (I)

• The Egyptian Liturgies

In Pre-Nicene times the outline of the rites of all the liturgies in the different churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Rome...etc., had the same structure and pattern, the same spirit and aim, and even common phrases. But there was no such original stability about the content. The liturgical prayer's text was subject to constant development, so that it varied from church to church, and from period to period.

Studying the Egyptian liturgies has its importance for the East, especially Egypt, which kept the Apostolic and patristic spirit of the liturgies, but the texts themselves are the same as they were in the fifth century. Fr. Jungmann says in his book, "The Early Liturgy", "in the general structure of the Mass, the oriental rites have kept many primitive characteristics which have disappeared from the Roman rite. Whereas our Mass changes day after day, the Orient constantly repeats the same invariable formularly."

The Anglican Monk Fr. G. Dix says, "The main lives of all the Eastern traditions had been reached before the end of the fourth century, and after this the process in all of them is no more than one of adjustment and development of detail. No new principle arose in the fifth century, as it did in the West, to give new turn to liturgical development."

The Egyptian church now uses only three liturgies of the Eucharist, namely:

1. The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

It is different from the Byzantine Liturgy though it has the same name. It is by far used the most frequently in the normal service.

2. The Liturgy of St. Gregory

It is often reserved for the festive occasions. Some presbyters use it throughout the year.

Its eucharistic prayers are addressed to the Son. There are three Egyptian prayers, three Ethiopian liturgies, the Syrian "SS. Addal and Mark's liturgy", and "S. James liturgy" all are addressed to the Son.

3. The Liturgy of St. Cyril (St. Mark)

It was originally written by St. Mark the Apostle. Then it was recorded and shortened by St. Cyril of Alexandria whose name is associated with it.

Now, we shall study the pattern of the Coptic Liturgy of St. Basil which is not much different from the Gregorian liturgy.

The disused Liturgies

There were in early times other Egyptian liturgies, which eventually became discontinued. We have for example:

1) The Euchologium 4 of Bishop Serapion
2) The Euchologium of Der Baluze, near Assiut.
3) The Anaphora of St. Matthew, the Coptic text and its German translation have been edited by Angleics Kropp in Oriens Christianus.
4) Fragments of other unidentified Anaphora which have been edited by H. Hyvemat, by G. Sobhy and by E. Lanne S.

• The Outline of the Liturgy

The basic pattern of the Coptic liturgy is:

1- The form of worship which, in the language of the western liturgies, is called "THE DIVINE OFFICE". It is also called "THE LITURGY OF TIME" and contains four cycles of time:

a) Daily cycle, as the Vespers (the Evening Incense), the Matins (the Morning Incense), the canonical Hours, etc.
b) Weekly cycle, as the psalmody which contains Psalm, Scriptural hymns, Doxologies, Theotokions…etc.; and is offered throughout the week, differing from day to day in material and music.
c) Monthly cycle, as the service the monthly feast of Archangel Michael.
d) Yearly cycle, as we worship God with prayers and hymns fit for the feasts and the fasting.

2- The Eucharist: it consists of three services:

a) The Offertory
b) The Liturgy of the Catechumens
c) The Liturgy of the faithful "ANAPHORA"

FEBRUARY
FIRST SUNDAY

CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST (II)

Please read the attached material entitled "Christ in the Eucharist - II", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
This is lesson two of a three-lesson series on "Christ in the Eucharist". In this lesson, we would like to show that the Eucharist is a trip to Heaven for us.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **The Liturgy as Referred to in the Book of Acts:**

From the Book of Acts we find that the main components of the liturgy are: teaching, sermons, prayers and breaking of the bread. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight" (Acts 20:7).

The mentioning of these components of the Liturgy in a clear way in the Book of Acts, makes us certain that these are the main parts of the Liturgical service since the Apostolic age. Note that teaching is different from delivering sermons and is more general. Teaching comes before delivering sermons and prepares people to accept the faith. St. Paul puts teaching before delivering sermons when he said, "Or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation" (Romans 12:7-8).

With regard to what was called "the breaking of bread", it is certainly the Lord's supper as St. Paul said, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Therefore, we can emphasize from the Book of Acts that the basic Apostolic liturgy had two parts:

a) The part dedicated to teachings, sermons and prayers.
b) The part dedicated to the breaking of the bread or the Lord's supper.

☩ **The Divine Liturgy of our Coptic Orthodox Church today:**

☩ **The Divine Office (also called the Liturgy of Time)**

It consists of public ecclesiastic prayers that are distinct from the Eucharistic and Sacramental prayers. Through these prayers we praise the Lord, honour His saints and pray for the salvation of the whole world.

Through these prayers, which start with Vespers in the Evening before the Eucharist service, we can begin the service of the sacraments with a concentrated mind and a zealous soul towards the fellowship with God.

So, our Coptic Orthodox Church holds the Divine Office as a liturgical worship, as a preparation for celebrating the Sacrament, but it is not a sacramental service.

☩ **<u>The Eucharist Service:</u>**

In the Eucharistic Service, the church offers the single sacrifice of her Bridegroom to God and at the same time it receives the same sacrifice as a divine gift.

The Eucharistic Service is divided into two main parts in addition to the Offertory (see note at the end of the lesson).

1) The Liturgy of the Catechumens

This is also known as the "Synaxis". The Synaxis is a Greek word which means a meeting.

The Catechumens (people who are trying to know about and enter into Christianity) listen only to a part of it: the lections, the sermon and some prayers which the church offers on their behalf, so that God grants them an understanding, wisdom and faith. The Liturgy of the catechumens has three parts:

a) Lections: A Pauline lesson, Catholic epistles (a part of the Catholican letters), a part from the book of Acts, a reading from the Synaxarium for the Saint of the day and the Gospel reading (preceded by a Psalm).

b) The Intercessions: these are special prayers for the peace of the church, prayers for the Pope and the Bishops and prayers for the meetings and fellowship of the church.

c) The Pre-Anaphora: the word "anaphora" is a Greek word and it means "lift-up" or "offer-up". The phrase "offer-up" was used in the Christian church since the Apostolic age to refer to the offering of Christ on the cross. St. Paul said, "Who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself' (Hebrews 7:27).

The pre-anaphora prayers is the prayer of reconciliation between God and man in Jesus Christ. These prayers also remind us about the need for reconciliation with one another. The faithful in response declare their reconciliation by the "Spasmos" (i.e. the Apostolic kiss).

2) The Anaphora:
This is also called "The Liturgy of the Faithful" or "The Eucharist".
The Anaphora starts when the priest says "Lift-up your heart". It includes all the prayers until the people depart.

Through the Anaphora, the church is ascended to heaven by the Holy Spirit in the presence of God, in Jesus Christ. Please review portions of it from the church liturgy service book.

***Note: The Offertory**
The rite of the offertory was a part of the right of the "Liturgy of the Faithful", but sometime before the fifth century this rite became the starting point of the Liturgy.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- ✞ The Divine Liturgy is a journey towards heaven. We enjoy it through our fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ, as we are united with Him.

SONGS

THE PRIME DOXOLOGY

We worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
Hail to the Church the house of the angels

Hail to the Virgin who brought forth our Saviour
Hail to Gabriel who brought her good news.

Hail to Cherubim Hail to Seraphim
Hail to all the heavenly orders

Hail to John the great fore-runner
Hail to the twelve Apostles.

Hail to our father Mark the Evangelist
The destroyer of the idols.

Hail to Stephen the first martyr.
Hail to George the morning star.

Hail to all the choirs of the martyrs.
Hail to Abba Anthony and the three Macarii.

Hail to all the choirs of the cross-bearers
Hail to all the saints who have pleased the Lord

Through their prayers O Christ our king
Accord to us mercy in thy kingdom.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Christ in the Eucharist (II)

• The Divine Office: "The Liturgy of Time"

In fact, it consists of the public ecclesiastic prayers, distinct from the Eucharistic and Sacramental prayers, through which the church practices its liturgical life all the day, praising her Lord, honouring His saints, and interceding for the salvation of the whole world. This service aims at devoting all our time to the Lord, by singing psalms and hymns, enjoying the recitation from the Holy Scriptures, and receiving the blessing of our holy fathers, etc.

Through this service the church asks the whole world, visible and invisible, the rational and irrational creatures to chant hymns to the Creator. Thus the presbyter, participating with the congregation and the heavenly creatures, begins the service of the sacraments with a concentrated mind and a zealous soul towards the fellowship with God.

• Divine Office & Eucharist:

The spiritual and theological movement of the Liturgy in the West is accompanied by two extreme theological theories of the relationship between the Divine Office and the Eucharist.

1. The first extreme is the increasing tendency to reduce the whole of the liturgical life of the church to the Eucharist alone, not to regard it as the summit or centre, or source of this life, or in fact as its sole content.

This attitude separates the divine offices from the "Eucharist" and creates a gulf between the liturgical life and the whole life of the church.

2. The second extreme is the liturgical theology which goes under the name of "mysterienlebre" and which is connected with the name of Dom Odo Casel and the Benedictine liturgical centre at Maria Laach. Casel seems to merge everything in a general mysteriological terminology. He failed to draw a clear line between the sacramental and non-sacramental worship. All worship appears as the manifestation of the expression of "mystery".

Fr. Schmenmann says: "On the one hand we have the danger of reducing the whole liturgical tradition to a single sacrament with a corresponding neglect of its other elements. On the other hand we have the widening of the concept of Sacrament to include all worship".

Our Orthodox Church, as usual, does not accept the extremes. She holds the Divine office as a liturgical worship, as a preparatory for celebrating the Sacrament, but it is not sacramental service.

• The History of the Divine Office:

The history of the Divine Office is co-extensive with that of the church from its beginning.

It was developed, especially when the "Monastic Movement" appeared in Egypt.

Although some liturgists, such as Fr. Dix see them, this office was unknown in the Apostolic age, but on the opposite there are other theories which explain how it was an extension of the liturgical life that was practiced by the synagogues in the days of our Lord Jesus Christ.

• The Eucharistic Service:

The Eucharistic service , in fact forms one single act of worship, through which the church offers the single sacrifice of her Bridegroom to God. At the same time it received the name sacrifice as a divine gift.

But we can say that this inseparable act of worship was divided into two parts, from the apostolic age.

1. The Liturgy of the Catechumens

Its main work is missionary and catechismal, but not ignoring its worshipping act. The catechumens listen only to a part of it: the lections, the sermon and some prayers which the church offers on their behalf, so that God grants them an understanding, wisdom and faith.

2. The Liturgy of the Faithful, the Eucharist, or the Anaphora

It is an act of worship, without losing the direct instructive attitude. Through it the church is ascended to heaven by the Holy Spirit in the presence of God, in Jesus Christ.

• The Synaxis and the Eucharist

Fr. Dix sees that the primitive core of the liturgy falls into two parts:

1) The "Synaxis". a Greek word which means "a meeting". We call it "the liturgy of the catechumens". Some historians see that "synaxis" is called the eucharistic service as a whole.

2) The Eucharist (i.e. the Liturgy of the Faithful).

These, in his opinion, were separate things, and each could be, and frequently was held without the other.

He proved this by saying that St. Justin's apology describes the Eucharist twice. At one time it is preceded by the synaxis, and at another it is preceded only by conferring of baptism.

The next witness, St. Hypolytus, in His "Apostolic Tradition" also describes the Eucharist twice, at one time preceded by the consecration of a bishop and at another preceded by baptism and Chrism, but in neither case it is accompanied by the synaxis.

But, as they did not mention it, this did not mean that it was not performed. Perhaps the synaxes were held before performing them i.e. after the dismissal of the catechumens as they were not admitted during the performance of the Sacraments. And the two Fathers described the service after this dismissal of the catechumens.

This is not abnormal, for the Coptic church - up to this day - holds the consecration of a bishop or presbyter after reading the lections and before the beginning of the celebration of the Anaphora. And the presbyter can baptize at this stage so that the newly-baptized person can receive the communion on the same day.

However, Fr. Gregory Dix himself says that despite their separate original and different purposes, the synaxis normally preceded the Eucharist in the regular Sunday worship of all churches in the second century. From the fourth century onwards the two were gradually fused, until they were everywhere considered inseparable parts of a single rite.

• The Offertory:

The rite of the offertory was a part of the rite of the "Liturgy of the Faithful", but someone before the fifth century this rite was performed at the beginning of the whole liturgy, so that the people, on hearing the word of God and receiving the communion would be prepared to renew their covenant with God.

The Divine Liturgy in Brief:

The Divine Liturgy is a journey towards heaven. We enjoy it through our fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ, as we are united with Him.

1) The **Psalmody**: is a preparation for this journey. It is addressing the whole world, visible and invisible, rational and irrational, to give hymns of the heavenly and earthly creatures.

The "Cross" or the "Sacrifice of the Messiah", is the centre and subject of the hymns of the heavenly and earthly creatures.

Thus before starting the liturgical prayers the presbyter and the congregation participate with all the creation in giving hymns to the Saviour.

2) The **Offertory**: Is the starting point of the journey. It guides the church to know the real expenses of the journey, for she must offer her whole life as a sacrifice to and through the Lord, Who is sacrificed for her sake. This is the least that the Lord accepts. He asks her whole life, without it she cannot start the journey.

3) The Lections: Are the guides and the maps of the journey, by which we know our position towards God, and His position too, without it we deviate from our aim.

By the lections the church witnesses to God. Who is the aim of this journey. She witnesses to Him before her children and the catechumens, so that they hear His divine voice through:

A. His apostles: "The Pauline and Catholic epistles"

B. The apostolic acts: "The Acts"

C. The acts of the church: "Synaxarium"

D. His Son: "The Gospel"

E. And through the ministers of the church: "The Sermon"

These lessons are accompanied with open and secret prayers which the church offers, so that God may work in their hearts by His word to complete their journey in peace.

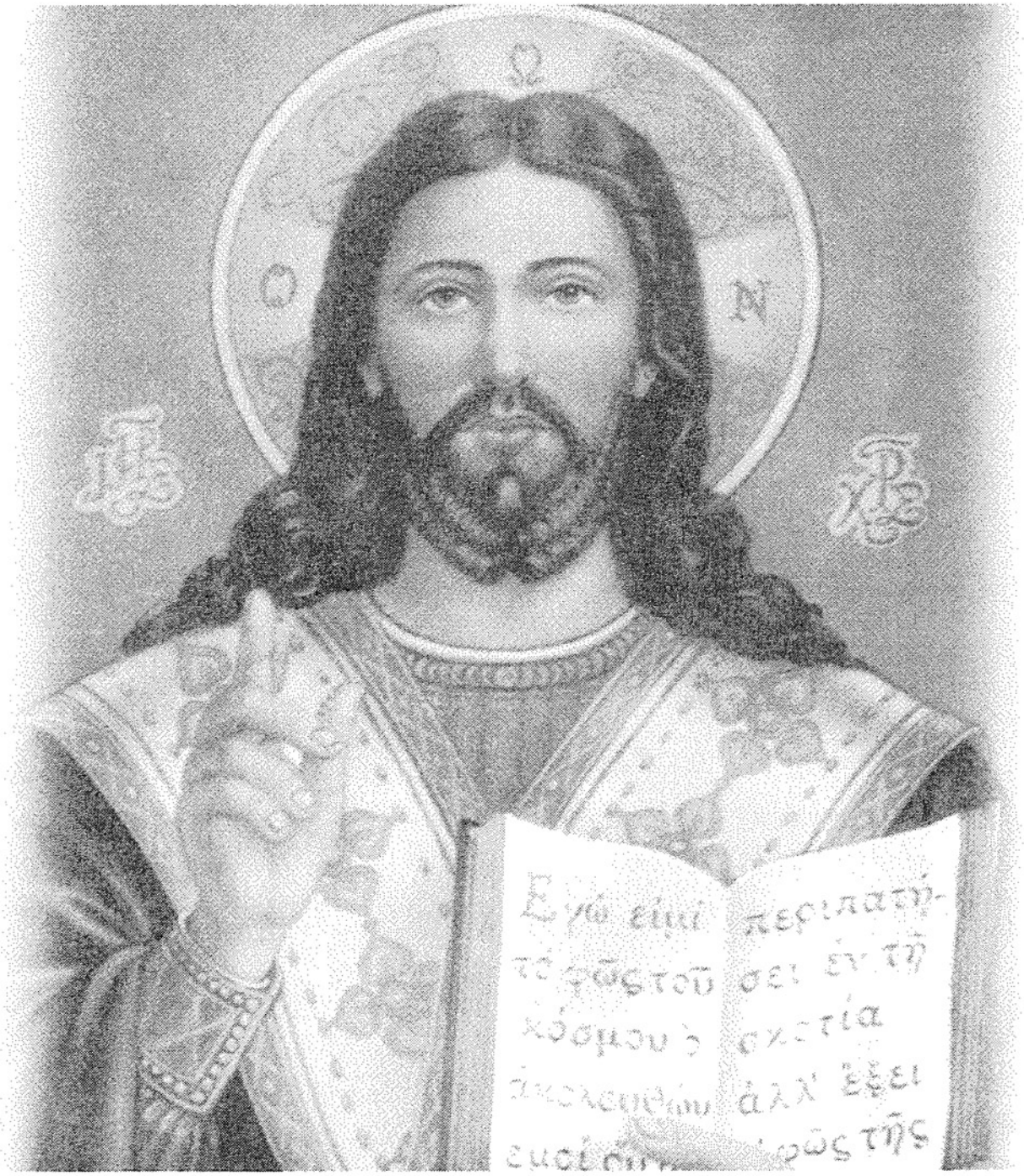
4) The Intercessions: Through the journey the church lifts up her heart to the Divine Throne asking God to bestow peace upon the church "Intercession of the Peace" - to strengthen her ministers "Intercession of the Fathers". and bless her meetings "Intercession of the meetings".

Thus she can fulfill her message without any deviation.

5) Pre-Anaphora: Now the whole church prepared to ascend to heaven and stand by the Lord Jesus, she proclaims the reconciliation between God and man in Jesus Christ (the prayer of reconciliation). The faithful in response declare their reconciliation in a practical way by the Spasmos (i.e. the apostolic kiss).

6) The Anaphora: It is an entry to heaven, the actions of the Holy Spirit, the unity with the Lord Jesus, and the spiritual nourishment through the Communion of His Holy Body and Blood.

What else do we need?!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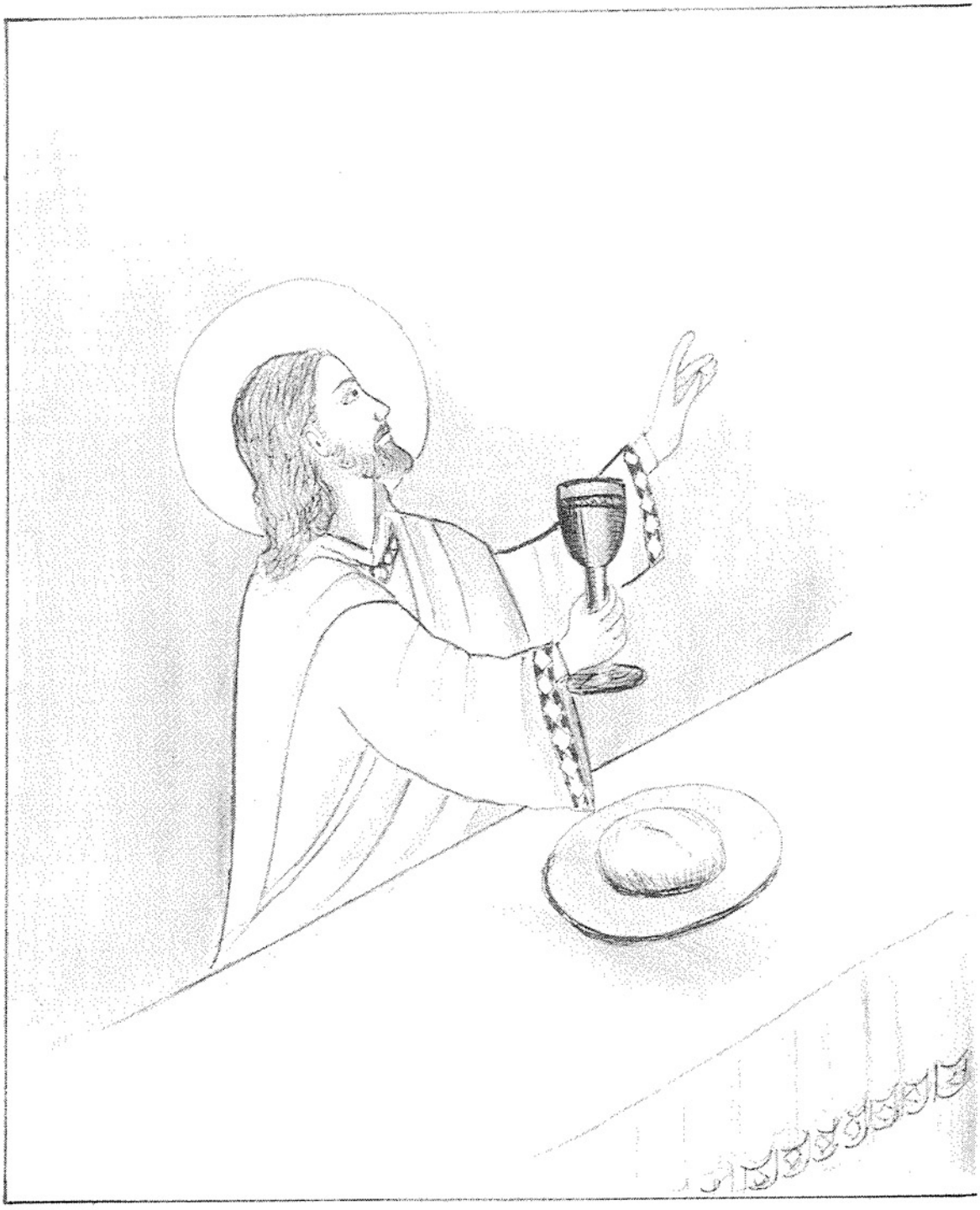


FEBRUARY
SECOND SUNDAY

CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST (III)

Please read the attached material "Christ in the Eucharist - III", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
This is the last lesson in a three-lesson series about "Christ in the Eucharist. In this lesson, we all learn about the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **The Liturgy of the Eucharist: Institution of the Lord's Supper:**

Our Lord Jesus Christ established this Holy sacrament and delivered it to His Apostles. St. Paul said, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me'. In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me'. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

✞ **Why did the Lord Jesus offer Himself up in the last supper?**

1. **Because the Utmost Love is to Give Oneself up to Death.**
   "Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world He loved them to the end" (John 13:1). The love of the Lord became very clear when He broke His own Body. Therefore, the key benefit of our attendance of the Eucharist becomes very obvious when we realize the secret of God's love in the offering. Then our hearts must receive

this unparalleled love by keeping love and desire to partake of the Holy Sacraments.

2. **For the Secret Body of the Lord to Appear:**
   Our Lord Jesus lived with His disciples as a companion. Now the Lord will disappear with the visual body from the life of the disciples so that they to become his non visual body, i.e., His secret Body. Therefore, it was necessary that the Lord's supper be the last work of the Lord in which He offered Himself as an offering. Then His Body disappeared from His disciples and became for them His secret Body. His is not a visual Body but a secret Body which is the church. Remember, the "church is the Body of Christ".

   Every time we have a Eucharist, the Body and Blood disappear totally from the altar so that He can live in our lives because we are His secret Body.

✞ **The Symbols of the Eucharist in the Old Testament:**

The Pascha:
In Jesus' "Uniting" with us, He joins us together with Him to pass from the power of darkness to the kingdom of light, from the death of this world to the Resurrection of the world to come.

The Manna:
Jesus showed that the manna had no unusual effect, for their Fathers ate it and died, but who receives the true Manna, the body and the blood of the Messiah will have eternal life as a reward.

Melchisedech's Sacrifice:
Melchisedech, offered bread and wine as a symbol of the Eucharist.

The Banquet of Wisdom:
Solomon declared that the wine is mixed, that is, he announces prophetically the chalice of the Lord mingled with water and wine.

"Song of Songs":
"Song of Songs" is the book o the spiritual marriage union between Christ and his church, or between Him and the soul. For it is, as a whole, a true prophecy of the sacramental deed of God in His church.
Our fathers found the sacrament of Eucharist in the "Song of Songs", as he offers the wedding feast to his Bride in order that she can be fed and calls others to participate with her in the heavenly banquet.

✞ **The Ten Rules to Observe in Participation in the Communion:**

1) As in the other sacraments, a priest must administer this sacrament.
2) Everyone must reconcile with his brother or sister or friend or anyone: "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First, to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5: 2-1). St. Yostine the martyr (150 A.D.) said that the participant in the Eucharist must: (a) believe that the church's teaching is true, (b) be baptized, and (c) behave as our Lord commanded us.
3) Everyone must be clean in his heart and his body as well, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22).
4) Everyone must come early to the church "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me" (Proverbs 8:17).
5) Everyone must be fasting for at least nine hours (for the very early Divine Liturgies) or from midnight the night before (for the usual Divine Liturgies for example the usual Sunday Services), whichever is more.
6) Everyone must enter the house of God with full respect and humbleness.
7) Everyone must be silent because we are standing in front of God. Anyone talking unnecessarily in the church should not be permitted to take communion on that day. Similarly, of course, anyone who laughs.
8) Everyone must not leave the service until it is totally finished.
9) Men and women must wear respectable clothes and ladies must cover their heads.
10) Last but not least, everyone must concentrate on Christ only, not on other people.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) When we go to church to attend the Divine Liturgy and partake in the communion, we must have a keen desire and all our feelings must be prepared for this most important journey to heaven in which we are raised to the Lord.

(2) When we take communion, coming down from the Lord after the Eucharist is finished, we must carry the great message to the world through Christ who dwells inside us.

SONGS

NIGHT OF THE LAST SUPPER

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger…" (Jn 6:35)

Night of the Last Supper — night of the Last Supper
Jesus took bread and broke — and said: " Eat my body."
REFRAIN:
Our Master, our Saviour — gave us the vine of love
He is the Bread of life — coming from heaven above.

Night when my Lord suffered — night when my Lord suffered
He took Wine and gave thanks — and said: "This is my Blood".

This the Groom's supper — is given to His bride
Promising eternal life — up in the paradise.

This is the food of souls — is offered to us all
And the Blood is given — to help me lest I fall

Jesus, you are my hope — forgive my sins O Lord
Wash me and clean my soul — put on me a new robe.

My hear I give to you — Your will I want to do
Your love for me I knew — when You paid all my dues

Jesus fills all my heart — the devil has no part
And through this sacrament — He gave me a new start.

Jesus to You I pray — to lead me in Your way
Bless me and help me obey — all what the Bible says.

Christ suffered for my sake — His mercy is so great
My sins Jesus forgave — and a new life He gave.

My heart is filled with joy — and my soul does rejoice
With God I have union — when I take communion.

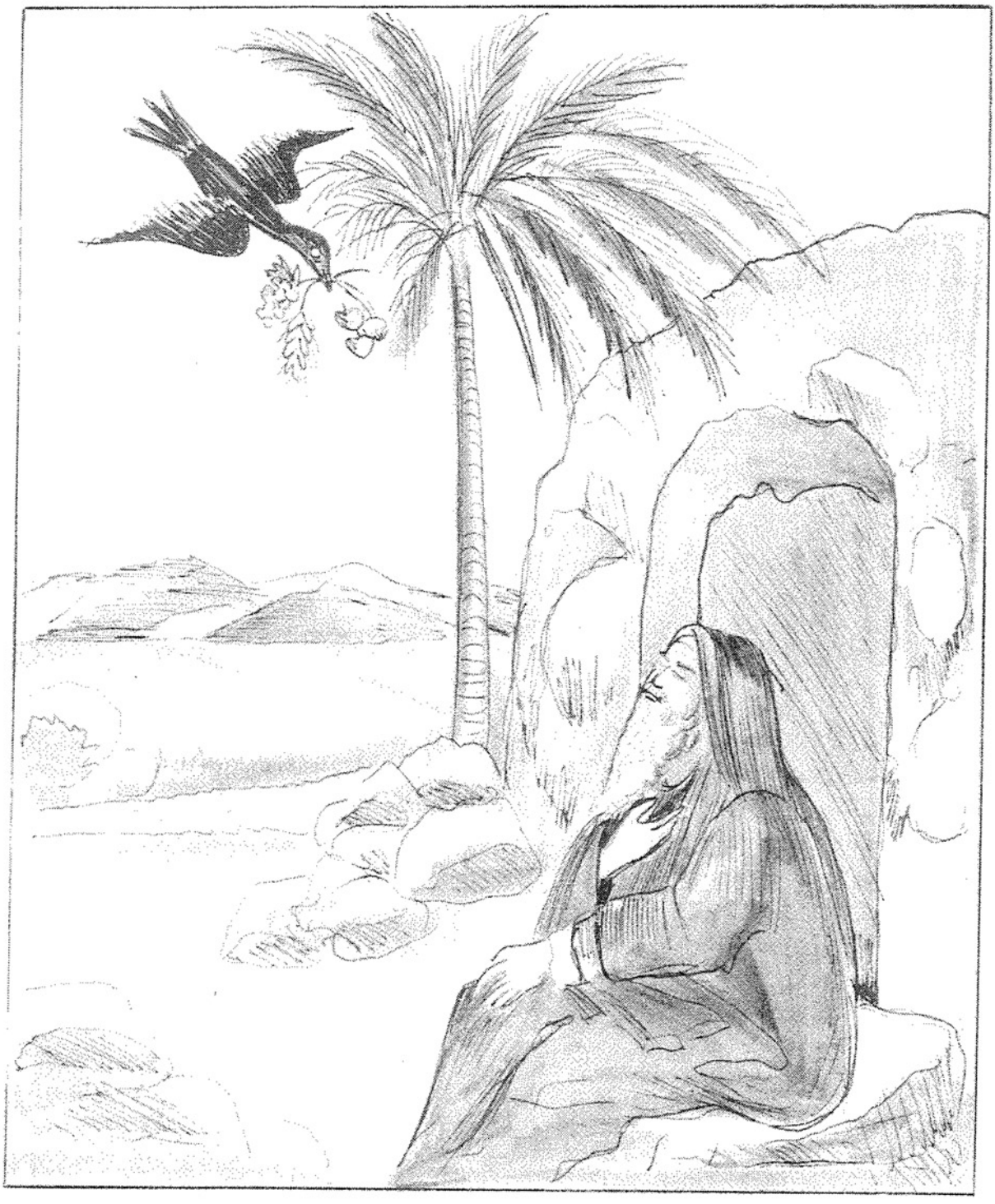
Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

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

HOLY BIBLE

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



FEBRUARY
THIRD SUNDAY

THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL
the First Hermit (A.D. 342)

Please read the attached materials entitled "The Life of St. Paul the First Hermit", "The Miracles of St. Paul the Hermit", "St. Paul's Raven", "Me alone", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

- ✞ To study the life of St. Paul the Hermit in the occasion of his feast celebrated by our church and learn from it in our daily life.
- ✞ To learn that there are so many people who love God and lead a righteous life, not us alone.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✞ **Summary of St. Paul the Hermit's Life:**

  St. Paul was born in the year 229 A.D. in Egypt, and lost both his parents when he was 15 years old. He was proficient in Greek and Egyptian learning, gentle, modest and he feared God from his earliest youth. When St. Paul found that his brother in law coveting his estate was inclined to betray him, he fled into the desert. He chose for his dwelling a cave in this place, near which was a palm tree and a clear spring; the tree provided him with raiment of leaves, and food; and the latter supplied him with water to drink. He was 22 years old when he entered the desert where he enjoyed worshipping God. He lived on the fruit of his tree till he was 43 years of age, and from that time till his death, like Elias, he was miraculously fed with bread brought to him every day by a raven. His method of life, and what he did in this place during 90 years, is hidden from us, but God was pleased to make His servant's life known a little before his death.

  The great St. Anthony, who was then 90 years old, was tempted to vanity, thinking that no one had served God so long in the wilderness as he had done,

since he believed that he is the first to adopt this unusual life style. But the contrary was made known to him in a dream, and the Saint was commanded by Almighty God to set out forthwith in quest of a solitary man more perfect than himself. The old man started the following morning and searched for two days until he found St. Paul. Having begged admittance at the door of the cell, St. Paul at last opened it with a smile. They embraced, and called each other by their names which they knew by revelation. A raven dropped a loaf of bread before them instead of a half loaf as St. Paul used to get daily.

The following day, St. Paul told his guest that the time of his death approached and that he wants him to go back and bring the gown of St. Athanasius the Pope. St. Anthony went back, took the gown and rushed back to St. Paul. On the way, St. Anthony saw St. Paul's soul carried up to heaven, attended by choirs of angels, prophets and apostles. When he arrived, he found that St. Paul passed away. While he stood perplexed as to how to dig a grave, two lions came up quietly, and as if they were mourning; and, they made a large hole using their nails to tear up the ground. St. Anthony then buried the body, singing psalms according to the rite then practiced in the church. After this St. Anthony returned home praising God, and he related to his monks what he had seen and done. St. Athanasius always kept as a great treasure, and wore himself on great festivals, the garment of St. Paul, of palm-tree leaves patched together. St. Paul died in year 342 at 113 years of age. May his prayers be with us.

☩ **The Miracles of St. Paul the Hermit:**
Please read the attached notes and at least mention one of them.

☩ **St. Paul's Raven:**
Please read the attached notes and mention the true story of St. Paul's raven.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We must have our values, principles and faith as the most important thing in our lives. Money had only one location in the church "at the feet of the apostles". We must depart from all love of money and reject anyway by while to get money that is against our values. St. Paul the hermit did not see any value in money.

(2) If you think you are the only one who is a good Christian, think again. St. Antony thought that he was the first to be in the desert. He was not. St. Paul the Hermit was.

SONGS

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

"I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep." (Jn 10:14)

REFRAIN

The Lord is my shepherd — I shall not want.
Come to Him all who labour — and He will give you rest.

Whenever I am weary — You wipe away me tears.
Whenever I am anxious — You calm all my fears.

Whenever I am restless — You listen and care.
On the cross You died — and my sins You did bare.

Whenever I am homeless — You open Your door.
In a strange country — no one can care more.

Whenever I am hungry — You give me Your food.
Whenever I am thirsty — You give me Your blood.

Whenever I am scorned at — You stretch out Your hand.
Whenever I am happy — by my side You stand.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Life of St. Paul The First Hermit
By Saint Jerome

During the reign of Decius and Valerian, when Cornelius reigned Rome, Cyprian at Carthage, the persecutors, shed their glorious blood, and a fierce tempest made havoc of many churches in Egypt and the Thebaid. The common prayer of a Christian was to die for the name of Christ. But their crafty enemy sought out torments wherein death came slowly: desiring rather to slaughter the soul than the body. And as Cyprian wrote, who was himself to suffer: They long for death and dying has denied them.

Now at this very time, while such deeds as these were being done, the death of both parents left Paul with a great wealth as heritage, in the Lower Thebaid: his sister was already married. He was then about fifteen years of age, excellently versed alike in Greek and Egyptian letters, of a gentle spirit, and a strong love for God. When the storm of persecution began its thunder, he betook himself to a farm in the country, as it was remote and secluded. But "What will you not drive mortal hearts to do, O you thirst for gold?"

His sister's husband began to meditate the betrayal of the lad which his duty was to conceal. Neither the tears of his wife, nor the bond of blood, nor God looking down upon it all from on high, could call him back from the crime, spurred on by a cruelty that seemed to ape religion. The boy, far-sighted as he was, had the wit to discern it, and fled to the mountains, where he may live till the persecution run its course. What had been hid necessity became his free choice. Little by little he made his way, sometimes turning back and again returning, till at length he came upon a rocky mountain, and at its foot, at no great distance, a huge cave, with its mouth closed by a stone. There is a thirst in men to pry into the unknown: he moved the stone, surprising by he found a spacious courtyard open to the sky, roofed by the wide-spreading branches of and ancient palm, with a spring of clear shining water: a stream ran hasting from it and was soon drunk again, through a narrow spinning, by the same earth that had given its waters birth. Moreover, there were, not a few dwelling places in that hollow mountain, where one might see chisels and anvils and hammers for the minting of coin. Egyptian records declare that the place was a mint for coining false money, at the time that Antony was joined to Cleopatra.

So then, in this beloved habitation, offered to him as it were by God himself, he lived hid life through in prayer and solitude: the palm tree provided him with food and clothing. And lest this should seem impossible to any, I call Jesus to witness and His holy angels, that I myself, in that part of the desert which marches with Syria and the Saracens, have seen monks, one of whom lived a recluse for thirty years, on barley bread and muddy water: another in an ancient well, (which in the heathen speech of

Syrie is called a quba) he kept himself alive on five dry figs a day. These things will seem incredible to those who do not believe that all things are possible to him that believes.

But to return to that place from which I branched, for a hundred and thirteen years, the Blessed Paul lived the life of heaven upon earth, while in another part of the desert an old man of ninety old, Antony abode. And as Antony himself would tell, there came suddenly into his mind the though that no better monk than himself led the life of dwelling in the desert. But as he lay quiet that night it was revealed to him that deep in the desert there was another one better by far than himself, and that he must make haste to visit him. And right away as the day was breaking the venerable old man set out, supporting his feeble limbs on his staff, to go somewhere he did not know. And now came burning noon, the scorching sun overhead, yet would he not flinch from the journey he had begun, saying, "I believe in my God that He will show me His servant as He said". Antony continued to travel through the region he had entered, now gazing at the tracks of wild beasts, and now at the vastness of the board he, "and when, and why I have come, you know. I know that I am not worthy to behold these: nevertheless, unless I see you, I will not go. You who receives beasts, why do you turn away men? I have sought, and I have found: I knock, that it may be opened to me. But if I not prevail, here shall I die before the door. Assuredly you will bury my corpse".

And so he stood, pleading, and fixed there. To him the hero answered, in few words:
“No man pleads thus, who comes to threaten: no man comes to injure, who comes in tears and do you marvel that I do not receive you, if it is a dying man that comes?”
And so jesting, Paul set open the door. And the two embraced each other and greeted one another by their names, and together returned thanks to God.
And after the holy kiss, Paul sat down beside Anthony; and began to speak. "Behold him who you have sought with so much labour, a shaggy white head and limbs worn out with age. Behold, you look upon a man that is soon to be dust. Yet because love endureth all things, tell me, I pray you, how fares the human race: if new roofs be risen in the ancient cities, whose empire is it that now sways the world; and if any still survive snared in the error of the demons."

And as they talked they perceived that a crow had settled on a branch of the tree, and softy flying down, deposited a whole loaf before their wondering eyes. And when he had withdrawn, "Behold", said Paul, "God has sent us our dinner, God the merciful, God the compassionate. It is now sixty years since I have had each day a half loaf of bread: but at your coming, Christ has doubled His soldiers' rations." And when they had given thanks to God, they sat down beside the margin of the crystal spring. But now sprang up a contention between them as to who should break the bread, that brought from day and night to the evening, Paul insisting on the right of the guest,

Anthony countering by right of seniority. At length they agreed that each should take hold of the loaf and pull toward himself, and let each take what remained in his hands. Then they drank a little water, holding their mouths to the spring: and offering to God the sacrifice of praise, they passed the night in vigil.

But as day returned to the earth, the Blessed Paul spoke to Anthony. "From old time, my brother, I have known that you were a dweller in these parts: from old time God had promised that you, my fellow-servant, would come to me. But since the time has come for sleeping, and (for I have ever desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ) the race is run, there remain for me a crown of righteousness; you have been sent by God to shelter this poor body in the ground, returning earth to earth."

At this Anthony, weeping and groaning, began pleading with him not to leave him but take him with him as a fellow traveller on that journey.
"You must not", said the other, "seek your own, but another's good. It were good for you, the burden of the flesh flung down, to follow the Lamb: but it is good for the other brethren that they should have your example for their grounding. Wherefore, I pray you, unless it be too great a trouble, go and bring the cloak which Athanasius the Bishop gave you, to wrap around my body." This indeed the Blessed Paul asked, not because he much cared whether his dead body should rot covered or naked, for indeed he had been clothed for so long in woven palm leaves: but he would have Anthony far from him, that he might spare him the pain of his death?

Then Anthony, amazed that Paul should have known of Athanasius and the cloak, dared make no answer: it seemed to him that he saw Christ in Paul, and he worshipped God in Paul's heart: silently weeping, he kissed his eyes and his hands, and set out on the return journey to the monastery, the same which in aftertime was captured by the Saracens. His steps indeed could not keep pace with his spirit: yet though length of days had broken a body worn out with fasting, his mind triumphed over his years. Exhausted and panting, he reached his dwelling, the journey ended. Two disciples who of long time had ministered to him, ran to meet him, saying, "Where have you been so long, Master?"

"Woe is me," he made no answer, "that do falsely bear the name of monk. I have seen Elisha, I have seen John in the desert, yea, I have seen Paul in paradise." And so, with tight pressed lips and his hand beating his breast, he carried the cloak from his cell. To his disciples eager to know more of what was toward, he answered, "There is a time to speak, and there is a time to be silent." And leaving the house, and not even taking some small provision for the journey, he again took the road by which he had come: athirst for him, longing for the sight of his, eyes and mind intent. For he feared as indeed befell, that in his absence, Paul might have rendered back to Christ the spirit that he owed Him.

And now the second day dawned upon him, and for three hours he had been on the way, when he saw amid a host of angels and amid the companies of prophets and apostles, Paul climbing the steps of heaven, and shining white as snow. And right away falling on his face he threw sand upon his head and wept saying, "Paul, why did you send me away? Why do you go with no leave-taking? So tardy to be known, are you so swift to go?"

In aftertime, the Blessed Anthony would tell how speedily he covered the rest of the road, as it might be a bird flying. Nor was it without cause. Entering the cave, he saw on its bent knees, the head erect and the hands stretched out to heaven, the lifeless body: yet first, thinking he yet lived, he knelt and prayed beside him. Yet no accustomed sigh of prayer came to him: he kissed him, weeping, and then knew that the dead body of the holy man still knelt and prayed to God, to whom all things live. So then he wrapped the body round and carried it outside. chanting the hymns and psalms of Christian tradition. But sadness came on Anthony, because he had no spade to dig the ground. His mind was shaken, turning this way and that. For if 1 should go back to the monastery; he said: It is a three day journey: if I stay here, there is no more that I can do. Let me die. Therefore, as is meet: and falling beside your soldier. Christ, let me draw my last breath.

But even as he pondered, behold two lions come coursing, their manes flying, from the inner desert, and made towards hire. At sight of them, he was at first in dread, then turning his mind to God, he waited undismayed. As though he looked at doves, they came straight to the body of the holy dead, and halted by it wagging their tails, then crouched themselves at his feet, roaring mightily; and Anthony well knew they were lamenting him, as best as they could. Then, going a little way off, they began to scratch up the ground with their paws, vying with one another in throwing up the sand, till they had dug a grave roomy enough for a man: and there upon, as though to ask the reward of their work, they came up to Anthony, with drooping ears and down bent heads, licking his hands and his feet. He saw that they were begging for his blessing; and pouring out his soul in praise to Christ for that even the dumb beasts feel that there is God. "Lord," he said, "without whom no leaf lights from the tree, nor a single sparrow falls upon the ground, give to these even as You know."

