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

GRADE EIGHT

Revised Edition 2005

PREPARATION AND WRITING
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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.

ΠΙΕΡΑ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΙΚΗ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΑΣ
ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ
البطريركية الأقباط الأرثوذكس

Date / / 19
/ / 17

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الى الدينيه المباركيه القمص مرقس الياس عبدالمسيح
والقس تادرس يعقوب ملطى

سلام ومحبة وبعد ،

زارنى ابننا د. فوقد وسلم المنهج المقترح لمدارس التربية الكنسية بالمهجر. وقد درست معه الخطوط الاساسية للمنهج، دون الدخول فى التفاصيل. وأبديت له بعض الملاحظات سواء فى مناهج العقيدة والطقس ؛ وفى الواقع أنه الجهد المبذول جهد كبير جداً يستحق الشكر. ومع ذلك تحتاج دروس الكتاب المقدس الى زيادة. وسأرسل لكم الملاحظات اخيراً بالتفصيل بمشيئة الرب .

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

وليكن صدقنا هو ما نستطيع الوصول اليه من كمال على قدر امكانياتنا . ويمكنه تزويد المنهج أيضاً بالصور المناسبة والتى تقربها كنيستنا من النواحى العقيدية والطقسية والتاريخية

الرب معكم . كونوا بخير

٧٩ ٨

عيد القديسة العذراء ١٩٨٦/٨/٢٢

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
FROM H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III
Deir Anba Rueiss, Ramses Avenue, ABBASSIYA,
CAIRO, EGYPT.
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بطريركية الاقباط الارثوذكس

Date / / 19
/ / 17

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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.

Maha Takla	Mark Botros	Patty Ibrahim
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Marian Barsoum	Helen Hanna	Maria Nasralla
Angela Salama	Margaret Massoud	Martha Tawadrous
Mina Gindi	Nancy Bishay	Samih Kalilian
Fady Dawood	Nagat Yassa	Emad Iskander
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Mariam Tawadrous	Donna Hanna	Dina Ayoub
Joseph Bishay	Dina George	Timothy Gindi
Sameh Barsoum	Marianna Nasralla	Samy Messiha
Sherin Ishak	Angy Hinis	Mariana Ramzy
Michael Malak	Monica Sourial	Nivin Bishay
Michael Kalilian	Mira Henis	Kamilia Beshara
Viola Iskander	Sarah Deif	Marina Mouharib
Hany Matta	Peter Gobran	Georgina Rizk
Marline Ayoub	Michael Abadir	John Hanna
Christina Salama	George Hanna	Irini Gad
Steven Messiha	Rasha Michael	Mohib Tawfik
Marilyn Yassa	Mina Elkatib	Nadir Deif
Sandra Eleigizy	Sherrine Fidal	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 Grades 8 (Adolescence: 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) They now have 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 and development of finer feelings, of 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. They will also 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, as 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. They will have to deal intellectually with it at a later age.

6) In addition to the above, the teacher should: start from the simple to the more difficult facts, from the known to the unknown and from the total to the parts and back to the total again.

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

6
Lisa Boden

SEPTEMBER
FIRST SUNDAY

"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES": IS IT PRACTICAL?

Please read the attached notes entitled "Love of the Enemies in the Old Testament", the attached article entitled "Wise love and foolish love" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON:

✞ To learn and emphasize that love is the corner stone of Christianity. Yes, it is practical to reach the level of loving of the enemies. One has to always review his or her love for others and see whether it is 'wise love or foolish love."

MEMORY VERSE:

"…you love one another as I have loved you" John 15:12

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

✞ In all generations, even in the Old Testament, the main thing that distinguishes God's people is LOVE. Remember, God is love. He placed love in the hearts of His people and therefore, we are capable of loving one another.

✞ Mention the two stories attached from the Old Testament about love. Joseph did good and loved his brothers although they mistreated him. David did good to Saul who persecuted and pursued him.