Then, motioning with his land, he signed to them to depart. And when they had gone away, he bowed his aged shoulders under the weight of the holy body and laying it in the grave, he gathered the earth above it, and made the wonted mound. Another day broke and then, lest the pious heir should receive none of the goods of the interstate, he claimed for himself the tunic which the saint had woven cut of palm leaves as one weaves baskets. And so returning to the monastery, he told the whole story to his disciples in order as it befell. And on the solemn feasts of Easter and Pentecost, he wore the tunic of St. Paul.

...I pray you, whoever you are who read this, that you be mindful of Jerome the sinner, who if the Lord gave him his choice, would rather have the tunic of St. Paul with his merits, than the purple of Kings with their thrones.

The Miracles of St. Paul the Hermit

"If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." Thus spoke our Lord about the honour that the Father shall give to His faithful servants. And to His faithful servant St. Paul the first Hermit, the Lord has given the honour of performing miracles. Even in this, day and age where scepticism is the order of the day. The following three miracles happened between 1983 and 1985 in the Mississauga-Toronto, Canada area. For the sake of anonymity we shall refer to the subjects of these miracles as "A", "B". and “C”.

"A" was in the hospital for more than a month, chances of a cure were minimal, at least as far as she was concerned, so much that she asked her family not to visit her anymore to spare then the agony of seeing her deteriorate. One day, she told the priest, "I want to have Communion before I die!" The priest brought her the Communion the next day, but instead of seeing her in her usual state. He found her well dressed and sitting on the bed smiling. He gave her Communion and then asked her how she was feeling, and she said, "Fine!' I am going home tomorrow." This came as a shock to the priest who asked, "What happened?" "I saw a man" said "'A'", "an old man with a long white beard. He was wearing as if it were a sack with and opening for his head, and two openings for his arms. And he was raising both his arms to heaven. He seemed to be searching for something. I asked him, 'What are you looking for Abouna?, and he answered, An altar. I am looking for an Altar' then he went away.

"A" was indeed sent home the next day. But the meaning of this vision that she saw was not clear in the priest's mind. He then asked another priest, who advised him first of all to ascertain the identity of the "man". It was very clear that "A"'s description fitted St. Paul the Hermit who came to visit "A". As soon as she saw the painting, she said. "This is the man who was looking for the altar." It was then that the priest realized that the blessed Saint was seeking an Altar in his name in this area. The same was the opinion of the other priests he consulted.
The priest asked the other priests in the surrounding areas if anyone had an Icon of Saint Paul that he could give to the church in Mississauga.
One of them did have an Icon on canvass that was sent to the priest in Mississauga, which was kept in the church as a blessing.

"B" was a very healthy person who suddenly developed an illness similar to "A"'s. The disease rapidly deteriorated, and this brought sadness to all the people around "B". The priest was called to pray for "B" and something told him to take along the painting of Saint Paul, still unmounted. He prayed for "B" and asked St. Paul to perform a miracle. He addressed him, The cure of “A” could be a coincidence, or due to medication received at the hospital, but if you cure "B" then no one can dispute your Holiness. Besides, you will now agree to having an Altar dedicated to you." Within weeks "B" was cured.

It was now early 1985, and much talk was being made about the necessity of a new church in downtown Toronto. The priest presumed that this is where an Altar for Saint Paul should be. He asked the Saint to give him a sign that this is what he wishes. "C" who happened to live in Downtown Toronto, developed a similar disease to "A" and "B", so the priest pleaded with St. Paul to cure "C" telling him that this would be the sign or the "green light" to go ahead and call the new church after St. Paul the first Hermit. He took the same Icon of the Saint, now mounted and luxuriously framed to “C”’s house. Months passed and nothing happened, in spite of the pleading of the priest. In disappointment, the priest said to another priest in the area, "Let us call the new church after St. Abraam or St. Mena", and the subject was almost forgotten.

Plans for building the new church of the Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius were being finalized, and there was put forward a proposal to build a small chapel attached to the new church. The proposal found many supporters including Abba Reweiss the Bishop. Soon after, and unexpectedly "C" was cured. For the priest, it was a puzzle, and he kept wondering in himself; why didn't St. Paul cure "C" earlier, when he could have had the Downtown church named after him? It is too late now for that church and it will be named after St. Mena and Abba Abraam. Slowly it started to make sense. It is the small chapel that St. Paul wants, not the church downtown. It is close to the church bearing the name of St. Athanasius where St. Paul wants his altar. It was in St. Athanasius Tunic that St. Paul wanted to be buried according to St. Anthony. Praise the Lord in his Saints!

SAINT PAUL'S RAVEN

This is a true story that happened during the 1973 war between Egypt and Israel, the principal character in the story is still living in Egypt.
The young man that told us the story was at that time a conscript in the Egyptian Army situated in the Eastern Desert. He was a devout Copt, and upon learning that the Monastery of Saint Paul the Hermit was nearby, decided to visit it.

After taking permission from his commanding officer, and after taking some directions from the Bedouins living in the area, he started on his journey. After hiking for a few hours, he could see the Monastery far ahead. The young man then did something he ought not to have done; he thought of taking a shortcut to the Monastery, disregarding the directions given to him by the Bedouins.

The foolishness of what he had done became apparent to him later; for suddenly he realized that he had lost his way in the desert. For three days he kept on walking aimlessly in the scorching heat, and the little water he was carrying ran out.
The young man realized that the end was near, so he sat down under a cliff and started writing some letters; a letter to his Commanding Officer explaining to him that he was not a deserter, a letter to his parents telling them of his fate, and finally a letter to his fiancé asking her to forgive him for the pain he would cause her. He then, lied down to pray that God would forgive him his sins and accept him in the Paradise of Joy.

Suddenly, a raven came and started pecking on him. It fluttered its wings blowing sand into his face and kept bothering the young man, until he really got upset at this intruder. He began shouting at the raven but to no avail. He finally stood up and started chasing the bird, following it even to the top of the cliff. Once on top of the cliff, the faint lights of the Monastery could be seen. The hope of survival gave the young man the necessary energy to make it to his destination. Inside the Monastery gates, food and water were given to the young man. Then, one of the monks asked him, "Did you come on your own or did the raven bring you here?" The young man felt a shiver down his spine. "How did you know about the raven?", asked the young man. "It's only Saint Paul's raven", replied the monk. "It always brings in those who have gone astray in this wilderness, has always done it and will always do it."

Me Alone
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

At one time, Elijah thought that he was the only one worshipping God, as he said, ' .. *And I alone am left... "* But God told him that seven thousand men have not bowed the knee to Baal.

How dangerous is the feeling that we are the only ones worshipping God, or the only ones with principles!

We tend to forget that there are seven thousand knees (which is the multiple of an even number) who worship God, and we are not aware...

There are those who judge the whole generation, and judge all people as being lost and corrupted!! They forget that there are those who are chosen by God, whom they might not know, but God knows them.

The scribes and Pharisees used to think that they were the only ones who knew the law and stuck strictly to the statute. Therefore they were stuck by pride and arrogancer of the heart and raised themselves above others. They began to judge others and describe them as being sinners. They even accused the Lord Jesus of reaking the Sabbath and violating the Law. They also criticized Him for humbly sitting with tax collectors and sinners...

When St. Anthony was attacked by self-righteousness and thought that he was the only monk, God sent him to where St. Paul was, to show him the one who was better than him...

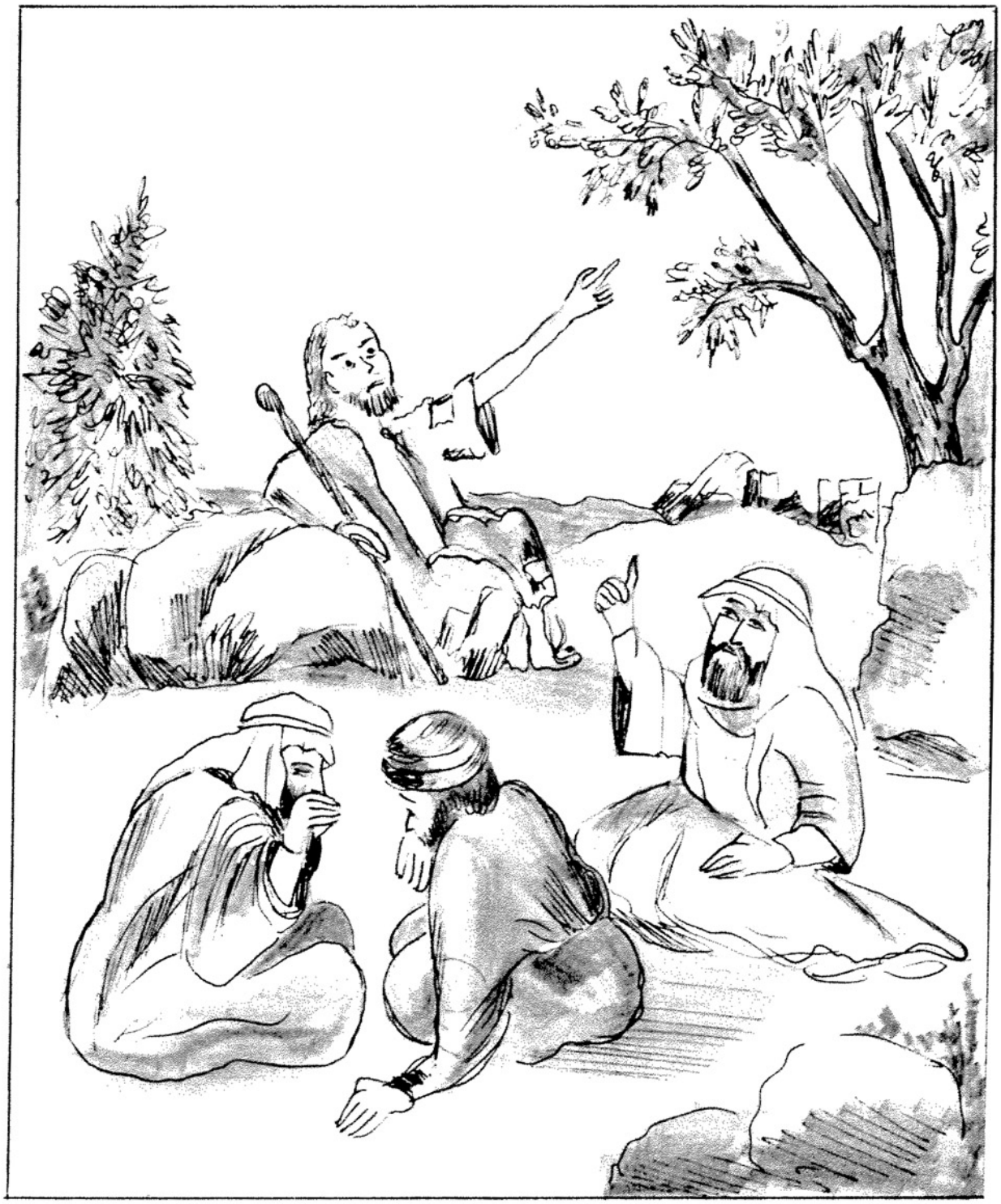
When St. Macarius the Great was attacked in the same way, God sent him to two married women in Alexandria who according to God's words were on the same spiritual level as him. So, he was not the only one, an (these two were of the seven thousand hidden knees..How painful is this sin, when one thinks that he is the only honest servant, the only one who has talents, principles and ideals, while thers have none. He is the only right person for leadership and nobody else!

The one who has love rejoices at having many like him or even better than him... As Moses said, *"Oh, that all the land's people were prophets... " (Num 11:29)* As for the self-conceited, this matter troubles him, or at least does not cheer him... ! He thinks it is a challenge to him He does not even care about God, but about himself...

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

HOLY BIBLE

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



FEBRUARY
FOURTH SUNDAY

SELECTED PERSONALITIES FROM THE HOLY BIBLE (I): Job "The Life of Perseverance"

Please read the attached material entitled "Words of Comfort during troubles", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To study:
+ The life of selected personalities from the Bible and learn from their lives.
+ We must be strong and patient at the time of troubles.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction:**

Job is a historical personality. He lived his life between Noah and Abraham and the book of Job is the oldest in the Holy Bible and starts with "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job" (Job 1:1). Job was also mentioned in the book of Ezekiel "Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in it..." (Ezekiel 14:14).

✞ **The book of Job can be classified into four parts:**

- The sufferings and trouble of Job - Chapter 1 and 2.
- The dialogue between Job and his friends - Chapter 3 and 37.
- The answer from God - Chapter 38:1 to 42:6.
- The happy ending - Chapter 42:7-17.

Job is a good example of withstanding the troubles and suffering, i.e., he was patient. St. James said, "My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord - that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:10-11).

He was leading a righteous life, this is why he was called "Job the Righteous". He was very rich and had 7 sons and 3 daughters and 7000 cows and 3000 camels, etc.

The devil complained saying, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge around him…You have blessed the work of his hands…But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" (Job 1:9-11). God allowed the devil to destroy all his belongings of cows, house…and even his house was destroyed killing all his children. Even at all these troubles, Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Then the devil came main and complained and God allowed him to hurt his body to make his faith clear; but not to hurt his mind. Job became very sick and his wife and his friends were insulting him. His wife said to him, "Do you still hold to your integrity? Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9). To all these, Job did not-say anything against the Lord.

✞ **Why did God allow the temptation of Job?**

Despite the fact that Job was a good man and righteous as the Lord said, and despite the fact that the temptation was to test his faith and make it clear, Job had some weakness. The weakness of Job was that he was righteous and he knew that he was righteous. Job said about himself, "I am blameless" (Job 9:21) and again he said, "When the ear heard, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw, then it approved of me" (Job 29:11).

This is why God allowed the temptation to come on Job to purify him and save him from feeling righteous and perfect in his own eyes.

After all this patience that Job had, the Lord lifted up the temptation and blessed him and gave him children instead of the ones who died. He lived after the temptation for 140 years.

✞ **Job was a Symbol of Christ:**

Job was a symbol of Christ for withstanding the severe sufferings and all of these sufferings were with a happy ending. Remember that after the cross there was the Resurrection and glory.

As the friends of Job departed from him also the disciples of our Lord Jesus departed from Him in His trial and crucifixion.

The Book of Job refers to the reconciliation between heaven and earth which was to be done by Christ (between heaven and earth). Therefore, our church calls the

Wednesday of the Holy Week "Job Wednesday" and reads a number of chapters from the Book of Job.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We have to be patient and never rush things. We should withstand troubles seeking the help of God.

(2) All things work for the good of the people who love God as St. Paul said.

(3) Let us be joyful when we are tempted by some troubles knowing that these troubles will help us increase our patience and faith.

(4) God did not give us the spirit of giving up. But He gave us the spirit of strength, love and righteousness.

SONGS

TO WHOM SHALL I GO?

"Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." (Ps 50:14)

When I feel worried — to whom shall I go?
You comfort me, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

When I feel sad — to whom shall I go?
You make me glad, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

When I feel hungry — to whom shall I go?
You feed me, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

When I feel sick — to whom shall I go ?
You cure me, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

When I feel lost — to whom shall I go?
You guide me, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

When I feel oppressed — to whom shall I go?
You defend me, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

WORDS OF CONSOLATION IN TIMES OF DISTRESS
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

David, the Prophet, said to God, *"Remember the word to your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction. (Ps 119:49,50)*

You too, in times of distress and hardships, remember the following sayings and you will be comforted:

+ "... and go, I am with you always, even to the end of age. " (Mt 28:20)

+ "No weapon formed against you shall prosper. "(Is 54:17)

+ "Do not be afraid I am with you"; "Here I am, do not fear. " (Jn 6:20)

+ "The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" (Exd 14:14)

+ "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive,... Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth. Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers, the snare is broken and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. " (Ps 124:2,3,6-8)

"For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous. " (Ps 125:3)

"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will' bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you. " (Gen 28:15)"

They will fight against you. But they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you "(Jer 1:19)

"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you. " (Acts 18:9,10).

"In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. " (Jn 16:33)
"Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth. Yet they have not prevailed against me. The ploughers ploughed on my back; they made their furrows long. The Lord is righteous, he has cut in pieces the cords of the wicked. " (Ps 129:2-4.

"You pushed me violently, that 1 might fall, but the Lord helped me.'-' (Ps 118:13.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. "(Ps 23:4)

+ "A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, But it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked. " (Ps 91:78)

+ "The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; he shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in. " (Ps 121:7,8).

+ "The Lord is my light and may salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ... Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear, though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident. " (Ps 27:1,3)

+ "Gird your sword upon your thigh, O Mighty One, with your glory and majesty. " (Ps 45:3)

+ "...the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it..." (Mt 16:18)

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

HOLY BIBLE

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

MARCH
FIRST SUNDAY

SELECTED PERSONALITIES FROM THE HOLY BIBLE (II):
Jacob (Part A)
"God has a Plan"

Please read Genesis 25:19-end, Genesis 27 to Genesis 30, the attached material "Isaac Blessed Jacob", "Different Vision", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

- This is lesson two of "Selected Personalities from the Holy Bible". We would like to benefit from their lives.
- We may judge who is right and who is wrong, but God who looks from up above and knows everything may have a different vision.

MEMORY VERSE:

"So he [Esau] swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob" (Genesis 25:33)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **Introduction:**

  Jacob is the son of Isaac, who is the son of Abraham. He was the twin brother of Esau.

  "And the Lord said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger' (Genesis 25:23). **This can be explained as follows:**

  The Lord revealed to Rebecca the secret behind the "children struggling together within her". He told her that she was carrying within her two groups of people. One group comes from the younger child, Jacob, and this group becomes spiritually stronger than the other group who comes from the older child, Esau.

The secret behind the spiritual strength and mastery of the descendants of Jacob was their acceptance and obedience of God's promises and enjoying His divine blessings. From the descendants of Jacob came the prophets, and the Word of God was incarnate.

The older, Esau, was the first from the flesh point of view. However, because of the corruption of his heart, he lost his birthright and the blessings. The younger, Jacob, because of his keen desire for the spiritual blessings and because of his faith, he enjoyed the birthright and the blessings.

Some of the Church fathers believe that this statement is referring to the Christian Church of the New Testament. The Christian Church, if compared with the Jews in its knowledge of God, can be considered as the younger since the Christian church knew God at the end of the ages, when Christ came.

But the Christian Church became the stronger spiritually, and picked up the spiritual birthright, accepted the prophecies and the covenants and the heavenly laws for its children. St. Augustine said, "You are Jacob, the young generation which was served by the older generation."

The two children, Jacob and Esau, are also symbols of the spiritual person and the materialistic person respectively. Esau was "red…like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau" (Genesis 25:25). So, Esau loved the world and the materialistic things, and he was also called "Edom" from the word "Adam" because he was red in colour. He lived aggressively as a hunter, and liked shedding blood. His descendants, "children of Edom", also came to love the earth and their hearts were aggressive. Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. He was a symbol for the spiritual maxi who works hard towards spiritual things.

Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?" (Genesis 25:32). And the Bible commented on that saying, "Thus Esau despised his birthright". But Jacob used this opportunity not to get a materialistic reward in return for the food that he gave to his brother, but rather he asked for something spiritual: "the birthright". So Esau represents the careless man who does not care about spiritual things and heavenly glory but only cares about the lusts of the body. St. Augustine said, about the fall of Esau, that it was not because of the dish of stew, but because of carelessness.

✞ Rebecca Supported Jacob:

Rebecca heard what her husband Isaac told Esau. Because of her love to Jacob, she told him what happened. It is interesting to note that neither Rebecca nor Jacob felt that they did something wrong and Isaac did not blame them for

anything after he realized their plan. On the other hand, Isaac emphasized his blessings to Jacob. Probably Isaac knew that Jacob and his mother Rebecca were right although they used a means that was wrong.

We were expecting Rebecca as a wise mother and a good wife to tell her husband Isaac what is in her heart and remind him about the divine voice which blessed Jacob before his birth. Even in these circumstances, God used her weakness to achieve something good. However, she was given the punishments of her rushed actions.

"The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau" (Genesis 27:22).

This is an interesting and living picture for our Master Jesus Christ. His voice is the voice of the Son "Omonoganies" (i.e. the only one unique in His race) but His hands are our hands because He carried our nature in Him.

✞ **Esau was Deprived from the Blessing:**

Some people may ask: What did Esau do wrong to be deprived from the blessing that was stolen by his brother with the plan of his mother? Didn't he cry loudly and bitterly when he heard that his father gave his blessings to Jacob? We answer saying that Esau was careless with the talents in his hands to control and hence he lost the blessings that are not in his control. When Esau asked his father "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" (Genesis 27:36), he was thinking about earthly blessings. The actual fact was that it was only one blessing through which Jacob enjoyed that from his descendants comes the Lord Jesus Christ. This blessing could only be given for Jacob, according to the directions from God to him, to whoever deserves it.

✞ **Jacob's Trip to his Uncle Laban:**

"Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12). He had this dream when he was afraid from his brother Esau on his way to his uncle Laban. God comforted him with the dream and promised him: "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go" (Genesis 28:15).

When Jacob woke from his dream he said "This is none other than the house of God" (Genesis 28:17). So this dream was referring to the church of God and the angels in it up and down from heaven. Jacob made a vow to worship the Lord his God if he kept him safe and returned him in peace to his father's house. **Please read Genesis 28:20-22.** Jacob met his wife Rachel beside the well. He served his

uncle Laban for 20 years. After 20 years he took his wives and children and escaped from his uncle Laban.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Jacob was a spiritual person who had a keen desire for spiritual things. Let us tie our hearts with heaven not earth.

(2) As Jacob loved the blessing of God and was trying very hard to get this blessing, God gave him lots of blessings and gave him power and comforted him in the time of troubles.

(3) As Jacob deceived his brother Esau, so his uncle Laban deceived him.

(4) God knows the hearts of everyone and may allow things to happen in a certain way that is above our comprehension.

SONGS

A GOD LIKE YOU

I have never seen a God like you, my Lord
Who opens the gates, and unlocks the chains (2)
And created roads in the middle of the sea
Never prevented by mountains nor barriers.

REFRAIN:
I have never seen a God like you my God (2)

No one else but you appears in the den
And rescues the souls from the lion's hem (2)
Who can lighten the darkness but you O King
And fill my heart with joy that I may sing?

You have suffered lots on the wooden cross
To give me back my life and restore my loss (2)
You have promised me You are coming back
To grant me the eternal life I lack

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Another View
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

We look at matters in a specific way and from a special angle and see them from a certain point of view; but we do not see everything.

There is another view through faith, that agrees with what God sees.

+ What do we see in Joseph being sold as a slave by his brothers?

And what do we see in his imprisonment after all his loyalty while in Potiphar's house?

All we can see is evil, jealousy and betrayal...

We also see injustice and ill-fate.

As for God, He has another view of all these matters.

That was the way for Joseph to be glorified.
How would we describe what Judas Iscariot did except betrayal in the lowest form?!

And the way Pontius Pilate acted, could it be anything but cowardice, injustice and yielding to evil?!

And what would we say about Annas and Caiaphas except envy, lying and conspiracy?!

We look at these things and say they should not have happened.

But God has another view.

He could see the Salvation as a result of the Crucifixion which was caused by all of these people.

It is God who changes evil into goodness.

It does not mean that their evil was good!
Of course not, but the other view is that God is able to make sweet out of the bitter and make all matters happen for the glory of His Holy name.

+ Jonah boarded the ship but a mighty tempest was about to turn it over. The mariners threw the cargo into the sea and were afraid... Was that all evil? Or was there another view of this sea tragedy?

The other view was that the waves of the raging sea caused the mariners to believe in the Lord.

+ There is no doubt that we have limited sight... You might be able to see the tribulation but not the blessing that God will positively achieve as a result of this trial.

But through faith we see the blessing, trusting that, *".. all things work together for good to those who love God. " (Rom 8:28)*

Isaac Blessed Jacob

At first Isaac and Rebecca had no children and this made them unhappy. Isaac prayed that they might have a child and the Lord heard his prayer and answered it. Rebecca then conceived. But the Lord told her, "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body. One people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger."

And when the delivery came, she had twins. The first one was red and hairy; they named him Esau. But the second was holding the first one by the heel; they named him Jacob.

As the boys grew up, it was apparent that they were very different. Esau loved the outdoors and hunting, but Jacob stayed around the tents.

One day, Jacob was cooking some food when Esau came in fainting from hunger. "Feed me, quick" he gasped.

"First, sell me your birthright", replied Jacob.

Since Esau needed food more than his birthright at that moment, he sold it to Jacob.

When Isaac became old, he was nearly blind. One day he sent for Esau and said, "I feel that I might die soon, so won't you take your bow and go out and get me some venison that I like so much? Then I can bless you before I die."

But Rebecca, overhearing Isaac's words to Esau, called Jacob and said to him, "Bring me two kids from the flock so that I can make some stew for your father. You are to take it to him, then he will give you his blessing." Jacob did as she told him; she made the stew and then put the hairy skin of the animals on Jacob's hands and arms and put Esau's robe on him.

When Isaac felt his arms, he said, "Although your voice sounds like Jacob's, you must be Esau, because your hands feel like Esau's." So Isaac, thinking it was Esau, blessed Jacob and said that he should rule over his brothers. He had just finished when the real Esau came in with the venison. When he discovered how Jacob had cheated him of the blessing, he wept in rage. And he vowed to kill his brother Jacob.

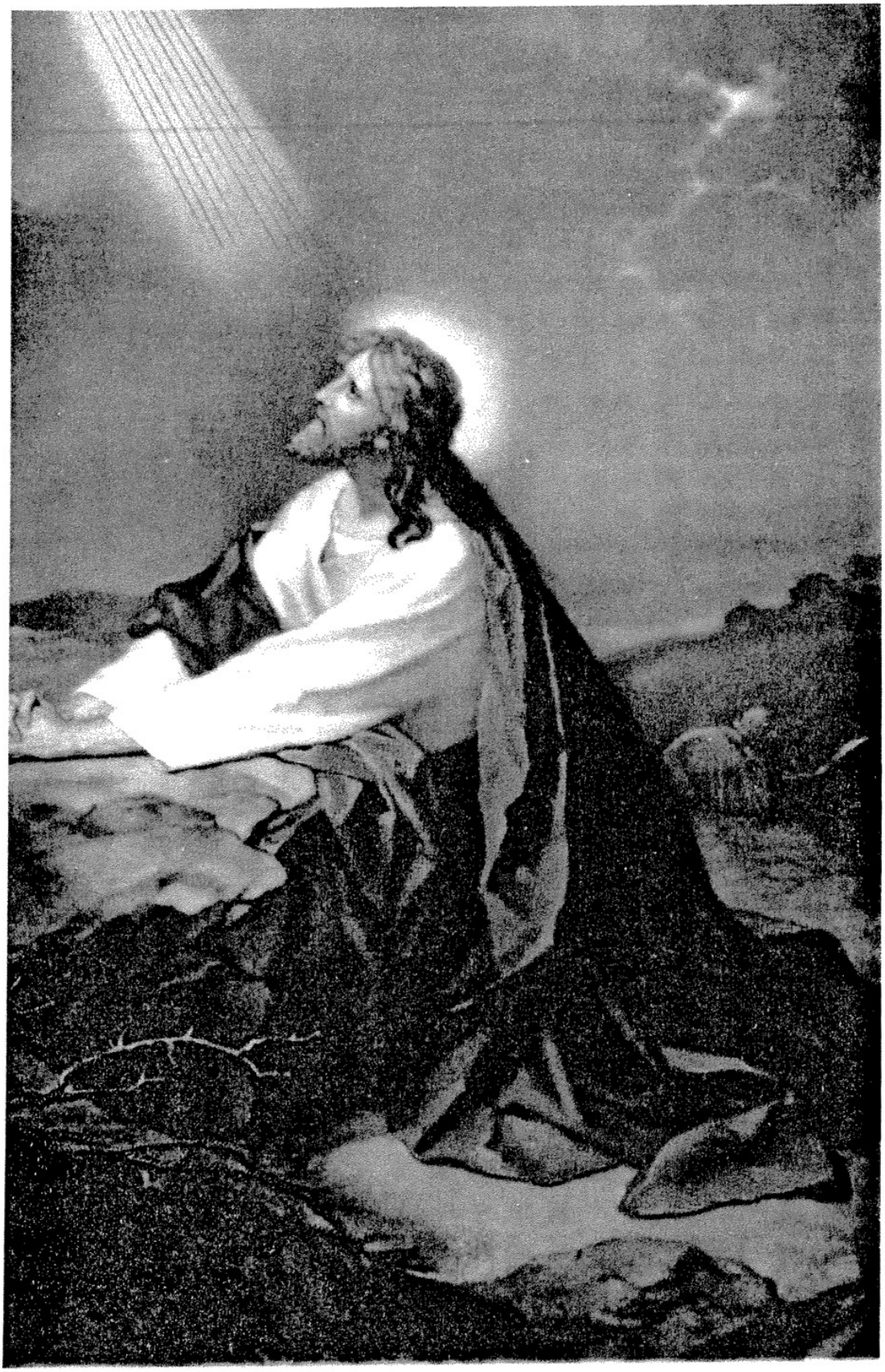
Rebecca heard of his plan and advised Jacob to flee to her brother Laban and stay with him until Esau's anger had cooled.

So Jacob set forth to stay with his uncle Laban. On the way, as it grew dark, he took a stone for a pillow and went to sleep. And he had a dream in which he saw a ladder which stretched from earth up to heaven. And there were angels ascending and descending it. But above it stood the Lord. And He said to Jacob, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. The land where you are lying will be yours and your descendants. They will be as numerous as the dust of the earth and their possessions will extend in all directions. Through you and your descendants all the

families of earth will be blessed. I shall be with you wherever you go, but I shall bring you back to this land. Nor shall I ever forsake you until I have fulfilled all that I have promised."

Jacob awoke from his dream very moved and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I never even knew it. This is truly the house of God, the very gate of heaven!" And he took the stone that he had used for a pillow, he set it on its end and poured oil on it, vowing that the Lord would be his God and that this would be God's house.

He then continued his journey until he reached the land where his uncle Laban lived. He saw three flocks of sheep near a well which was covered by a stone. Jacob asked the shepherds if they knew Laban and they replied that they did. "In fact", they said, "here comes his daughter Rachel now, to water her father's sheep." When Jacob saw Rachel, he removed the stone from the well and watered the sheep for her. Then he told Rachel who he was. She took him home where he was welcomed by his uncle. He stayed there twenty years. He married both Rachel and her older sister Leah, and had many children.



MARCH
SECOND SUNDAY

SELECTED PERSONALITIES FROM THE HOLY BIBLE (III):
Jacob (Part B)
"Use of Good Means"

Please read Genesis 31 up to and including Genesis 33, the attached materials "Jacob's Meeting with Esau", "The Good Mean", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
This is lesson three of "Selected Personalities from the Holy Bible". We would like to benefit from their lives. By using nice ways of treatment we can win people to our side.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed" (Genesis 32:28)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **Jacob's Flight to Canaan:**
  - "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you" (Genesis 31:3).
  - Jacob represented our Lord Jesus Christ who came to our land (i.e. Haran in this case) and He took us from the house of our old father, i.e., Satan (i.e. Laban the idolist in this case). So, He gained us as a bride for Him whether we were from the Gentiles (as Rachel was) or from the Jews (as Leah was). The Lord Jesus took us from the old life (in Haran) going through the baptism (i.e., as Jacob crossed the river with his people) and carrying us to heaven (i.e. the promised land of Canaan).

- ✞ Laban knew about the escape of Jacob: "Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead" God said to Laban, "Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad" (Genesis 31:23-24).
- ✞ The war was not between Jacob and Laban, but it was between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Therefore, God interfered and warned Laban not to touch Jacob.
- ✞ The departure of both teams: Laban went back to Haran, while Jacob went to Canaan representing our return to heaven through our Lord Jesus Christ.

✞ **The Preparation to Meet Esau:**

- ✞ Jacob with the angels of God: "When Jacob saw them (i.e., the angels), he said 'this is God's camp" (Genesis 32:2). As Jacob was going to Canaan (which represents heaven), God's angels met him. Jacob sent representatives to Esau with a letter full of love and humility calling his brother "Master".
- ✞ Jacob prayed to the Lord of his fathers saying "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac" (Genesis 32:9). He did not pray to God as He is the God of all nations, but Jacob felt that there was a personal relationship with God as the Father for him and his family. It is beautiful for everyone of us to feel that he has a personal and loving relationship with God. Jacob sends a gift to Esau: "It is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us" (Genesis 32:18).
- ✞ Jacob wrestled with God for a blessing: "Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day" (Genesis 32:24). Jacob tried his best in all situations to gain spiritual blessings. This reminds us that "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12).

✞ **Jacob Meets his Brother Esau:**

- ✞ Jacob was wise when he met his brother Esau. He had a humble heart and called his brother "Master".
- ✞ When God saw that Jacob is obedient and fears Him, he comforted him, strengthened him in the night and blessed him. God gave him a new name Israel, because he struggled with God and with people and won. Jacob said to God "I will not leave you before you bless me."

- ✞ Jacob had 12 sons and they are called the 12 tribes of Israel. Jacob lived 17 years in Egypt with his son Joseph. Jacob lived for 147 years.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Because Jacob was humble, he won peace with his brother Esau.

(2) He relied completely on the protection of God.

(3) "Whatever one plants he/she will collect."

SONGS

DO NOT LEAVE ME ALONE

Do not leave me alone
Be always near to help me

O shepherd of my soul
and hear me when I call

REFRAIN
My lord, I'm nothing without Thee
So take my right hand

I am nothing at all
O Lord, and lead me
Forever in Thy way

Do not leave me alone
And hold me lest I fall

My guardian and my guide
whenever my footsteps slide

Do not leave me alone
When outward things are strong

if I'm tempted to sin
keep watch, O Lord, within

Do not leave me alone
Subdue Satan before me

whenever I feel frail
and let him not prevail

Do not leave me alone
But take my hand and lead me

when I have gone astray
again into Thy way

Do not leave me alone
But rather, Lord, forgive me

whenever sins abound
and turn my life around

Do not leave me alone
But rather reassure me

when hope has fled away
and teach me to watch and pray

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Good Means

By H.H. Pope Shenoouda III

It is not enough that the work we do is good in itself or in its objectives, but the means we use must be kind and good.

For example, violence and extreme strictness and cruelty are not all good ways of upbringing or achieving discipline and obedience.

Mostly these are displeasing means that do not suit every person. One might arrive at his aim without violence or cruelty... by adopting good means...

Swearing, also, is not a spiritual way of answering those who disagree with you in faith or in opinion.

By doing this you lose the one whom you agree with, and if you were a writer or an author you will also lose your readers. The correct way is to be objective in the discussion of matters concerning faith and beliefs, without swearing or insults, because, *"... nor revilers nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. " (1 Cor 6:10)*

Destruction, bitter criticism or trying to ruin others, are not good means of expressing holy zeal.

Zeal could be shown in a positive and constructive way that handles matters deliberately and objectively. It could also be shown by quiet study and submission of acceptable solutions that are done in love. As it says in the Bible, *"Let all that you do be done in love. " (1 Cor 16:14)*

Division is not a good way for ecclesiastical work or even for social and national work.

Division weakens the ranks and proves lack of cooperation and inability to deal with the other point of view. It could also be an evidence of failure in convincing and gaining the other side.

The Bible says, *"And he who wins souls is wise. " (Prov 11:30)*

The wise chooses right means for his good deeds.

Wrong means do not go with good work.

And the good work, if achieved through improper means, becomes a combination of light and darkness or mixture of virtue and sin and would not prove to be spiritual.

Let our means be good, quiet and spiritual; at least, let not be them harmful or a stumbling block.

Jacob's Meeting with Esau

Bitterness grew between Jacob and his uncle and his cousins, so that they accused one another. One night, God appeared to Jacob in a dream and told him to leave this land and to return to his own kindred. So he took his wives, his children and his cattle and left the home of his uncle. Laban pursued him and blamed him for going away secretly, but he finally let his daughters and grandchildren go with Jacob.

As Jacob drew nearer to his brother Esau's land, he grew anxious. So he sent servants to Esau to see if he was still angry. The servants returned and reported that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men.

Jacob was terrified. So he prayed, "Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children" (Genesis 32:11). Then he took many of his flocks and sent them ahead with servants as presents for Esau.

That night, Jacob was alone, after sending the entire company ahead of him. Suddenly he found himself wrestling with a Man. At day break, the Man said, "Let me go."

But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me" (Genesis 32:26). "And He said, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel: for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed" (Genesis 32:28).

Soon after, Esau arrived with all his men. Jacob bowed to the ground seven times as he came near his brother. But Esau embraced him and kissed him and they both wept. The two brothers became friends again.

Jacob bought a piece of land and settled near Shechem in the land of Canaan. But once again God said to him, "Rise up, and go to Bethel, the place where you set up the stone when you fled from your brother." So Jacob journeyed there. And God blessed him and promised him that nations and kings would be born from him.

MARCH
THIRD SUNDAY

SELECTED PERSONALITIES FROM THE HOLY BIBLE (IV)
Mary and Martha
"Giving priority to the spiritual life"

Please read Luke 10: 38-42, John 11: 1-44, John 12: 1-8, Matthew 26: 6-13, the attached material entitled "The Spiritual Life", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

- ✞ This is lesson four in a four-lesson series on "Selected Personalities from the Holy Bible".
- ✞ We would like to learn from their lives. Let nothing delay us from proceeding and getting deeper in our spiritual life".

MEMORY VERSE:

"Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus" (John 12:3)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✞ **Mary and Martha Worship and Serve (Luke 10:38-42):**
  - ✞ There once was a small family composed of three members Lazarus, Mary and Martha, two sisters and one brother. Jesus loved the three of them and used to sleep over many times in their house.
  - ✞ When Jesus visited them, Martha was serving and was too busy in the kitchen. Mary was sitting by his feet listening to his teaching. Martha was a good example of people serving God.
  - ✞ Mary was a good example of worshipping God, an act based on love.

- ✞ Mary was very attracted to Jesus and she loved to sit at His feet to hear His words "I sat down in his shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" (Song of Solomon 2:3).
- ✞ Martha represents the model of people who are serving God, while Mary represents the model of worshippers. Both are acceptable in the church. "But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42). Therefore the greatest thing we can do in this world is to praise the name of the Lord, worship Him and glorify His Holy Name. But serving is not rejected provided that it is without complaining or confusion or pride. It is very essential that first we sit at the feet of Jesus and be filled and then afterwards we can go out and serve Him.

✞ **Lazarus Died and the Two Sisters were Very Sad (John 11:1-44):**

- ✞ The two sisters sent to Jesus saying "He whom You love is sick". The two sisters did the right thing. They just let the Lord know their problems. This teaches us that in situations where we cannot offer any help to others in trouble, we must pray to our Lord Jesus and present their problem to Him, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick" (John 11:3).
- ✞ Jesus went to their village and by the time He arrived, it was already four days after the death of Lazarus.
- ✞ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died, but even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You". Jesus answered her, "Your brother will rise again". Jesus also told her "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" ... "Take away the stone" ... "***Lazarus, come forth***!"
- ✞ From this miracle we learn that: Jesus is the Son of the Living God and that He is the Resurrection and Life. There is a Resurrection for the dead, and whoever lives in the life of faith conquers death. Also that God, even if He allowed troubles to happen to us, He gives the outlet as He Himself comes and comforts us.

✞ **<u>Thanksgiving by Mary and Martha Six Days Before the Passover (Matthew 26:6-13):</u>**

- ✞ "Then six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, who had been dead, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat

at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair" (John 12:1-3). In this occasion Martha offered the supper (which was needed) and Mary offered her love. The Lord preferred the love of Mary.

- ✞ When Judas Iscariot complained about what Mary did, our Lord Jesus praised her and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Matthew 26:13).
- ✞ This family represents a model of a thankful family who is admitting the gratitude of God.

✞ **Let us discuss:**

a) Do you love Jesus?
b) Can you give up something for his sake and what is it?
c) Can we be like Mary?
d) What do we learn from this family that can be applied in our own families?

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Mary had love. She translated love into the worship of the Lord. This is the sound basis for worshipping God.

(2) Martha served. This is good. But better still was if she sat and enjoyed the words of our Lord Jesus.

(3) Even up to the last moment, Mary expressed her thankfulness to Jesus. Mary was very poor but she sold all what she had to express her thankfulness to Jesus.

SONGS

<u>JESUS, JESUS</u>

Jesus , Jesus
You have given me Your blessings

Love, love, love, love
Love your neighbour as your brother

Holy God
Holy and Immortal One

can I tell You how I feel?
I love You so

the Gospel in a word is love
love, love, love

Holy and Mighty
have mercy on us

The Spiritual Life
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

+ It is a permanent movement towards God and a continual advancement towards the infinite.

It is an uninterrupted effort to attain perfection... and perfection is boundless. Therefore, the spiritual life cannot be experienced by one who pauses, sits or sleeps; it suits person who always goes forward with all his power...

+ It is a transition from one perfection to another better perfection... it is always connected with growth.

The spiritual life does not mean that you lead a virtuous life but to move always from good to better and far better... with no end.. It is summarized in one phrase said by St. Paul the Apostle, *"...reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press towards the goal. "*

+ Poor is the man who spends all his life combating sin...

He is supposed to stop sin and enter the life of righteousness, then grow until he reaches perfection. He should proceed gradually from relative perfection pressing towards absolute perfection which he will not attain... So, the righteous feels always that he is at fault and negligent because the target before him is still far away...

A spiritual person strives with all his power and seeing it is not enough, he widens the circle of his potentials trying to create new skills for himself...

In all this he wrestles with himself and with the grace working in him... He struggles with God to lead him as He did with the saints.

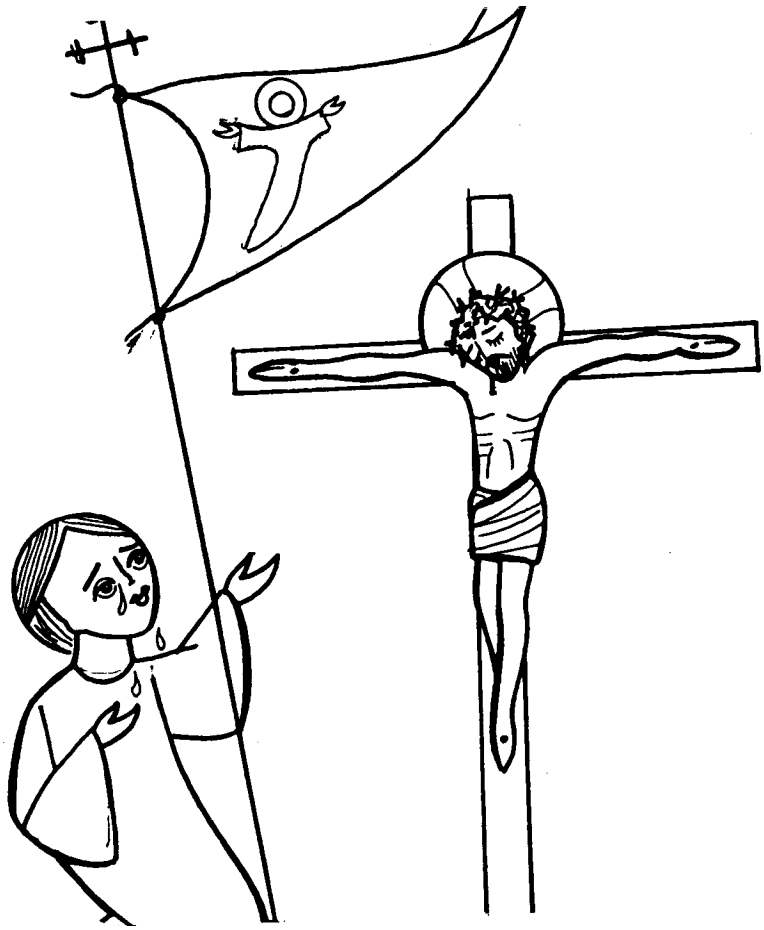
+ Do not move slowly along the way of spiritual life. Do not pause or be distracted by the sceneries of the road. Do not allow your enemies or even your friends to hinder you. Tell them as Lazarus of Damascus said to Rebecca's parents, *"Do not hinder me, since the Lord has prospered my way. " (Gen. 24:56). Remember the Lord's saying, "...greet no one along the road" (Luk. 10:4).* Do not preoccupy yourselves with a relative or a friend, but repeat the words of St. Peter the Apostle to the Lord, *"We have left all and followed You." (Matt. 19:27).*
+ The Samaritan woman did not want to be hindered by her water-pot, so she left it by the well and hastened to the city to preach Christ to them.

We have many water-pots, when one becomes empty we fill it again. We do not leave the well, the pots nor the water, nor do we go down o preach Christ.

+ Believe me, the whole life is not enough to get across our way to God. How much great indeed our loss is regarding the years we wasted from our lives, which were the best of our times filled with energy and deserving greater reward...

+ Very often, our best times are those in which we talk about the way, its beauty and its spirituality, without walking along it ... !!

Merely, we are learned and and well informed, we prepare lessons and give them to the people...!!



MARCH
FOURTH SUNDAY

Pope Kyrollos VI Pope of Alexandria

Please read the attached materials entitled "Pope Kyrollos VI", "Some Miracles of Pope Kyrollos VI", "Prayers", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To study:

- ✞ The life of Pope Kyrollos and learn from it.
- ✞ In him we see a good role model of how the lives of prayer can shape-up the personality.

MEMORY VERSE:

"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name" (Revelation 3:12)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Pope Kyrollos the VI was the 116th Pope of Alexandria. He lived from August 2, 1902 to March 9, 1971.

- ✞ **Pope Kyrollos Before Being a Monk:**
  - ✞ He finished his secondary school only. He loved God and was very honest in his work. His name was Azer.
- ✞ **Azer became a monk:**
  - ✞ He was similar to Mary who selected the best share. He wanted to dedicate all his life to God. He went to the Western desert and stayed in the monastery. He was specialized in helping the older and the sick monks.

- **Father Mina:**
  - On July 18, 1931, he was ordained "Father Mina" (i.e. he became a priest). He left the monastery and lived two miles away from the monastery in a little cave. Every Saturday evening he used to go to the monastery to attend the evening prayers and take communion on Sunday.

- **Heaven calls Father Mina to become the Pope:**
  - On April 19, 1959, the Altar Lot (which is usually done after the church service to select the Pope among a number of selected monks) was drawn. The selection from heaven was for him to become the Pope of Alexandria.

- **Most of the achievements in Pope Kyrollos' time:**
  1. Renovation and enlargement of the Monastery of St. Mena. He bought a large land himself and built the new Monastery of St. Mena.
  2. Building the new Cathedral of St. Mark in the district of Anba Reweis, Cairo.
  3. Obtaining part of the relics of St. Mark from Rome.
  4. Establishing the base for churches in the land of immigration outside Egypt: two in Canada, two in the United States, two in Australia and one in London, England.
  5. The apparition of the Virgin Mary in her church in Zaytoun, Cairo on April 2, 1968 was during his era.

- **What did Pope Shenouda Say about Pope Kyrollos?**
  - "Church history has no record of anyone who is like Pope Kyrollos. He celebrated mass over 12,000 times, a fact unheard of in the history of the popes of Alexandria or the world. He was wonderful in his prayers. He entrusted his problems to the Lord and he saw that it was only through the mass and prayers and not through human efforts that problems should be solved".
  - "Many people came to him not to have a very deep opinion or a lengthy prayer, but it was enough for them to hear from him 'If God willing, it will be solved'. This was enough to convince the people that their problem will be solved."
  - "He was the first Pope in our generation to open his door to every person. Everyone was able to sit with him and talk to him without any obstacle."
  - "He did not use a book in his divine liturgies or his prayers in any occasion. Therefore, he was praying from his heart and he knew what is in the books by heart.

☩ Pope Kyrollos performed a large number of miracles. These are documented in several books. He healed a lot of sick people. He comforted the suffering people. (See the attached material for examples of his miracles.)

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Pope Kyrollos was a man of prayers and was completely depending on the power of prayers. Let us pray at all times.

(2) He celebrated a lot of divine liturgies. Let us be regular participants in attending the Divine Liturgy, and regular partakers of the Holy Communion.

SONGS

OUT OF THE DEPTH, O LORD

Out of the depth, O Lord
Consider my afflictions
I am in need

I've cried with all my heart
accept my invocations
I am in need

When I pour myself before Thee
Before Thee, O my Lord
Please hear my voice, O Lord

let my prayer be accepted
as rising sweet incense
Please hear my voice, O Lord

May the lifting up of my hands
To purge all my iniquities
I praise Thee, O Lord

be like evening oblation
and purify my heart
I praise Thee, O Lord

Recitation Curriculum :

Please Look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

PRAYER

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Prayer is to open the heart to God, so that the faithful talks to Him, lovingly and openly. It is laying the individual before God.

Prayer is a tie, a relationship between Man and God. Therefore, it is not just talk, it is a heart connected to a heart.

Prayer is a feeling of being in the presence of God. It is a partnership with the Holy Spirit and unity with God...

Prayer is the food of the angels and the spirituals by which they are nourished and taste the Lord, *"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. " (Ps 34:8)*

Prayer quenches a soul's thirst for God, *"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul to you, O God" (Ps 42:1), "I will lift up my hands in your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. " (Ps 63:5)*

Prayer is the submission of life to God to conduct it Himself, *"Your will be done. "*

Prayer is an admission of our lack of strength, and insufficiency of our intelligence. Therefore, we resort to a greater power where we find our care...

Prayer is to abolish our independence from God...

It is meeting with God: either we lift ourselves up to Him or He comes down to us...

It is turning oneself to Heaven and to the throne of God...

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!!

Prayer is not just a request. One might pray without asking for anything... but contemplate on the beauty of God and His life giving qualities... Therefore, a prayer of praise and glorification... is more sublime than that of a request...

Whoever seeks something else besides God alone, will never be able to enjoy prayer as he ought to. Prayer means dying completely to all the world, an utter forgetfulness to pleasures, where God alone remains in one's thought...

Prayer is the ladder which connects Heaven and Earth. It is a bridge that we cross to reach the heavenly places where there is no world...

It is a key to Heaven..... It is a combination of feelings tnat are expressed in words...

Prayer would be without words or utterance... The heart's beat is a prayer... the eye's tear is prayer... the feeling of God's presence is a prayer..

In all these shades of meaning, do you really pray?...

Pope Kyrollos VI Pope of Alexandria

The 116th Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark
His Upbringing, Monasticism, Enthronement, and Repose:
(August 2, 1902 - March 9, 1971).

Azer (Pope Cyril VI = Pope Kyrollos) was born of pious parents on August 2, 1902. His father, Mr. Youssef Ata, was a deacon known for his beautiful voice and for his fine calligraphy. He used to spend his spare time teaching young deacons church hymns or copying manuscripts and old books in his beautiful handwriting.

Azer grew up loving the church, Christ and the Saints. He was used to praying, observing church fasts, reading the Bible and visiting Holy places and the tombs of Saints, particularly the tomb of St. Mena's and the wonder-worker (Mari Mena). The tomb was in the town of Abyar, where the family used to spend a week every year during St. Mena's feast days.

Azer completed his high school studies and worked for "Cooks Shipping Company" in Alexandria. He was loved and respected by his peers and his superiors and was shortly promoted to a better position. Azer's behaviour at that time reflected his great love for God. He used to spend his spare time attending masses and partaking of the Holy Communion. He spent long hours at night praying and reading the Holy Bible in his own room.

The family was surprised by Azer's sudden resignation and his intent to become a monk. They tried to make him change his mind but they failed.

After completing his studies at the Theological College, he went to Al-Baramus Monastery in Wadi al Natrun in the Western Desert to spend the training period that usually precedes monasticism.

There, he was responsible for the kitchen and helped and served the elders. He baked bread for the monks and guests and also the church bread (Korban) for the mass. He attended mass punctually and frequently partook of the Holy Communion. He spent a great deal of time reading the Holy Bible, and the writings of the Church Fathers.

All the monks in the Al-Baramus monastery were very pleased with Azer's behaviour and the elders thought very highly of him. On the 25th of February 1928 all the elders of the monastery recommended Azer to become a monk. The ceremonies were completed and they named him "Mena".

He was loved by everyone for he was cooperative, helpful to the elders and attentive to the needs of the sick monks.

He paid special attention to the library of the monastery putting the books in good order. He read a lot of the writings of the church fathers particularly Mar Ishaq Al-Suryani (St. Isaac the Syrian), St. Anthony the Great and St. Shenouda, the Archimandrite.

Father Mina

On Sunday July 18, 1931, Mina the monk was ordained "Father Mina". Throughout the mass he stood calmly in the altar with tears. There was a ceremony thereafter well-attended by members of his family and his friends.

He was chosen to study at the Helwan Theological College (near Cairo) and he obeyed in spite of his great desire for solitude. He excelled in his studies and was one of the top ranking monks. One evening, during the service of the raising of incense, Pope Yuanes who was present there, listened to a sermon delivered by Father Mina. He admired him tremendously and wanted to ordain him Bishop. When Father Mina heard, he fled to the monastery of Anba Shenouda in Suhag in Upper Egypt. Pope Yuanes respected the humble desire of Father Mina and permitted him to go back to his own monastery: the monastery of Al-Baramus.

Father Mina loved solitude and decided to live in a cave two miles away from the monastery. The area of the cave was approximately 6 x 5 meters and its depth was about 3 meters. He lived there worshipping the Lord and he used to go back to the monastery every Saturday to wash his clothes and the clothes of the sick and the elders, attend the evening prayers and spend the night in the monastery to attend the Sunday mass and partake of the Holy Communion. Pope Yuanes visited him in his cave and blessed him.

Bishop Athanasius of Beni-Suef appointed Father Mina head of St. Samuel's Monastery (near Maghagha in Upper Egypt).

Heaven Calls Father Mina

After the repose of Pope Yusab, the 115th Patriarch of the Coptic Church, Bishop Athanasius took charge of the church. It was agreed to nominate a number of monks known for their piety, sound judgment and administrative abilities. Father Mina stayed away from this matter worshipping the Lord and helping those in need for help. Bishop Athanasius, however, nominated him for the Papal elections. Father Mina, on the other hand, asked his friends not to wage any propaganda for him nor hold meetings to urge people to vote for him.

Three monks won the elections. These were Father Demyan AI-Miharagi, Father Angelos Al-Miharagi and Father Mina Al-Baramusi.

On April 19, 1959 the Altar Lot was drawn. It happened thus that after the mass, the three names mentioned above were written on three separate pieces of paper, folded and put inside a sealed envelope placed on the top of the Altar. In the presence of several thousand people, the envelope was opened by Rafik Basily, a young deacon from the city of Tanta. The young deacon, then, drew one folded piece of paper. That was the one with the name of Father Mina Al-Baramusi on it. The Cathedral bells rang; joy reigned at the Lord's choice of a good shepherd for his people: the choice of Father Mina, now Pope Kyrollos (Pope Cyril VI).

On Sunday, May 10, 1959 Father Mina Al-Baramusi stood in front of the closed doors of the church with the door-key in his hands. He opened the door saying:
"Open to me the gates of 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. "(Psalm 118:19-21).
The fact that Father Mina became Pope Kyrollos (Pope Cyril VI) did not change his nature. He punctually raised evening and morning incense and celebrated His daily masses as usual.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III said concerning this matter:
"Church history has no record of anyone who is like Pope Kyrollos (Pope Cyril VI). He celebrated mass over 12,000 times, a fact unheard of in the history of the popes of Alexandria, or the world. He was wonderful in his prayers. He entrusted his problems to the Lord and he saw that it was only through mass and prayers and not through human effort that problems should be solved."

His Repose (Death)
Pope Kyrollos referred to death as traveling. On March 9th, 1971, the day of his departure, his chauffeur Mr. Azmi Wassef went to see Pope Kyrollos in his room and to ask about his health for he was very ill at that time. Pope Kyrollos told him, "Son, I want to travel." The chauffeur misunderstood (that the Pope wanted to travel), and went out to get the car. No sooner did he reach the end of the hall when he heard the loud cries of Pope Kyrollos' deacon. The Pope passed away; he traveled to the heavenly glories.
May the blessings of this great saint, Pope Kyrollos VI and his intercessor St. Minas (Mari Mina) be with us all. Amen.

Some Miracles of Pope Kyrollos VI

In a far off place in a mountain near Cairo, Father Mina lived in an old mill. There he lived with Christ through continuous prayers. The prayers turned the old mill into a part of heaven. Father Mina prayed all day until sunset. In the dark night Father Mina lived with the light of God Jesus Christ. He lived lonely but happily through his warm and sincere prayers.

One night, the Saint was praying as usual. It was about midnight and darkness filled the whole place. But Father Mina never feared darkness. For he loved our Lord Jesus Christ who said, "It is I, don't be afraid" (Mark 41:50). Father Mina heard a tap on the door of the mill. So he went to open the door. Outside in the darkness of the night three men were standing. They asked Father Mina for a glass of water. When the loving Father turned to get it, the men of darkness hit him so hard on the head that he fell unconscious.

When he came to himself, he found that his head was bleeding heavily. With great difficulty he crawled and reached for a picture of St. Mina whom he loved so much. When Father Mina put the picture on his bleeding head, the bleeding stopped. Father Mina then began to feel better and so he got up, opened the door, and stepped out. He saw from a distance the three men going down the track. He felt sad for those men who asked him for a glass of water then hit him without a word.

The Saint lifted up his eyes toward heaven and thanked Christ, his Lord. Then he returned to the mill to pray for the blessing of St. Mina. A few days went by. As the Saint was praying as usual, he heard someone knocking at the door. He opened the door and there outside one of the three men who had hit him, his eyes full of tears, was asking for his forgiveness. "The two other men", he said, "had been punished: one died and the other had been jailed", so he came quickly asking for forgiveness.

He was sorry for having hurt Father Mina. He feared that heaven would punish him, too, for Father Mina was a man of prayer, blessed from heaven, and he blessed all through his prayers to Jesus Christ, his Lord. Father Mina had always been a winner because he was a lover of Christ. Through his prayers, and through the blessing of the martyr St. Mina, he overcame many difficulties. Those who went to visit him in the old mill saw unusual things.

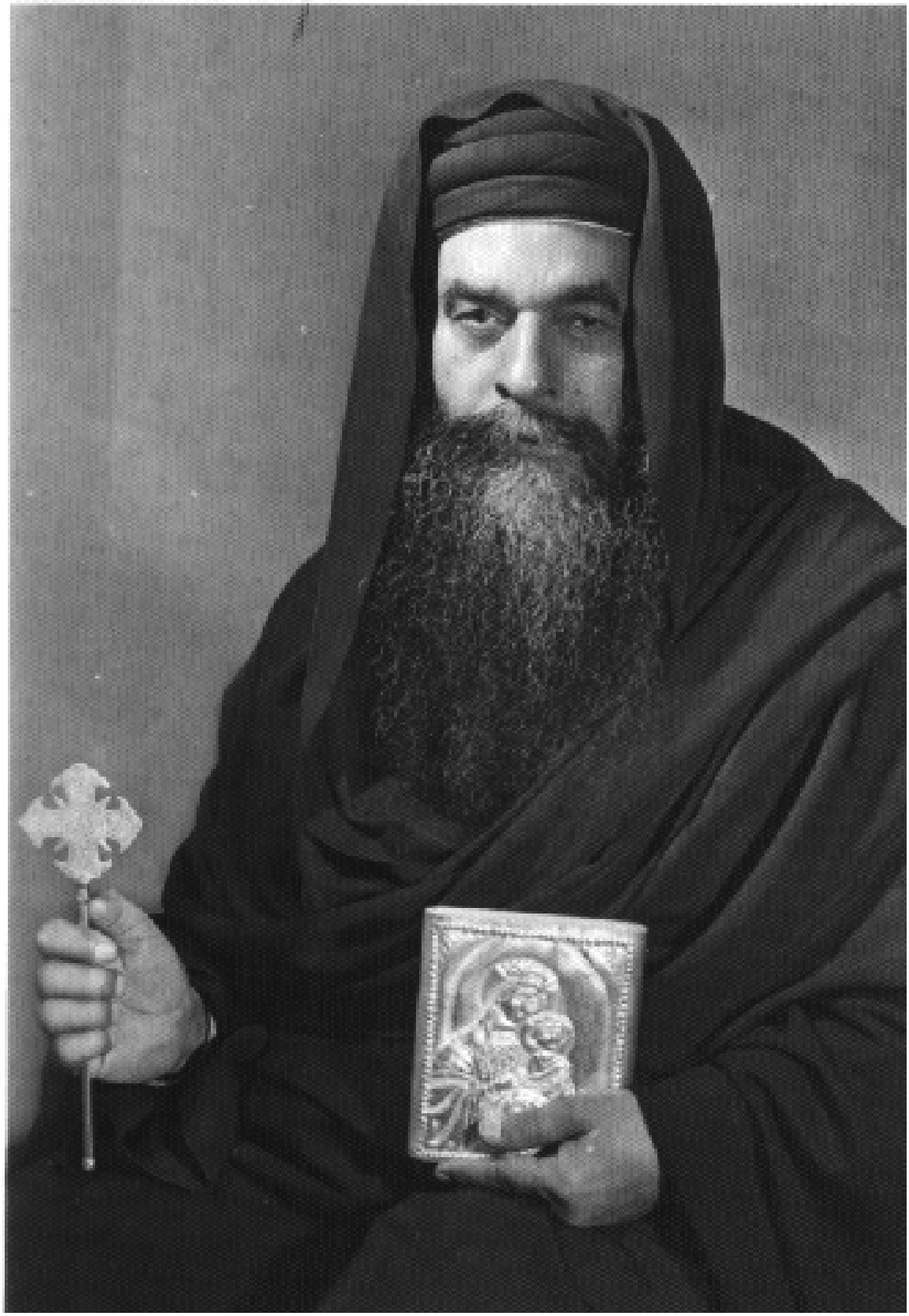
One day a woman who was a lover of Christ and the church, went to see the Saint, seeking the blessing of his prayers. Upon entering the mill she saw a lion sitting right by the side of Father Mina. She was frightened and she stepped back, but Father Mina told her not to be afraid. He ordered the lion to go away and the lion obeyed. Whenever he ordered the lion to sit down, the lion would obey and sit down motionless. The lion always obeyed Father Mina. Through the prayers of this Saint the lion acted like a faithful dog. Such was the power of the Saint's prayers.

As the days went by, Father Mina's prayers became greater and he rose to the heavenly throne. Christ chose Father Mina to be the Pope of the great Coptic

Orthodox Church. He was named Pope Kyrollos VI, and this Saint moved from his poor narrow place in the mill to the great church to be the father of all bishops, priests and congregation. Yet he never forgot his old place in the mill where he lived for many years, praying and blessing.

Pope Kyrollos VI loved everybody. He blessed the children whom Christ loved so dearly. One day a weeping mother brought her little baby to the church where Pope Kyrollos was praying. The child could not see with his left eye, although it looked all right. The doctors were puzzled and they failed to cure the baby's eye. Pope Kyrollos saw the mother's fears of the strange disease in her baby's eye. He suddenly stopped her saying, "Do not be afraid. There's nothing wrong with your child."

The Pope then placed the Cross on the child's eye and prayed and blessed him. The child was cured and at once his sightless eye regained its sight. This happened through the blessing and the prayers of Pope Kyrollos VI, the lover of Christ who taught us to love children when he said, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as those."



APRIL
FIRST SUNDAY

PALM SUNDAY
Hosanna to the Son of David…Hosanna in the Highest

Please read Matthew 21: 1-11, the attachment entitled "A Fraction Addressed to God the Father to be prayed on Palm Sunday", "Saving us from the sins", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To review:
- ✞ Our faith that the Lord Jesus is the Saviour and that the people received Him saying "Hosanna" which means "save us".
- ✞ The Divinity and Humanity of the Lord Jesus were announced in the greetings with which He was received in Jerusalem. He is our Saviour.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:9)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✞ **Introduction:**

  - ✞ Our Lord Jesus attended the supper on Saturday Nissan 9, in the village known by the name Bethany, where Mary anointed His feet (John 12:1). On the next day, Sunday Nissan 10, the Jews used to take the lamb of Passover and keep it until Nissan 14 and then slaughter it in the evening (Exodus 12: 1-36). On that same day (Nissan 10) our Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, entered Jerusalem and He was going back and forth between the Altar and Bethany.
  - ✞ "Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her.

Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, The Lord has need of them', and immediately he will send them" (Matthew 21: 1-3).

- "Bethphage" is a small village southeast from the Mountain of Olives. The priests were living in this village to be close to the altar in Jerusalem.
- The donkey and the colt represent symbolically the world at this time, which had Jews and Gentiles. So the Lord wants the entire human race, even if their thinking and knowledge of God was as low as the donkey and the colt. St. John Chrysostum said, "The human race was similar to these two animals. The donkey is an impure animal (according to the law) and the donkey is used to carry loads. Similarly, the human race before Christ was impure and loaded with sins."

  Also St. John Chrysostum said, "The donkey means the church and the new generation which was impure and became pure when Jesus settled in it."

  St. Jerome talked about the two disciples whom the Lord sent, saying "Jesus sent His two disciples; one of them to the circumcised and one of them to the gentiles."

  St. Amperosius talked about the authority given to the two disciples saying, "It was impossible to loosen the donkey and the colt without the Lord's authority. The Apostolic hand which is given authority from the Lord can loosen them".

  The man who owned the donkey and the colt did not argue with the disciples.

  "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey,' (Matthew 21: 4-5).

- Our Lord Jesus announced His love to His bride and appeared very modest to serve her. In His entrance to Jerusalem to give a helping hand to the human race as His bride, He did not take a horse driving a wagon. He is the One who sits on the Cherubim, appeared in Jerusalem riding a donkey and a colt.

  "So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them" (Matthew 21: 6-7).

  The disciples gave up the old clothes to enjoy the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as the cloth of righteousness. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).

"And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road" (Matthew 21:8).

✞ The people announced the happiness of the church with its victory with the Lord and the branches from the trees were coupled with the olive branches. St. Augustine said, "the branches of the trees are signs of praise and they mean victory. The Lord came for victory over death, by His death and the defeat of Satan".

"Then the multitudes who He went before and those who followed Him cried out, saying: 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord Hosanna in the highest!'(Matthew 21:9).

The knowledgeable Origin said, "We can say that who went 'before' Him were the prophets who lived before He came and the people who 'followed' Him were the Apostles who were attached with Him after the coming of the Word of God. All announced the same thing, in one voice: that the Saviour is the incarnate God".

St. John Chrysostum said, "the people 'before' Him announced by their prophecy about the Messiah who was to come and the people 'after' Him praised Him announcing that His coming, has been fulfilled".

The knowledgeable Origin said that "Hosanna to the Son of David…Hosanna in the highest" means that the people praised His humanity and His divinity.

"And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, 'Who is this?' So the multitude said, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee' (Matthew 21:10-11).

As Jesus enters our hearts to establish His kingdom inside us with His Cross, our hearts shake with love, happiness and peace.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) In order to receive Jesus in our hearts, we must give up our old sinful lives as the disciples gave up the garments for Him to sit on.

(2) Let us be sure that we are benefiting from the salvation that our Lord Jesus have done for us. He is the Lamb of God who carries our sins so that we may gain salvation through His Cross.

SONGS

THE HYMN OF PALM SUNDAY

"Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel"
(Jn 12:13)

He Who is above the Cherubim
With great glory riding a colt

today appeared in Jerusalem
surrounded by ranks of ni-angelos.

REFRAIN
Oussana khen ni – et – chocee
Ef-es-maro-out enjevi-ethni-yo nigom.

fai pe epouro empi - Israel
khen efran em epchoice ente

On the way they spread garments
With joy and praise they did sing

from the tress they cut branches
Hosanna to the Son of David.

Today God fulfilled many words
As Zachariah prophesied

the prophecies and the proverbs
this prediction of Jesus Christ.

Recitation Curriculum :

Please Look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

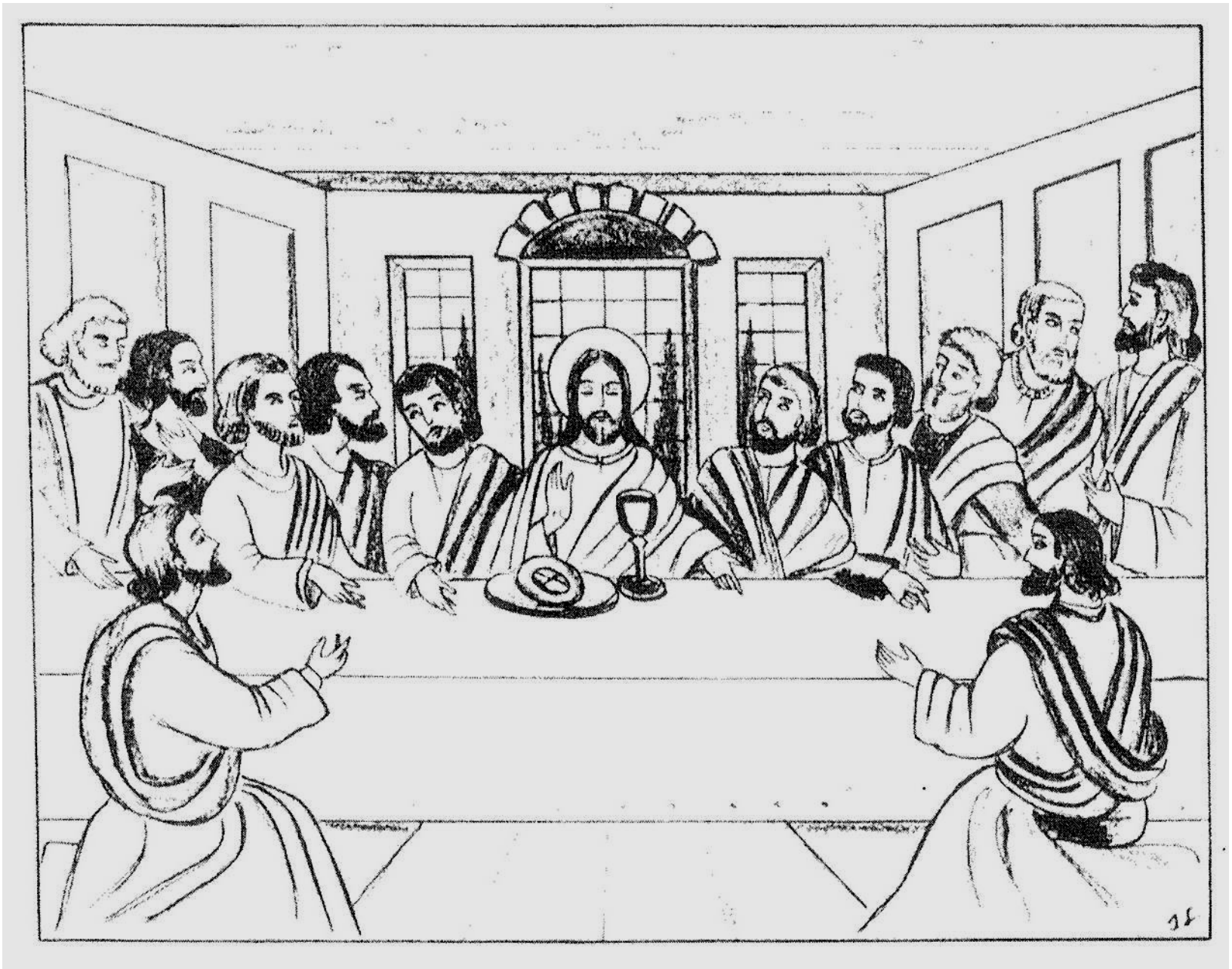
A Fraction Addressed to God the Father to be Prayed on Palm Sunday:

O God our Lord, Your Holy Name is marvellous all over the world.

For the majesty of Your glory is high above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of infants and sucklings, You have prepared praise.

O, Lord prepare our souls that we may praise You, chant for You, bless Your Holy Name, serve You and offer You our thanks every day and every hour.



APRIL
SECOND SUNDAY

CHRIST THE LAMB OF GOD (I):
(Maundy Thursday)

Please read Matthew 26: 17-30, Mark 14: 12-26, Luke 22: 7-30, the attached materials "Remembering Christ", "A fraction addressed to God the Father to be prayed on Maundy Thursday", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

✞ This lesson is one of a two-lesson series on Christ the Lamb of God. The emphasis in this lesson is on Maundy Thursday. The Lord Christ opened for us the door for the forgiveness of our sins.

MEMORY VERSE:

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction:**

"For as in Adam all die even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians15:22).

- ✞ When Adam sinned by disobeying God, he deserved to die and also all the people of the world.
- ✞ But God planned for man's salvation and sent prophets. But man did not listen.
- ✞ Then the Lord came Himself - Jesus Christ the incarnate God to save the world.

- ✞ The Lord Jesus lived with people, healed them, taught them, forgave their sins and at the end, He was crucified for them by His own will. He declared to His Disciples that He will suffer, be buried, and rise from the dead to grant us salvation.
- ✞ On Maundy Thursday we celebrate the feast of the new covenant. On this day, the Lord Jesus, glory be to Him, offered Himself as bread and wine for us to eat, drink and become one with Him. The Lord Christ made this holy table the new covenant for eternal life for whoever is worthy to partake of it.

✞ **On Maundy Thursday: Matthew 26:17-30**

- ✞ Jesus asked Peter and John to go and prepare for Him and the rest of the Disciples to celebrate the Passover. They prepared everything in St. Mark's house. St. John Chrysostom explains the question of the Disciples to Jesus "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" " We understand from this that Jesus did not have a house or a fixed address. Also we can assume that the Disciples were in a similar situation, or they would have asked Him to eat in one of their houses".
- ✞ Our Lord Jesus and His Disciples celebrated the Passover one day before the Jews celebrated it. This means our Lord Jesus celebrated the Passover on Thursday Nissan 13, then He was crucified on Friday Nissan 14 which was the preparation day for the Passover feast in which the Jews kill the Lamb and on Nissan 15 was the Jewish Passover feast (which was Saturday). Please read the Jewish custom of celebrating the Passover feast as given to them by God through Moses (Exodus 12:1-47). The correspondence between the timing of events in which our true Lamb died and the Jewish Passover celebrations can be shown as follows:
- ✞ On the trial of our Lord Jesus on Friday "Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he (i.e. Pilate) said to the Jews, "Behold your King" (John 19:14).
- ✞ "Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken" (John 19:31).

✞ **In the upper room, our Lord Jesus did three things:**

(1) At first, He celebrated the Passover with His Disciples.
(2) Secondly, He washed His Disciples' feet.
(3) Thirdly, He offered His body in the form of bread and wine, i.e., He established the Eucharist.

- ☩ Describe the conversation between Peter and Jesus about washing the feet (John 13:4-10).
- ☩ "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me".
- ☩ Jesus declared that Judas Iscariot will betray Him.
- ☩ Although Judas Iscariot saw all the miracles that Jesus did, he did not benefit from them. On the contrary he loved money so much that he agreed to take 30 coins from the chief priests to help them to take Jesus while he is away from the crowds to avoid any troubles, as there were always crowds around Jesus.
- ☩ On Maundy Thursday Jesus established the Sacrament of Communion. When we take communion we receive the body and blood of Jesus. They are the same body and the same blood with which Jesus was born and with which He was crucified. This is the greatest mystery of the new covenant.

☩ **Maundy Thursday in our Church:**

- ☩ Our church on Maundy Thursday does the Liturgy of El-Lakan and the priest washes the feet of the congregation as the Lord Jesus did.
- ☩ The prayer of the fraction in the Liturgy of Maundy Thursday is the one known by "Fraction for the Slaughtering of Isaac". Please read the attached sheets. Remember that:
  1. The slaughtering of Isaac was a sign of the shedding of the Blood of Christ, the Son of God on the Cross for the salvation of the world.
  2. As Isaac carried the wood for the burnt offering, likewise Christ carried the wood of the Cross.
  3. As Isaac returned alive, likewise Christ rose from the dead.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). This means that through the Blood of Jesus we passed from death to life.

(2) We must be ready through repentance and confession to take communion so that we may be washed from our sins (see the memory verse).

SONGS

REMEMBER ME O LORD

Remember me O Lord, when You come into Your kingdom.

Remember me O Holy, when You come into Your kingdom.

Remember me O Master, when You come into Your kingdom.

Remember me O God, when You come into Your kingdom.

Remember me O Saviour, when You come into Your kingdom.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Remembering Christ

When Christ went up on the Cross, He became our sacrifice. Christ gave His own life so that we may have eternal life. Christ's sacrifice on the cross is the greatest sacrifice; He made it to prove His love for us. "Greater love has no one than this, then to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). Christ wanted His Disciples to remember always this sacrifice of love. He wanted them to remember how He gave His Holy Body to be nailed on the cross and His Precious Blood to be shed from His wounds for the sake of us all.

That is why Christ told His Disciples when He gave them the First Communion: "Do this in remembrance of Me". And in order that we do not ever forget this sacrifice, Christ gave us the same Body that was nailed on the Cross to eat, and the same Blood that came down from His wounds to drink whenever we take Communion.
When we take Communion, Abouna tells us "the body of Emmanuel our God this is indeed" and we respond saying "Amen". Then we receive the Body of Jesus Christ to eat, and we should always remember Christ's Body on the Cross.

Likewise when we receive the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, Abouna tells us "the Blood of Emmanuel our God this is indeed" and we respond "Amen". Our thoughts should always be in the Precious Blood that came down from Christ's forehead, His Holy hands, and His side. This is what Christ meant when He told His Disciples: "Do this in remembrance of me". Christ wanted them to remember His great love for them; the love that He proved by dying on the Cross instead of them.
Not only do we remember Christ's death when we take Communion, but also His Resurrection from the dead on the third day. We also commemorate His Ascension into heaven forty days later.

You see, to us every Sunday is a celebration of Christ's Resurrection from the dead.
We also remember Christ's promise to us that He is going up to Heaven to prepare a place for us, then He would come again to take us to live happily ever after with Him in Heaven!
Every time we take communion we should think of all these things! We should think of how much Christ loved us. We should feel very happy when we take Communion, for we remember that Christ took away our punishment so we may receive eternal life.
Do you think of all these wonderful things when you take Communion?

A Fraction Addressed to God the Father to be Prayed on Maundy Thursday (or at any time):

And it happened in those days when God wanted to try Abraham and test his heart and his love for Him, that He said to him: “Abraham, Abraham, take your beloved son Isaac and offer him to me as a burnt offering on the mountain that I will let you know of.”

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, saddled his mount, and took two of his young men with him, his son Isaac, a knife and firewood. He then walked until he saw the place that God had told him about. Abraham then told his two young men: “Stay here with the animal and I will take Isaac and go to worship the Lord and will come back to you.”

Abraham took the firewood for the offering, gave it to his son Isaac to carry, and he took in his hands the fire and knife.

And Isaac said to his father: “O father, here we have the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” And Abraham told him: “God who has ordered us to offer a sacrifice for Him, will Himself provide a lamb for the burnt offering, my son.”

Then Abraham took stones and built an altar, laid the wood on the altar and took Isaac, his son, and tied him and put him on the altar and took the knife to slaughter him.

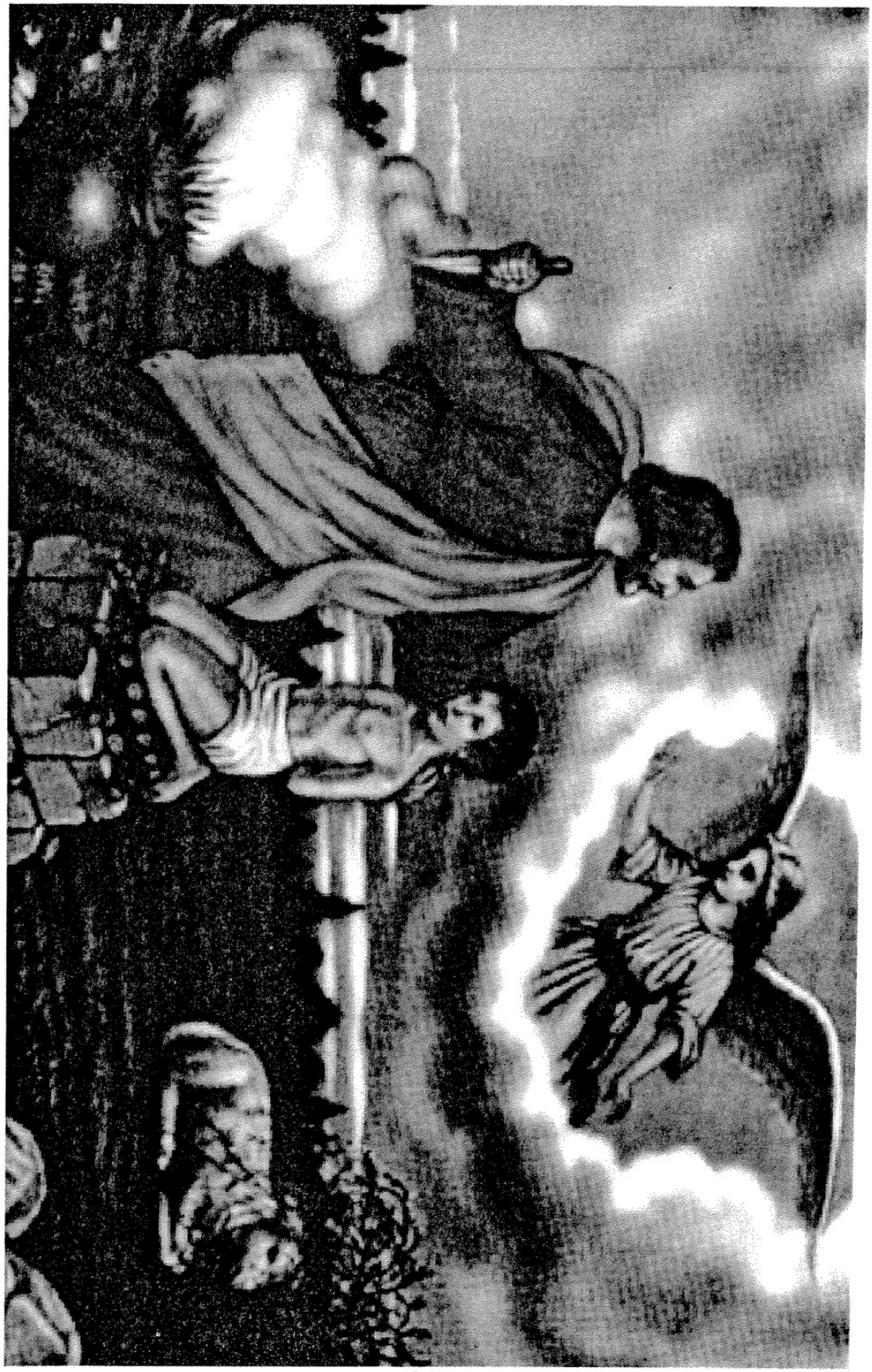
Then the angel of the Lord called Abraham and said: “Abraham, Abraham, look; do not lay your hand on your son, nor do any harm to him. For when God saw your love for Him, He said: ‘I am the Lord your God; I have sworn by Myself that in blessings I will bless you and in multiplying I will multiply your seed.’

And Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw a lamb tied to a tree by its horns, and he let Isaac his son go and take the lamb, and offered it up a burnt offering instead of his son.

Thus the slaughtering of Isaac was a sign to the shedding of the Blood of Christ, the Son of God on the Cross for the salvation of the world.

And Isaac carried the wood for the burnt offering, likewise Christ carried the wood of the Cross. And as Isaac returned alive, likewise Christ rose from the dead and appeared to His holy Disciples.

O God, who accepted the offering of our father Abraham, please accept this sacrifice from us at this hour. Bless these oblations; bless those for whom they are offered. Rest the souls of those who have reposed. May Christ bless our hearts and spirits.