✞ In the New Testament, our Lord Jesus emphasized that love is the corner stone of Christianity. Without love we will not be able to know or receive God because **"..** God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him" 1 John 4:16. If we have love, we live in the light of Christianity. If we

practice hatred, we would be living darkness.

✞ We must pray to God to help us love others. This will lead us to love God. Love is the first fruit of the Holy Spirit, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace..." (Galatians 5:22). So, a true Christian who has the Holy Spirit working in him or her would have love to the level of loving his/her enemies. Without the help of the Holy Spirit we cannot reach such a level. For example, St. Stephen, during his last moments on earth, while being stoned by the Jews, he prayed and said, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" Acts 7:60.

✞ In the Old Testament we have only few examples about loving the enemies. Now as Christians filled with the power of the Holy Spirit we can with no doubt gradually reach the level of loving our enemies.

✞ The Lord Christ said "You love one another **as I loved you**" (John 15:12). The "type of love that we should have for others should be in the wise type of love not the foolish type of love."

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let each one of us start treating others fairly and avoid conflicts. Each one of us must pray for the Holy Spirit to fill us and give us the power to love all people; even our enemies.

(2) We are winners when we love others because this will lead us to love God. This will lead us to enter into a friendly relationship with God filled with love and this is the ultimate goal of Christianity.

(3) There is wise love and foolish love. The Lord Jesus wanted us to only practice the wise love, which is the same type of love He practiced for us (please see example in the attached material).

(4) To do any missionary work we must have deep love for others.

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

Love of the Enemies in the Old Testament

In the New Testament, loving enemies is clear in Christianity. Furthermore, there was also a few cases of loving the enemies in the Old Testament:

1. Joseph was good to his brothers who sold him as a slave. (Genesis chapters 37 and 45).

2. "… when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, is this your voice, my son David?' And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. Then He said to David: 'You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil.' "(1 Samuel: 24:16-17).

3. Some of the statements in the Old Testament:

   - "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls; and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles" (Proverbs 24:17).

   - "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;" (Proverbs 25:2 1).

WISE LOVE AND FOOLISH LOVE

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

There is a wise love whose owner profits from it, even if it causes some pain, but it is useful for his soul and eternity.

And there is a foolish love that destroys its owner, even if it shows features of kindness and tenderness...

You might love a person, then you support him in whatever is right or wrong. You might even encourage his wrong doings and he loses his soul and yours too. Your love would be then a wrong love.

Or you might love a person and have pity for his physical tiredness, struggle and asceticism. You end up doing him harm and destroy his soul, mind and future! It is a foolish love...

A mother who loves her child, pampers and spoils him... or loves him when he grows and wishes that he remains by her side, could stop him from dedication, monasticism or priesthood! Her love would be selfish and harmful! !

One who loves his sick relative may hide from him the seriousness of his sickness and never gives him a chance to prepare for his eternity. This is also a non-spiritual and unwise love.

True love is wise and spiritual and aims at the salvation of souls. It is a love that does not sacrifice what is right for the sake of being courteous. It does not share in the faults of others... It is pure and sincere, like God's love...

NOTES

SEPTEMBER
SECOND SUNDAY

SIGNS OF THE END OF THE WORLD

Please read Matthew 24:1-33, the attached material entitled "Do not postpone.", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

- To study the signs of the end of the world, as presented in the Bible, and to emphasize that our church does not give any specific date for this event. This event reminds us of not delaying our repentance and our readiness to meet with God.

MEMORY VERSE

"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven …" (Matthew 24:30).