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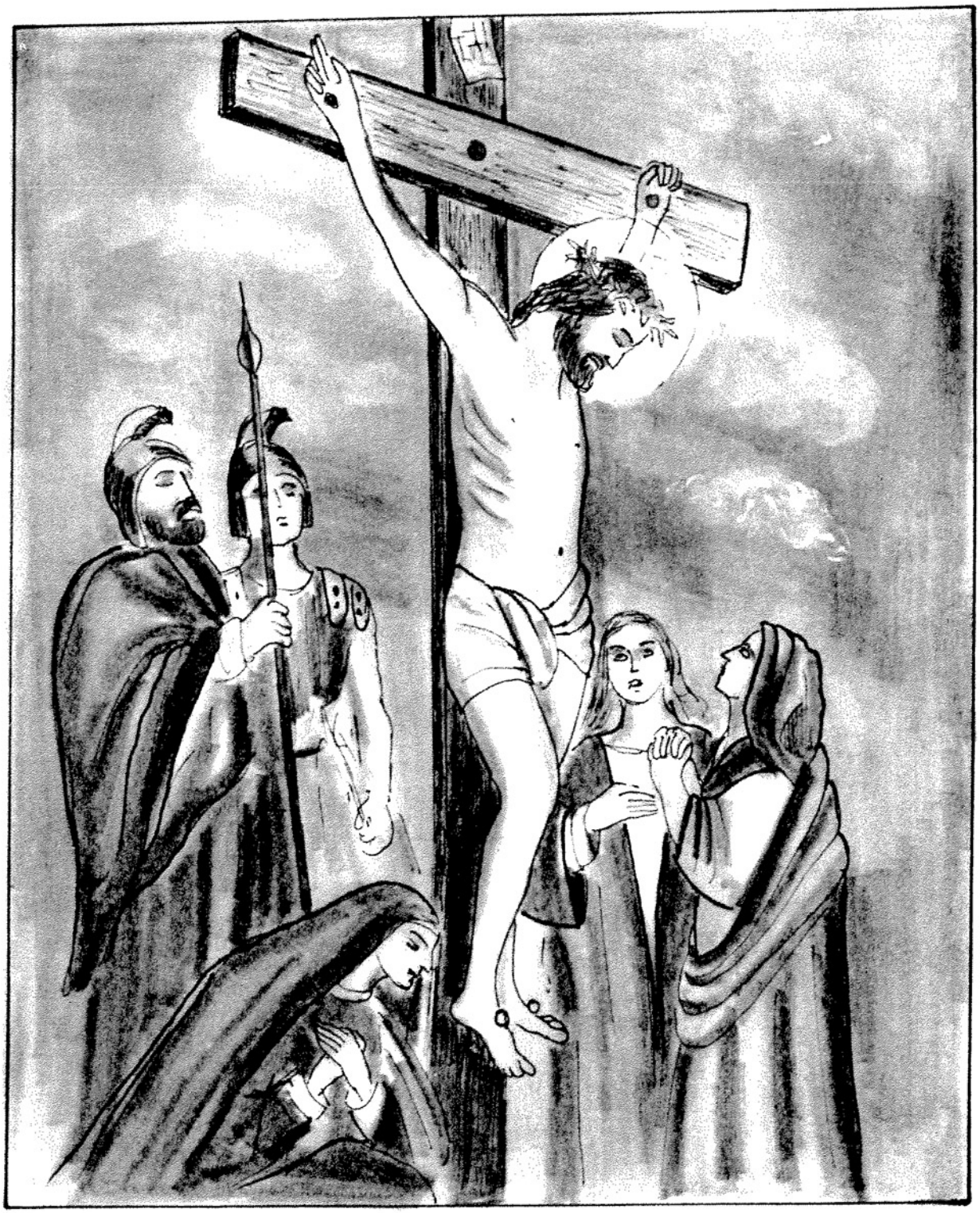


APRIL
THIRD SUNDAY

CHRIST THE LAMB OF GOD (II):
The Holy Week and Good Friday in our Church

Please read the attached material(s) entitled "The Holy Week (The Pascha)", "Good Friday", "The glory in suffering", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To describe:
- ✞ The main events of the Paschal Week and Good Friday and how does our church celebrate the Paschal Week?
- ✞ We cannot accept the sufferings in Christianity unless we get the glory that goes with it.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ✞ **Introduction:**

  - ✞ The Holy Week is the greatest and most spiritual week in our church. Our church follows all the events in this week, which is the last week of the Lord's life on earth, until his Resurrection. This week is called "the suffering week", "the Paschal Week" and "the Holy Week". This week is totally dedicated to worshipping God. The congregation used to take time off their work to spend the whole time in church praying and meditating. All signs of sadness are clear in the church during that week: the pillars of the church are wrapped up with black, the icons are surrounded by black, the holder of the Bible (El-Mangalia) is also wrapped with black. Also the hymns are sung with sad tones, all the readings are focused on the suffering of Jesus for us during the events of that

week. The entire congregation leads a life away from any signs of pleasure. The church is participating with the Lord Jesus in His sufferings. Ladies do not wear makeup, no parties, extended fasting, no sweets are eaten and no major cooking. All the prayers from the Agbeya (i.e. the hourly prayers), which offer us various prayers, are stopped. The Agbeya is replaced by the Paschal hymns and readings that focus on Jesus' Cross.

- ☩ The Holy week starts with "Lazarus Saturday". There was a supper that was held in honour of Jesus in Mary and Martha's house to celebrate the Resurrection of Lazarus by the power of Jesus.
- ☩ Palm Sunday: The entrance of our Lord to Jerusalem as a victorious King of Peace (Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19 and John 12). The prayers of Palm Sunday start with the Vespers in the evening of Lazarus Saturday, then midnight prayers, the Psalmody hymns and matins in which we have the "procession of Palm Sunday", which is one of the very favourable celebrations in our church. The people carry Crosses made of palm, the priest carries a large Cross made of palm and decorated with flowers, and the procession of the priest and the deacons go around the church singing "Hosanna in the highest, this is the King of Israel".

- ☩ **The General Prayers for the Dead:**
  - ☩ These are prayers carried out at the end of Palm Sunday service. The curtains of the altar are closed and the general prayers for the dead start. The reason for this service is that during the week after Palm Sunday until Easter Sunday, the church does not hold the raising of incense prayers on the dead in the church because the church is only busy with the Paschal Week. This is why these prayers are done at the end of Palm Sunday and the blessing of water is carried out. This water is sprinkled on all the people of the church.

- ☩ **The Paschal Days:**
  - ☩ The word "Pascha" is a Hebrew word which means Passover. It refers to the passing of the hurting angel over the Hebrew homes that were sprinkled with the blood (Exodus 12:13).
  - ☩ The curtains of the altar are closed after the Palm Sunday Service and stay closed until Maundy Thursday. Then they are opened for the service, closed afterwards again until the holy burial on the evening of Good Friday.
  - ☩ Prayers are carried out in the church every day in the morning and in the evening. Parts from the Old Testament and parts from the New Testament are read to suit the occasion or the events of the day.

- ✞ Please discuss the events of every day of the Paschal Week with the children from the attached sheets.

- ✞ **Good Friday Service in our Church:**
  - ✞ We follow up the events that happened on Good Friday, hour-by-hour. **Please read to the children the main events on Good Friday from the attached material.** For every hour, there are special readings from both the Old and New Testaments to suit the events of the hour.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us follow the Lord Jesus in the week in which His sufferings were concentrated. He endured all sufferings because of His love for us.

(2) We should live outside the church with the same attitude, characters and feelings as we live inside the church during the Paschal week.

SONGS

NEAR THE CROSS

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

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

there a precious fountain
flows from Calvary's mountain

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

by my glory ever
rest beyond the river

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

love and mercy found me
sheds His beams around me

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

bring it's scenes before me
with it's shadows over me

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

hoping trusting ever
just beyond the river

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Holy Week (The Pascha)

This week is called the Holy (Pascha) Week. The word "Pascha" is a Hebrew word which means the "Passover". It refers to the smiting angel's passage over the Hebrew houses that had the blood sign on them. Christ is our Passover.
The sequence of this week (which is the last week before our Lord's Resurrection) as our church celebrates it is as follows:

• Saturday:
Jesus arrived at Bethany six days before the Passover (John 11:55-57).
Jesus took supper in Bethany at Mary and Martha's house. Then Mary bought a pound of ointment of spikenard that is very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment (Matthew 26:1-13, Mark, 14:3-9, John 12:2-11).

• Sunday: "Palm Sunday"
The victorious entry of the Saviour Jesus Christ to Jerusalem as the King of Peace.

• Monday:
Jesus Curses the Fig Tree:
"On His way back to the city early next morning, Jesus was hungry. He saw a fig tree by the side of the road and went to it, but found nothing on it except leaves, so He said to the tree, 'You will never again bear fruit'. At once the fig tree dried up" (Matthew 21:12-19, Mark 11:12-19, Luke 20:1-8)

• Tuesday:
Seeing that the fig tree had dried up, Jesus spoke to His Disciples about the faith that can move mountains (Matthew 21:20-22, Mark 11:20-26).
The Synagogue authorities question Jesus' actions, miracles and authority, and His answer to them (Matthew 21:23-32, Mark 11:27-33, Luke 20:1-8).

• Wednesday:
Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve went to the chief priests and betrayed Jesus (Mark 14:10-16).
The preparation for the Last Supper (Mark 14:10-16).

• Thursday: "The Last Supper"
"He that dips his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me" (Matthew 26:20-25, Luke 23:41-45).
Jesus washes the Disciples' feet (John 13:3-8).

Memory Text:

"A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another".

• Friday: "Good Friday"
Please see the attached sheets on Good Friday's details and events.

*** Notes on the Holy Week:**

(1) The whole week is dedicated to the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is not permitted to pray the common funeral services on the dead in the church (only water blessed on Palm Sunday for that purpose is sprinkled on the casket of the deceased). Also, no baptism is performed during this week.

(2) The church is dressed in black, remembering our sin that killed our Beloved Son of God. We are in grief not only because our Lord Jesus Christ died, but also because of our sins.

**** Note: This article is taken from "Sout El Rahi" magazine, St. George Church, Alexandria, Egypt, and April 1975.***

Good Friday

✞ **Trials from 6-9 a.m.:**

1. The second trial of Jesus in front of the chief priests
2. The third trial in front of Pilate
3. The fourth trial in front of Herod
4. The fifth trial in front of Pilate for the second time

✞ **To the Golgotha Carrying the Cross from 9 a.m.-12p.m.:**

5. The 39 whips
6. The crown of thorns, the insults and mockery
7. The falling of Jesus under the Cross.
8. Simon of Cyrene carries the Cross with Jesus.
9. Jesus eye-to-eye with His mother
10. The Crucifixion and the nails

✞ **The words of Jesus on the Cross from 12-3 p.m.:**

From location 11 to location 17 (as shown in the attached figure for the Cross).

✞ **The events from 3-6 p.m.:**

18. A soldier plunged his spear into Jesus' side
19. The tombs opened and the curtain hanging in the temple was torn into two from top to bottom.
20. The rocks cracked and the land shook
21. The leader of one hundred soldiers gained faith
22. The burial of the Son of God

We pray "Lord have Mercy" 41 times remembering: the 39 whips + 1 crown of thorns + 1 the spear.

Note: This article is taken from "Sout El-Rahi" magazine, St. George Coptic Church, Alexandria, Egypt, April 1975.

The Glory Of Suffering
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

St Paul, the Apostle, says in his Epistle to the Romans, ***"If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*** *"* (Rom 8:17)

And so, suffering for the Lord becomes a measure of the glory that awaits the faithful in the eternal Kingdom. **Therefore the Church places the martyrs above all the Saints.**

They are mentioned in the Church's prayers before the spirit-borne and the solitary fathers, who filled the wilderness with prayers and contemplation. They are also mentioned before our fathers the Patriarchs and Bishops, with all their services in spreading the Word. This is all because of the sufferings they endured for the sake of God.

Even in service, the measure of suffering is also obvious, as the Apostle says, "... *and each will receive his own reward according to his own labour. "* (1 Cor 3:8) Therefore, the Lord says in his letter to the Angel of the Church at Ephesus, "I *know your works, your labour, your patience... and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for my name's sake and have not become weary. "* (Rev 2:2-3), putting labour at the beginning.

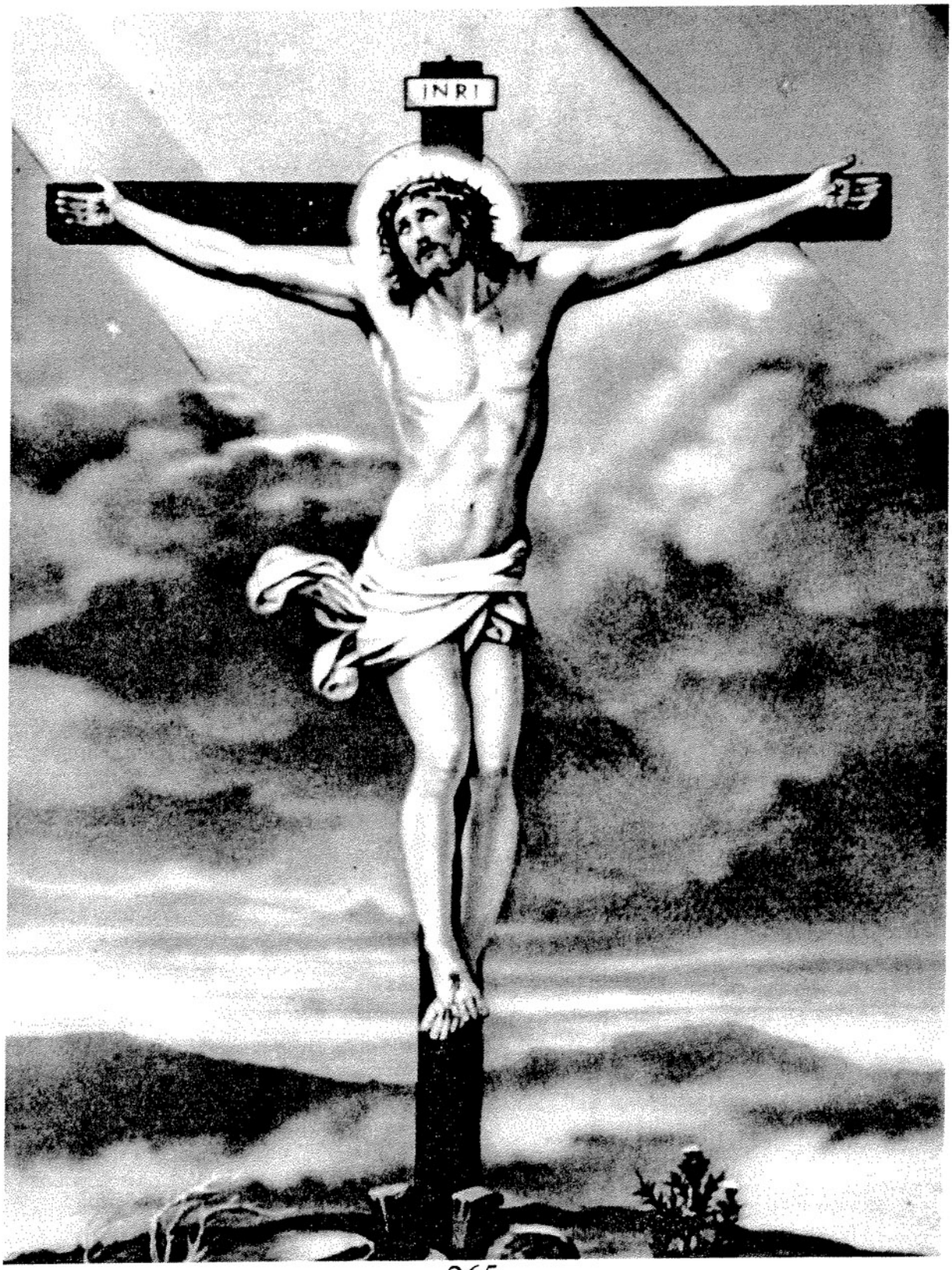
It is also said in the Bible that, *"God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love...* "(Heb 6:10)

Love expresses its existence by labouring for the be loved one, as the Apostle says, "... *Let us not love in word or in tongue. " (1* Jn 3:18)

The depth of love also shows in suffering, when the level of love is raised up to sacrifice and redemption.

Therefore, God's love was shown to us in its deepest form when the Lord was on the Cross, sacrificing him self for our redemption, the just for the unjust., **Christ was at the peak of His glory when He was in His deepest passion.**

For this reason, He said about his crucifixion, "Now *the Son of Man is glorified. "* (Jn *13:13)* The picture of His crucifixion is the picture of His glory...
St. Paul, the Apostle, considers suffering as a gift from God. In this, he says, *"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for his sake."* (Phil *1:29)*
St. Peter, the Apostle, also talked about suffering saying, *"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps. " (1* Pet *2:21)*



265

APRIL
FOURTH SUNDAY

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST
is the Source of Hope

Please read (Luke 24:1-12) the attached material entitled "The Resurrection is the Source of Hope", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To learn about the Resurrection in the life of Christ, the Resurrection in the life of the church and the Resurrection in the life of the faithful. One of the greatest things in Christianity is the Resurrection.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us." (Mark 16:3).

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction**

- ✞ The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is different from any other Resurrection. Therefore, He has been called the "Pioneer of the deceased" because He rose in such a way that there will be no death after Him. He also rose by Himself and no one else gave Him Resurrection.
- ✞ The power of Resurrection was inside Him and not outside, and the proofs are: His Body did not see corruption, He resurrected with the stone at the gate of the tomb as it was and He resurrected with the cloth and the handkerchief placed in an organized way. "O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction" (Hosea 13:14).
- ✞ He descended into Hades by Himself, shook the foundation of Hades and freed all the righteous souls which were captured by the devils.

- **Resurrection in the Life of the Church:**
  - The Lord Jesus had promised His Disciples that they would see Him after His death and that their hearts would rejoice. No one can take away their joy from them.
  - Truly the Resurrection had eliminated the sadness of the Apostles and the Marys, changed their despair to strength and hope and changed their fear to courage.
  - The Bible talks about the effect of the Resurrection on the Apostles: "And with great power the Apostles gave witness to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33).
  - The Church lives in a continuous joy for the Resurrection of the Lord waiting for His second coming with great glory. Every Sunday we celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord, so it is a feast for the faithful. When we take the flesh of the Lord and His Blood, we renew the covenant of love with Him commemorating His Resurrection until He comes. Therefore the church lives in a Passover feast continuously.

- **Resurrection in our Personal Life:**
  - The person, who buried himself in the tomb of sin or in sadness or in caring only about the self, cannot enjoy the Resurrection.
  - The Lord Jesus is the King of peace and joy: in Him, we receive victory over sadness. He is the source of eternal joy that flows to defeat all the fears and sadness of the world.
  - Lack of faith is the factor that prevents our joy "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" (Mark 16:3). Let us look and find that the stone was rolled, the angel of the Lord is ready to prepare our hearts to meet the risen Lord and the angel is also ready to scare away the guards of Satan who are guarding the stones of sin in our hearts.
  - The lights of the Resurrection enlighten the darkness of our hearts and uncover its bad sins.
  - The entrance of the Lord Jesus to the upper room while the doors were closed, is a sign of the feasibility of His entrance in our life even while our senses are closed. He enters to enlighten and to grant peace above every imagination. Let us seek Him to reign over our hearts.

✞ **How do we celebrate Easter?**

- ✞ "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).
- ✞ Let us remove the "old man" and be dressed with the "new man".
- ✞ Let us seek what is above "if then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us pray and seek that the Lord grants us a life of joy and victory. Let us pray that He grant us to continuously praise Jim in our hearts and to serve His Holy name and preach His Resurrection.

(2) Christianity is a religion of joy, even death which is the worst enemy is defeated.

THE GOSPEL RESPONSE IN EASTER

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia Alleluia, Jesus Christ The King of Glory, rose from Dead on the third day	Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia Alleluia, Isos Pikhristos eporo ente epo-oo: aftonf evol khen ni ethmo-oot
This is He to whom the glory Is due, with His Good Father And the Holy Spirit, now and Forever	Fai ere pio-oo ereprepi naf nem pefyot enaghathos: nem piepnevma ethoo-wab : yesgen tinoo nem sha – eneh
Blessed be the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Perfect Trinity, we worship Him and glorify Him	Je efezmaroot enje efyot nem epshiri: nem piepnevma ethoo- wab tietrias et jeek evol : ten oo-ost emmos ten tio-oonac

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Resurrection is the Source of Hope

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Man triumphed in hundreds of fields except death. Before death, man stood helpless and hopeless...

Then came the Resurrection to give the first victory over death:

The Apostle says in a challenge, *"O Death, where is your sting?"*

Then, hope in the eternal life entered man's heart and filled it with joy, that he would not perish or come to an end.

Also, the church receives those who pass away with the beautiful chant *"it is not death to your servants but it is a transition ".*

The chanter also says in the psalm, *"The right hand of the Lord does valiantly; the right hand of the Lord is exalted... I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. " (Ps. 118:16,17).*

Victory over death gave hope to triumph over all other things, because who overcomes the stronger certainly can overcome the weaker and a whole army of the enemy.

Thus, through victory over death, the morale of the children of God was elevated and so St. Paul said, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

Also, there became nothing difficult, nothing impossible for people... but *"all things are possible to him who believes".*

The spirit of the Resurrection spread out its hope on everything.

The image of the Lord who rose from the dead stands in case of any difficulty or problem to give hope that after death there is life, and after darkness there is light, and that there is a solution to every problem...

That is how, the children of God lived *"Rejoicing in Hope. "* (Rom 12:12). They see that everything and everyone around them *"Even though he dies, he shall live"...* that is why they *"should not sorrow as others who have no hope".*

Here ends the grieves of Gethsemane and the passion of Golgotha, the suspicion and fear of the upper room but remains the image of the bright angel before the empty tomb to announce the Resurrection....

MAY
FIRST SUNDAY

THE LORD JESUS GRANTED PETER FORGIVENESS
at the Sea of Tiberius
"God's love for us"

Please read (John 21:1-17), the attached material "God's love for us", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
The Lord Jesus accepted the repentance of Peter who denied Him. He is always ready to accept the repentance of everyone of us. No one can comprehend God's love for us.

MEMORY VERSE:

Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep" (John 21:16)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **Appearance of the Lord after His glorified Resurrection:**
  - First to Mary Magdalene
  - To the two Disciples of Emmaus
  - To the Disciples while Thomas was away
  - To the Disciples in the presence of Thomas on the following Sunday
  - To seven Disciples at the sea of Tiberius (John 21:1-24)
  - To more than five hundred people on the mountain of Galilee (I Corinthians 15:6)
  - To James
  - Lastly to all of the Apostles (1 Corinthians 15:7)

- ✞ Where did the crucified Jesus go? He rose with the signs of the nails witnessing that He was the same person who was crucified. With His Resurrection He defeated death and proved that He is the Lord of life. "And reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing" (John 20:27).
- ✞ The appearance of Jesus after Resurrection was not only to enhance the faith of His followers (and us) that Jesus is the Son of God, but also to solve the problems of the human kind such as in the case of the disciples; and sadness as in the case of Thomas.
- ✞ At the beginning, at the sea of Tiberius (which is also called the sea of Galilee) Jesus called His Disciples. There Jesus met with them after His Resurrection, as if He was reminding them that they had met at the same place before. There He was calling them to go and preach to the whole world.

  The Apostles, after seeing the Lord Jesus Christ after His Resurrection, and being sure of it, they said, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). They also said, "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42).

  In this meeting Jesus gave special treatment to Peter. Peter was still sad because he denied his beloved Lord three times in front of a servant. Now Jesus would like to assure Peter that He accepted his repentance and that He loves him and trusts him. So Jesus asked him three times "Tend my sheep" which is a proof that He accepted him as a good Disciple.
- ✞ Let us take Peter as a good example for us. When we make a mistake we must trust that Jesus loves us, and if we repent He will welcome us back. We must be careful not to be like Judas Iscariot who lost hope.

  In John 21:3, Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing" and they went with him. It appears that Peter wanted to go back to his original job as a fisherman and to stop being a full time preacher of the word of God. But Jesus came back quickly to tell him “Tend my sheep". Peter and the rest of the Disciples did not work as fishermen anymore but they were full time serving the Lord.

  Jesus revealed to Peter (and to us) that the only condition for being a shepherd is to have love. Jesus accepted Peter because Peter had love.

  Jesus blesses the work. When He met His Disciples for the first time, it was at their work place. Now again after His Resurrection He met them at the work place. We must pray and work.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us look at Christ's wounds and be assured of His love, His Resurrection, and of His hands that are calling for us to repentance and to peace "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

(2) Let us never forget that God loves us beyond our comprehension. He gave us His commandments out of His love.

SONGS

THE GOSPEL RESPONSE IN EASTER

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia Alleluia, Jesus Christ The King of Glory, rose from Dead on the third day	Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia Alleluia, Isos Pikhristos eporo ente epo-oo: aftonf evol khen ni ethmo-oot
This is He to whom the glory Is due, with His Good Father And the Holy Spirit , now and Forever	Fai ere pio-oo ereprepi naf nem pefyot enaghathos: nem piepnevma ethoo-wab : yesgen tinoo nem sha – eneh
Blessed be the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit , the Perfect Trinity, we worship Him and glorify Him	Je efezmaroot enje efyot nem epshiri: nem piepnevma ethoo- wab tietrias et jeek evol : ten oo-ost emmos ten tio-oonac

Recitation Curriculum :

Please Look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

God's Love For Us
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Because of God's love for us, He considers us part of Him, as He says, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. " On 15:5)* **And He also says,** *"... we are members of his body. " (Eph 5:30),* or He is the head and the whole Church is the body. Again He says, *"Abide in me, and I in you, as the branches abide in the vine. " (Jn 15:4)* He also says about us to the Father, *"I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one. " (Jn 17:23)*

+ How beautiful is the expression in the Bible about God's love for us, in saying, *"... partakers of the divine nature. " (2 Pet 1:4)* **And also,** *'... the communion of the Holy Spirit. " (2 Cor 13:14)* Of course it is not a communion in the nature and essence but in work. Therefore, St Paul says about himself and his friend Silas, *"For we are God's fellow workers. " "For we are God's fellow workers." (1 Cor 3:9)*

+ One of the aspects of God's love for us is the friendship that developed between Him and our human race. For example, Abraham was called, "El-Khalil" the friend of God, and Enoch, about whom it was said, *"And Enoch walked with God; and he was not for God took him. " (Gen 5:24)* Moses, too spent forty days with God on the mountain. The twelve Disciples are also another example, the way the Lord associated with them...

+ It is also beautiful how God made His delight in the sons of men...

And He, the unlimited, humbled Himself for the human beings, who are limited, and associated with them. He also appeared to them and talked to them through mouth to ear.

+ It is also due to God's love for us all that these amazing ways of care which history tells us occurred, such as the split of the Red Sea, the Manna in the wilderness, the water flowing from a rock, looking after Elijah during the famine, delivering Peter from prison and Daniel from the lions' den and the three youths from the burning furnace... beside many other stories that have no end.

+ As a sign of God's love for us He has given us these beautiful promises:'

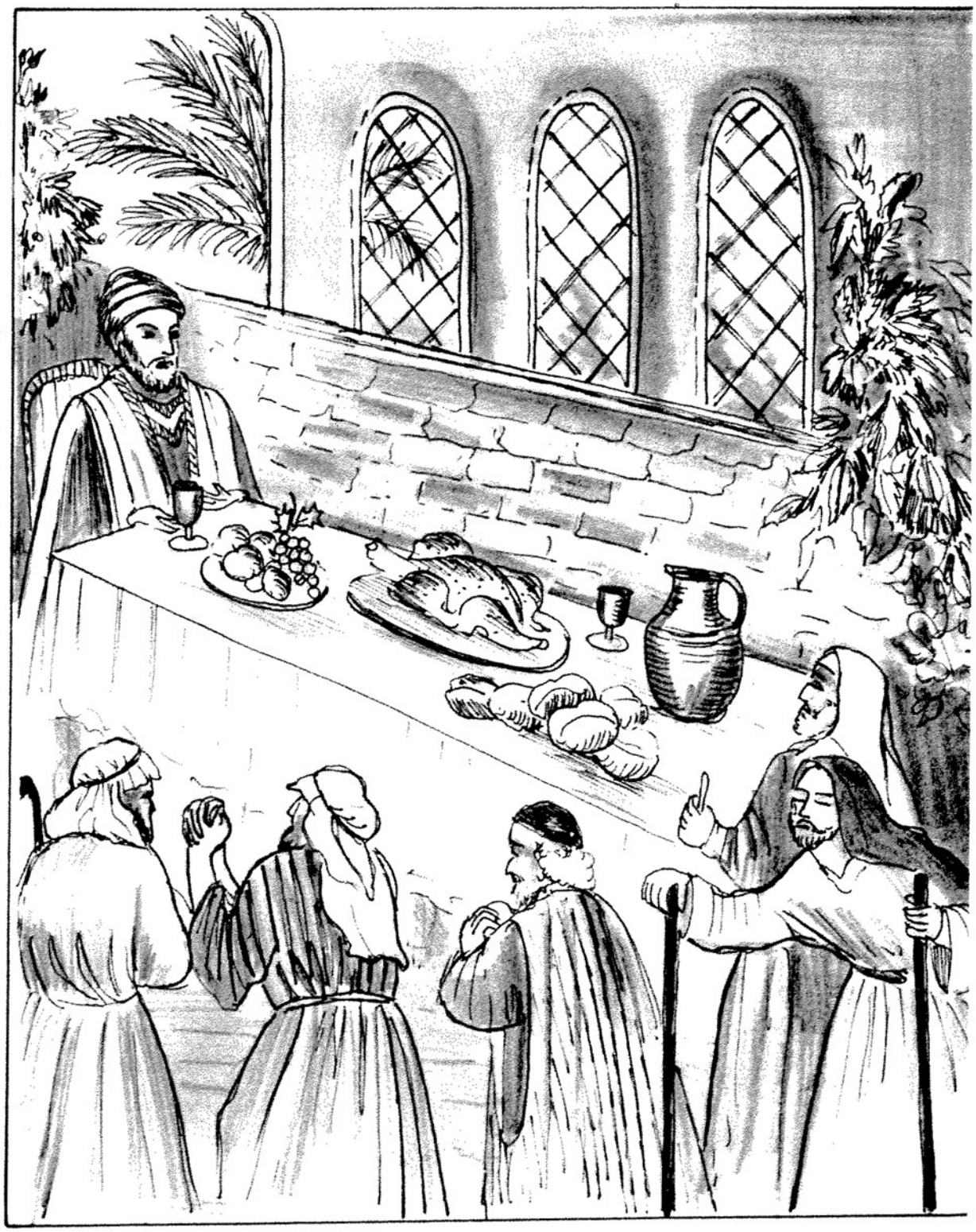
"I have, inscribed you on the palms of my hands. " (Is 49:16), "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. " (Mt. 10:30), "I will give you a new heart,", (Ezek 36:26), And no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (Jn 10:29) and, "I go to prepare a place for you. " (Jn 14:2)

+ The gifts we are granted are an evidence of God's love for Man.
The gift of eternity, of the resurrection as in the body of His glory and the several gifts of the Holy Spirit... Blessed by God in His love.

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

HOLY BIBLE

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



MAY
SECOND SUNDAY

Excuses … Excuses

Please read Luke 14:16-24, the attached materials entitled "Excuses Excuses", "The Problem of Excuses", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
Let us stop giving excuses. Take a proactive role in doing things.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind" (Luke 14:21)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **Introduction**
  - When our Lord Jesus Christ mentioned a parable, He wanted to simplify and clarify an idea to teach us. In this parable our Lord Jesus wanted to declare that the Jewish nation which rejected His invitation to the heavenly kingdom, will not have a share in the heavenly table. He knew that they will reject Him as the Son of God. This heavenly table will be enjoyed by the lowly who will accept Him as their God and Saviour. Also in this heavenly kingdom, there will be place for the gentiles who will accept to come to Him.
- All of the people who were originally invited for the Great Supper gave excuses. The first gave an excuse that he bought a piece of land and he wanted to go and see it. Certainly, even if he was telling the truth, he could go later to see the land, but for now he should have accepted this honourable invitation.
- The truth of the matter was that his attention was focused on this land only. The second one who also gave an excuse, had all his attention focused on the cows rather than the honourable invitation. The third one also gave an excuse in a more

direct way. He said: "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come". By this he is declaring that he prefers a wife over the heavenly kingdom. He should have brought her to the heavenly supper and let her participate in these heavenly blessings.

- ✞ After the servant invited "the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind", still there was enough more room. But the Lord have prepared His Great Supper for many and it was pleasing to Him to see the kingdom full. He asked His apostle to go to the gentiles, convince them with the faith and bring them to His heavenly kingdom. But the Jews who rejected His invitation and insulted it, He judged that they will be deprived from the heavenly kingdom.
- ✞ The Master of the house in the parable of the Great Supper is God and the great supper is the Holy Communion or the gathering around the heavenly table with God.
- ✞ So God is inviting everyone of us to take communion. He is inviting us to be united with Him and to have a share in the kingdom of heaven with Him. We should not give excuses. When we give excuses, some people may believe us, but God who knows everything will consider it a lie.
- ✞ We must answer God's invitation. God is stretching His hands saying: "Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).
  What are we waiting for? Our Lord Jesus is offering His Body and Blood free on the Altar and when we take Him we become one with Him and we gain happiness here and eternal life as well.
- ✞ In our daily life as well, we should not give excuses or blame other people for the problems. We must face the realities of things. If we are wrong we just say so and apologize.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- ✞ Let us be clear with ourselves instead of giving excuses. If our first priority is to live with Jesus and partake of His heavenly kingdom, no excuses will appear. As an attitude we must not give excuses.

SONGS

CHRIST IS RISEN

Christ is risen from the dead	Khristos anesti eknekron
Trampling death by His death	thanato thanaton patisas
And upon those in the tomb	ke tis entis emni masi
He bestowed eternal life	zueen kharisaminos
Glory be to the Father, the	Zoksapatri ke iyou-ke agi
Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen	you epnevmaty
Now and at all times, and	kenin ke aa-ee ke is touce
Forever and ever . Amen	e-on-ace ton e-ono, Amen

Recitation Curriculum :

Please Look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Excuses... Excuses !!

Jesus once said this parable; "A certain man made a great supper and invited many. He sent his servant at supper time to say to them, "Come, for all things are now ready". They all began to make excuses. The first said, "I have a piece of land and I must go and see it. Please have me excused". Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. Please have me excused". Another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come".

The master of the house, being angry said to his servant: "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind" (Luke 14:21).

What does this parable mean?

Who is the master of the house who invited the people? He symbolizes God who invites us all.

What is that great supper? It represents the heavenly food which the Lord prepared for us in the church: His Body and Blood. God invites us, "Come, eat my Body and drink my Blood that I have prepared for you. I offer Myself to you so I may live in you and you in Me".

"I offer my Blood to wash away all your sins that nag your conscious so that you may live in happiness all your life. Come, get closer to Me so we may be united together".

What is our response to this invitation? In the parable, every one gave an excuse - one bought land, the other bought oxen, the third got married. All these were just excuses because they did not want to go to that great supper. If they really wanted to go, they would have accepted the invitation and later finished their other responsibilities. Don't we sometimes give similar excuses?

Our Lord Jesus invites us to partake of His Body and Blood and we start giving excuses. " I have other things to do; I have to do my hair". This takes a long time, then we arrive late to the church after reading the Gospel.

Can't you do your hair some other time? This is just an excuse. Another excuse is: "I woke up late, therefore we arrived to church after the reading of the Gospel".

If you were going to a special party at one of your friends, I am sure you would have set the alarm clock to wake you up. If you really want Jesus to dwell inside you, you would have made a special effort to wake up early and be eager to go to church to partake of that Great Heavenly Supper. If you really love Jesus who died for you, you can overcome all obstacles. Enough excuses!

That parable represents Jesus inviting all the Jews. When they refused Him, He went to the Gentiles.

Do not refuse this heavenly invitation!

The Problem Of Excuses
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Many try to find excuses to cover up some of their sins, in order not to be blamed or to justify their failure in doing good deeds...

It is an ancient fault that goes back to Adam and Eve! Eve's excuse was that the serpent tempted her, although she did not have to obey the serpent; so it is an unacceptable excuse.

Exactly like Adam's excuse that the woman gave him the fruit, but, he could have refused it!

How true is the saying: the road to hell is full of excuses! Even the servant who hid his talent in the ground gave an excuse worst than his bad deed. He told his master that he was a hard man, reaping where he had not sown!!

Many find an excuse for not praying by saying that they have no time, while they have enough time for various amusements and visits. In fact, they do not have the desire to pray.

Most of those who do not offer the tithes to God say that they don't have enough, while the widow who gave the two mites from her needs did not think of an excuse. the same with the widow of Zarephath in Siddon, who offered her flour and oil to the prophet Elijah during the famine, while she badly needed them.

David, the young boy, had many excuses to avoid fighting Goliath!... He, was not a soldier and nobody expected him to volunteer. He was young and even the old feared Goliath who was a giant and hard to defeat ... etc, but David's fiery zeal would not allow excuses...

The robber on the right had excuses against belief but he never used them! How would he believe in a God whom he saw crucified and who seemed unable to save himself? The robber heard the people's mockery and challenges echoing in his ears but he would not take it as an excuse not to believe...

Fear was not an excuse for Daniel when he was taken to the lion's den or an excuse for the three youths when taken to the furnace...

The love of the only son could have been used as an excuse for Abraham when God asked him to offer his son, the child of promise, who was born after tens of years!!

The friends of the paralytic had many excuses, if they wanted. But the obstacles did not stop them. They uncovered the roof and let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying...

The one who overcomes hardships and does not use them as an excuse, proves the truth of his inner intentions.

But the weak-willed, or the one with a weak determination reminds us of the saying of the Bible, "the slothful man says, `there is a lion on the road' " (Prov. 26:13)

NOTES

St. Arsenius

MAY
THIRD SUNDAY

"ST. ARSENIUS"
The Teacher of the Sons of Kings

Please read the attached materials entitled "St. Arsenius, the Teacher of the Sons of the Kings", "Some practices in the virtue of silence", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To study the life of St. Arsenius and learn from it to be humble and silent.

MEMORY STATEMENT:

"Many times did I regret what I spoke, but as for silence, I have never regretted." St. Arsenius.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

☩ **Introduction**

☩ On May 21 of this year (13 Bashense) our church celebrates the feast day of St. Arsenius, teacher of the sons of kings. He departed from this world in the year 445. Please read portions of the attached material in the class. In honouring any of the church Saints we see in them good examples for people who benefited from the grace of God and who were able to fulfill God's commandments. Many times the devil may try to deceive us by saying that the commandments as mentioned in the Holy Bible are difficult and we cannot do it. But when we study the life of the Saints, their lives become like signs on the road that the passenger need to observe in order to reach the destination. These Saints were able to live by God's commandments through doing their best and also through God's grace.

- ☥ The king (his name was Theodosius the Great) hired St. Arsenius as a teacher for his two sons. He taught them in the king's house.
- ☥ After reaching a great position like this, he started to think that the world will vanish and that he wanted to live with God.
- ☥ St. Arsenius said: "Show me O God how to be saved". After that an angel came to him and told him to go outside the world. As soon as he heard the voice, he changed his clothes and traveled to Alexandria, Egypt, and from there he went alone to the wilderness praying and fasting.
- ☥ One time he was talking to a new monk. The other monks asked him, "how come you are asking questions to this new monk and you are the one who is full of knowledge?" St. Arsenius told them: "I am learning from his simplicity and I am learning the basic principles of Coptic Orthodox life from him". This shows us that in spiritual life what counts is not the amount of knowledge, but the depth, the humbleness, and love.
- ☥ One of his main characteristics was silence. When the people asked him, "Why are you so silent?", he answered, "Many times I blame myself for what I said, but I never blamed myself for not speaking".
- ☥ St. Arsenius was very humble. He used to work and produce small things by his hand. Then he used to sell it and give the money to the poor.
- ☥ He visited Jerusalem and got the blessings of the Holy places there.
- ☥ At the time of his death, he was very afraid. When the other monks asked him why he was so afraid, he said, "Since I became a monk and this hour of leaving the world is before my eyes". In the Agpeya book, in the Compline prayers we say. "Behold I am about to stand before the Just Judge, frightened and terrified of my many sins, for the life that is spent in jollity deserves condemnation. Repent, therefore, O my soul, as long as you dwell on this earth".
- ☥ When the King of Constantinople knew that St. Arsenius departed he brought his body and built a church in his name. May his blessings be with us. Amen.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Do not speak too much. At least think carefully before speaking.

(2) Be humble as St. Arsenius was humble.

SONGS

ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

On the first day of the week
Christ the Lord rose again
before the dawn began to break
clothed in majesty to reign

REFRAIN
Our Lord is risen today
Who did once, upon the cross
O triumphant holy day !
suffer to redeem our loss.

Hymns of praise, then, let us sing
Who endured the Cross and grave
unto Christ our heavenly King
Sinners to redeem and save

By the pains that He endured
Now, above the skies He is King
Our Salvation He procured
where the angels ever sing

He who gave for us His life
Now became our Life-giver
who for us endured the strife
freeing us from death forever

All the toil and sorrow done
Now, behind we leave the past
all the battle fought and won
forward be our glances cast

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

St. Arsenius
The Teacher of the Sons of King

- **The Early Life of St. Arsenius:**

  It was said that St. Arsenius was a Roman, and one of its best philosophers. His father was one of the great men in the Royal Palace and the king's favourite. When Theodosius became a ruler, he sent to the king and the Pope of Rome asking them for a philosopher that knows the Latin and the Greek languages, so that he might teach his children Wisdom and Arts. They did not find a man in Rome better than Arsenius in wisdom and knowledge and fear of God, so they sent him to the king in Constantinople. The king was so pleased of him and liked him for his overflowing knowledge and for the blessing of God that was upon him. So the king gave him his children to teach them, and he introduced him to all the great personalities of his kingdom. Arsenius used to sit close to the Emperor, and his orders were obeyed, and had many slaves to serve him, but he had no woman abiding in his home.

- **Leaving the World:**

  After reaching a great position like this, he started to think within himself saying: "That all this must vanish, as dreams end, and that all the world's wealth and its power and beauty is nothing but a dream. Nothing remains constant unchangeable". He started asking God at all times saying: "Show me O God how to be saved". One day he heard a voice saying to him: "Arsany, escape from the people and thou shalt be saved".

- **Reaching Sketis:**

  So he stood at once and left everything and went to the harbour, he found a ship leaving to Alexandria. So he went aboard the ship heading to Alexandria, and from there he went to Sketis to Father Macarius. The Father gave him one of the cells outside the monastery, because he found that Arsenius likes to be isolated and to live in a quiet place, and after a few days of his arrival, Father Macarius passed away.

- **His Early Monastic Days:**

  St. Arsenius started his life as a monk with great devotion and lots of praying and holiness until he over ran others. So when the children of the great people of Constantinople heard of his great devotion, many of them started to devote themselves to God and came to the monasteries of Egypt and became monks.

- **His Love for Education:**

  St. Arsenius started his monastic life with great affinity towards education. It was said that one day he was asking an old Egyptian man about his thoughts, when another old man heard him and said to him: "How come with thy great Latin and Greek philosophy you need to ask this ignorant Egyptian about his thoughts?" So St. Arsenius answered him: " I know the Greek and Latin philosophies well, but the Alpha Beta that this Egyptian knows, I do not know till that hour (he meant way of truth).

(A) The Way He was Trained:

Because St. Arsenius was brought up between the Royal Family, he had a sensitive body similar to that of the royal children, thus he was not able to go along with the Egyptian monastic life and their hard ways of living, but he started to train cut his appetite gradually till he reached their way of living. Strange enough he was not in need of a direct method for his education, but he trained himself to the monastic life by watching what is happening around him, and in some cases he did not need more than a signal, as what happened in those two incidents:

1) Some days Father Arsenius ate boiled beans with his brethren; and they had a habit of not picking the small stones from the beans. But he used to separate the white beans from the bad black beans. So the Head of the monastery did not like that, and feared that this would spoil the monastery's tradition, so he chose a monk and told him: "Please stand what I will do to you, for God's sake". So the monk told him: "As you say Father". So the Head of the monastery said to him: "Sit beside Arsenius and pick up the white beans and eat it", so the monk did as he was ordered. To the monk's astonishment the Head of the monastery slapped him on the face and told him: "Why do you pick the white beans and leave the black ones to your brethren?' So Arsenius knelt down in front of all that were present and said to that monk: "This slap was meant for me and not for you, here is Arsenius the teacher of the sons of kings who did not know how to eat the beans with the Egyptian monks". And hence he developed his understanding.

2) It was said that one of the brethren who lived in a cell close to that of St. Arsenius went out to cut some palm leaves on a very hot day. When he was done, he returned back and he was very hungry. He was not able to swallow the hard dry bread because his throat was very dry due to the hot sun. During 'that time all the monks were on a severe abstinence and great devoutness, so the monk took a jar of water and dissolved some salt in it, and moistened the bread in it. During that time Father Isaiah came to him,

and when the monk felt his coming he quickly hid the jar under the palm leaves. Father Isaiah was an intelligent person and knew that Arsenius made two kinds of food beans and boiled vegetables, and being a conservative monk, the brethren did not want to hurt his feelings quickly, So Father Isaiah found it a great opportunity to give Arsenius a lesson through this monk. So he asked the monk: "What was this that you hide from me?" So the monk told him: "Forgive me Father for God's sake. I went to the wilderness to cut some palm leaves, and the hot weather dried my throat, and when I came back to my cell, I wished to eat but I could not swallow the dry bread. So I took the bread and moistened it in some salty water to ease swallowing it. So Father Isaiah took the jar and placed it in front of Arsenius cell and asked the guard to ring the bell so that all the brethren would come and see the monk eating broth. When they were gathered, he looked at the monk and said to him you have left your pleasures and your money and came to the monastery because of your love to God and for your salvation, so why do you want now to please yourself by eating? If you want to eat broth then go back to Egypt, because there is no place for pleasures in the monastery. When Arsenius heard that, he said to himself, "These words are spoken to you Arsany". Then immediately he ordered his servant to cook him her badge only and said to himself: "I learned the Greek philosophy but as for the wisdom of this Egyptian, concerning the food, I have not reached his grade yet. It is true what was written: "and Moses was taught the wisdom of the Egyptians".

- **His Death from the World:**

Once, a man named Gesrianos was sent from a wealthy man who died and asked that his money be given to Arsenius. When the Saint knew about it, he stood up and quickly tried to tear down the will, but the man asked him not to tear the will lest he should be killed instead. So the Saint told him: "I died a long time ago, and he died too". Then he sent the messenger away without taking any money from him.

- **His Life in Solitude**

(1) His Strive in Prayer and Wakefulness:

It was said that he used to spend the whole night praying, and when it was dawn he would lie down saying: "Go ahead O evil servant", and he would fall asleep and at once he would wake up saying: "For a monk, one hour of sleep is sufficient if he wants to work".

It was also said that on Sunday evenings he would go out of his cell and he would stand in the open air with the sun behind him and he would fold his hands to pray until the sun faces him then he would sit down.

- **In His Strive Against the Devil:**

  It was said about him the following : The devils came to him once to tempt him, but when his servants came to him they heard him in his cell saying in a loud voice: O Lord do not put me down, I have not done good to Thee but grant me Thy kindness to start doing good".

  Daniel his follower said about him: "He never asked to speak from a book, but he would pray for that if he wants, and he never wrote letters.

  Once a brethren went to the cell of St. Arsenius in Sketis and peeked from the window and saw him standing with his body like fire. This brethren deserved to see this scene. Then he knocked on the door, so Arsenius went out to him, and when he saw that the brethren was astonished at what he saw; he told him: "Did you knock on the door for a long time? Did you see anything unusual?" Then Arsenius talked to him and sent him away.

  Once he called his followers Alexander and Zowel and told them: "The devils fight me, and I do not know whether they fight me during my sleep or not, so please spend the night with me and watch me if I sleep while praying at night". They sat down one on his right and the other on his left from sunset to sunrise. They said we slept and we woke up but we did not notice that he had slept at all. When it was dawn, he blew air from his mouth three times as though he was asleep, but whether he did this on purpose to give us the impression that he fell asleep or not, we could not tell. Then he stood up and said: "Did I fall asleep?" So we told him, "We do not know as we ourselves fell asleep". By this we found out that the Saint hid his good deeds and showed that he was overcome by sleep, but he was actually awake.

(2) His Quietness and Calmness:

It was said about St. Arsenius that after he escaped from Constantinople and came to Sketis, he constantly prayed to God to guide him for what he was supposed to do and how to respond to matters.

After three years he heard a voice telling him: "Arsenius, keep calm and get away from people and you shall be saved because these are veins of unsinfulness".

When he heard the voice once more, he escaped from the people and kept calm and quiet.

It was also said about him that when he learned to be quiet, he was told by the voice that he could not do it, so he placed a stone weighing twelve darhams in his mouth for three years, he only removed it when he ate, or when a stranger came to visit him. And so with this virtue he trained himself to be quiet and to close his mouth.

It was also said about him that due to his great quietness and calmness, the devils came one day to him but he was not scared of them. One of them came to him with a knife in his hand and tried to cut his hand. So Arsenius gave him his hand courageously, and told him: "Do what you want for Jesus' sake". When the devil saw his calmness, he cried and said: "O Saint you have burned me by thy quietness and calmness".

Arsenius said once: "Many times did I regret what I spoke, but as for quietness I have never regretted".

The following story elaborated how St. Arsenius liked quietness on one hand and on the other hand it shows how numerous are the deeds of the Holy Ghost.

Once a stranger came to Sketis to meet St. Arsenius, so he asked the brethren to lead him to the Saint. So they asked him to eat first and then see him, but the stranger said: "I will not eat anything until I see him". So the brethren sent one of them to lead him to the Saint's cell because it was too far". So he knocked the door and entered, then they prayed together quietly. Then the brethren said: "I am leaving now, so pray for me". When the stranger saw that he was not welcomed, he said: "And I am leaving with you too". Then they went out together, and the stranger asked to be led to the cell of St. Moses the Black who was a thief before he became a monk. When he arrived there, St. Moses embraced him and welcomed him, then he left.

Then the brethren asked the stranger: "Now that you met both the Egyptian and the Greek, which one of them satisfied you"? The stranger answered him: "I would say that the Egyptian satisfied me more". When the brethren heard that, he prayed constantly to God asking Him to clear this matter, for some people run away from us for your name's sake, and some people like us for thy name too. While he was sleeping he saw in his dream two ships in the sea, in one of them St. Arsenius with the Spirit of God, and in the other ship St. Moses the Black with the angels feeding him honey.

(3) Reverence and Tears:

It was said about him: when he sits down to braid the palm leaves he places a piece of cloth on his knees to wipe off the tears that drop from his eyes. And one

warm day he moistened the palm leaves with his tears. His eye lashes started to fall off due to his crying.

It was also said about him that every morning and evening he sits down and asks himself "What did I do to please God, and what did I do that He does not like". By this method he judged his life.

He used to say to himself. "Contemplate O Arsenius for what you came for".

(4) His Abstinence:

A) Limited Eating:

Daniel (one of his followers) said about him that his supply of food per year was a sac of wheat, and when we go to him we eat from it.
It was also said about him: when he hears of the fruits were ripe from the trees, he would ask the brethren to get him some of them because he had the habit of eating each fruit once a year, to give thanks to God.

B) His Devoid of Luxury:

He never renewed the water of the palm leaves except once a year, or when the water level decreased he would add more water to it. Due to this, the water rotted and its odour was not pleasant and was unbearable. It happened once that Father Makarious of Alexandria went to Arsenius ' cell, and when he smelled the odour he asked Arsenius: "Arsenius, why don't you change the water for it is rotten"? So Arsenius answered him saying: "Frankly I cannot stand the odour. But I try to smell it to compensate for the fancy doors that I used to use in the world". So when the brethren heard this they were pleased.

C) The Work of the Hands:

It was said about St. Arsenius, that from the day he took the fork he never kept in his cell more than his needs, he even gave away the rest of it to the others. He learned braiding the palm leaves from the monks, and he braided fans and bags and other things and sold it and ate from it and bought the palm leaves and gave away what remains. That was always his work.

- **His Humbleness and Meekness:**

When St. Arsenius goes to pray in church he stands behind a pillar lest someone should see his face, and he did not look at any person, for he had a face that resembles the angels.

Once a person brought some figs to Sketis for the monks to divide between themselves, and because it was too little they did not send any to Arsenius

because of his honourable position. But when Arsenius heard of it, he refused to go to church and said, "You sorted me out, and did not give me from the blessing that God has sent you as if I was not worth taking from it, or you have forgotten me because of my pride". So when the monks heard that, they were ashamed and they learned how to be humble like him. They went quickly and got him a share.

It was said that St. Arsenius and Tadros El Farmy hated to be flattered more than others. St. Arsenius did not meet with the people by chance. But Tadros met with people quite often but he stayed with them for a very short period of time.

Once Arsenius was sick and he was in need of something to eat, and since he did not have any money to buy a piece of bread, he asked a man for it and said: "Thank you my God for letting me accept a charity for thy name's sake".

It happened once when he was in the Sketis, that he was sick, so the priest went to him and took him to church and laid him on a small bed and placed a pillow made of goat skin under his head. When some monks came to see him and found him laying on a bed they said: "Is this Arsenius that sleeps on the bed". So the priest took one of those monks aside and asked him about his job before he became a monk; the monk answered him: "I was a shepherd, then the priest asked him about how he managed then, so the monk said: "I was tired and I worked hard"; so the priest asked him again about how he felt after becoming a monk; then the brethren answered: "Much better than before". So the priest finally said: "Don't you know that Arsenius was living among the kings and he had servants and slaves to serve him while he was sitting on the royal chairs and under him was the pure colored silk, but you were a shepherd and you did not posses in the world what you have now; this man has nothing of the pleasures that he had in his worldly life. So now, you are pleased but he is tired". When the monk heard that, he was ashamed of himself and knelt down and said: "Forgive me Father for I was wrong, for truly this is the man who came to humble himself but I came to rest".

St. Daniel said about Arsenius that because of his calmness he used to stop speaking about explaining the Bible although he could do that if he wants, and he also never wrote a word fast.

- **His Love for Loneliness and His Endurance:**

  It was said that his cell was 32 miles away and he never came quickly. People used to care about him. So when the Sketis fell down he said a Roman destroyed the world and the monks lost the Sketis.

- **Why does he escape from the people?**

  Once Father Makarious asked Arsenius: "Why do you run away from us". So Arsenius answered him saying: "God knows that I love you all, but I cannot be

with God and with the people at the same time; for thousands of angels have one cause, but people have many causes, and thus I cannot leave God and have patience with the people.

- **Going to the Monastery then to Solitude:**

  The brethren were once asked: "Why did the brethren consider Arsenius, when he left the world and went to the monastery, and then when he went out of the koinonia to solitude, to be an example written in books"? So one of the brethren answered: "This is because Arsenius was sent by God to the monastery and after that he was sent to solitude, and we are sure that these two incidents were according to God's will, that is why we have to take the example from the life of God's man.

  The following two messages were explained by one of the monks:

  Some brethren asked an elder holy monk: "Explain to us the two calls that Arsenius heard. What is the meaning of what was said to him in the first call, "Run and escape from the people and thou shalt be saved". And what is the meaning of what was said to him in the second call "Escape and learn about quietness, live a life of contemplation in your quietness for these are the main things that keeps man from sin".

  So the monk answered: "The call: 'Run from the people and you shall be saved' means that if you want to escape from death imbedded in sin and to live a true life, you must leave your possession, your family, and your country then go and live in the wilderness, which is the deserts and mountains of the saints and abide with them according to my commandments and you shall live a true life. And what is meant by 'Escape and seek quietness and live a life of contemplation in calmness' is: when you were in the world and were thinking about the worries of the world, I made you escape from it and I have sent you to the monks, and after a short period of living in the monks' church you were able to follow my commandments more freely and contemplate in the quietness; and now, having been trained enough in the first call, you can escape from the monastery and go to solitude in your cell, exactly as you escaped from the world to the monastery.

  "What is meant by 'Learn quietness and live a life of contemplation in calm' is that if you went to solitude in your cell, do not give a chance for the visitors to come to you, and you to speak to them without a cause, except for matters that are related to the holiness of the soul. If you do so, you shall keep living in quietness and contemplation because by learning, hearing and speaking to the visitors that come to you, the depth of the thought that you plunge in can take you away and scatter your thoughts. But do not think that teaching the brethren or not expecting visitors in your cell can be sufficient to keep your mind in peace, or can force you

to contemplate in God and reform yourself unless you are alert at all times, and unless you do not waste your time thinking about them by any means when they are far from you.

For when a monk thinks of someone, he does for a certain reason or because he misses him or praises him. For when the mind thinks of ordinary matters, if one does not end those thoughts, one will be led in his thoughts to the memories related to those matters. And this is the case with a beginner seeking a life of contemplation and quietness. If he thinks of women he commits adultery, and if he thinks of men he thinks of hate, and starts to blame them or ask them to respect him, and then he shifts himself to negativity". Also when they asked St. Makarious: "What is the right way for a beginner in his cell"?, he answered them: "Do not think of a monk in his cell as a man for he would not benefit out of deep thinking when he speaks to people but he has to control his thoughts secretly and this is what he meant by 'Escape, keep calm and don't speak'".

- **Arsenius and the Pope:**

  Once Pope Theophilos came with the ruler to St. Arsenius and asked him for a word, yet St. Arsenius remained silent for a while then told them: "If I tell you something would you learn it"? So when the Pope promised him he said to them: "Wherever you hear of Arsenius, do not come near him".

  Once the Pope wished to see Arsenius, so he sent to him asking if he would open his door for him, so Arsenius answered: "If you come I will open my door for you. And if I open my door for you I will not be able to close it in front of anyone else. And if I open my door for everyone I will not be able to live here again". When the Pope heard these words, he said: "If we go to him, we will make him leave his cell, so it is better not to go".

- **A Brethren Visits the Saint:**

  Once a man knocked at his door, so Arsenius opened the door for him thinking that he was his servant, so when he saw that it was not him, he fell on his face, but the man told him: "Please stand up I just want to shake your hand even at the door steps". But Arsenius told him: "I will not rise until you leave". But the man insisted on his demand, and Arsenius did not stand up, so the man left him and went on his way.

- **Some Priests Visit the Saint:**

  Some priests once went to visit St. Arsenius and asked him about his quietness. He answered them saying: "As long as the virgin is in her parent's house, many people will propose to marry her. If she goes in and out, then she will not satisfy

all people, because some of them will not like it while others will. And she will not have her approval in her parents' home. Same is the case with quiet hidden soul, once it is known, it will be torn".

- **A Virgin from the Royal Family Visits Him:**

  Once a virgin from the Royal Family heard of him, she was rich and feared God. She came to see Arsenius, and she had lots of money and many servants and soldiers. So Pope Theophilos invited her and gave her great respect. She asked him to send someone to St. Arsenius in order to accept her. So the Pope wrote to him saying: "A lady 'Elaria the Sakliki' the daughter of a man from the Royal Family in Rome, asks you to permit her to visit you". He also wrote to the head of the monasteries asking him to permit her to visit the saints in their monasteries and have their blessings. But St. Arsenius did not wish her to visit him, so he wrote to her saying: "I knew about your trip and your desire to visit us, and we pray for you. So do not come because I do not want to see a woman's face". But she did not accept it and said: " I am sure that God will grant me my wish to see your angelic face, for I did not travel all this way to see a man, for we have many men in my country, but I came here to see an angel". And she ordered to be taken to the wilderness.

  When she arrived at the monastery, Arsenius was out of his cell. When she saw him she knelt in front of him, so he raised her and said: "You wished to see my face, and now you have seen it, so what is the benefit that you got"? But because of her modesty she was not able to look at his face, so he told her: "If you hear of a good deed, do it yourself and do not go around seeking the one who did it. How dare you travel along the seas? Don't you know that you are a woman and that you should not go around? Do you want to tell the women in Rome that you saw Arsany, and make the sea a way for women to come to us". She answered him: "Because of my faith I came here, but I will not let any woman come to you, so pray for me". He said: "No, but I will pray to God to remove your picture and your name from my thoughts and heart". Then he left her and went back to his cell. So she went back worried. When she reached Alexandria she had a fever due to her sorrows, so Pope Theophilos invited her and asked her about her worries, and she told him, "I wish I did not see Arsenius because when I told him to remember me in his prayers, he answered me saying, 'I will pray that your picture and your name may be forgotten'. And here I stand in sorrow". So the Pope told her: "Don't you know that you are a woman and Satan tempts the monks by women; but he always prays for your soul and does not forget your fatigue and your trip". So she went back to her country pleased.

Once Arsenius was worried so he left his cell without taking anything from it and went to his two followers Alexander and Zowel, and told Alexander to rise and go to where he came from, and so he did. Then he told Zowel: "Come with me to the river to find a boat sailing to Alexandria, then go back to our brother. So Zowel was astonished at what he was told. So Arsenius sailed to Alexandria where he was struck with a severe sickness. When his two followers went back to where they lived, one told the other: "Perhaps one of us had hurt his feelings and for that reason he deserted us", but they did not find a cause in themselves.

When Arsenius felt better he decided to go back to the monks. While he was crossing the river, a maid saw him, so she pulled his clothes, but he pushed her back, so the maid told him, "If you are a monk go back to your monastery". So Arsenius blamed himself and went back to the monastery. His followers met him and knelt in front of him and so did Arsenius, and they all wept. So Arsenius said: "Didn't you hear that I was sick"? So they answered, "yes, but the way you deserted us was not right, for we said had we not disobeyed you in any matter, you would not have deserted us". But Arsenius said: "I know that people would say that the bird did not find a place to rest so it came back to the arc". So his followers were pleased and lived with him once more.

- **His Late Days and His Death:**

Daniel his follower said that Arsenius was in good health in his old age and his beard reached his stomach and he was tall, but he had a little hunched back when he grew older, and he reached 95 years of age. He spent 40 years in the Royal Palace and the rest in the monastery. Also, Daniel said that he was a good holy man and was filled with faith and the Holy Ghost, and that he left him a shirt made of wool and a suit made of leather. His follower also said that when he felt that his days were near, he asked them not to remember him, but just to make bread, for he used to say if he had done a good deed he will find the reward in eternity.

When he felt that the days left for his life were few, he told his followers to pay more attention to the salvation of their souls and not to weep for his departure. He spoke these words while he was crying, so they asked him: "Are you afraid"? He answered them: "The fear of this hour followed me since I came to the wilderness".

And that is how Arsenius died, he died with tears in his eyes and so his followers wept a lot for him and started kissing his feet as if he was a strange man leaving for his country.

When St. Benjamin heard of his death he said: "Blessed are you Arsenius for you wept in this world, for whoever does not cry in this world will cry a lot after his

death, for on this earth crying is our choice, but over there crying will be due to our sorrow, and in both cases we will not escape crying, so it is better for a man to cry in this world".

When Pope Theophilos attended his funeral he said: "Blessed are you Arsenius because for this hour you wept all your life".

Some Exercises In Silence
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

It is hard for whoever lives in our society to keep silent completely, but he can xercise silence by adopting the following:

l. Short concise answers:

If a word or a phrase would suffice for an answer, there is no need to go into extended detail and lengthy explanation; one sentence is enough.

2. To cease talk on any subject:

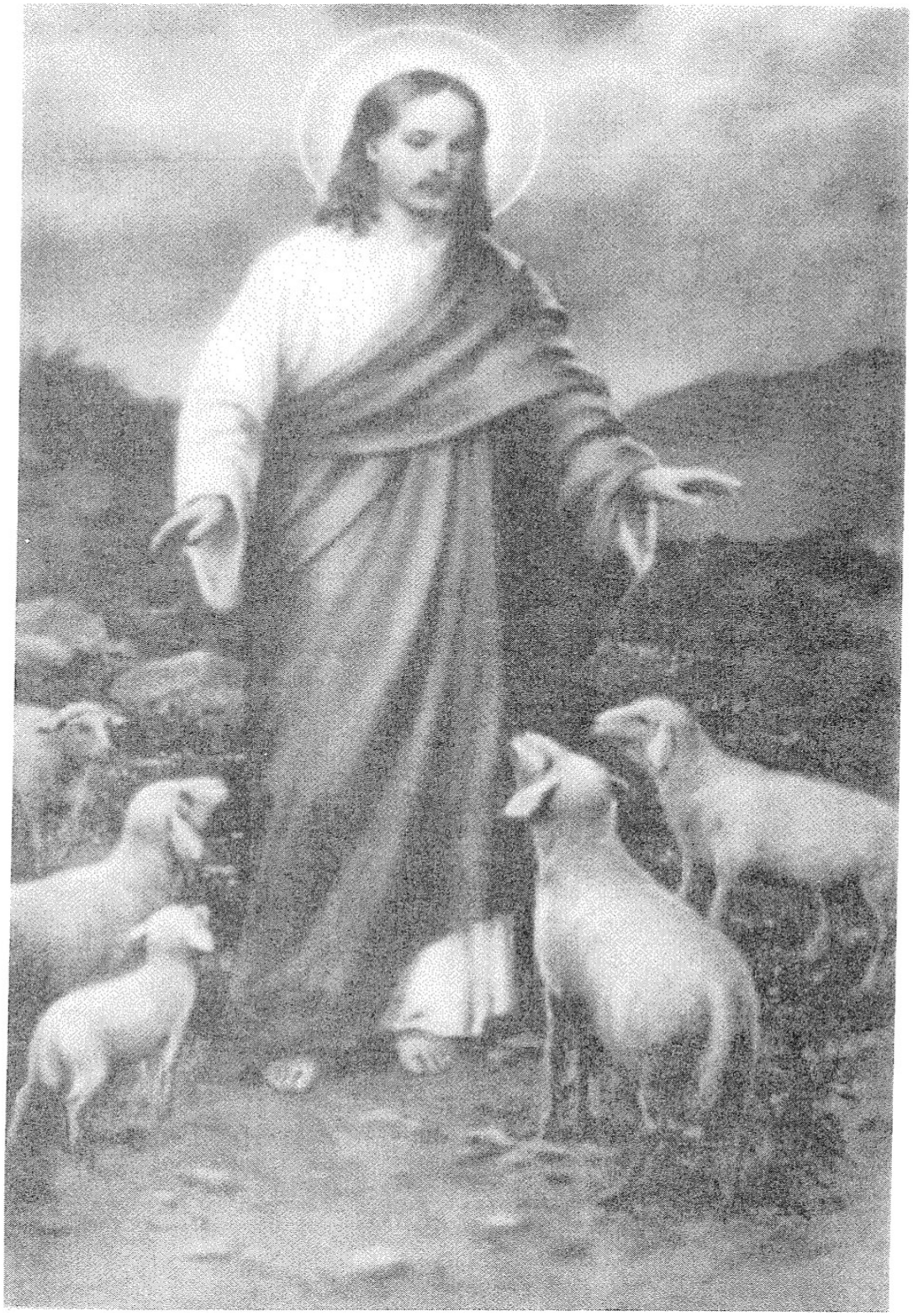
There are some subjects which are not your concern, therefore do not speak about them, especially matters relating to the secrets of others. Also abstain from talking on subjects which are not your specialty, such as pure scientific or artistic or political matters that surpass your knowledge.

3. Keep away from faults of the tongue:

Such as: condemnation, sneering, futile talk, chattering, worthless argument, words of anger and contempt, etc...

4. Avoid starting a conversation except for necessity:

If somebody talked to you, answer him briefly; and if nobody talked to you, keep silent unless there is something which necessitates your speaking, otherwise you might fall into a certain mistake...



MAY
FOURTH SUNDAY

Christianity and the building up of the personality

Please read the attached material entitled "Your language reveals you", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To study the value of our personality and how Christianity helps to build up our personalities. A true Christian must behave like one.

MEMORY VERSE:

"You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honour, and set him over the works of Your hands" (Hebrews 2:7)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction**

✞ **The Value of Man from God's Point of View:**

God created man using a totally different way compared to the creation of the rest of the creatures. When God created light, He said "'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). Then God said "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so" (Genesis 1:9). When God created man, He said "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Then the way man was created in more detail was mentioned in Genesis 2:7 "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being". Therefore, man was distinguished from all other creations with the "breath of life" which was breathed in him by God.

God created man in his image in freedom, holiness, ability to choose and immortality.

✞ **The greatness of man is in his dual abilities:**

- He or she has the inside and the outside abilities
- He or she has the spiritual and the social life.
- He or she has the spirit and has the flesh.
- He or she has the heavenly life and the earthly life.
- He or she has the mind and the feelings.

These dual abilities make the value of man so great. See the memory verse.

✞ **The Perfect Personality:**

St. Luke said about the personality of the Lord Jesus:

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men" (Luke 2:52). From this verse we can see that our Lord Jesus at the age of twelve had "favour with God and men". This is the characteristic of the perfect Christian personality Jesus loved people and people loved Him with the exception of those who were jealous later on when Jesus grew and started His Ministry. Our Lord Jesus at the age of twelve had wisdom, had thinking ability and great ability to discuss "And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers" (Luke 2:47). (Remember that Jesus was similar to us in everything accept He never sinned).

Therefore, Christianity looks after the personality of the human being from all aspects: wisdom, body, spirit and growth in all directions.

a. How can Christianity help build up the personality?

✞ **New Nature:**

St. Paul said "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The new life starts when we are baptized. Then this life grows with the help of communion, Holy Sacraments, and prayers.

This leads to the establishment of the true Christian personality.

The Christian personality has the ability to:

- Love your enemies (St. Stephen)
- Overcome any bad desires (St. Peter)
- Be humble and gentle (St. Mary)
- Overcome the world (St. Augustine)
- Serve other people (St. Paul)

***Note:** Please tell some stories of the above Saints briefly.

- **New Incentives:**
  The new spiritual life directs our incentives through the complete guidance of the Holy Spirit. Then we are not led by any temptation. "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

- **It Gives Comfort:**
  True Christians are in complete peace and comfort, because Jesus arose from the dead and promised to raise us from the dead as well. Even death does not scare Christians, but they are always in peace.

  Resurrection → casts away → sadness

  Hope → casts away → worries

  Love → casts away → fears

- **The Service of Reconciliation:**

  Christianity made man content by offering complete reconciliation between man and himself, between man and others, and between man and God. "O Great and Eternal God, who formed man in incorruption; and death, which entered into the world by the envy of the devil, Thou hast destroyed by the life-giving manifestation of Thine Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

  Thou hast filled the earth with the peace from the heavens, by which the hosts of angels glorify Thee saying, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and goodwill towards men."

  Now man can live with no conflicts. If a person is a true Christian, then his personality will not have any internal or external conflicts.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- Christianity is not just a name or just an external appearance. Christianity is true living, that gives the personality certain characteristics: love, peace hope, etc. Let us judge ourselves: are we true Christians? Let us make a commitment today to live according to the Lord's teachings.

SONGS

ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

On the first day of the week
Christ the Lord rose again
before the dawn began to break
clothed in majesty to reign

REFRAIN
Our Lord is risen today
Who did once, upon the cross
O triumphant holy day !
suffer to redeem our loss.

Hymns of praise, then, let us sing
Who endured the Cross and grave
unto Christ our heavenly King
Sinners to redeem and save

By the pains that He endured
Now, above the skies He is King
Our Salvation He procured
where the angels ever sing

He who gave for us His life
Now became our Life-giver
who for us endured the strife
freeing us from death forever

All the toil and sorrow done
Now, behind we leave the past
all the battle fought and won
forward be our glances cast

Recitation Curriculum :

Please Look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Your Language Reveals You
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Your talk shows and reveals your personality. It uncovers what is inside you, "For by your words, you will be justified, and by your words, you will be condemned!" (Mt 12:37)

Talk is not to be taken slightly. By judging you could be judged and by the word '!fool", you might be in danger of hell fire. Some talk defiles the person, as God said. James the Apostle describes the tongue as *"fire" that "kindles from hell. "*

The faults of the tongue are many. They made the Saints favour silence:

There is blasphemy, lying, abuse mockery, scornful talk, harsh and angry words, bitterness and envy, talk of pride and boasting, exaggeration, words of hypocrisy and deceit, false witness and repudiating others, foolish disputes and prattle... etc.

There are faults that affect the person himself and faults that are stumbling blocks for others.

For example, the talk a person pours into the ears of others defiles the purity of their hearts and thoughts or spoils their faith and the soundness of their knowledge. It could also damage their relationship with others and cause friction between them. It could also make them change their minds about their friends. Many are the victims of talk!

The Bible advises us to slow down in speaking, at least to get a chance to think... St. James, the Apostle said, "...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." (Jas 1:19)

The one who hastens or rushes in his talk, is bound to err. He might regret it, but after being recorded against him, he cannot get it. back...

However, there is useful talk. The spirit-borne used to come to our fathers from the farthest ends of the world, asking for a word of benefit...

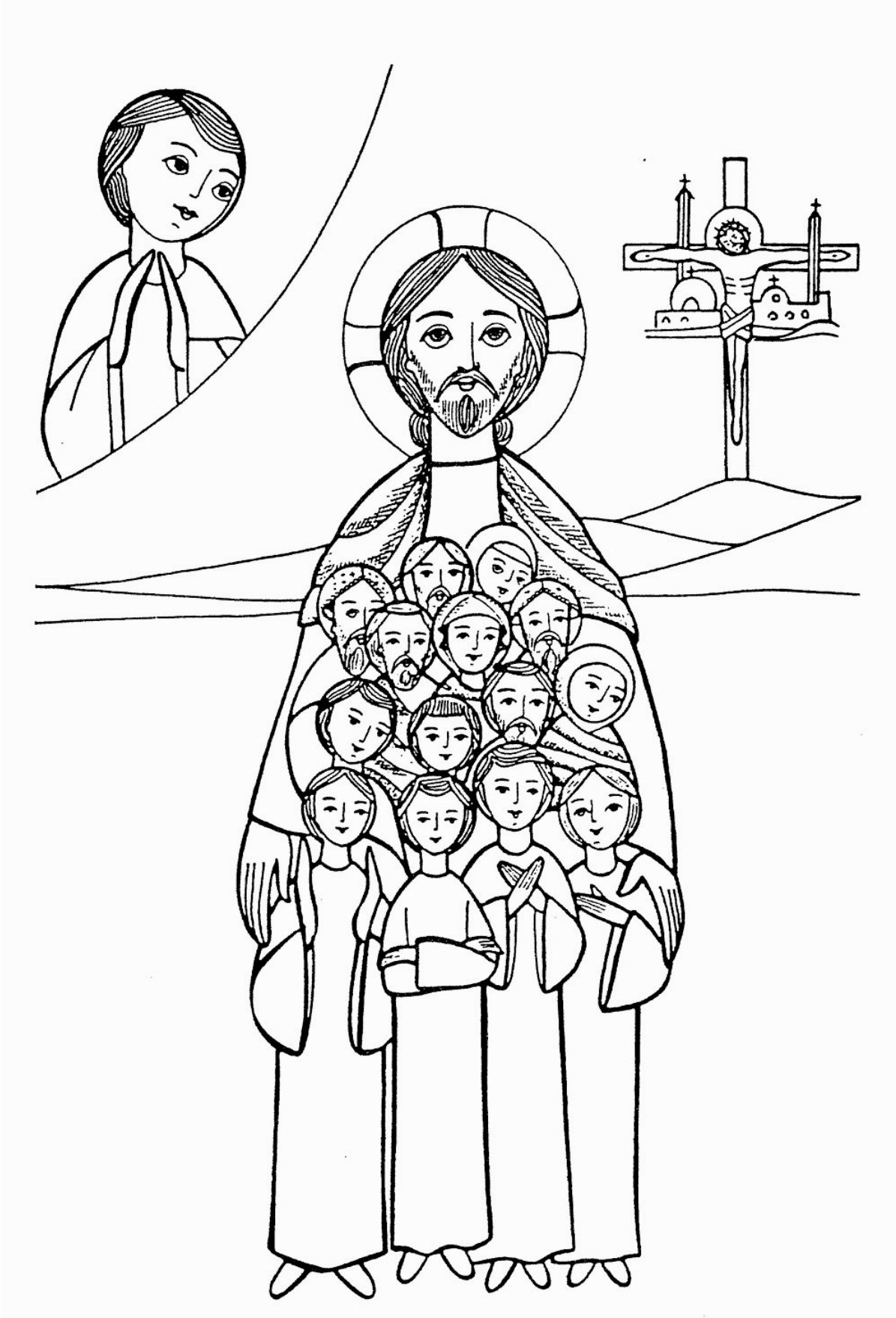
There are words of the spirit and words of grace, like the words that God puts in the mouth of people to pass onto others, *"It is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father,"* who spoke through the prophets...

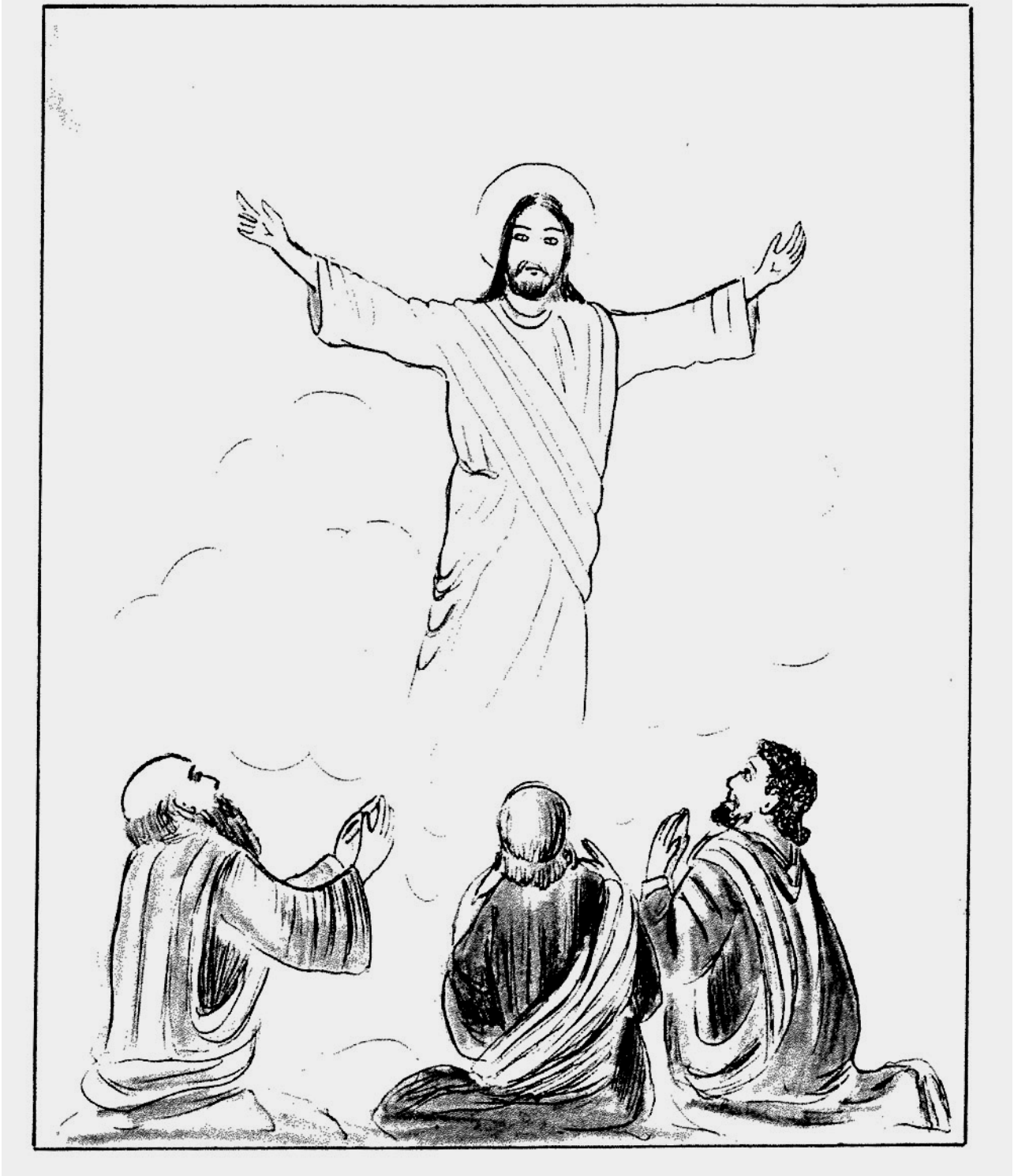
Therefore, the Psalmist says, *"O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall show forth your praise. " Is it then God who opens your lips?...*

Among the gentle words: a word or blessing, a word of comfort, a word of encouragement, a word of solution, a word of guidance, a word of teaching, and also a word of rebuke, if it is said with love.

The word which is from God never returns empty. It is strong, live and effective. It penetrates the heart, bears fruit and changes souls.

Talk then when it is right to talk and know how to talk and when.





JUNE
FIRST SUNDAY

THE ASCENSION FEAST
Between Ascension and Pentecost

Please read Acts 1:1-2, 6-26, and Luke 24:44-53, the attached material entitled "The Ascension", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To study the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ to heaven and the ten days between Ascension and Pentecost in which the Disciples were awaiting the promise of God. When the Lord ascended to heaven, He lifted up the heart of the church towards heaven.

MEMORY VERSE:

> **"But tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49)**

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction**

Describe first the events of Ascension of the Lord Jesus to heaven mentioned in Luke 24:44-53 and Acts 1:1-2, 6-26.

✞ **His Blessing of the Disciples**

"He lifted up His hands and blessed them" (Luke 24:50). When the Lord blessed his Disciples, He gave us back the Divine Grace which was taken away from Adam because of the original sin

✞ **His Ascension to Heaven**

"After the Lord had spoken to them. He was received up into heaven" (Mark 6:19).

Our Lord ascended to heaven with the flesh so that He can intercede on behalf of all people. The Ascension of the Lord in front of His Disciples left a great impression in their memory, and strengthened their faith, proving that He was the Heavenly King.

✞ **After the Ascension:**

The appearance of the two angels emphasized to the Disciples the second coming of the Lord Jesus. "This same Jesus, Who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Act 1:11).

When the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven, He told His Disciples to go to Jerusalem and to stay there because He is going to send the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of God, to stay with them and give them power. "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart. I will send Him to you" (John 16:7).

The days were moving by but the Holy Spirit did not descend. The Disciples were in the upper room with St. Mary, the mother of our Lord, awaiting the promise of God.

They were spending their time in prayers. This is a lesson for us to have patience and to have trust in God. When we ask Him for something, we must trust in Him and wait until the right time for Him to give us what we need.

The selection of Matthias instead of Judas was made between the Ascension and Pentecost (Acts 1:15-26). So Matthias joined the eleven Disciples and was with them in the Pentecost. Matthias was present "all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us" (Acts 1:21).

✞ **Examples of People Who Waited for the Promise of God:**

- Abraham waited a long time for God to fulfill His promise and give him a son in his old age.
- Elijah waited for God to provide rain. (God stopped the rain as Elijah had requested as a result of his people's disobedience.)

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

✞ Let us always think about heaven and our share in it. The Holy Spirit inside us helps our thoughts, feelings and life to be directed towards heaven.

SONGS

THE LORD ASCENDED

The Lord ascended up on high !
The grave and Hell are captive led
The Lord has triumphed gloriously
Christ ascended to Heaven !

The heavens, with joy , receive their Lord
O earth, adore your Glorious King
by saints, by angels hosts adored
Christ ascended to Heaven !

Thou art gone up before us, Lord
That we may be where now Thou art
to prepare for us our heavenly abode,
Christ ascended to Heaven !

Lift up our hearts, lift up our minds
Our treasure be with Thee on high
that while we live on earth now
Christ ascended to Heaven !

That where Thou art, at God's right hand
Dwell Thou in us that we may, too
our hope, our love may always be
Dwell for evermore in Thee.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Ascension
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Last Thursday the Church celebrated the feast of the Holy Ascension, as Christ ascended to Heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father.

The Lord ascended in glory, defying all the law of gravity. **He also gave us hope of being lifted up like Him,** defying the law of gravity and joining Him, by saying, *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. " (Jn 12:32)*

He was lifted up on a cloud and disappeared from their sight. But He will come again on the clouds of Heaven, with His Angels and Saints, to lift us up on the clouds with Him, and be with God all the time.

And as He sat down at the right hand of the Father, we will sit down with Him in His glory.

The One they crucified at Golgotha and was counted as a sinner, enduring many reproaches and insults, has risen from the dead in glory, ascended to Heaven in glory and sat down at the right hand of the Father in glory.

Golgotha was not a sad ending of His life. It was the beginning of His glory.

Therefore, whoever suffers with Him will surely be glorified with Him...

The Ascension was the last picture of the Lord seen by His Disciples. It lifted up their eyes to where Christ is sitting down. It is what the Apostle meant when he said, "Received up in glory. " (1 Tim. 3:16)

And so Christian suffering became inseparable from its glory.

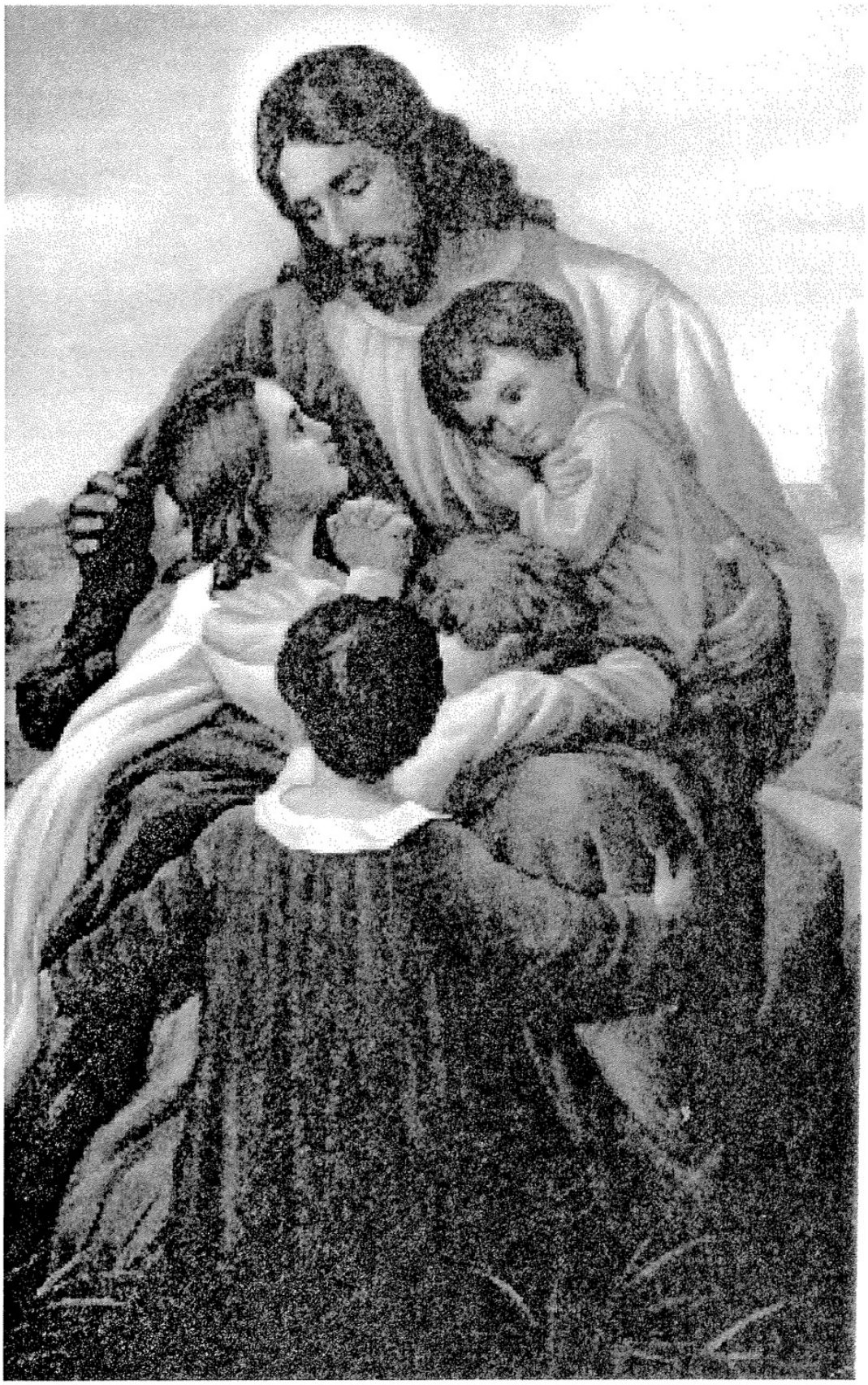
Christ who suffered for our sake, appeared to St Stephen during the suffering of his martyrdom *"He gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Look, l see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. He then cried out with a loud voice, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."*

The one who descended has also ascended...
We, too, would not be able to ascend, if we do not first descend...