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

- There are many cult groups who try to determine the timing of the end of the world. They have been proven wrong time after time. Our Lord Christ said "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority." (Acts 1:7). So, our church never predicts the timing of these events.
- The signs of the end of the world as mentioned in the Bible are as follows:

1. <u>Wars and famines "The beginning of sorrows":</u>

"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars.. ..And there will be famines, pestilence, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginnings of sorrows" Matthew 24:6-8

2. The coming of the rebellion:

"Let no one deceive you by any means: for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already all work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan. with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." 2 Thess. 2:3-10

- ❖ Please read it with the students and emphasize that this is a very important sign. Please read also 1 Timothy 4:1. Emphasize that there are many evil things and troubles appearing in the world that belong to Satan, however, that general rebellion did not come yet. Please read also Matthew 24:24

3. The destruction of all elements:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." Matthew 24:29

4. The last sign is the appearance of Christ in heaven

"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30). "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath" (Matthew 24:20). This means we pray that our departure from this world comes when we are frilly ready and not lazy or cold in our spiritual life similar to people in the winter or the Sabbath.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. To live a good Christian life that is pleasing to God. To each of us, the end is when we are called to leave this world and give account for our deeds. So, let us not delay getting ready.

2. Never trust any predictions about the end of the world.

3. Let us be ready at all times and do not delay our repentance.

4. The usefulness of the signs of the end of the world is not to predict when it is going to happen. But the fulfillment of those signs is evidence that the end of the world and the second coming of Christ will happen.

Songs

SPEEDILY

Jesus is standing and knocking on your door
Let Him in to reign on your heart like before
open up or else He will be there no more
open up your heart for Jesus, speedily

REFRAIN

Speedily, Speedily,
Use the only chance you may have been given
Open up your heart for Jesus, speedily

All the day He has been there waiting for you
And together They will make a home in you
open up and he will bring His Father too
open up your heart for Jesus, speedily

Open up your heart and you'll be forgiven
So waste not your chance to make it to heaven
this may be the only time you are given
open up your heart for Jesus, speedily

Open up your heart today and do not wait
Hell is full of those who did procrastinate
wake up and repent before it is too late
open up your heart for Jesus, speedily

He is knocking on your door, so open up
Come, receive Him in the paten and the cup
He's prepared to give Himself for you to sup
open up your heart for Jesus, speedily.

Do Not Postpone
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

If the grace of God worked in your heart and you felt a strong desire to repent, do not hesitate not even for a few minutes...

You do not know, perhaps the motive might cease as well as the outside effect, then the desire to repent goes away and when you try to look for repentance you will not find it...

Your deferment for repentance will give the devil a chance to be prepared for you and to put obstacles in your way. When he knows of your intention to repent, his wars will become fierce and he will make repentance difficult for you...

The Bible considers your rejection of the voice of God, a kind of a hardness of the heart. The Divine Inspiration says, ***"Today if you will heart His voice, do not harden your hearts. " (Heb. 3:15).***

Also such deferment, or non-response to the voice of God and His work in you is considered as giving little value to the work of grace.