We, also, must humble ourselves, endure suffering and be lifted up on the cross, before the ascension to the right hand of the Father...

As Christ has been lifted up, we always lift up our eyes to where Christ sits on the right hand of the Father, till he comes back once more on the clouds, to take us to Him.

Then, we will be lifted up with no descent ... Amen.



333

JUNE
SENCOND SUNDAY

PENTECOST
The Descent of the Holy Spirit and His Gifts

Please read Acts 2:1-13, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, and 1 Corinthians 12:28-31, and the attached materials entitled "Pentecost", "The Holy Spirit in your life", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.,

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To Study the way the Holy Spirit was given in the Pentecost, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church. We as Christians have the Holy Spirit. How do we feel His presence in us?

MEMORY VERSE:

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:4)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction**

✞ **The Teaching of the Saviour about the Holy Spirit:**

- **The Holy Spirit Witnesses to Christ:**

  "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me" (John 15:26).

- **The Holy Spirit's Permanent Existence in the Believers:**

  "And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16).

- **The Holy Spirit Teaches Us Everything:**

  "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26).

✞ **The Way the Holy Spirit was Given in the Pentecost:**

The Holy Spirit was given while the Disciples were in a condition of prayers, thankfulness and unity. They were very thankful to the Lord Jesus Who said to them, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Luke 11:13).

✞ **The Appearance of the Holy Spirit:**

The Holy Spirit appeared in the Pentecost in two forms: the form of strong wind and the form of tongues of fire "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:1-3).

We note that one of the expressions of the presence of God is usually the rushing mighty wind. For example in the Book of Job, we read "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind" (Job 38:1). In Psalm 50:3: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him."

From this we can form the idea that the mighty wind that accompanied the coming of the Holy Spirit in the Pentecost is in fact an expression of the presence of God. It is also a clear sign of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, Who filled the house and the people in it.

If we returned to the verses and the examples which express the presence of God, we find that the mighty wind was always accompanied by fire. We find in fire, an expression of the nature of God. It was said by Saint Paul: "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). We think, and at other times, He moves our tongues to speak".

✞ **The Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

First: The Gifts of Speech
This can be divided into three types:

a) **The Gift of Teaching:**
The Holy Spirit gives good thinking, freedom of expression and possession of knowledge.

b) **The Gift of Prophecy:**
The Holy Spirit elevates the mind of the prophets to realize whatever cannot be obtained by a regular man through reading, education or intelligence. In the New Testament, the gift of prophecy does not end at the future events but it extends to reveal some of the secrets of God: "For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10).

c) **The Gift of Speaking with Tongues:**
"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to Speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

Second: The Gifts of Teaching

This can be divided into two types:

a) **The gifts of teaching with knowledge**
b) **The gifts of teaching with wise words**
"For to one is given the word of wisdom through the same Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:8).

Third: The Practical Gifts

This can be divided into two types:

a) **The gifts of organizing the church matters, and serving its needs**
b) **The gifts which declare the glory of God to strengthen the faith through miracles**
"To another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles" (1 Corinthians 12:9-10).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- The most important gift in our lives, as Christians, is the Holy Spirit inside us. All what we have to do is to give the leadership of our lives to the Holy Spirit, obey its directions, and then, enjoy all Its fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
In all our spiritual practices, we must feel the full guidance of the Holy Spirit.

SONGS

LET US ALL PRAISE THE LORD

Let us all praise the Lord for He is in glory Glorified	Maren hos e-epchoise: Je Khen ou –o –oo ghar afetchi o-oo
REFRAIN	
He ascended into heaven And send us the Paraclete The Spirit of truth, the Comforter Amen. Alleluia	Afshenaf e-epshoi enifio –wee wee af oo- orpe nan empi parakliton piepnevma ente timethemi: Amen . Alleluia
He made the two into one Which is heaven and earth	pentaf er piesnav en owai ete fai pe etfe nem epkahi
O come all ye nations, let Us worship Jesus Christ	Amoini nilaos tiro: entenoo- osht en Isos piekhristos
This is God our Saviour And Lord of every one	Fai pe efnooti pensotir : owoh epchoise ensarex niven
Three in one and one in Three; the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit The spirit of truth the Comforter. Amen Alleluia	Oo-etrias esjik evol: esoi enshomt esoi enowai: ete fai pe efiot nem epshiri nem pi epnevma ethoo-wab; piepnevma ente timethmiL Amin Alleluia

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Pentecost
The Descent of the Holy Spirit

In the Old Testament, Pentecost was the feast which occurred fifty days after Passover. As the Passover feast celebrated the exodus of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, so Pentecost celebrated God's gift of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. In the New Testament as well, the Pentecostal feast is fulfilled and made new by the coming of the new law, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Disciples.

The Apostles received "the power from high" and they began to preach and bear witness to Jesus as the risen Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This moment has traditionally been called the Birth of the Church.

It must be noted that the feast of Pentecost is not simply the celebration of and event which took place centuries ago; it is the celebration of what must happen and does happen to us in the Church Today. We all have died and risen with the Messiah-King, and we all received his most Holy Spirit. We are the “Temple of the Holy Spirit". God's Spirit dwells in us. We, by our own membership in the Church, have received "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit" in the sacrament of Chrismation. Pentecost has happened to us.

Blessed art you, O Christ our God, Who has revealed the fishermen as most wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit: through them you drew the world into the Net . O Lover of Man, Glory be to you. When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, He divided the nations. But when he distributed the tongues of fire, He called all to unity. Therefore, with one voice we glorify the All-Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit In Your Life

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Do you sometimes feel that you *"grieve the Holy Spirit of God. " (Eph. 4:30)* with certain conduct which does not agree with the Holy Spirit who dwells in you.
Do you *"quench the Spirit. " (1 Thess. 5:19).* with the life of lukewarmness and lack of response to the work of the Spirit in you?!

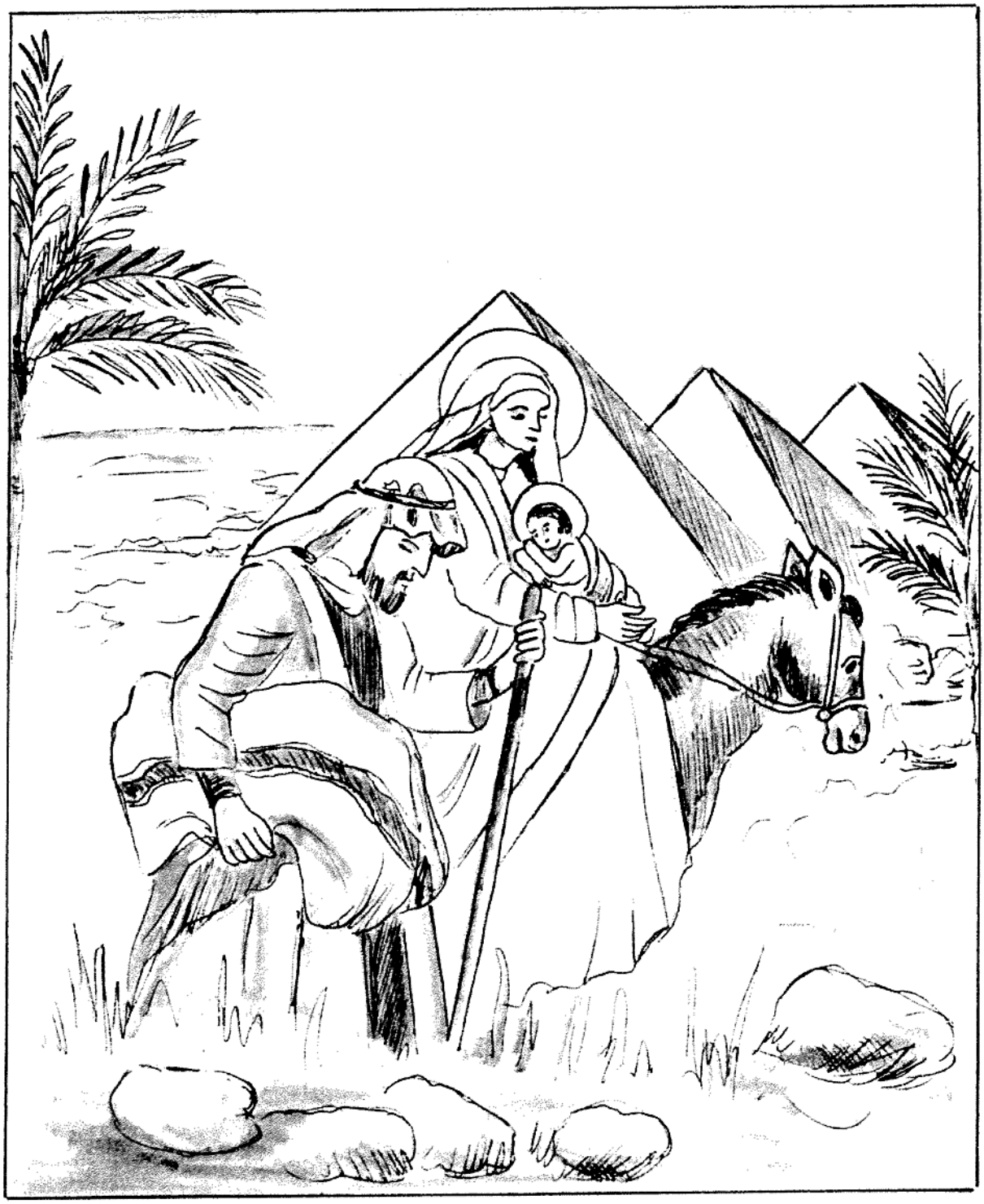
Would you re-consider the extent of your relationship with the Holy spirit and then ask:

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

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

HOLY BIBLE

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



JUNE
THIRD SUNDAY

THE HOLY FAMILY IN EGYPT

Please read the attached material entitled "Lessons learned from the Nile River," and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To study the visit of the Holy Family to Egypt, and its blessings to our homeland. We are proud and thankful to belong to such an ancient church.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Blessed is Egypt My people" (Isaiah 19:25)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **Introduction**

  - The Coptic Orthodox Church commemorates the Holy Family's trip to Egypt on the first day of June every year.

    We, as Copts, should be proud that our country, and indeed our forefathers provided a haven for the Holy Family. In fact the Egyptians were some of the first to bear witness to the Holiness of Christ as a child.

    Forced to flee Bethlehem because of possible persecution by its King Herod, the Holy Family fled to Egypt where they blessed our country for an estimated three and half years.

    The Holy Family left Judea in response to King Herod's order, who in his paranoia of this new baby King that he had heard of, had ordered to have all male infants under two years of age slaughtered. Herod, of course, did not know of Jesus' real purpose of being a Heavenly King not a worldly one. He only knew that he could "trick" the wisemen; that a new "King" was born in Bethlehem. When the wisemen discovered Herod's real plans to kill the child, they did not come back to see him. Herod, in a rage of paranoia and anger,

gave the order, which killed hundreds of innocent babies, but the Christ Child, as we know, escaped to Egypt.

☩ The Holy Landmarks in Egypt

In Egypt many churches, monasteries, and landmarks were blessed by the Holy Family. They have left their "marks" throughout Egypt consisting of sites of miracles, generally any exact place where the Holy Family have been documented to have stayed.

FARMA, situated between EI-Arish and Port-Said, was their gateway into Egypt. They first stopped at the town of TAL BASTA, where nearby in AL MAHAMMAH (the "Bath"), the Virgin is said to have bathed Jesus in a spring which He caused to gush from the ground.

From A1 Mahammah they went to BELBEIS where their presence has made a "holy" landmark. "The tree of the Virgin Mary", a site where the Holy Family rested in the shade, which has withstood nature, man and time itself. It stood ever after as a Coptic relic and it has been proven so on several occasions. As a matter of fact it was reported that when Napoleon's soldiers were trying to chop it down for firewood, the tree started oozing out with blood, causing the soldiers to run away leaving the tree.

The Holy Family then passed through SAMANOUD, and on the SAKHA (a suburb of KAFR EL SHEIKH) where they stayed for a good while. There is a rock in Sakha named in Coptic "Picha Lesous" meaning Jesus left the imprint of His heel.

Now they started westwards to WADI-EL-NATRUN the site of many monasteries, of which only four are still inhabited today.

From there they, made their way to EIN SHAMS (present day MATARIEH) where like Belbeis, they sat down to rest under another tree which is also named after the Blessed Virgin, and still stands today!

Also at Ein Shams there is a spring which Jesus' presence caused to flow. The Holy Family drank from this spring and the Holy Mother washed Jesus clothes there. The "Balsam", a fragrant plant burst from the ground where the washing water was poured out. It is no coincidence that Balsam is still used as an ingredient of Chrism Oil, which is used in sacred rites like Baptism, Consecration of churches, altars, etc.

The Holy Family then went even further southward to BABYLON (in old Cairo which later became FUSTAT) where they stayed in a cave which is now part of the Church of St. Serqius (Abou Sarqa). They were forced to leave Babylon because the idols there collapsed, and therefore, the governor sought to kill Jesus. According to oral tradition, they left in a sailboat heading for Upper Egypt.

Their first stop in Upper Egypt was at a place near. BENI MAZAR (east of BAHNASA) where they were to have stayed for four days. From there, they crossed to the eastern bank of the Nile and came to GEBEL EL TAIR (the mount-of birds) near SAMALOUT.

An ancient chronicler recorded that St. Mary was frightened because a rock was about to fall on them, but Jesus put His hand forward and held it back, leaving His palm print on it. The mount came to be known as "Palm Mountain". There is a church built there by Queen Helena, for the Virgin Mary, which came to be known as the Church of the Lady of the Palm.

From Gebel El Tair the Holy Family went by river to ASHMOUNEIN, near MALLAWI, then to PHYLS (now Dyrout Monastery), twelve miles south of Ashmounein, where they stayed for a few days before moving to old QOUSSIEH. Here Jesus' presence again caused the idols to fall before Him, so the Holy Family moved to the village MIRET (now MARE) and then took to the QUOSQUAM MOUNTAINS on which the famous monastery of the Holy Virgin, known as A1 MUHARRAQ still stands. Situated on some twenty acres, it is the largest monastery in all of Egypt and even the Orient. Al Muharraq is well renowned for the discipline, education and piety of its monks. Monks from here did missionary work far beyond Egypt, reaching as far as Ireland.

West of this monastery is a church whose main altar is situated in the very cave where the Holy Family stayed for six months according to Coptic records. Among these records are the writings of St. Theophilus the twenty-third Pope of Alexandria, all based on a vision in which the Holy Virgin disclosed to him details of the Holy Family's excursion from Palestine.

The church mentioned above was the first to be established in Upper Egypt and dates back to the first century. It is also significant, because it was in the cave (which now houses the altar of the church) that Joseph had a dream telling him to take his family and return to Palestine.

That concludes the main events of the trip of the Holy Family in Egypt.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us remember the visit of the Holy Family and celebrate his feast with great joy as we belong to the blessed land of Egypt. Let us be keen that our Egyptian homes become like small churches for the glory of the Lord Jesus, filled with prayers, praising of God and pure fasting.

(2) As we think of Egypt, we remember the Nile River and there are many lessons benefited from it (and actually any major river).

SONGS

THE HOLY FAMILY ENTERING EGYPT

"Behold , the Lord rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt." (Isa 19:25)

O fortunate and blessed Egypt
With the Child Jesus in your midst
with the Child Jesus in your midst
He gave you great heavenly blessings.

Your idols then were frightened
and quickly fell down to the ground
and quickly fell down to the ground
and paganism was ended.

In you the Lord has an altar
with Christians praying and praising
with Christians praying and praising
in the Divine Liturgy.

Thousands of martyrs gave their lives
In love for the Lord Jesus Christ
in love for the Lord Jesus Christ
and raised banners of Christianity

Monasteries in the wilderness
are filled with many of your saints
are filled with many of your saints
they are the light of the desert.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Lessons from the River Nile

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Do you know that the origin of this river derived from drops of water which fell as rain, accumulated and became a river?.

Couldn't we learn that any major work might start with a simple thing, perhaps an idea? This proves true the saying "the longest journey begins with a step".

The first sin started with a simple meeting with the serpent And perhaps the biggest fight begins with a word.

We can learn from the Nile that if a soft drop of water falls orderly and continually on a rock or mountain, it can carve a way through: an important lesson on patience and perseverance.

This water carries the clay from the mountains of Ethiopia. At the first sight it looks turbid, but it contains the silt which causes the fertility of the land in Egypt and covers its sand.

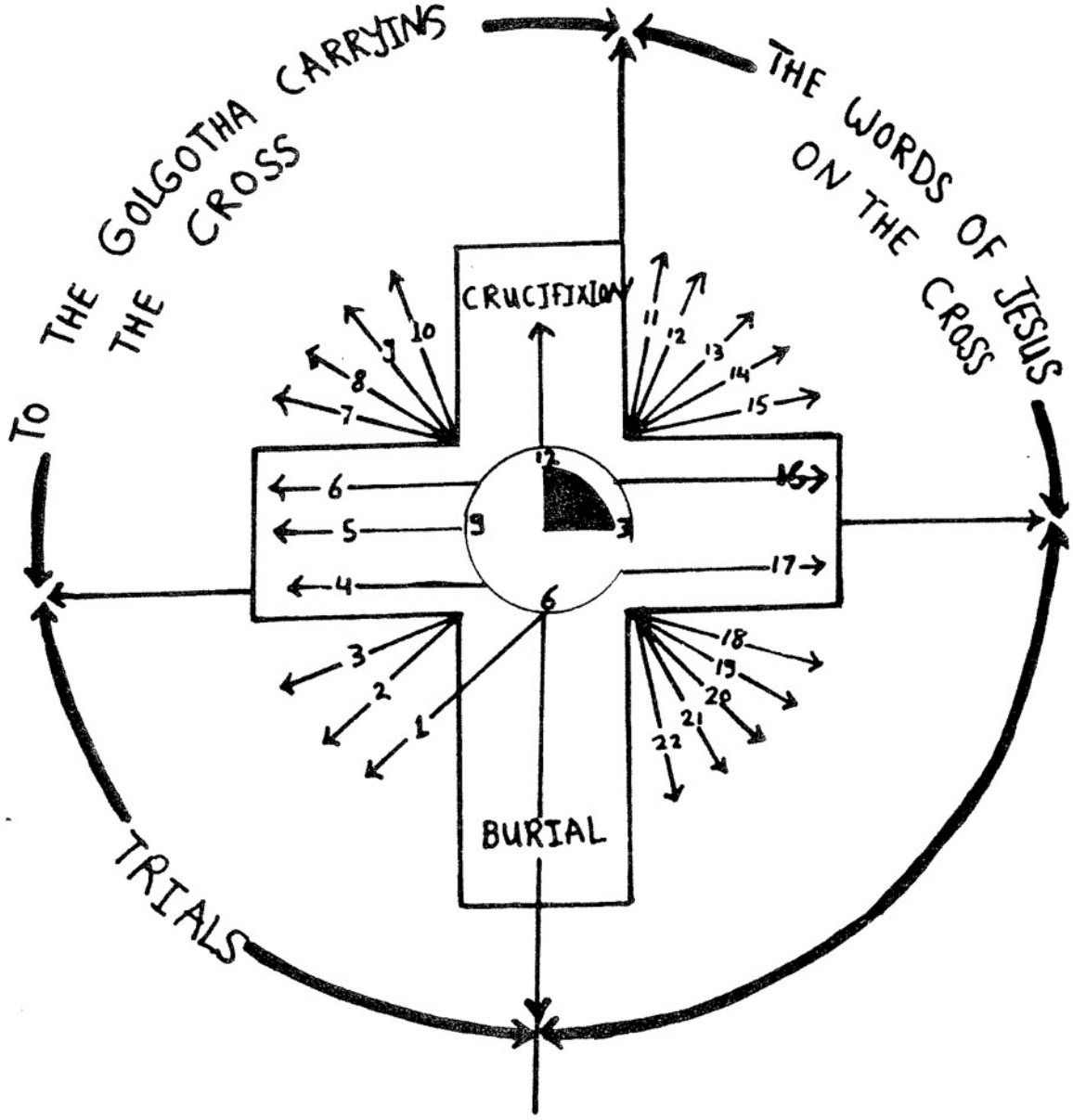
This muddy water sings with the Bride in Song of Songs, *"I am dark, but lovely" (Song 1:5).* In spite of such murkiness, this water carries in it good sweetness to its drinker when purified just as the sweetness of the lives of Augustine and Moses the Black, which appeared after their repentance.

Before the cutting of the Nile channel the water was flowing on both sides forming swamps. But, along many years its channel deepened, bit by bit, till it became stable.

This gives us an idea about the gradual progress in the spiritual life; and the steadfastness until soul becomes firm after sometime. This teaches us also not to judge those who are in the "swamps" stage and have not yet reached the deep and stable channel.

We must also praise the two sides through which the river runs. They are not two barriers which limit its freedom but hey keep it from being lost. They resemble the Commandments in that they do not restrict freedom but protect a person.

It is a long journey the Nile has made until it reached us, through which it gave its riches to the countries it passed by: Ethiopia, Nuba, Sudan, Egypt and all the surrounding deserts. This teaches us to give and do good to whoever we meet with.


TO THE GOLGOTHA CARRYING THE CROSS
THE WORDS OF JESUS ON THE CROSS
TRIALS
CRUCIFIXION
BURIAL
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JUNE
FOURTH SUNDAY

THE SEVEN MAGIC WORDS:
"I Can Do All Things Through Christ"

Please read Philippians 4:10-13, the attached material entitled "Hope", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To learn that faith is built on the experience of God's support. From the very beginning Adam lost hope because of his sin. But God returned hope to him by promising support to him.

MEMORY VERSE:

"I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- **The Strength of Faith:**

  "I can do all things through Christ". These seven words show that you, the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, can do all things through Him. The seven words can help you to overcome any difficulty.

- Never think you "haven't a prayer". You do have a prayer to carry you through anything and everything. Spiritual commitments are not for odd balls but for "with-it" people.

- Confidence and self-trust are by-products of the seven magic words. Let us learn to repeat this verse several times during the day. Let the confidence in Christ knock out any weakness you may have.

- In crisis let the seven magic words take over. They will carry you through anything and everything. You are always watched over in time of danger. Live by faith that will never let you down.

Faith does not contradict science and logic but overcomes their level. There is logic in science but in faith there are miracles: Jesus walked on the water, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after four days, and Jesus rebuked the winds to stop.

✞ **Faith Overcomes Fear: (Luke 12:32-40)**

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

Why did the Lord call His people "little flock"? He called them the "little flock" so that His people do not depend on their own limited human abilities but on God The Father who is unlimited. God takes His "little flock" in His hands.

✞ The world is interested in the large numbers and always thinks that whatever the majority says is correct. On the other hand, the little flock sometimes appears very small and the whole world is against it in its characters, principles and teachings. But now Jesus is saying, "Do not fear little flock"... and St. Paul is saying "I can do all things through Christ". St. Athanasius was very strong because he depended on the power of Christ. One time people were saying to St. Athanasius "The world is against you" and he answered," And I am against the world".

✞ **Examples of the Little Flock:**

1) An honest youth working in a society full of fake business ..... this man is a little flock (Daniel).
2) A youth who lives in purity in the midst of a corrupt society ..... this youth is a little flock (Joseph).
3) A youth who does not love money in a materialistic society .... this youth is a little flock (St. Anthony).
4) A youth telling the truth no matter what happens in the midst of false witnesses in the world .... this youth is a little flock (St. John the Baptist).
5) A youth living in Christ and His Bible in the midst of the world which is escaping from the Cross of Christ ... this youth is a little flock (St. Paul).

Please tell the class some of these examples to show God's support. In all these examples: Jesus said "Do not fear little flock". And the flock replies "I can do all things through Christ". When we review the life of the Saints, we find that they lived the lives of faith which eliminated all their fears. This little flock is in fact so big and so strong "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- ✞ Never give up. Never lose hope. It is never too late. Never say "I cannot". Always say in full confidence "I can do all things through Christ". Never yield to the world opposing your Christian behaviour. You are stronger than the world!

SONGS

YOU ARE MY HIDING PLACE

You are my hiding place
you always fill my heart with songs of deliverance
Whenever I am afraid
I will trust You
I will trust You
Let the weak say I am strong
In the strength of the Lord

Recitation Curriculum :

Please Look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Hope

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Since the first sin and before our fore parents were driven out from Paradise, God granted them the hope of salvation and told them that the woman's offspring would strike the serpent's head... This was the beginning of hope...

The story of Mary Magdalene gives us an example of hope. This woman, out of whom the Lord cast seven demons, became a great saint and He entrusted her with the announcement of His Resurrection to His disciples. She was also with the Virgin Mary at the cross...

Also the example of Johan the Prophet gives us the same hope...

Who ever thought that a person who was swallowed by a great fish kneels to God in the belly of the fish and says, *"I will look again towards Your holy temple. " (Jon. 2:4)*..

The above two examples remind us of the three men who were cast in the burning fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lion's den; all are examples of hope.

There is nothing impossible in the life with God. There is hope whatever the sin and the troubles may be and however difficult the case is.

In the spiritual life, how nice are the sayings about hope in the Bible: *":.. all things are possible to him who believes. "* (Mark 9:23). *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. "* (Phil. 4.13).

If you are fought with hopelessness about your personal abilities, you should not be fought about God's power...

If you do not have the ability, God certainly has:

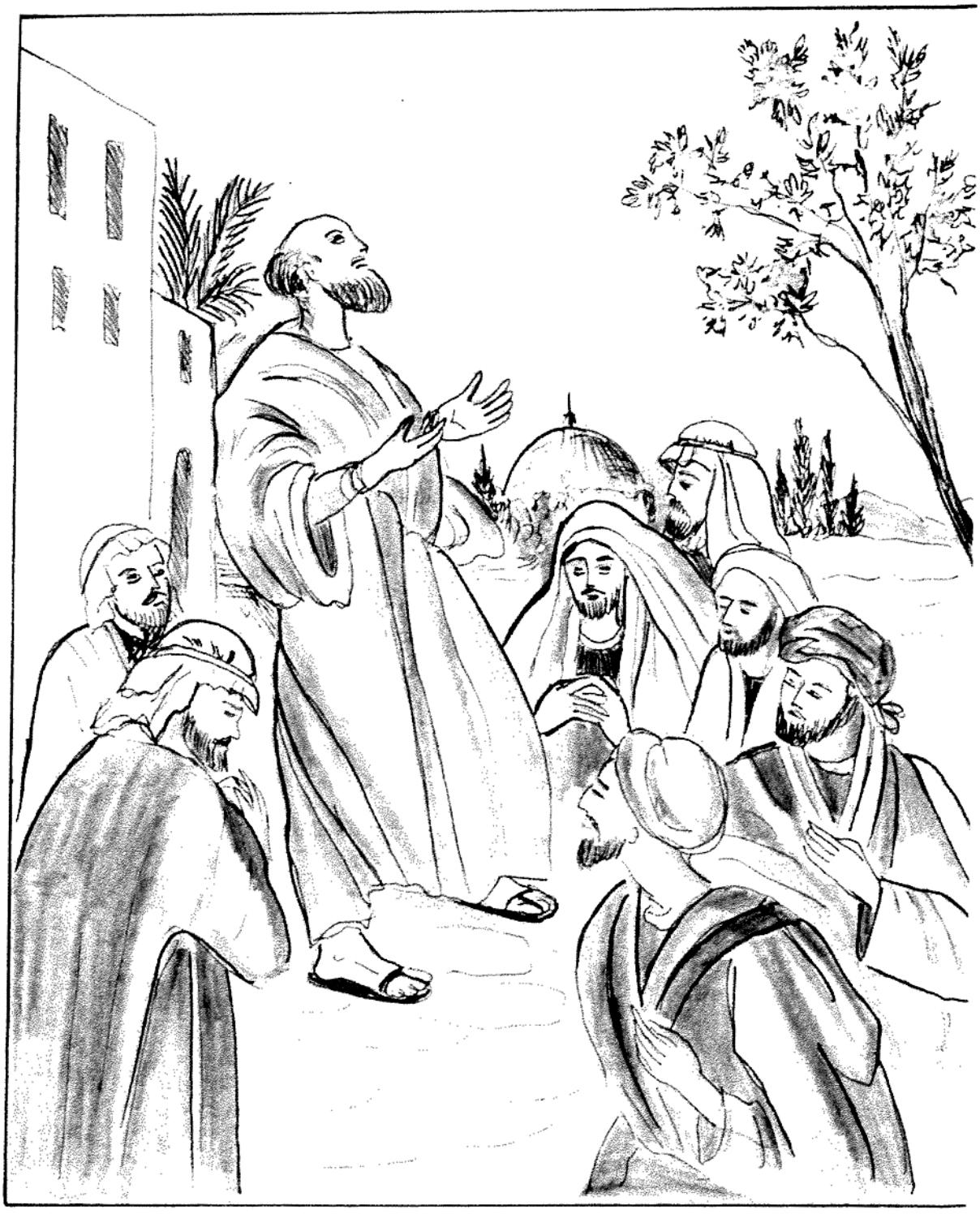
Even if you are not seeking Him, He seeks you as He sought the prodigal son and the lost coin. He stands and knocks at your door to open for Him. How great is this hope that God is seeking you and He does not wish the sinner to perish but to repent and live.

Satan, in keen insistence, does not lose hope to destroy the most saintly and continues fighting him. How more becomes our hope in God's salvation of sinners.

God gave us hope through examples mentioned in the Bible, such as the numerous miracles among which was the resurrection of the dead, even the one who has been dead for four days.

The greater war by which Satan fights us is hopelessness.

NOTES



JULY
FIRST SUNDAY

THE APOSTLES' FEAST (I)
You Shall be MY Witnesses

Please read (Acts 1: 1-8), the attached article entitled "The Spirit of Service," and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
This is lesson one in a two-lesson series about the Saintly Apostles. The Apostles were witnesses of God to other people through the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Do we witness to Christ our Lord in our lives?

MEMORY VERSE:

"You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Why did the Lord Jesus choose Disciples and Apostles for Himself?**

When our Lord Jesus started His ministry, He chose for Himself twelve Disciples (who became also Apostles) for the following reasons:

The Master Christ chose His Disciples to be His friends. He sat with them and talked to them. This was an expression of God's love to people and His fatherhood to man.

He chose them to be with Him always and to teach them so that they become His witnesses and teach other people ." He who hears you hears Me..." (Luke 10:16).

He chose them so that they become Apostles to carry the message of salvation to the whole world. "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

- As Christians, God wants us to be his witnesses. The witnesses were called by St. Paul "vessels" carrying the name of God and filled with the Holy Spirit. The Bible says that God does not leave Himself without a witness in all generations.

- Before the flood, it was Noah who witnessed to God and saved the world from ending.

- When the people went back to worship idols (after the flood) Abraham was the witness in obeying God in everything even to offer his son Isaac.

- Joseph also (who was son of Jacob) was witness to the life of faith and sticking to God's commandments when he refused to commit the sin with His master's wife.

- In the New Testament, John the Baptist witnessed to the right principle and said to King Herod when he wanted to take his brother's wife "It is not permitted".

- The Apostles were the witnesses of our Lord after they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost.

  St. Peter: after denying Jesus, he witnessed that Jesus is the Messiah and with one sermon three thousand people became Christians. Also he preached in several places and proved his love when he was crucified.

  St. Paul: who suffered more than any of the other Apostles was an excellent "vessel" of the Holy Spirit. He wrote some of his letters from the prison. The letter to the Ephesians was written from the prison.

  St. Mark: went to fix his shoes and was able to convert the shoe-maker and his family to become Christians by healing his hand and witnessing to the power of God.

- **The Struggle for the Sake of Witnessing to the Lord Jesus:**
  Our Lord Jesus chose His Disciples from among the simple type of people. None of them was from among the high positioned people, or from among philosophers or from among scientists. When He sent them to preach to the people, He told them, "Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food" (Matthew 10:9-10).

  In this way, the Disciples went out to preach with the Lord Jesus Christ without money or human support. But they were able to face the Jews with all their knowledge, the Greek with all their philosophy and the Romans with all their rulers. They were able to witness and preach Christianity in the whole world.

Before the first century was over, the message of the Lord Jesus reached all the known countries at this time. They were able to do this because they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they struggled with fasting, deep prayers, and shed their blood for the sake of witnessing for Jesus.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) If we are true Christians, we must behave as sons and daughters of God. We must show our faith by our actions, if we are truly the witnesses of God.

(2) We have to serve the church and the world that we are living in. Be a good example. Be kind and responsible in helping others to get closer to God.

SONGS

THEY WILL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS

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

We are one in the spirit — we are one in the Lord
And we pray that our unity — will one day be restored.

REFRAIN
And they'll know we are Christians — by our love, by our love
Yes they'll know we are Christians — by our love.

We will walk with each other — we will walk hand in hand
And together we'll spread the news — that God is in our land

We will work with each other — we will work side by side
And we'll guard each man's dignity — and save each man's pride

Our praise to the Father — from whom all things come
And our praise to Christ Jesus — His only Son
And our praise to the Spirit — who makes us one

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Spirit of Servce
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

In remembering the style of our Fathers the Apostles in their service, we learn practical and ideal lessons in the spirit of service, of which we mention the following:

1. The Warmth of the Service:

How nice is the saying of the Apostle Paul in this respect, "who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation. " (2 Cor. 11:29). Also, his saying, "I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more. To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. " (1 Cor. 9:19-22). His zeal, in flaming love, encompassed all.

2. Visits of Service:

Our Fathers, the Apostles, did not neglect the service they began but used all means to follow it up: by sending epistles, or disciples- as Paul used to send Titus or Timothy. Frequently, they used to make special visits, as expressed by St. Paul in his saying, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are going.. " (Acts 15:36).

3. Service Filled with Spirit and Power:

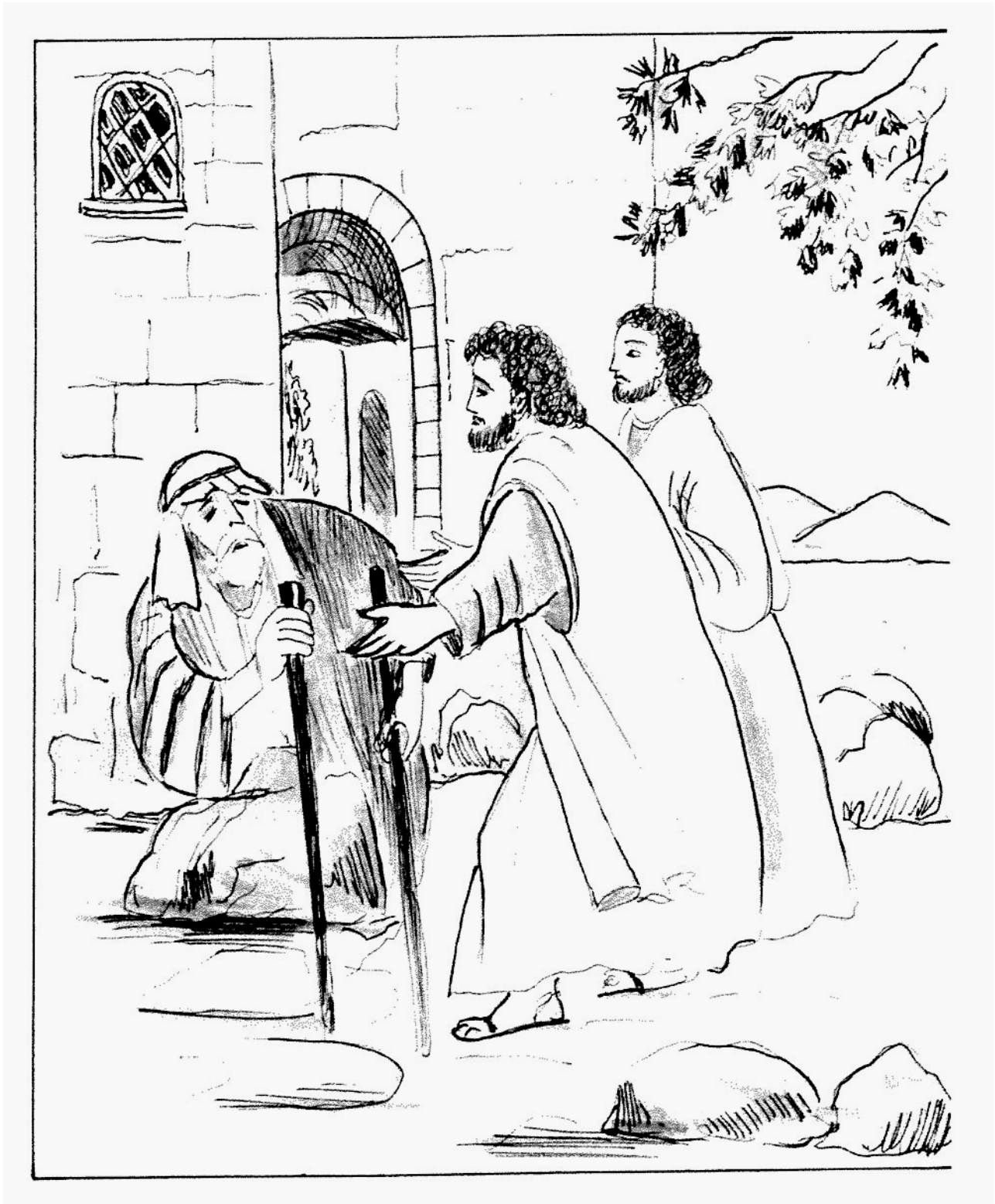
The Apostles did not serve except after they received the Holy Spirit, as the Lord said to them, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me. " (Acts 1:8).

How beautiful are the words of the Bible in this respect, "And with great power the Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus And great grace was upon them all. " (Acts 4:33)

Beautiful also is that which was said about St. Stephen, that he was, "Full of faith and power. " (Acts 6:8) He stood against synagogues, "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. " (Acts 6:10) The nature of the spiritual service is powerful as it is from the Spirit, `for the, word of God is living and powerful. " (Heb. 4:12)

4. Service filled with Love:

The Lord Jesus "Loved His own... to the end. " (John 13:1), and with the same love He served the Apostles. It was not a mere official service.



JULY
SECOND SUNDAY

THE APOSTLES FEAST (II)
"The Twelve Apostles"

Please read Mark 3:13-18 (names of the 12 disciples), Mark 6:7-13 (Jesus sent the 12 Disciples to preach, (Luke 10:1-7) (Jesus sends 70 Apostles to preach).The attached material entitled "The Twelve Disciples," "Working with God", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
This is lesson two, in a two lesson series about the Saintly Apostles. In this lesson, we study their lives and learn something beneficial for our spiritual lives. They are excellent examples for working with God.

MEMORY VERSE:

"He gave them power over unclean spirits'. (Mark 6:7-13)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **The Choice of the Twelve Apostles:**

Our Lord Jesus Christ chose His twelve Disciples and provided them with authority to heal the sick and cast out the demons. This means He provided them with His own authority to do miracles. Hence, they became like ambassadors or representatives for His will. He chose their number to be twelve to be similar in number to the twelve tribes of Israel. These twelve were "Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter, James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder". Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus, Simon the Canamte, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him" (Mark 3:16-19).

✞ **The Fields of the Apostles' Preaching:**

The twelve Apostles started their preaching first to the Jews, especially in Jerusalem because it was necessary that they witness for the Lord in front of their own people. After they established the church in Jerusalem, the Apostles preached to the Jews in different cities of Judea and Samaria, and then they preached to the gentiles. They did it in this sequence as the Lord told them "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

✞ **The Preaching to the Jews:**

When the Apostles preached to the Jews, they emphasized to them that Jesus Christ whom they crucified is the Messiah, whom the prophets wrote about, and whom the Jews were waiting for as their Saviour and that He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and will come again at the end to judge the living and the dead. They asked the Jews to repent, believe in Jesus Christ and gain salvation.

An example of this preaching, is the sermon of St. Peter the Apostle in the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36).

✞ **The Preaching to the Gentiles:**

When the Apostles preached to the Gentiles, they discussed with them their beliefs and explained to them that the idols which they made by their hands will not benefit them and they should not worship them. The Apostles preached to the Gentiles that the Only god is God, the Lord, Who created heaven and earth. He gave life to mankind and sent His Only Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world: Jews and gentiles.

An example is the preaching of St. Matthias to the Greeks.

Please read the attached material for the life of each twelve apostles. It may be a good idea to give a copy of the attached material to each student.

Make sure to mention that St. Matthias was selected instead of Judas. He was one of the seventy Apostles.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). The twelve Disciples did just that. Let us behave as true Christians with our own principles, life style, and to let our light shine before men. Above all, we must how our true love for Jesus by witnessing for Him through our good deeds.

(2) In our own life as well as in our missionary work, we have to work with God.

SONGS

O APOSTLES OF CHRIST

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mk 16:15)

With happiness and joy in heaven with our Lord
Now many crowns enjoy O Apostles of Christ

Through sufferings and tears and yet without any fears
You taught for many years O Apostles of Christ

In pain you never complained even when you were jailed
The paradise obtained O Apostles of Christ

Remember to ask for us before our Lord Jesus
Blessings may He grant us O Apostles of Christ

With happiness and joy in Heaven with our Lord
Now many crowns enjoy O Apostles of Christ

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Twelve Disciples

l. St. Andrew

St. Andrew was a native of Bethsaida, a town in Galilee or the banks of the lake of Genesareth. He was the son of Jona, a fisherman of that town, and brother to Simon Peter, but the Holy Scriptures do not say whether he is older or younger. They had a house at Capharnaum, where Jesus lodged when He preached in that city. When St. John the Baptist began to preach penance Andrew became his Disciple, and he was with his master when St John, seeing Jesus pass by the way after His baptism, said "Behold the Lamb of God!". Andrew was so far enlightened as to comprehend this mysterious saying, and without delay he and another Disciple of the Baptist went after Jesus. The Lord saw them with the eyes of His spirit before He beheld them with His corporeal eyes. Turning back as He walked, He said, "What seek ye?" They said they wanted to know where He dwelt, and He bade them come and see. There remained but two hours for that day, which they spent with Him, and Andrew clearly learned that Jesus was the Messiah and resolved from that moment to follow Him; he was thus the first of His Disciples, and therefore is styled by the Greeks the "Protoclete" or First-called. He then brought his brother to know Him, and as soon as Simon came to Jesus, the Saviour accepted him also as a Disciple, and gave him the name of Peter. From this time they were His followers, not constantly attending Him as they afterwards did, but hearing Him as frequently as their business would permit and returning to their trade and family affairs again. When Jesus, going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, stayed some days in Judea and baptized in the Jordan, Peter and Andrew also baptized by His authority, and in His name. Our Saviour, coming back to Galilee and meeting Peter and fishing in the lake, He called them permanently, to the ministry of the gospel, saying that He would make then fishers of men. Where upon they immediately left their nets to follow Him, and never left Him again. The following year our Lord chose twelve to be His Apostles, and St. Andrew is named among the first four in all the Biblical lists. He is also mentioned in connection with the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:8-9) and the Gentiles who would see Jesus (John 12:20-22).