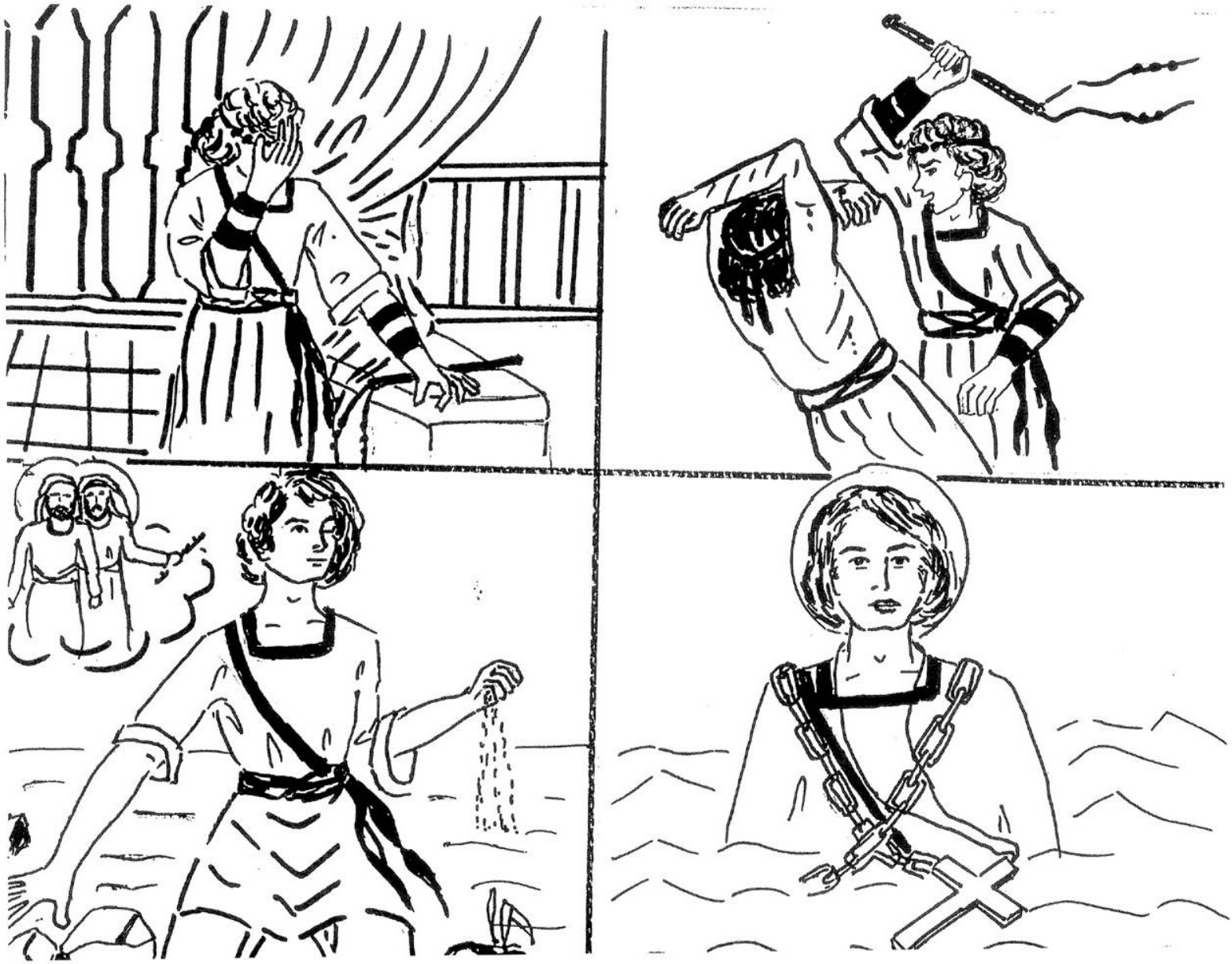
God might allow His grace to be taken away from you, or deliver you to the hands of your enemies or let you be humiliated by sin in order that you may know the value of the grace you rejected and refuse it no more afterwards...

The prodigal son, when he came to himself, he said, "I will arise and go to my father. " (Luk. 15:18). Immediately he arose and went... he seized opportunity of the spiritual warmth before it became cool in the heart and before it was snatched by the enemy...

The Bible says, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. " (Eph. 5:16). Therefore, benefit from the time in which you feel a longing for God; turn such a desire into practical fact showing that you seek God as He seeks you...

Many of those who delayed repentance never repented. Or when they tried to repent later they found it very difficult. And what is worse, many of them no longer had the wish to repent.. . !

Every time you delay repentance, say to yourself what is the meaning of this? Does it mean that you forsake God's reconciliation?! Or do you prefer to continue resisting Him?! Or do you not mind to strife with God and wound His love?



SEPTEMBER
THIRD SUNDAY

EL-NAYROUZ
"ARIANUS, THE PERSECUTOR OF CHRISTIANS BECAME A CHRISTIAN AND MARTYR"

Please read the attached materials entitled "Feast of the Martyrs", "In the memory of our Martyrs El Nayrouz Feast", the attached material taken from the Coptic synaxairum entitled "The Martyrdom of St. Arianus" the attached article entitled "The glory of pain", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

- The martyrs' lives and endurance of sufferings were in support of the spreading of Christianity around the world. The martyrs truly experienced the glory of Christ in the widest of their sufferings. We can also feel the glory of Christ upon bearing sufferings for His sake.