Apart from a few words in Eusebius, who informs us that St. Andrew preached in Scythia and that certain "acts" bearing his name were made use of by heretics, we have practically nothing but apocryphal writings which profess to tell us anything of the later history that he was crucified at Patras in Achaia, being not nailed but bound to a cross, on which he suffered and preached to the people for two days before he died.

2. St. Bartholomew

This name given to this Apostle is probably not his proper name, but his patronymic, meaning the son of Tolmai, and beyond the fact of his existence nothing is certainly

known of him. Many scholars, however, take him to have been the same person as Nathanael, a native of Cana of Galilee, of whom our Lord said, "Behold! An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile". Among the reasons advanced for this supposition is that, as St. John never mentions Bartholomew among the Apostles, so the other three evangelists take no notice of the name of Nathaneal; and they constantly put together Philip and Bartholomew, just as St. John says Philip and Nathaneal came together to Christ; moreover, Nathaneal is reckoned with other Apostles when Christ appeared to them at the sea of Galilee after His Resurrection (John 21:2).

The popular traditions concerning St. Bartholomew are summed up in the Roman Martyrology, which says he "preached the gospel of Christ in India; hence he went into Greater Armnenia, and when he had converted many people there to the faith he was presented alive by the barbarians, and by command of King Astywages fulfilled his martyrdom by beheading...". The place is said to have been Albanopolis (Derbend, on the west coast of the Caspian Sea), and he is represented to have preached also in Mesopotamia, Persia Egypt and elsewhere.

3. St. James the Greater

St. James, the brother of St. John the Evangelist, son of Zebedee, was the Greater to distinguish him from the other Apostle of the same name surnamed the Less because he was the younger. St. James the Greater is a Galilean by birth, and is a fisherman by trade along with his father and brother. He lived, probably, at Bethsaida, where St. Peter also dwelt at that time. Jesus walking by the lake of Genesareth saw Peter and Andrew fishing, and He called them to come after Him, promising to make them fishers of men. Going a little further on the shore, He saw two other brothers, James and John, in a ship, with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He also called them; who forthwith left their nets and their father and followed Him. Probably by conversing with Peter, their townsman, and by other means, they had, before this call a conviction that Jesus was the Christ; and no sooner did they hear His invitation, and felt the divine will direct them, that they quit all things to answer this summon.

St. James was present with his brother St. John and St. Peter at the cure of Peter's mother-in-law, and the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead, and in the same hour Jesus formed the company of His Apostles, into which He adopted James and John. He gave these two the surname of Boanerges, or "Sons of Thunder", seemingly on account of an impetuous spirit and fiery temper. For example, when a town of the Samaritans refused to accept Christ, they suggested that He should call down fire from Heaven to consume it; but our Redeemer made them understand, that meekness and patience were the arms by which they were to conquer. "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls but to save." But the instruction and the example of the Son of God had shed His light upon them: their virtue was still imperfect, as appeared when the mother of James and John, imagining that He was going to set up a temporal monarchy, according to the notion

of the Jews concerning the Messiah, asked Him that her two sons might sit, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, in His kingdom. The two sons of Zebedee spoke by the mouth of their mother as well as by their own, but Christ directed His answer to them, telling them they knew not what they had asked; for in His kingdom preferment are attainable, not by the forward and ambitious, but by the most humble, the most laborious, and the most patient. He therefore asked them if they were able to drink of His cup of suffering. The two Apostles, understanding the condition under which Christ offered them His kingdom and ardent for His sake, without hesitation answered, "We can". Our Lord told them they should indeed have their portion of suffering; but He could make no other disposal of the honours of His kingdom than according to the proportion of every one's charity and patience in suffering: "The Son of Man also is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a redemption for many."

Nevertheless, those Apostles who from time to time acted impetuously, and had to be rebuked, were the very ones whom our Lord turned to on special occasions. Peter, this James and John alone were admitted to be spectators of His glorious transfiguration, and they alone were taken to the innermost recesses of Gethsemani on the night of agony and bloody seat at the beginning to of His passion.

Where St. James preached and spread the gospel after the Lord's Ascension we have no account from the writers of the first ages. St. James was the first among the Apostles who had the honour to follow his divine Master by martyrdom, which he suffered at Jerusalem under King Herod Agrippa I, who began to persecute Christians in order to please the Jews. Clement of Alexandria, and accordingly Eusebius, relate that his accuser, observing the courage and constancy of mind wherewith the Apostle underwent his trial, was so impressed that he repented of what he had done declared himself a Christian, and was condemned to be beheaded. As they were both led together to execution, he begged pardon of the Apostle for having apprehended him. St. James, after pausing a little, turned to him and embraced him, saying, "Peace be with you". He then kissed him, and they were both beheaded together. The Holy Scriptures simply say that Agrippa "killed James, the brother of John, with the sword" (Acts 12:2).

4. St. James the Less

The Apostle James - the Less, or the younger - here associated with St. Philip, is most commonly held to be the same individual who is variously designated "James, the son of Alpheus" (e.g. Matthew 10:3 and Acts 1:13), and "James, the brother of the Lord" (Matthew 13:55; Gal. 1:19). He may also possibly be identical with James, son of Mary and brother of Joseph (Mark 15:40). Although no prominence is given to this James in the gospel narrative, we learn from St. Paul that he was favoured with a special appearing of our Lord before the Ascension. Further, when St. Paul, three years after his conversion, went up to Jerusalem and was still regarded with

some suspicion by the Apostles who remained there, James, with St. Peter, seemed to have bid him a cordial welcome. Later we learn that to one whose pre-eminence was recognized among the Christians of the holy city. At what is called the Council of Jerusalem, where it was decided that the Gentiles who accepted Christian teaching need not be circumcised, it was St. James who, after listening to St. Peter's advice, voiced the conclusion of the assembly in the words, "it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us" (Acts 15). He was, in fact, the Bishop of Jerusalem, as Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius expressly state. Even Josephus, the Jewish historian, bears testimony to the repute in which James was held, and declares, so Eusebius asserts, that the terrible calamities which fell upon the people of that city were a retribution for their treatment of one "who was the most righteous of men". The story of his martyrdom, as told by Hegesippus in the latter part of the second century, has been preserved by Eusebius, and runs as follows:

As many as came to believe did so through James. When, therefore, many also of the rulers were believers, there was an uproar among the Jews and scribes and Pharisees, for they said: "There is danger that the whole people should expect Jesus as the Christ". Coming together, therefore, they said to James: "We beseech thee, restrain the people, for they are gone astray unto Jesus, imagining that he is the Christ. We beseech thee to persuade all who come for the day of the Passover concerning Jesus, for in thee do we all put our trust. For we bear thee witness, as do all the people, that thou art just and that thou accepts not the person of any. Persuade, therefore, the multitude that they go not astray concerning Jesus. For, of truth, the people, and we all, put our trust in thee. Stand, therefore, upon the pinnacle of the temple, that from thy lofty station thou mayest be evident, and thy words may easily be heard by all the people. For on account of the Passover, all the tribes, with the Gentiles also, have come together." Therefore the aforesaid scribes and Pharisees set James upon the pinnacle of the temple, and cried aloud to him saying, "O Just One, in whom we ought all to put our trust, inasmuch as the people is gone astray after Jesus who was crucified, tell us what is the door of Jesus" (John 10:1-9). And he replied with a loud voice, "Why ask ye me concerning the Son of Man, since He sitteth in Heaven on the right hand of the Mighty Power, and shall come on the clouds of Heaven?" And when many were fully persuaded and gave glory at the testimony of James and said, "Hosanna to the son of David", then once more the same scribes and Pharisees said among themselves. "We do ill in affording such a testimony to Jesus. Let us rather go up and cast him down, that being affrighted they may not believe him." And they cried aloud saying, "Ho, ho, even the Just One has gone astray!" And they fulfilled the scripture that is written is Isaias, "Let us take away the Just One, for he is troublesome to us. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their doings." Going up therefore they cast the Just One down. And they said to each other, "Let us stone James the Just". And they began to stone him, for the fall did not kill him. But turning he kneeled down and said, "I beseech thee, O Lord God, Father, forgive

them, for they know not what they do". And while they thus were stoning him, one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of Rachabim, who had witness borne to them by Jeremiah the prophet, cried aloud, saying: "Cease ye; what do ye? The Just One is praying on your behalf." And one of them, a fuller, took the stick with which he beat the clothes, and brought it down on the Just One's head. Thus he was martyred. And they buried him at the spot beside the temple, and his monument still remains beside the temple.

5. St. Philip:

St. Philip the Apostle came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and seems to have belonged to a little group of earnest men who had already fallen under the influence of St. John the Baptist. In the synoptic gospels there is no mention of Philip except in the list of Apostles which occurs in each. But St. John's gospel introduces his name several times, recording in particular that the call of Philip came the day after the call of St. Peter and St. Andrew. Jesus, we are told, "found Philip" and said to him, "Follow me".

From the account given by the evangelist, we should naturally infer that Philip responded without hesitation to the call he had received. Though his knowledge was imperfect, so much so that he describes Jesus as "the son of Joseph of Nazareth", he goes at once to find his friend Nathaniel (in all probability to be identified with the Apostle, Bartholomew) and tells him, "We have found him of whom Moses, in the law and the prophets did write", being plainly satisfied that this was in truth the Messiah. At the same time, Philip gives proof of a sober discretion in his missionary zeal. He does not attempt to force his discovery upon unwilling ears. When Nathaniel objects, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" his answer is not indignant declamation, but an appeal for personal inquiry - "Come and see". In the description of the feeding of the five thousand, Philip figures again. "When Jesus", we are told, "had lifted up His eyes and seen that -a very great multitude cometh to Him, He said to Philip, 'Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?' And this He said to try him; for He Himself knew what He would do." Once more we get an impression of the sober literalness of St. Philip's mental outlook when he replies: "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them that everyone may take a little". It is in accord with the same amiable type of character which hesitates before responsibilities that, when certain Gentiles among the crowds who thronged to Jerusalem for the Pascha came to Philip saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus", we find him reluctant to deal with the request without taking counsel. "Philip cometh and telleth Andrew. Again Andrew and Philip told Jesus." Finally another glimpse is afforded us of the Apostle's earnestness and devotion conjoined with defective spiritual insight, when on the evening before the Passion our Lord announced, "No man cometh to the Father but by Me. If you had known Me, you would without doubt have known My Father also: and from henceforth you shall know Him, and

you have seen Him." Philip saith to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us". Jesus saith to him, "Have I been so long a time with you, and have you not known Me? Philip, he that seeth Me seeth the Father also. How sayest thou, Show us the Father?" (John 14:6-9).

Apart from the fact that St. Philip is named with the other Apostles who spent ten days in the upper room awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, this is all we know about him with any degree of certainty.

On the other hand, Eusebius, the church historian, and some other early writers, have preserved a few details which tradition connected with the later life of Philip. The most reliable of these is the belief that he preached the gospel in Phrygia, and died at Hierapolis, where he was also buried. St. Philip was crucified head downwards under Domitian.

6. St. John the Evangelist

St. John the Evangelist, distinguished as the "Disciple whom Jesus loved" and often called in England, as by the Greeks. "the Divine" (i.e. the Theologian), was a Galilean, the son of Zebedee and brother of St. James the Greater with whom he was brought up to the trade of fishing. He was called to be an Apostle with his brother, as they were mending their nets on the sea of Galilee, soon after Jesus had called Peter and Andrew. Christ gave them the nick-name of Boanerges, "sons of thunder", whether as commendation or on account of some violence of temperament (Luke 9:54) is not clear. St. John is said to have been the youngest of all the Apostles, and outlived the others, being the only one of whom it is sure that he did not die a martyr. In the gospel which he wrote he refers to himself with a proud humility as "the Disciple whom Jesus loved", and it is clear he was one of those who had a privileged position. Our Lord would have him present with Peter and James at His transfiguration and at His agony in the garden; and He showed St. John other instances of kindness and affection above the rest, so that it was not without human occasion that the wife of Zebedee asked the Lord that her two sons might sit the one on His right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom. John was chosen to go with Peter to the city to prepare the last supper, and at that supper he leaned on the chest of Jesus and elicited from Him, at St. Peter's prompting, whom it was that should betray Him. It is generally believed that he was that "other Disciple" who was known to the high priest and went in with Jesus to the court of Caiaphas, leaving St. Peter at the outer door. He alone of the Apostles stood at the foot of the Cross with Mary and the other faithful women, and received the sublime charge to care for the mother of his Redeemer. "'Woman, behold thy son.' 'Behold thy mother.' And from that hour the Disciple took her to his own." Our Lord calls us all brethren, and He recommends us all as such to the loving care of His own yet alone it was given to John to treat her as his natural mother, and treat her as such by honouring, serving and assisting her in person.

When Mary Magdalene brought word that Christ's sepulchre was open, Peter and John ran there immediately, and John, who was younger and ran faster, arrived first. But he waited for St. Peter to come up, and followed him in: "and he saw and believed" that Christ was indeed risen. A few days later Jesus manifested Himself for the third time, by the sea of Galilee, and He walked along the shore questioning Peter about the sincerity of his love, gave him the charge of His Church, and foretold his martyrdom. St. Peter, seeing St. John walk behind and being solicitous for his friend, asked Jesus, "Lord, what shall this man do?" And Jesus replied, "If I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou me." It is therefore not surprising that it was rumoured among the brethren that John should not die, a rumour which he himself disposes of by pointing out that our Lord did not say, "He shall not die". After Christ's Ascension we find these two same Apostles going up to the temple and miraculously healing a cripple. They were imprisoned, but were released again with an order no more to preach Christ, to which they answered, "If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." Then they were sent by the other Apostles to confirm the converts which the deacon Philip had made in Samaria. When St. Paul went up to Jerusalem after his conversion he addressed himself to those who "seemed to be pillars" of the Church, chiefly James, Peter and John, who confirmed his mission among the Gentiles, and about that time St. John assisted at the council which the Apostles held at Jerusalem. Perhaps it was soon after this that John left Palestine for Asia Minor. No doubt he was present at the passing of our Lady, whether that took place at Jerusalem or Ephesus; St. Irenacus says that he settled at the last-named city after the martyrdom of St. Peter and Paul, but how soon after it is impossible to tell. There is a tradition that during the reign of Domitian he was taken to Rome, where an attempt to put him to death was miraculously frustrated; and that he was then banished to the island of Patmos, where he received those revelations from Heaven which he wrote down in his book called the Apocalypse.

After the death of Domitian in the year 96 St. John could return to Ephesus, and many believe that he wrote his gospel at this time.

The character of charity which he possessed so conspicuously himself he constantly and affectionately urged in others. St. Jerome writes that when age and weakness grew upon him at Ephesus so that he was no longer able to preach to the people, he used to be carried to the assembly of the faithful, and every time said to his flock only these words: "My little children, love one another." When they asked him why he always repeated the same words, he relied, "Because it is the word of the Lord, and if you keep it you do enough". St. John died in peace, in Ephesus about the third year of Trajan, that is, the hundredth of the Christian era, being then about ninety-four years old according to St. Epiphanius.

7. St. Matthew

St. Matthew is called by two evangelists, Levi, and by St. Mark, "the son of Alpheus"; it is probable that Levi was his original name and that he took, or was given, that of Matthew ("the gift of Yahveh") when he became a follower of the Lord. But Alpheus, his father, was not of the same name who was father of St. James the Less. He seems to have been a Galilean by birth, and was by profession a publican, or gatherer of taxes for the Romans, a profession which was infamous to the Jews, especially those of the Pharisee's party; they were in general so grasping and extortionate that they were no more popular among the Gentiles. The Jews abhorred them to the extent of refusing to marry into a family which had a publican among its members, banished them for communion in religious worship, and shunned them in all affairs of civil society and commerce. But it is certain that St. Matthew was a Jew, as well as a publican.

The story of Matthew's call is told in his own gospel. Jesus had just confounded some of the Scribes by curing a man who was sick of the palsy, and passing on saw the despised publican in his custom-house. "And he saith to him, 'Follow Me'. And he arose up and followed Him". Matthew left all his interests and relations to become our Lord's Disciple and to embrace a spiritual commerce. We cannot suppose that he was before wholly unacquainted with our Saviour's person or doctrine, especially as his office was at Capharnaum, where Christ had resided for some time and had preached and wrought many miracles, by which no doubt Matthew was in some measure prepared to receive the impression which the call made upon him. St. Jerome says that a certain skinniness and air of majesty which appeared in the countenance of our divine Redeemer pierced his soul and strongly attracted him. But the great cause of his conversion was, as St. Bede remarks that, "He who called him outwardly by His word at the same time moved him inwardly by the invisible instinct of His grace".

The calling of St. Matthew happened in the second year of the public ministry of Christ, who adopted him into that holy family of the Apostles, the spiritual leaders of His Church. It may be noted that whereas the other evangelists in describing the Apostles by pairs rank St. Matthew before St. Thomas, he places that Apostle before himself and in this list adds to his own name the epithet of "the publican". He followed our Lord throughout His earthly life, and wrote his gospel or short history of our blessed Redeemer, doubtless at the entreaty of the Jewish converts, in the Aramaic language which they spoke.

It is said that St. Matthew, after having made a harvest of souls in Judea, went to preach of Christ to the nations of the East, but nothing of this is known for certain. He is venerated by the Church as a martyr, though the time, place and circumstances of his end are unknown.

8. St. Peter

The story of St. Peter as recounted in the gospels is so familiar that there is no need to retrace it here in detail. We know that he was a Galilean, that his original home was at Bethsaida, that he was married. He was a fisherman, a brother to the Apostle St. Andrew. His name was Simon, but our Lord, on first meeting him, told him that he should be called Kephas, the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek word whose English form is Peter (i.e. rock). No one who reads the New Testament can be blind to the predominant role which is everywhere accorded to him among the immediate followers of Jesus. It was he who, as spokesman of the rest, made the sublime profession of faith:

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God": and it was to him personally that our Saviour, with a solemnity of phrase which finds no parallel in the rest of the gospel narrative, addressed the words: "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in Heaven. And I say to thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be lost also in Heaven."

Not less familiar is the story of Peter's triple denial of his Master, in spite of the warning he had previously received. The very fact, that his fall is recorded by all four evangelists with a fullness of detail which seem out of proportion to its relative insignificance amid the incidents of our Saviour's passion, is itself a tribute to the position which St. Peter occupied among his fellows. On the other hand, if our Lord's warning met with no response, we must also remember that it was prefaced by those astounding words, with their strange change from the plural to the singular: "Simon, Simon behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith not, and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren." Equally impressive is the triple reparation which our Lord tenderly but almost cruelly exerted from His shame faced Disciple beside the sea of Galilee. "When therefore they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John lovest thou Me more than these?' He saith to Him, 'Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.' He saith to him, 'Feed My lambs.' He saith again, 'Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?' He saith to Him, 'Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.' He saith to Him, 'Feed My lambs.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?' Peter was grieved, because He had said to him the third time, 'Lovest thou Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee.' He said to him, 'Feed My sheep'." But the prophecy which follows is almost more wonderful; for Jesus went on, "Amen, amen, I say to thee, when thou wast younger thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead

thee whither thou wouldst not." "And this", adds the evangelist, "He said, signifying by what death he should glorify God."
Almost all that we know for certain about the later life of St. Peter is derived from the Acts of the Apostles and from slight allusions in his own epistles and those of St. Paul.
It is possible, though, that we have no real reliable evidence concerning the point that before the Jerusalem council (A.D. 49) St. Peter had already, for two years or more, been bishop of Antioch, and that he may even have made his way to Rome, thus taking possession of what was to be his permanent see.
The passion of St. Peter took place in Rome during the reign of Nero (A.D. 54-68), the Apostle was crucified; and Eusebius adds, on the authority of Origen that by his own desire he suffered head downwards. The place has always been believed to be the gardens of Nero, which saw so many scenes of terror and glory at this time.

9. St. Simon
St. Simon is surnamed the Cananean or Zealots in the Holy Scriptures, words which both mean "the Zealous". Some have mistakenly thought that the first of these names was meant to imply that St. Simon was born at Cana in Galilee. The name refers to his zeal for the Jewish law before his call, and does not necessarily mean that he was one of that particular party among the Jews called Zealots. No mention of him appears in the gospels beyond that he was chosen among the Apostles. With the rest he received the Holy Ghost, but of his life after Pentecost we have no information whatever; it is not possible to reconcile the various traditions. The Menology of Basil says that St. Simon died in peace at Edessa, but the Western tradition recognized in the Roman liturgy is that, after preaching in Egypt, he joined St. Jude from Mesopotamia and that they went as missionaries for some years to Persia, suffering martyrdom there. They are accordingly commemorated together in the West on this day, but in the East they are commemorated separately and on various dates.

10. St. Jude or Thaddeus
The Apostle Jude (Judas), also called Thaddeus (or Lebbeus), "the brother of James", is usually regarded as the brother of St. James the Less. It is not known when and by what means he became a Disciple of Christ, nothing having been said of him in the gospels before we find him enumerated among the Apostles. After the Last Supper, when Christ promised to manifest Himself to His hearers, St. Jude asked Him why He did not manifest Himself to the rest of the world and Christ answered that He and the Father would visit all those who love Him, "we will come to Him, and will make our abode with Him" (John 14:22-23). The history of St. Jude after our Lord's Ascension and the descent of the Holy Ghost is as unknown as that of St. Simon. Jude's name is borne by one of the canonical epistles, which has much in common with the second epistle of St. Peter. It is not addressed to any particular church or

person, and in it he urges the faithful to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. For certain men are secretly entered in ... ungodly men, turning the grace of our Lord God into righteousness, and denying the only sovereign ruler, and our Lord Jesus Christ."
St., Jude Thaddeus has often been confounded with the St. Thaddeus of the Abgar legend, and made to die in peace at Bairut or Edessa. As has been said above, according to a Western tradition he was martyred with St. Simon in Persia. Eusebius quotes a story that two grandsons of St. Jude, Zoker and James, were brought before the Emperor Domitian, who had been alarmed by the report that they were of the royal house of David. But when he saw they were poor, hard-working peasants, and heard that the kingdom for which they looked was not of this world, he dismissed them with contempt.

11. St. Thomas

St. Thomas was a Jew, and probably a Galilean of humble birth, but we are not told that he was a fisherman or the circumstances in which our Lord made him an Apostle. His name is Syriac, and means the "twin"; Didymus, as we know he was also called, is the Greek equivalent.
St. Thomas preached the gospel to the Parthians. Meedes, Persians and Hyrcanians, passed into India, and was martyred there at "Calamina".

12. St. Matthias

Clement of Alexandria says that according to tradition, St. Matthias was one of the seventy-two Disciples whom our Lord had sent out, two by two, during His ministry, and this is also asserted by Eusebius and by St. Jerome. We know from the Acts of the Apostles that he was constantly with the Saviour from the time of His baptism until His Ascension. When St. Peter soon after had declared that it was necessary to elect a twelfth Apostle in place of Judas, two candidates were chosen as most worthy, Joseph called Barsabas and Matthias. After prayer to God that He would direct their choice, they proceeded to cast lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, who was accordingly numbered with the eleven and ranked among the Apostles. He received the Holy Ghost with the rest soon after his election, and applied himself with zeal to his mission. 1t is stated by Clement of Alexandria, that he was remarkable for his insistence upon the necessity of mortifying the flesh to subdue the sensual appetites - a lesson he had learnt from Christ and which he faithfully practiced himself.
The first part of his ministry was spent, we are told, in Judea, but he afterwards went to other lands. According to the Greeks, he planted the faith in Cappadocia and on the coasts of the Caspian Sea; he endured great persecution and ill-treatment from the savage people amongst whom he preached, and finally received the crown of martyrdom at Colchis. We know nothing for certain of the manner of his death, but

the Greek Menaia and other legendary sources say that he was crucified. His body is stated to have been kept for a long time in Jerusalem and to have been transferred from there to Rome by St. Helena.

MAY THEIR HOLY BLESSINGS BE WITH US AMEN

WORKING WITH GOD
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

The Lord Jesus said, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working. " (Jn 5:17) Let us concentrate on the last phrase...

St. Paul said about himself and his companion Apollo's, "For we are God's fellow workers. " (1 Cor 3:9)

God can do everything on his own, but he wants you to work with Him, not only to work, but to toil and strive, "And each one will receive his own reward according to his own labour. " (I Cor 3:8)

The fact that God works does not mean that Man can slack off...

God, in Revelation, blessed the Angel of the church in Ephesus for labouring and toiling, saying, "I know, your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil, and you have persevered and have patience and have laboured for my name's sake and have not become weary. " (Rev 2:2-3)

Work for the spiritual person, is an association with God and the Holy Spirit It is a partnership with the Divine Nature in work... It is the readiness of one's will, not only to associate with God but to become actually a partner...

Therefore we say to God in the Liturgy of the travelers, "Share in the work of your servants. "Depending on God does not mean idleness or carelessens but it is an association with God; relying on God's strength.

Through work, God tests the extent of our love and obedience to Him. And as St. John the Apostle said, "Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. " (1 Jn 3:18)In spite of David's faith that, "the war is for God" and his confidence that God is going to work with him, he took his sling and stones and progressed to the front to face Goliath...

Therefore you must work and ask God to be with you in what you are doing. But beware of idleness, as God does not like the sluggard...
You have to plant and water then God will make the plant grow...

Truly, you could humbly say, "So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God gave the increase. " (1 Cor 3:7)

NOTES

JULY
THIRD SUNDAY

God's Plan for Us (I)

Please read (Acts 9:1-3), (Acts 22:3-21), (Acts 26:9-20), and the attached material entitled "Joy … and … Joy." Give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
When a person meets the Lord Jesus, he lives with Him and he becomes a new creation. Old things of sin and death are out of his life. Christianity is a life of joy.

MEMORY VERSE:

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

✞ **Introduction**

None of the Disciples or the Apostles had gained the attention as much as St. Paul did... He wrote 14 letters, St. Luke wrote about him in the Book of Acts (more than 50% of the Book of Acts), St. Peter referred to him in his second letter, and all the church fathers wrote about him with full appreciation.

✞ **St. Paul's Early Life**

His Hebrew name was Saul. He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia from a well known family. St. Paul said about himself "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (Acts 23:6). Saul was well educated in history, languages, law, and psychology. By occupation, he was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3).

Saul had a lot of authority in Jerusalem. He hated the Christians, persecuted them and Participated in witnessing against St. Stephen. "And the witnesses laid down

their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen ...Saul was consenting to his death" (Acts 7: 58-59,8:1).

✞ **Saul was Called to be an Apostle for Jesus Christ:**

In the Holy Bible we see clearly that our Lord Jesus invited Saul to become an Apostle. Not only that, but in fact God had selected Saul even before he was born. "But when it pleased God, Who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles" (Galatians 1:15-16).

✞ **The Stages of Saul's Invitation:**

Direct invitation at the doors of Damascus:

Please read Acts 9:1-9. "Suddenly a light shown around him from heaven ... Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? ... Lord, what do You want me to do? ... Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

✞ **Emphasis of the invitation:**

Please read Acts 9:10-19. Our Lord Jesus appeared in a vision to Saul and told him that Ananias will come to him to emphasize to him the invitation. At the same time our Lord Jesus also appeared in a vision to Ananias and ordered him to go to Saul. "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear Me name before Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Also read Acts 22:12-16.

✞ **His Invitation to Preach to the Gentiles:**

Please read Acts 22:17-21. "Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me .... Depart, for I will send you for from here to the Gentiles".

✞ **The Invitation of the Holy Spirit:**

Please read Acts 13:1-5. "Now in the church that was at Antioch, there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas ... and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit Said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul ... So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit ...".

✞ **When Someone Meets Jesus:**

When a person meets with Jesus, his life becomes completely different: hatred becomes love, love for money and materialistic things becomes love for God and people, sinful life becomes a Holy life, and a miserable life becomes a happy one.

There are Several Examples in the Bible of People Who have Changed Completely Because they Met Jesus:

Matthew (previously named Levi) was a tax collector. Jesus met him and said to him "Follow Me". Matthew left everything and followed Jesus (Luke 5:27-33).

Zacchaeus went on top of a tree to see Jesus. He was also tax collector. Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house". Zacchaeus and all his family were saved and became Christians (Luke 19:1-10).

✞ **Let us Discuss the memory verse:**

If anyone is in Christ: means a true Christian and say with St. Paul "1 live not, but Christ lives in me". This means the Lord Jesus becomes everything in his life.

He is a new creation: It means Adam's sins are taken off him by baptism. The Holy Spirit is in him. The body and blood of Jesus, which he takes in communion, unites him with the body of Christ. Then death has no power on him. This is why our church says in the Liturgy "no death for your people but it is a departure", i.e., departure to paradise.

Old things have passed away: All the old habits and the sinful life are gone.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) If we truly have met Jesus, we must live an intimate life with Him, think about Him and our hearts become filled with His love. He is stretching out His hands calling for everyone. Let us respond to His call.

(2) A good indication if the person has a new life in Jesus Christ is the type of joy that he or she has. A real peace and joy can only be obtained when Christ is in the heart.

SONGS

O TAKE MY HAND DEAR SAVIOUR

" Lead me and guide me .. For You are my strength." (Ps 31:3,4)

O take my hand Dear Saviour and please lead me
Till at my journey's ending I'll dwell with Thee

REFRAIN
I need Thee, O Lord I need Thee
O bless me, my Lord I come to Thee

Thou Mighty God of ages O be Thou near
When the tempest rages I need not fear

When evening shadows lengthen the night has come
My faith heart Saviour strengthen and bring me home

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

JOY... AND… JOY
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

There is a trivial joy for perishable, worldly affairs and pleasures...
Like Solomon's joy with what he toiled under the sun (Eccles 1:3) and Jonah's joy with the plant more than with the Salvation of Nineveh. The same kind of joy is that of the elder son, when he said to his father, "You never gave me a young goat that I might make merry with my friends. " (Lk. 15:29)

One type of the false joy is the joy of some people over their talents as the disciples were joyful in casting evil spirits, so the Lord said to them, "Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice rather because your names are written in heaven.'" -(Lk. 10:20)

The worst type of joy is being joyful over other's suffering. About this the Apostle said, "Love does not rejoice in iniquity, " (1 Cor. 13:6) as those who rejoice in people's loss. Solomon says, "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls. " (Prov. 24:17) This wicked joy is called gloating.As for the holy joy, it is from the fruits of the spirit. (Gal. 5:23)

The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord, and the Magi when they saw the star and the righteous rejoiced over the fruits of their holy toil, "Those who sow in tears, reap in joy." (Ps. 126:5).The Bible has explained to us the joy of your salvation and the joy of the shepherds when the Angel said to them, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy... for there is born to you this day in the city of
David a Saviour... ". The Psalmist says about the joy of salvation, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation. " (P s. 51:12). And the Father said, "It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again. (Lk. 15:32).

The joy of the repentance of a sinner is in heaven and earth! When the Good Shepherd found the lost sheep, "He lays it on his shoulders rejoicing, " (Lk. 15:5). He also says, "..there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.. " (Lk. 15:7). The widow also rejoiced when she found her lost coin and called all her neighbours to rejoice with her.We also rejoice over all means of grace...
"I rejoiced over your testimonies".. "I was glad when they said to me, `Let us go to the house of the Lord.' " (Ps. 122:1), "There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God.-' (Ps. 46:4)

The righteous rejoice over temptations and reproach: (James 1)

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials" so I rejoice over tribulations.The greatest joy is that of the Kingdom:

"Enter into the joy of your Lord. " (Mt 25:21). This is the real joy, where we rejoice in the Lord, and in his company. Although we have not reached His Kingdom yet, we rejoice while waiting in hope. As the Apostle says, "Rejoice in hope. " (Rom. 12:12)

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

HOLY BIBLE

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

JULY
FOURTH SUNDAY

GOD'S PLAN FOR US (II)
God's Plan for Elisha

Please read 1 Kings 19:19-21, 2 Kings 2:1-1, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To Show that the Lord plans all things for the individual who depends on Him. We have to be active and desire for more spiritual depth. This is the good ambition.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God" (Psalm 143:10)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Please read with the children the above mentioned references from the Bible.

✞ **God's Plan for Elijah**

In both Judah, the southern kingdom, and Israel, the northern kingdom, the kings and the people drifted away from worshipping the true God. They set up false gods. After a series of evil kings in Israel, Ahab mounted the throne and he was the worst of all. His wife Jezebel was very evil and she tried to have all prophets of God slain.

At the right time, the Lord sent Prophet Elijah. He was told by the Lord to predict a drought and famine in the land. Accordingly, he warned Ahab the King. As the drought became ever more serious, the Lord sent Elijah to Ahab. Elijah asked Ahab to summon the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred priests whom Jezebel supports to mount Carmel. Ahab did as Elijah asked. All the prophets and priests and people gathered on Mount Carmel. Elijah then gave the

challenge: "Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord". (I Kings 18:23-24). The Baal priests prayed and shouted, but there was no answer. Then Elijah prayed, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word" (1 Kings 18:36). Immediately the fire came down and consumed the burnt offering of Elijah's bull. The people then seized the prophets of Baal and they were all killed. When Jezebel knew what Elijah did, she sent a message to Elijah saying that by the same time on the wilderness until he reached Horeb the mountain of God. Then the Lord met him in Horeb and asked him to go back to the wilderness of Damascus; and when he arrives he shall appoint Hazel as king over Syria. Also you shall appoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Saphat of Abel Meholah you shall appoint as prophet in your place.

✞ **God's Plan for Elisha:**

Elisha was driving a team of oxen up and down a wide field at his father's farm. He was ploughing the rough, brown earth to make it ready for planting seeds. As Elisha ploughed, he saw a man coming toward him. Around his shoulders he wore a piece of clothing called a mantle. He stopped in front of Elisha, and looked closely at his face. Then the man took off his mantle and put it around Elisha.

Elisha knew that the Lord had given Elijah power to do many wonderful things. And Elisha knew why Elijah had thrown his mantle over Elisha's shoulders. In those days, it meant that God wanted Elisha to be his special messenger just as Elijah had been.

Would Elisha obey? He said, "Yes". He left his home and went with Elijah. They started a school to teach in it.

The two men spent many happy days serving the Lord. They travelled from one city to the next.

Then came the last day when Elijah was about to depart from earth. He made a visit to one of the schools to say good-bye. And he said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the next town Bethel". Elisha said, "I shall not leave you". So together they went to the next town. The young men at the school there came out to meet them. "Did you know that the Lord will take Elijah away from you today?" they asked Elisha. "Yes", said Elisha sadly . The Lord has told Elisha, that Elijah was to leave him.

Again the same conversation between Elijah, Elisha, and the school people, happened at other places.

Before Elijah left Elisha, he asked him "Ask what may I do for you before I am taken away". He wanted to give Elisha a farewell gift. Then Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me".

✞ **The Key to Elisha's Success:**

a) His Efforts:

Elisha was very active and spent many efforts. God likes active people who do His will. Despite the fact that Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please", Elisha insisted in walking with him wherever he went despite all the travels. Therefore, Elisha deserved to be utilized by God, as a prophet.

b) His Interest in Serving the Lord:

Elisha knew about the departure of his teacher Elijah. This was clear in his answer to the prophets, when he said, "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from you today?" He was not troubled but he insisted to stay with him to take a double portion of his spirit to use in serving God.

c) The Grace and Help of God:

God supported Elisha with so many miracles. Some people estimated the miracles that God performed through Elisha, to be double the miracles performed through Elijah.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us take Elisha as an example. Let us achieve our best in all circumstances that we are in. Let us pray that God leads our lives, and to depend entirely on Him. God's plan for us is better than our own because He knows what is good for us, and we do not.

(2) We must desire for more spiritual depth and talents. The desires for more materialistic things are harmful.

SONGS

WHERE HE LEADS ME I WILL FOLLOW

I can hear my Saviour calling — take your cross and follow, follow me

Where He leads me I will follow — I'll go with Him, with Him all the way

If I am sick or if I am healthy — I'll go with Him, with Him all the way

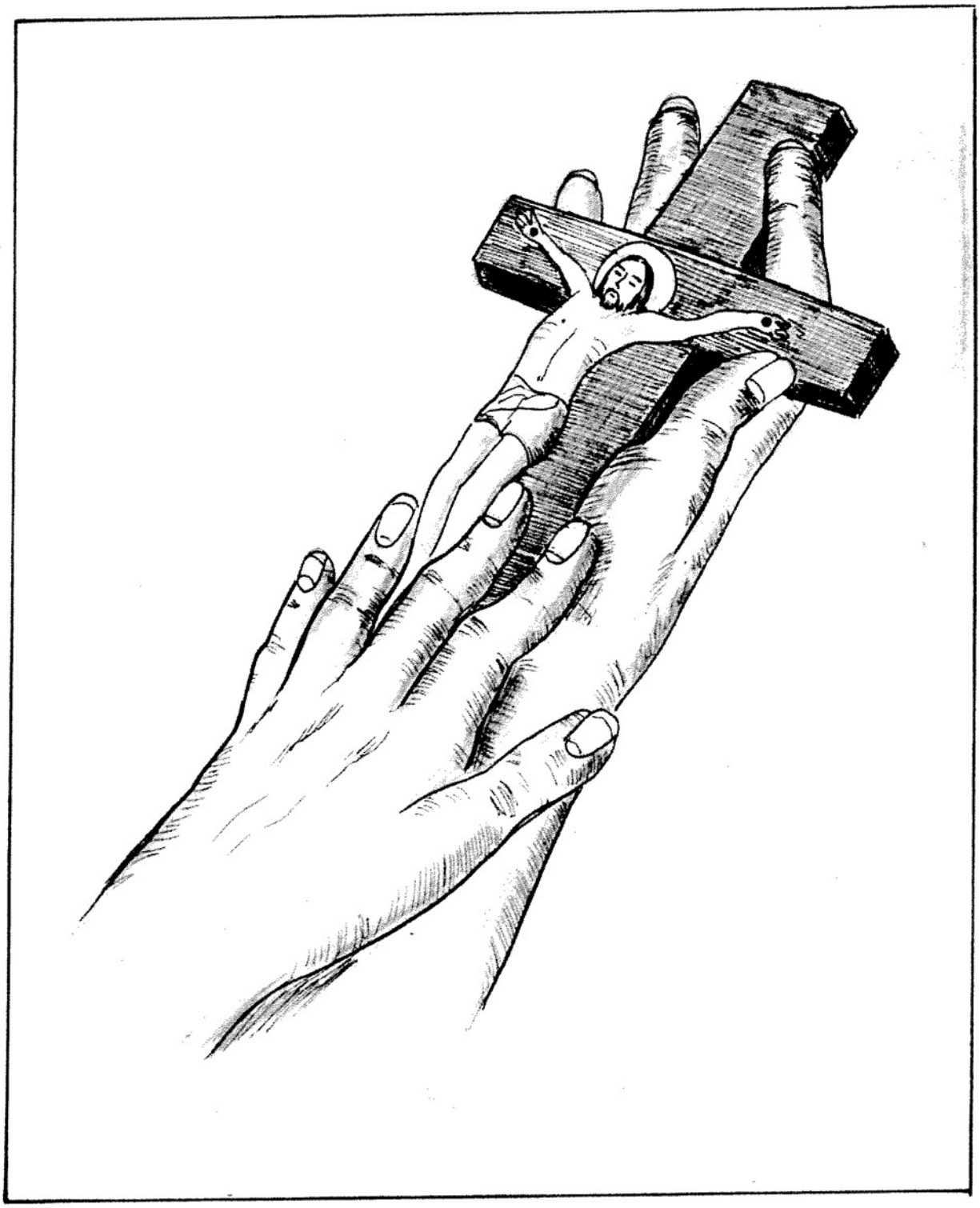
Whether in peace or times of war — I'll go with Him, with Him all the way

I'll go with Him through the judgment — I'll go with Him, with Him all the way

He will give me grace and glory — I'll go with Him, with Him all the way

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book



JULY
FIFTH SUNDAY

The Acceptable Prayers

Please read (Matthew 6:5-89), (Matthew 7:21-23), the attached material entitled "The Prayers", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To understand the true meaning of praying to God or worshipping Him. To practice effective prayers and enjoy our prayers.

MEMORY VERSE:

> **"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord'.. shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 7:21)**

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **The Acceptable Prayer**

Many people pray, but their prayers are not acceptable to God, because their lives are not according to God's commandments.

This is why we must honestly examine ourselves, and in turn our worship and prayers would be acceptable to Him. The Bible said, "The prayers of the wicked are hated by God".

The pure heart is an altar for God and a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. There are obstacles to prayer that St. Peter referred to when he said "that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). Isaiah expressed also that man's sins can hinder his prayers and make them unacceptable. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). One of the church fathers said, "A man who is tied up cannot run, the mind which is tied up with lusts cannot find a place for spiritual prayers. Above all he is always tied up and attracted here

and there with evil thoughts". "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22).

- ✞ The acceptable prayers are those according to God's will. St. John the beloved said, "If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (I John 5:14). This means that everything we ask for must be in agreement with His love, and His wisdom. Sometimes, we ask God very anxiously to give us something, that He may not want for us. Later on, we discover that what we were asking for, was not good for us in the first place. As St. Paul said, "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought" (Romans 8:26). Here we must, observe that God who commanded us to pray and ask things of Him, would not give us harmful things. One may ask: Why do I pray since I do not know the will of God? Our Lord Jesus taught us to pray all the time and ask Him. But He also taught us to say "not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). This shows us clearly, that we ask for what we need and then leave the whole matter to God who is totally good, totally wise, and totally knowledgeable.

- ✞ The acceptable prayers are the ones offered in the name of Jesus Christ. Our Master Christ in His last talk in the upper room advised His Disciples several times to plead and pray always in His name for their prayers to be answered. He repeated this five times: "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do ... If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14) ... "Whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:16) ... "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24) ... "In that day you will ask in My name... " (John 16:26).

  But what does the prayer in the name of Jesus Christ mean? And why do I have to present my prayers in His name? It is known that God was displeased with man since he disobeyed Him before the salvation which was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. So, we became on good terms with God, through the death of His only Son for us. This means we are only acceptable to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. A good example for this, is a man going to the bank to cash a cheque with no account, then the bank refuses to cash the cheque. But if the same man went to the bank with a cheque written by a another person who has a good account, then the bank definitely will cash it. "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19).

  In order for the prayers to be in the name of Christ, it must by in agreement with Christ's will for He is our heavenly king. This means we must ask for heavenly things first, and all the materialistic things would be increased. Therefore the

prayers that aim at the glory of Christ, and the spread of His kingdom, is the acceptable prayer.