MEMORY VERSE

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

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

- Religions in the world spread through various ways and means, For example, Islam spread in the world by the sword and the threats. Many cults now try to seduce people to adopt their religions and later they become very hostile with them if they change their opinion.
- Please review all the background information about El-Nayrouz Feast, from the second attached article. Ask the students first to brainstorm on what they know, then add to their knowledge.
- The Egyptian year is a very old year. The Egyptian Pharaohs made its

calculations more than 5,000 years before Christ. They called its months with the names of their ancient gods.

The Egyptian year (also called the Coptic Year as the word Coptic means Egyptian) was called the "Martyr year" and the counting of it started with the reign of King Diocletian who killed thousands of faithful Christians. The difference between the Julian year and the Coptic year is 284 years.

- Describe the life of Arianus who used to persecute the Christians and kill them. Later on, he believed and was converted to Christianity.

  Arrianus tortured St. Appollonius by tying him to a tree and throwing arrows at his body. Consequently, one of the arrows accidentally, hurt Arianus' eye. He bled and in pain asked St. Appollonius to heal his eye. One of believers advised him to take from the blood of the martyrs and put it on his eyes to be healed. Arianus did as told and his eyes were healed. Arrianus then repented from his sins against Christianity. He declared his love for Christ became Christian and was martyred.

  Arianus is just one example of many Rulers who converted to Christianity. They usually convert to Christianity after they persecute many Christians. In a similar way, during the seven years of tortures that St. George endured before his martyrdom, thousands and thousands of non-believers became Christians when they saw the Faith of St. George.

- In martyrdom, Christ is present in the martyr's heart, thoughts and soul, supporting him till the last breath. Extending His body, and placing His wounds on the martyr's wounds. Then the martyr gets a taste of Christ's glory.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. We too can attract many people to the Christianity by our good deeds.

2. Our Christianity is founded upon the blood shed by the Fathers of the Church. In order to do any meaningful missionary work, one has to be ready to bear sufferings and endure pains for the sake of Christ. However, the Lord Jesus will carry with us those pains and sufferings so that we will be feeling only the glory of God and be anxious for heaven. You never see the icon of a martyr who looks sad, angry or in despair. The reverse is true as the faces of martyrs are filled with joy and peace.

We must never lose hope. Just as God changed the heart of Arianus and made him a good Christian. He can also work with us, guide us, protect us and help us lead a victorious life over the attractions and temptations of this world.

Songs

THE MARTYRE AND NAIROUZ

Come, Ye faithful people, come
Where there is eternal life
to the heavenly Jerusalem
and we'll live in peace with our Saviour

Nairouz is the beginning of the year
Who defended faith without fear
when we remember our martyrs
and lived in peace with our Saviour

Our ancestors were brave
Now in Heaven they are crowned
for their faith their lives they gave
And they lived in peace with our Saviour

Our martyrs won their crowns
And they opened Heaven's doors
when they laid their lives down
now they live in peace with our Saviour

Never flinched they from the flame
They shed their blood for His Name
nor from the tyrant's sharpest aim
Now they live in peace with our Saviour

By their faith they saw the land
They put their souls in His hand
where triumphant now they stand
And lived in peace with our Saviour

If Satan comes to divide us
And His peace will be with us
the voice of God will gather us
And we'll live in peace with our Saviour

Lord, deliver us from all sin
And lead us to Thy Kingdom
that eternal life we may win
O our King, and our Saviour

FEAST OF THE MARTYRS

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

Thus the martyrs bear all sorts of torture without any complaints or objections because at that time, they actually experience conquering of death and see the dawn of eternity. Together with pain and suffering martyrs get a taste of Christ's glory through a tangible and visible vision.

Praising the martyrs is certainly a definite order from God, and martyrdom is a great joy and godly glory. The glory received in martyrdom does not mean that the martyr or martyrdom is higher in rank than faith, but that the martyr as a human being, proclaims his faith on the basis of the verse: or to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1. 1:21) this reveals that the martyr actually lives by faith through Christ. The true proof is in his or her readiness to die, believing that death is the door to everlasting life and eternity with Christ. Any person who is not ready to suffer and die with Christ or for Christ, is not considered to be of perfect faith.

When the martyr reaches the point of sensing the call to this happy journey, he/she cannot bear to remain on this earth, and no longer worries about any form of torture. This can come at the moments of love that fills him/her with faith and blazing hope.

Christians used to surround the martyrs during their last moments to breathe their fragrance, to receive their advice and to be enriched with their supplications. They also crowded to touch their bodies and dip the most treasured belongings in the drops of their blood. The bodies of the martyrs were wrapped in the most valuable shrouds and placed in the most holy of places. The crown of martyrdom which the church insists upon is one of the rights of the martyrs always appearing around their heads.

One of the church's rituals that is inherited from the first centuries is the commemoration of the saints by singing hymns and praises all night every Sunday and on the eve of their feast. In Egypt, the church used to and still does make an

agape feast after the mass to feed the congregation and the poor. It used to be called “Agape anamnesis” i.e. “Love for memory.

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

In conclusion, many have witnessed that the martyr’s blood had an aroma that excelled all worldly fragrance. As for those who were martyred though burning, their burning bodies gave out an aroma filled with perfume. All those testimonies prove in all certainty that the martyrs directly departed to the highest glory

IN THE MEMORY OF OUR MARTYRS
EL-NAYROUZ FEAST

- El-Nayrouz feast is the beginning of the Egyptian year. The Egyptian year is a very old one. The ancient Pharaohs initiated this calendar system 5000 years before the birth of Jesus', naming its months after the names of their ancient Egyptian gods. The Egyptian year has 13 months; they are: Tout, Baba, Hatour, Kyahek, Touba, Amshier, Baramehat, Baramouda, Bashense, Baouna, Abib, Messra and El-Nassey. Each month of these months is 30 days in length; except the last month, El=Nassey, which is only 5 days long.

- Up until now, the Egyptians farmers use the Coptic Year System in their timing for agriculture.

- Egypt had used the Egyptian year system only until the French came to Egypt in the era of Esmaile Basha, who introduced the Western Year System (January, February . . . etc).

- In the years of Dicaldianos, in which the numbers of martyrs increased very much, the Egyptian year took the name of the "Martyrs Year".

- The Church these days, celebrates special feasts; the "Nayrouz Feast" which is the "Martyrs' Feast." This celebration continues for 17 days until the "Feast of the Cross." 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 in which the Church celebrates the memory of the martyrs who established the church on account of their faith and blood. (Tout)

Round #2: The Church celebrates the mystery of the birth of Jesus, from Our Lady, St. Mary (Kyahek), and this ends at Christmas.

Round #3: The Baptism of Jesus and the unity of the Holy Trinity (The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit.) (Touba)

Round #4: The Jonah Feast and the preparation for the Holy Forty--Day Fast. (Touba)

Round #5: The Holy Lent. (Amshier - Baramehat)

Round #6: The Easter celebration. (Baramouda - Bashense)

Round #7: Mission month and the Disciples' Feast. (Abib)

Round #8: St. Mary's Feast. (Messra)

Round #9: The short month (Nassey), and all the readings in the church during this month are about the end of the world.

I hope you live up these occasions, during the year. The Church celebrates these 9 rounds in order for you to keep in touch with all the events; and seeing as you live in the church; remember these events, learn from them and get their blessings.