- The acceptable prayers are the ones offered in complete faith. Our Lord Jesus said, "For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea', and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:23-24). So prayers without faith are unacceptable or ineffective.

- The acceptable prayers are the ones with thankfulness. St. Paul said, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanks giving" (Colossians 4:2). St. Paul said, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

- **The Story of the Stranger:**

  One Christmas eve, while celebrating mass at St. Mark's Cathedral in Egypt. The entire congregation were very well dressed, and there was a large number of security guards around the church because a representative of the Egyptian government was attending the church to congratulate the Pope and the people for the occasion.

  In the midst of the people, an old man wearing very old clothes tried to enter the church and the security guards prevented him because of his attire. After a number of attempts the priest of the church convinced them to let him in. He entered the church, stayed at the back and kept praying with tears in his eyes. When the service was over, all the people were very happy, greeting each other, except this man: no one talked to him. As a matter of fact, the people were trying to stay away from him. Ultimately one person found him with tears in his eyes and asked why he is crying. The old man answered, "Because I am a stranger and no one is greeting me". So, the man greeted him and wanted to give him some money. The old man told him, "I need someone to invite me to his house". So the man replied, "I am ready to take you but stay in a small room in my backyard". So the old man told him, "I hope you would take me in your house". So the man asked the old man, "How old are you?" He said, "I was born almost 2000 years ago". As soon as he said that, the man knew that he was the Lord Jesus, and the old man disappeared immediately.

  This story shows us that we may be praying, but our prayers are unacceptable because our hearts are not kind to our poor brothers.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- ✞ Let us review the effectiveness of our prayers. Are they from the heart? Are they acceptable? Let us enter into the school of prayers and improve the effectiveness of our prayers through observing the factors mentioned above.

SONGS

TO WHOM SHALL I GO?

"Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." (Ps 50:14)

When I feel worried — to whom shall I go?
You comfort me, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

When I feel sad — to whom shall I go?
You make me glad, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

When I feel hungry — to whom shall I go?
You feed me, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

When I feel sick — to whom shall I go ?
You cure me, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

When I feel lost — to whom shall I go?
You guide me, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

When I feel oppressed — to whom shall I go?
You defend me, O Lord — I kneel and pray to Thee

Recitation Curriculum :

Please Look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

THE PRAYERS

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Prayer is to open the heart to God, so that the faithful talks to Him, lovingly and openly. It is laying the individual before God.

Prayer is a tie, a relationship between Man and God. Therefore, it is not just talk, it is a heart connected to a heart.

Prayer is a feeling of being in the presence of God. It is a partnership with the Holy Spirit and unity with God...

Prayer is the food of the angels and the spirituals by which they are nourished and taste the Lord, *"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. " (Ps 34:8)*

Prayer quenches a soul's thirst for God, *"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul to you, O God" (Ps 42:1), "I will lift up my hands in your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. " (Ps 63:5)*

Prayer is the submission of life to God to conduct it Himself, *"Your will be done. "*

Prayer is an admission of our lack of strength, and insufficiency of our intelligence. Therefore, we resort to a greater power where we find our care...

Prayer is to abolish our independence from God...

It is meeting with God: either we lift ourselves up to Him or He comes down to us...

It is turning oneself to Heaven and to the throne of God...

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!!

Prayer is not just a request. One might pray without asking for anything... but contemplate on the beauty of God and His life giving qualities... Therefore, a prayer of praise and glorification... is more sublime than that of a request...

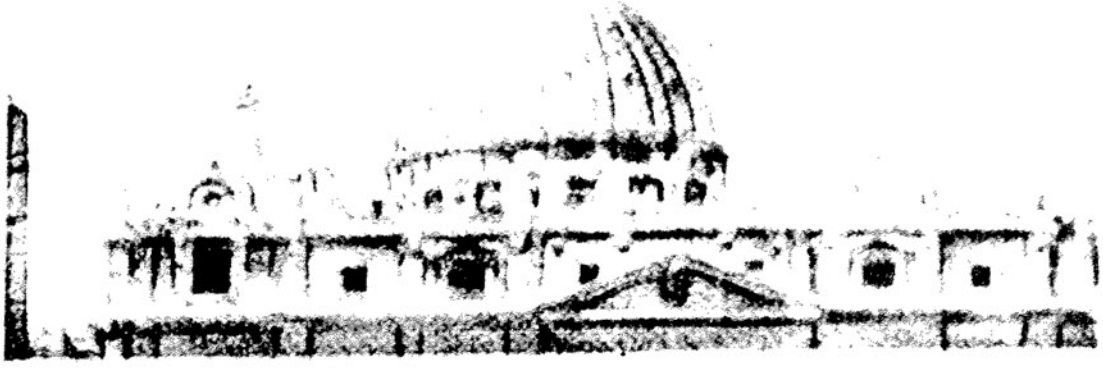
Whoever seeks something else besides God alone, will never be able to enjoy prayer as he ought to. Prayer means dying completely to all the world, an utter forgetfulness to pleasures, where God alone remains in one's thought...

Prayer is the ladder which connects Heaven and Earth. It is a bridge that we cross to reach the heavenly places where there is no world...

It is a key to Heaven..... It is a combination of feelings tnat are expressed in words...

Prayer would be without words or utterance... The heart's beat is a prayer... the eye's tear is prayer... the feeling of God's presence is a prayer..

In all these shades of meaning, do you really pray?...



AUGUST
FIRST SUNDAY

TRADITION AND ORTHODOXY (I)
The Holy Tradition in the Apostolic Age

Please read the attached materials entitled "The Holy Tradition", "Tradition in the Apostolic Age", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To understand the meaning of tradition, and how it worked in the Apostolic Age.
Note: It is proposed to read the attached material in the class and explain as you go along.

MEMORY VERSE:

> **"Tradition is "the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3)**

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Definition of "Tradition" According to Western Writers:**

It is a blind obedience to the past and a mechanical transmission of a passive deposit.

✞ **The Meaning of "Tradition" in Languages:**

In Greek, as it is mentioned in the New Testament the corresponding word is "Paradosis" which means "handling over or delivering a thing by hand".

In Hebrew, the corresponding word is "Masar" which means "hand on or deliver".

This means that "Tradition" is not "imitation of the past", but Biblically "delivering a deposit and receiving it".

✞ What is the Precious Delivery which the Church Received and Preserved through the Successive Generations?

Jesus did not deliver to His Disciples a written document, but rather He prepared them to follow Him and to accept Him dwelling within their hearts. They saw and heard everything Jesus did.

The letter of Jude defines tradition as "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), or the Gospel written in our lives and engraved within our hearts.

The precious delivery is the "faith", a living thing received by the Apostles who delivered it to their Disciples by the Holy Spirit.

✞ Tradition in the Apostolic Age

In the Apostolic age, the New Testament books were already in existence, but these were not canonized officially. The New Testament books were only canonized in the middle of the second century. Tradition was the only source of Christian faith, doctrines and worship.

- Tradition in the Apostolic Age from Eye-Witness

  St. John said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life... " (1 John 1:1).

  St. Luke said, "Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us" (Luke 1:2).

  When the eleven Apostles wished to fill the place of Judas, they determined to choose only one. "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His Resurrection" (Acts 1:21-22).

✞ Tradition in the Apostolic Age by the Holy Spirit

St. Paul was not an eye-witness, but he delivered "the tradition of Christ" to the Church by receiving a special commission from the Holy Spirit. "Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)" (Galatians 1:1).

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread" (1 Cor. 11:23).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Tradition is a living faith received from the Apostles delivered to us from generation to generation. We must honour it, be proud of it, and live according to it.

(2) Life is not just reading and writing things. But life is filled with emotions, feelings and actual commitments.

SONGS

MY COPTIC CHURCH

My Coptic Orthodox Church
In Nubia and Ethiopia
Also in African nations
In the European countries
you have spread Christianity
and in Western cities
as well as in Sudan
you witnessed through the land

REFRAIN
O my church the strong
We defend you with our blood
O great place of prayer
we defend you with our life.

At the Nicean Council
Your deacon Athanasius
With Clement and Origen
And Cyril and Discoros
you stood firm and remained
is the hero of faith
with Anthony and Paul
all of your saints stood tall.

My beloved Coptic Church
You are so sweet and radiant
Our eyes do look toward you
O great place of prayer
a house of beauty bright
we defend you with our love.
and our hearts adore you
we always come to you

Jesus came and visited you
And the blood of St. Mark
St. George and St. Demiana
The blood of Abba Peter
with His Mother He blessed you
established your faith true.
were martyred for the faith
ended the pagan ways.

Mother of seven sacraments
The wicked persecuted you
The oldest of all churches
The love of all our martyrs
as well as of our saints
but God kept strong your gates
in the world a bright light
you are the way of paradise

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Holy Tradition

For a long time some western writers looked to "tradition" as a blind obedience to the past and a mechanical transmission of a passive deposit. In their point of view, tradition is a precise catalogue of a set of ancient doctrines, canons and rites, or it is a museum for antiquity. Therefore, the traditional Church, in their view, seems to be a solid obscurant and retrograde one, attached to what is old simply for its antiquity.
In this simple work, I would like to explain our concept of "tradition", through the Holy Bible, the patristic thought and our practical church life.

• The Meaning of "Tradition"

The word "tradition", in Greek, as it is mentioned in the New Testament, is "Paradosis" which does not mean "imitation". Its cognate verb is "paradidomi" which means "handing over or delivering a thing by hand". The closely associated verb is "paralambano", which means "receiving a thing or taking it".
In Hebrew there are two terms corresponding to these two Greek verbs: "masar" (hand or deliver) and "qibbel" (receive).
Thus, the word "tradition" does not mean "imitation of the past", but it means, biblically, "delivering a deposit and receiving it". A generation delivers the faith and another receives it.

• The Subject of Christian Tradition

What is the subject of the Christian tradition? Or what is the deposit which the church received and preserved through the successive generations?
In fact, Christ did not deliver to His Disciples and Apostles a written document, but rather He prepared them to follow Him and to accept Him dwelling within their hearts. They heard Him teach, followed Him everywhere; they saw Him praying, comforting the people, treating the sinners kindly, healing the sick, giving life to the dead; they saw Him celebrate the Last Supper and granting them peace after His Resurrection. At last He sent them His Holy Spirit not only to remind them of His own words, and help them to follow His example, but rather to attain the unity with Him and to participate in His divine life.
This is the essence of our tradition; it is "the unity with Christ through the Holy Spirit". For God the Father delivered His own Son to us, and the Son also gave Himself up for us" (Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 5:2).
This is the "tradition", i.e., "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), or the "Gospel" written in our lives and engraved within our hearts. It is a living thing, received by the Apostles who delivered it to their Disciples by the Holy Spirit, who bore witness to Christ within the life of the Church, and united her with the Saviour.

In others words, the action of transmission is realized not only by the Apostles' writings, but rather by the Holy Spirit who guided their feelings, attitudes, worship, behaviour and their preaching. He granted them the new life, that is, "the life in Christ". It is the action of the Holy Spirit that the "tradition of Christ" is preserved in the church life through the successive generations, as He always lives and acts in the church - yesterday, today and tomorrow -, inspires her life and makes it a continuity of life, faith and love, and not a mechanical repetition of the past.

Thus, tradition is the living stream of the one life of the church which brings up the past with all its aspects as a living present, and extends the present towards the morrow without deformation.

This is the essence of the "tradition" on which we have to concentrate on studying the contents of "tradition" which are:

1) The message of faith in the Holy Trinity and God redeeming deeds
2) The deeds and words of Christ
3) The books of the Old Testament
4) The spiritual and ethical scheme in Jesus Christ
5) The curriculum of worship, its concept and order.

Tradition In The Apostolic Age

In the Apostolic Age, the New Testament books were already in existence, but these were not yet canonized officially. Tradition was the only source of Christian faith, doctrines and worship. Its role in the church life of that period may be summarized in the following points:

1) When the Church was born, the books of the Old Testament were already extant in use and the early Christians, on the authority of Christ and His Apostles, received these Scriptures from the Jews and treated them as the inspired and authoritative Word of God. The early Church considered herself the heir of the Jewish Church in this old tradition, i.e., the Scriptures.

It is worthy to note that the early Church was reading the Scriptures with an eye enlightened by specifically Christian revelation. She conceived the prophecies mentioned in these books, and was using a particular method of exegesus, which the Jews did not know yet. This type of exegesis was received from the Apostles, and there is every reason to suppose that our Lord Himself set the precedent.

2) Although the books of the New Testament were not canonized until the middle of the second century, but through tradition, the Fathers of the Church accepted them as the inspired Word of God, and many citations were used in their writings.

3) Through tradition the Fathers of the Church conceived the unity of the Holy Scriptures, I mean the unity between the Old and the New Testaments as the one and the same word of God, even before the canonization of the New Testament books took place.

4) The Apostles reveal that one of the sources of the authority of their apostolate is the tradition which they had received through their discipleship to Jesus Christ. They preached as eye-witnesses to the events of Christ's life and His saving deeds.
St. John states, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life" (1 John l:1).
In his gospel he also says, "He who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth so that you may believe" (John 19:35).
St. Luke also pointed out that accounts of the events of Christ's life were delivered to us by "those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke 1:2).
When the eleven Apostles wished to fill the place of Judas, they determined to choose only one. "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His Resurrection" (Acts 1:21-22).
This apostolic tradition started by their "eye-witness" to the Lord's life events, but the "eye-witness" was not sufficient to set it. It was founded by the Holy Spirit Who guides the life of the Church, reveals the truth and gives her the unity with God in Jesus Christ, "we are witnesses of these things", the Apostles say, "and so is the Holy Spirit".
St. Paul the Apostle, who was interested in depositing "the tradition of Christ" to the Church, was not an eye-witness of these events, but he received a special commission to the apostolate. He received the Church tradition by the Holy Spirit, as it was given to him from God directly. He asserts, "Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father...) (Galatians 1:1). He also says, "For I received [Paralambano] from the Lord that which I [apo tou Kyriou] I also delivered [paradidomi] to you" (1 Cornthiansl1:23). It has been argued that the use of the preposition "apo" in the phrase "from the Lord" indicated transmission of the information through tone or more intermediaries, whereas "Para" with the genitive would have ruled out such mediation.
5) The tradition which the Apostles received from Christ and was deposited unto the Church was in its essence "the new life in Jesus Christ", or "the unity with God in Christ by the Holy Spirit". In other words, the apostolic tradition was not a static deposit, but it bears within. In itself it is the continuity of the Pentecost in the Church as a whole and in every living member. Through the apostolic tradition, not only does the Christian community, as a whole, practice this new life by the Holy Spirit, but every member of the Church accepts a personal relationship with God in Spirit, without isolation from the universal Church.
Through this point of view we also look to our tradition - in its essence - as a spiritual gift, not offered from one person to another, but having its mutual effect

upon the giver and the receiver. "For I long to see you", to the Romans wrote St. Paul, "that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established- that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me" (Romans 1:11-12).

In this effect, St. Augustine says, "Because, for you, I am a bishop, with you I am a Christian. He deeply felt that as a bishop, he was appointed by God to deposit the Christian tradition to his people. Meanwhile, he practiced this same tradition with them as one of them, as a Christian.

6) The Apostles subjected to some Jewish traditions of worship and rites which were in harmony with their faith, after Christianizing them.

7) Through tradition the Church made a stress on the loyalty to the episcopate as he regarded the bishop - the successor of the Apostle - as the appointed one of purity of doctrine.

In brief, we can say that the church in the Apostolic Age accepted the living tradition, by which she received the books of the Old Testament, conceived its prophecies, discovered its types and symbols, acknowledged its unity with the apostolic testimony, received the witnesses of the Apostles, declared the authority for their successors in preserving the Christian faith and practiced the true worship of God.

AUGUST
SECOND SUNDAY

TRADITION AND ORTHODOXY (II)
The Holy Tradition and: (a) the Gospel, (b) Church Life

Please read the attached material entitled "The Holy Tradition and the Gospel" and "The Holy Tradition and Church Life", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To learn the Gospel is not separated from tradition, but the first is part of the latter. The Holy Tradition must conform totally with the Holy Scriptures.

MEMORY VERSE:

"I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face" (3 John 13:14)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **The Holy Tradition and the Gospel**

The Apostles received this "Gospel of Christ", not written on paper but orally, in order to deliver it unto the Church by the oral tradition, as well as, by the written one.

Hence, Christian preaching was founded on the New Testament and on the living tradition of the Lord Jesus, passed from mouth to mouth. This feeling for personal witness was very strong in the early Church. By tradition, the fathers usually mean doctrine which the Lord or His Apostles committed to the Church irrespective of whether it was handed down orally or in documents. This can be supported by the Bible itself:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand" (1 Corinthians 15:1).

"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in those who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Also please see 2 Thessalonians 3:6, Colossians 2:8 and 3 John 13:14.

✞ **Was the oral tradition cancelled by the appearance of the books of the New Testament?**

No, the Apostles themselves in their letters to the early Christian communities, often reminded the believers of the verbal tradition, from which they may gain an understanding of the Christian truth.

By tradition we received the Holy Gospels; we know that they are true and we know that they relate the deeds and the words of Christ (but not all His deeds and words), John 21:25.

St. Irenaeus, who is called "the father of the Ecclesiastical Tradition" summarized his thoughts as follows:

Tradition which originates from the Apostles is guaranteed by the unbroken succession of presbyters in the Church.

The tradition is preserved in the Church by the Holy Spirit, Who renews the Church's youth.

The Apostolic tradition is not something secret but it is within the power of all who wish to accept the truth to know it. It is manifested in every church throughout the whole world.

The heretics misinterpreted the scripture, as they seized isolated passages and rearranged them to suit their own ideas disregarding the underlying unity of the scripture. They made use of the texts, but since they do not read them within the content of the Church, they do not read them according to the tradition of the Apostles.

✞ **The Holy Tradition and the Church Life:**

The Church tradition is the a continuous stream of the church life in Jesus Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit. This life is not limited to our "faith", but also embraces the church spiritual and ethical scheme.

✞ **Tradition and Ethical Teaching:**

St. Paul delivered to us the tradition which contains the spiritual and ethical scheme. "Withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according

to the tradition which he received from us" (2 Th. 3:6). Also please see Colossians 2:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 4:1 and Philippians 4:9.

☥ **Tradition and Church Worship:**

Through tradition we accept our "church life in Jesus Christ", not only through the Christian beliefs, doctrines, Holy Scriptures and ethical scheme, but also through the church liturgies, rites, canons and all that belong to our worship.

☥ **Preserving the Church Tradition:**

This has been achieved by: the church councils (against heresies and wrong teachings), and the writings of the church fathers.

The decisions of the church councils and the writings of the church fathers are insufficient in preserving the church tradition. The laymen also have an essential role in keeping the tradition alive, by practicing it in their daily lives, and their worship.

☥ **Tradition and Liturgy:**

Tradition is the source of our church Liturgies of Baptism, Eucharist, Marriage, etc.

☥ **Tradition and Rite:**

Rite is an essential element of the liturgical, family and personal worship, for it meant the participation of the body and spirit in worshipping God. The rites we received by tradition, and are not accidental in the life of the Church. They are real entrance to the mystery of worship.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- ☥ Our Coptic Orthodox Church preserved more than others the Holy Tradition in its details as in its spirit. It is because our Church did not interfere in politics, and did not exercise any worldly authority, so she can live in her spirituality far away from the spirit of the world. The appearance of the monastic movement has kept the tradition of the church in a humble, evangelic and ascetic spirit.

SONGS

HAIL TO MARY

"For behold, henceforth generations will call me blessed." (Lk 1:48)

Hail to Mary Mother of God
Magnify her, glorify her

Before God even the heavens
Higher than heaven is St. Mary

She is above the angels
Over the saints and Apostles

David said in his Psalm
God chose her, queen of us all

As we call her to help us
On the rocky road of living

As we gaze up to the heavens
In trials and tribulations

whenever you see the sun
she was chosen to bear the Son

are not pure in His holy sight
who became Mother of the true Light

in the heaven her light does shine
is the Mother of the true vine

Mary is seen as a golden dove
to her we give our deepest love.

we will find her by our side
she will hold our hands to guide

and raise our eyes to the sky
on her always we can rely.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

The Holy Tradition and the Gospel

Our faith in the Messiah, the Saviour, that is "the gospel of the church", is the core of the Holy tradition and its centre. In more than one place, St. Paul the Apostle told his people that he had delivered the tradition of the "gospel of salvation", the "word of hearing" or the "saving deed of God" which he had received from the Church.

He says, "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand ... For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians. 15:1-3).

"When you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians. 2:13).

The Apostles received this "Gospel of Christ", which is "the Gospel of the Church", not written on paper but received it by the oral tradition as well as by the written one.

In fact, the church received the "Word of God" before it was written on paper. She enjoyed the good tidings, and understood the deepest meaning of the Word of God, by the Holy Spirit, through the oral tradition, not only by words but also as a mode of life. She received her life over twenty years before she had the written New Testament. And when the evangelists and Apostles wrote it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Church accepted it, venerated and understood it as a life she has previously practiced.

Thus, the Gospel is not strange from tradition, but the first is a part of the latter. Both declare the "One Truth", and explain the nature of the church.

Perhaps, one may say, if the oral tradition was cancelled by the appearance of the books of the New Testament. We answer that, the Apostles themselves, in their letters to the early Christian communities, often reminded the believers of the oral tradition, from which they may gain an understanding of the Christian truth.

"Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink, but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full" (2 John 12).

"I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto you. But I trust I shall shortly see you and we shall speak face to face" (3 John 13:14).

"And the rest (remaining matters) will I set in order when I come" (1 Cor. 11:34).

"For this cause I left you in Crete that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain presbyters in every city" (Titus 1:5).

In many places the Apostle Paul commands his disciples to preserve tradition, deliver it unto others, keep up with the traditions which they were taught either by word of mouth or by letter and to withdraw, themselves from every brother walking disorderly, and not according to the tradition which he had received from us (2 Thessalonians 3:6). He also charges us to be aware of every tradition of men against

faith, "according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).
Moreover, in the early Church, many nations converted to Christianity, although they had no translations of the Bible as yet in their own languages, and could not therefore learn the truth from it, but from the oral tradition.
St. Irenaeus, in the second century, is the first to argue out the matter of tradition. He puts the question - supposing, as might had happened, that we had no Scriptures, to what should we have to make our appeal? "Should we not have to go back to the most ancient churches, in which the Apostles lived, and take from them ... what is fixed and ascertained? What else could we do? If the Apostles themselves had not left us writings. Should we not be obliged, to depend on the teaching of the tradition which they left the churches?

• Tradition Preserves the Bible:
The Holy Scriptures is the book of the church, which we receive through the church tradition. By tradition the "canon" of the Holy books, which affirms their inspired character is established.

Origen
By tradition, I knew the four gospels, and that they are true. Learn also diligently, and from the church what are the books of the Old Testament, and what are those of the New.

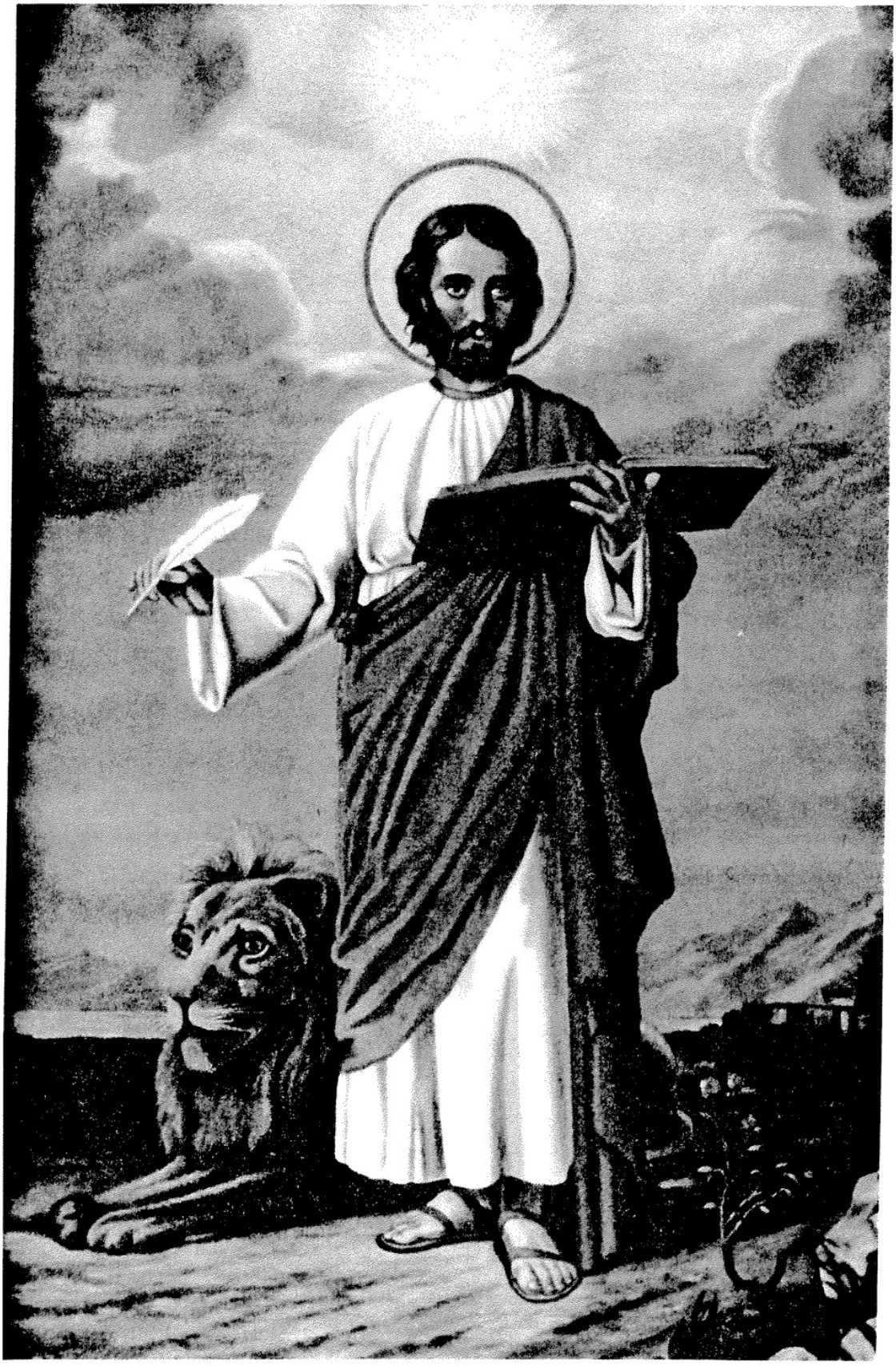
St. Cyril of Jerusalem
I would not have believed in the gospel, unless the voice of the universal church convinced me.

St. Augustine
If we try to dismiss the unwritten traditions as if they are unworthy, we disregard that, thus we disdain the important element of preaching, and make the evangelic preaching merely a name.

St. Basil the Great
It is worthy to note that church tradition gives testimony to the Holy Scripture, and that the Scripture itself is a part of the church tradition, but this does not lessen the Scripture's uniqueness. It preserves its own nature as the word of God, the eternal revelation of divinity, addressed not only to this age but also to the ages to come.
Although tradition testifies the Holy Scripture, but it is not its criterion. On the contrary, tradition is recognized when founded in disagreement with the Scripture.
Moreover, the Scripture is given to each believer, to judge, in accordance with his personal taste, the value and inspiration of a given work, but no one can, by himself, decide questions relative to the divine inspiration of the Scriptures and the presence

of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. This is given only by the Holy Spirit who lives in the Church. This cannot be a question of personal choice but it depends only on the judgment of the church.
Lastly, this close relation between the Scripture and the Church tradition does not mean extinguishing the personal feeling towards the Scripture. On the contrary, the Church tradition asserts our personal attitude towards the Bible, asking us to live in the Bible, without isolation from the Church.

• Tradition Preserved the Deeds and Words of Christ:
By tradition we receive the Holy gospels, which contain the deeds and words of Christ, but not all His deeds and works, as our teacher John concludes his gospel by saying, "And there are also many things which Jesus did, which if they should be written everyone, I think that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25).
The Disciples and Apostles heard many sayings, preserved them, lived them, but did not record all of them in the gospels. For instance we mention what the Apostle Paul says:
"Even so has the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (Cor. 9:14).
"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband" (1 Cor. 7:10).
The Apostle Paul received these Lord's commandments and sayings from the Disciples and the Apostles who heard the Lord and examined them by Spirit, preserved and delivered them unto others.
Concerning the deeds of Christ, the Apostle Paul also says, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord (kyrios) Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread ... " (Cor. 11:23). The Apostle did not receive this deed directly from the Lord in the night of His suffering, but as Oscar Cullman says that the word "Kyrios" here designated for the Oral Tradition concerning Jesus. The Apostle did receive many direct visions and revelation, but this deed was delivered by the Lord through the Church tradition.
What is wonderful, is that the ancient liturgies, as that of the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus quoted the same expression of St. Paul in the "Narrative of Institution" ... It is because the Apostolic Tradition reflects a general tradition in the early church from which St. Paul also quoted and all other apostolic liturgies.



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

HOLY BIBLE

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

ΜΡ
ΘΥ
ΙΗΣ
ΧΡΣ

AUGUST
THIRD SUNDAY

The Intercession of the Saints

Please read (John 2:1-1) the attached material entitled "The Feasts of the Saints", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To understand the meaning of intercession of the Saints, and in particular the intercession of St. Mary on commemoration of the feast of St. Mary on Messra 16th.

MEMORY VERSE:

St. Mary said, "They have no wine" (John 2:3)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **The General Meaning of Intercession:**

Intercession means one acts as an intermediate between two. When an individual, with a great authority mediates to the king to forgive another individual who made a mistake, we call the individual with a great authority, "intercessor".

The word intercession in the religious environment is used to mean more than one thing: if a man prayed for the sake of his brothers we call him an intercessor, and when our Lord Jesus Christ dies for the forgiveness of our sins we saw that His intercession works between the justice of God and the human race, and we call our Lord Jesus the intercessor between God and man. But these are two different types of intercessions. Both are mentioned in 1 Timothy 2:1-6:

✞ **The Ransom Intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ:**

As Adam disobeyed God, he chose death for himself,, and consequently, all the human race inherited sin and death: "Just as through one man's sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

The divine love of God accepted to perform, Himself, the salvation for mankind. God was incarnated, became man uniting with our humanity, died for us on the Cross, resurrected from the dead with the human body that He took from us and ascended with the same body to heaven. "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (l Timothy 2:5-6).

"And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

This means that the ransom intercession of our Lord Jesus is unique and it is available through His Blood on the Cross.

✞ **The Intercession of the Saints:**

God's love for us invites us to the level of His children. Our Lord Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father... ". This applies to God's side. From our side, however, we must not forget that we do not deserve this level because of our sins. For this reason, before we pray the Lord's prayer in the Divine Liturgy, the priest says, "Purify our souls, bodies, spirits, hearts, eyes, understanding, thoughts and intentions, that with a pure heart, and an enlighten and soul, an unashamed face, faith free from hypocrisy, perfect love and steadfast hope, we are intimately and fearlessly encouraged to call unto Thee, God and Holy Father. Who are in heaven and say: Our Father ... ".

Therefore, in God's love He called us His children, but because of our sins we need to hide behind someone who is accepted by God (i.e., a Saint) so that God may accept us.

Every time we repent, confess and take communion we wash our sins by the Blood of our Lord Jesus who purifies us, and enables us to have acceptable prayers to God the Father. But, if we keep repeating the same mistakes, we then lose our ability to present ourselves to our Lord Jesus Christ. Here we need the Saintly prayers and Saintly intercession in repentance so that we can be accepted to our Lord Jesus Christ.

✞ **Intercession as Mentioned in the Holy Bible:**

a. Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

Please read (Genesis 18:16-33) and tell this story in details to show the position that Abraham had in the eyes of God. "But Abraham still stood before the Lord" (Genesis 18:22).

b. Elisha Intercedes for his Servant

Please read (2 Kings 6:17-20). "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see".

c. St. Paul Seeks Prayer for All Men

"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplication, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

The intercession of the Saints for us does not mean that we lack confidence in God's love to us that we are unable to pray to Him directly. Otherwise all our prayers would be presented to the Saints, seeking their prayers for our needs. The actual fact is that a Christian presents himself sometimes in front of God speaking directly to Him in full humbleness, courage and love and other times he feels the fear of God because of his sins, and he does not dare to seek anything more from God because of his sins, so then he seeks the intercession of the Saints (like St. Mary, St. Mark, St. Mina, etc.). No contradiction between the two statuses of prayers. In both cases God is the One Who is answering the prayers, and the Saints are only interceding on our behalf:

St. Paul was even asking for the prayers of the people he taught and preached Christianity to: "Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me" (Romans 15:30).

✞ **The Intercession of the Virgin Mary:**

Read the Gospel of John 2:1-11 and emphasize that the first miracle that the Lord Jesus did was by the request of His Mother Virgin Mary. So, The Virgin St. Mary is a great intercessor for us when we are in trouble or experiencing difficulties.

The intercession of the Virgin St. Mary has continued from the early ages of Christianity. When Mettias the Apostle was tied by chains in the prison, The Virgin St. Mary untied the chain and got him out of prison. Many Coptic churches all over the world are named after her, because so many miracles are performed by her prayers when people ask for her help.

The appearance of Virgin Mary several times, including the major one in the church of Zaitoun, is a clear evidence of her role to pray on behalf of the people so that God may help them.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) The intercession of the Saints is an experience that we can live, and feel its effect in our lives. We must seek the intercession of the Saints, especially St. Mary. Everyone of us can use the prayers of St. Mary at times of repentance, and at times when we feel unworthy of asking anything from God. Remember that, sin is a separation from God.

(2) One of the best church celebrations is the feasts of the Saints. We should be regularly attending these and gain spiritually from them

SONGS

WATCHING US

'Behold , great is thy intercession, strong and acceptable with our Savior." (the sixth prayer)

REFRAIN

Watching us, hearing us, loving us — she could never possibly forget us
She is St. Mary — Mother of Jesus who saved us
We are her children — and she is always guiding us.

She is in heaven in her glory — the pride of all our saints
And is always interceding — with the saints on our behalf

She is heaven but she appears — to her children everywhere
Spreading on earth love and peace — and preserving faith for all

She is heaven but she sees — when her children are in tears
Mettias was hand-cuffed in jail — but she came and broke the chains

She is in heaven but she hears — the pleadings of a great Pope
Anba Abraam come out and see — the faith that moved the mountain

She is in heaven but she leaves — many miracles where she appears
In the church she comes and shares — with faith we witness her care.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

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

HOLY BIBLE

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

AUGUST
FOURTH SUNDAY

The Transfiguration Feast

Please read Luke 9:28-36, Mark 9:2-13, Matthew 17:1-9, 2 Peter 1:12-2, the attached material entitled "The Transfiguration", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:
To study the meaning of Transfiguration.

MEMORY VERSE:

"He received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to Him by the Excellent Glory" (2 Peter 1: 7)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ **Introduction**:

The events of the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ are very important, to the extent that the story is mentioned in the Holy Bible four times (Matthew, Mark, Luke and the second letter of St. Peter).

The historical **Introduction** to this marvellous event is that our Lord Jesus told His Disciples that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem to suffer, and to be crucified. They were filled with sadness. Then Jesus wanted to encourage them and show them a glimpse of His glory. "And it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistering" (Luke 9:28-29).

The miracle of the transfiguration has five miracles within it, as follows:

1) **The Transfiguration of Christ**

His appearance had changed to become very white and His face shone more than the sun. His appearance had changed for the following reasons:

To declare His divine glory.

"Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3).

"Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see" (1 Timothy 6:16).

To declare that His followers will have similar glory at His second coming:

"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43).

"Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21).

2) **The appearance of Moses and Elijah:**

This teaches us:
The spirits of the people who passed away exist in heaven. "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come" (Hebrew 13:14).
The believers of Jesus exist in a glorious status after they pass away.
"But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and you are tormented" (Luke 16:25).
"... having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23).

3) **A Cloud Over-Shadowed Them:**

The Disciples asked for booths because they liked what they saw. So the Lord sent a cloud to over-shadow them. The cloud reminded them that in the second coming of Jesus He will come on the clouds.
"Behold, He is coming with clouds... " (Revel. 1:7).
"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"
(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

4) **The Witness of the Father:**

God the Father witnessed 3 times for His Son:
"This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

"This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 17:5).
"I have both glorified it and will glorify it again" (John 12:28).

5) Moses and Elijah Disappeared and Only Jesus Remains:
When Jesus touched His Disciples who were very afraid, they looked and found Jesus only. Moses with his laws went away and Elijah with his strong actions also went away. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- ✞ Let us say with St. Peter, "Lord, it is good for us to be here". Let us remember every time we go to church that "it is good to be here". Let us be thankful that we have a share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the happiest and most peaceful time of our life, when we attend the divine liturgy, and eat of the Flesh and drink of the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SONGS

O KING OF PEACE

O King of peace give us Thy peace, accord to us Thy peace and forgive us our sins.	epouroo ente tihirini moi nan entek-hirini semni nan entek-hirini kanrnnovi nan evol.
Disperse the enemies of the church, fortify her and establish her forever.	Gor evol ennigagi ente ti-ekeklicia aricoft eros enneskim sha eneh
Emmanuel our God is now in our midst, in the glory of His Father and the Holy Spirit.	Emmano-eel pennooti khen tenmiti tinoo khen epo-oo ente pefiot nem piepnevma ethoo-wab.
May He bless us all, purify our hearts and heal the sicknesses of our souls and bodies.	Entefesmo eron tiren entef tovo ennenhit,entef talsho enny shony ente nen epsishi nem nensoma.
We worship Thee O Christ with Thy Good Father and the Holy Spirit, for Thou hast come and saved us.	Tenoosht emok O pekhristos nempekiot enaghathos nem piepnevma ethoo-wab, je ak-i aksoti emoon.

Recitation Curriculum:

Please look at the recitation curriculum at the end of this book.

Recitation Curriculum

In addition to all the memory versus and songs in the lessons, please teach the following recitation items throughout the year:

Recitation 1

The Litanies of the Sixth Hour

O Thou who on the sixth day at the sixth hour was nailed to the cross because of the sin Adam dared to commit in the garden, take away the handwriting of our sins, O Christ our God, and deliver us.

But I have called on God, and the Lord has heard me. O God hear my prayer and turn not away Thy face at my supplication. Attend unto me and hear me. At evening and at morning and at noontime, will I utter my words, and He will hear my voice and save my soul in peace. "*Zoksapatri ke lyou-ke agi-you epnevmat*"" (Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.)

O Jesus Christ our God, who was nailed to the cross at the sixth hour; Thou has slain sin by the tree and given life to the dead by Thy death; even to man whom Thou has created with Thine own hands, and who was dead by sin. Slay our passions by Thy saving and life-giving sufferings

and by the nails with which Thou was nailed. Deliver our minds from the hurt of carnal works and worldly lusts, unto the remembrance of Thy heavenly judgement, according to Thy tender mercies. *"Kenin ke aa-ee ke-ic-touce e-on-ace ton e-onon Amen."* (Now and unto ages of ages, Amen.)

Forasmuch as we have no excuse, because of the multitude of our sins, we plead through thee, O Virgin Mother, with Him who thou did bear. Behold, great is thy intercession, strong and acceptable with our Savior. O spotless mother, reject not us sinners in thy intercession with Him who thou did bear, for He is merciful and able to save us because He suffered for us to rescue us.
Let Thy tender mercies come quickly unto us, for we have become very poor. Help us, O God our Savior, for the glory of Thy name, O Lord, Thou will deliver us and forgive our sins for the sake of Thy holy name. *"Kenin ke aa-ee ke-ic-touce e-on-ace ton e-onon Amen."*(Now and unto ages of ages, Amen.)

Thou has wrought salvation in the midst of all the earth, O Christ our God; in the forthstretching

of Thy holy hands upon the cross. Wherefore all nations cry out saying; “Glory to Thee, O Lord.” “*Zoksapatri ke lyou-ke agi-you epnevmat”* (Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.)

We worship Thine incorruptible person, O Thou Good. We ask the forgiveness of our sins, O Christ our God, because Thou was pleased to go up on the cross to deliver those whom Thou has created from the bondage of the enemy. We cry unto Thee; we thank Thee. Thou has filled all with joy, O Savior, when Thou came to help the world. Lord, the glory is Thine. *"Kenin ke aa-ee ke-ic-touce e-on-ace ton e-onon Amen."*(Now and unto ages of ages, Amen.)

Thou art she who is full of grace, Virgin Mother of God; we cry to thee. Through the cross of thy Son, Hell has fallen and death is destroyed. We who were dead are raised up and made worthy of eternal life, and have obtained the joy of the first paradise. Wherefore, we in thanksgiving glorify Him, Immortal Christ Our God. *"Kenin ke aa-ee ke-ic-touce e-on-ace ton e-onon Amen."*(Now and unto ages of ages, Amen.)

Recitation 2

Arise, you, O children of the light, to praise the Lord of Hosts, that He may grant us the salvation of our souls. When we stand in the flesh before You, take away from our minds the sleep of forgetfulness, and grant us alertness, in order that we understand how to stand up before You at the time of prayer, and send up to You the appropriate doxology, and win the forgiveness of our many sins. Glory to You, the Lover of mankind.

Recitation 3

The Absolution of the Sixth hour

We give thanks to Thee, O our King, the Almighty, Father of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, and we glorify Thee for Thou has appointed the hours of suffering of Thine only-begotten Son to be times of prayer and comfort. Accept our supplications and blot out the handwriting of our sins that is written against us. Even as Thou has stripped it apart during these holy hours on the cross of Thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and the Savior of our souls, by whom Thou has shattered all the power of the enemy. Give us, O God, a glorious time, an unblemished walk, and a peaceful life, that we may be worthy of Thy Holy and worshipful name, and may stand at the awful and righteous judgement seat of Thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, without falling into condemnation, and may glorify Thee with all Thy saints; Thee, the unoriginate Father, and the Son,

who is consubstantial with Thee, and the Holy Spirit, the Giver of life. Now and ever and unto the ages of all ages, Amen.

*Note: It will be beneficial if the teacher can include the recitation items of the previous years as well.

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

HOLY BIBLE

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

MAJOR REFERENCES

(with permission)

(1) Books by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III up to March 2005.

(2) El-Keraza Magazine, head publisher: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, all issues up to March 2005.

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(4) Books by His Grace Bishop Moussa up to March 2005

(5) All books by Mr. Kamal Habib (Late Bishop Biman Bishop of Mallawi)

(6) Books by His Grace Bishop Youanis, the Bishop of El-Gharbia.

(7) Books by Late Father Pishoy Kamel of St. George Coptic Church, Alexandria, Egypt.

(8) All issues of "Sout El-Rahi" magazine, St. George Church, Alexandria, Egypt.

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(10) "Bahgat El-Aiad" by Yassa Mansour, 1970.

(11) "The Seven Church Sacraments" by Late Mr. Habib Girgis, 1968.

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THE FOLLOWING TABLES OF CONTENTS REFLECT THE CHANGES IN THE TIMING OF EASTER AND THE ASSOCIATED, BEFORE AND AFTER, CELEBRATIONS IN VARIOUS YEARS

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