Here is an example of one of our beloved martyrs:

ST. ARIANUS

St. Arianus, the governor of Ansena, was martyred. When he ordered to shoot St. Apollonius with arrows, one of the arrows glanced back and struck his eye and destroyed it. As it is mentioned in the Seventh day of Baramhat, one of the believers said to him: "If you take some of his blood and smear your eye with it, you will regain your sight." The Governor took some of his blood, smeared his eye, and immediately he was able to see. Arianus believed in the Lord Christ, and he regretted all the evil things which he had done to the holy martyrs and the severity with which he tortured them. Then he rose up, destroyed his idols, and stopped torturing the believers.

When Diocletian heard the report of Arianus, he brought him, and asked him why he had forsaken the worship of his idols. Arianus told him about the signs and wonders that God had worked through the hands of the holy martyrs, and how, in spite of the tortures which he had inflicted upon them and the mutilation of their bodies, they rose up again whole. The Emperor became furious with him because of what he said, and ordered him to be tortured severely, casted him into a pit and covered it until he died.

The Lord Christ sent His angel, who brought Arianus out from the pit, and took him beside the bed of the Emperor. When the Emperor woke up from his sleep, he saw and recognized Arianus, he was amazed and terrified. Diocletian again ordered him to be placed into a hair sack, and casted it into the sea. Arianus, the martyr, delivered up his soul while he was in the hair sack. The Saint had told his kinsfolk, when he bid them farewell, that the Lord had told him in a vision of the night that He would take care of his body, and return it to his town. He also told Arianus that they will find his body on the shore of Alexandria.

The Lord ordered a sea creature to carry the Saint, and bring him to the city of Alexandria, and cast him on the shore. His men took his body, brought it to Ansena, and laid it with the bodies of the Saints Philemon and Apollonius. Thus, St. Arianus finished his good fight and received the heavenly crown.

May his prayers be with us and Glory be to God forever. Amen.

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)*

SEPTEMBER
FOURTH SUNDAY

THE CROSS - (I)
AS EXPRESSED IN THE READINGS OF THE CHURCH ON THE THREE DAYS OF THE FEAST OF THE CROSS

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is the first lesson in a series of two lessons about the Holy Cross as expressed in the reading of the Coptic Orthodox Church on the three days of the feast of the Cross.

MEMORY VERSE

"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He."
(John8:28)

PLEASE EMPHASIS

Introduction: The Church's cherishing of the Cross.

- ☥ The Coptic Orthodox Church celebrates two feasts of the Cross every year. One lasts for 3 days starting on 17th of Tut till the 19th and is the first feast in the new Coptic year. The second is on the 10th of Baramhat. The first feast is in remembrance of the inauguration of the Church of the Holy Cross which was built by Queen Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine. The second feast is on the occasion, of the findings of the Cross by Queen Helen.
- ☥ The Cross is placed at the highest point whether inside or outside of the church. No Christian home lacks the Cross of our Savior. A lot of Christians have the sign of the Cross tattooed on their arms or carry it on a chain around their necks. In the Canonical prayers of the Horlogian, the prayers of the sixth and of

the ninth hours are in remembrance of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and of His giving up the Ghost.

- In the sixths hour's passage we say, "O Thou who was nailed on the Cross on the sixth day and in the sixth hour because of the sin which our father Adam committed in paradise …"

- In the ninth hour passage we pray and say "O thou who hast tasted bodily death in the Ninth hour for our sake, we the sinners …" Thus, the hours of the Saviour's crucifixion and of His intense passion for our sake have become the subject of our prayers. They inspire the worshippers with peace and make them feel the warmth and the depth of God's love.

- **Also in practicing the seven sacraments, a priest makes the sign of the Cross several times to get the blessing of our God, Jesus Christ. The reason is that we have gotten all the heavenly blessings entailed on all the sacraments through the great sacrifice that Christ has accomplished on the Cross.**

- The Cross is carried by the priests at all times, they bless the congregation with it. We kiss the Cross out of love for it. We use it to decorate our icons, and we even sing hymns about it.

- We have powerful slogans about the Cross such as: "There is no Christianity without a Cross"… "A spirit without the Cross is like a bride without a groom"… "I find not only comfort but also pride in the Cross."

Why is all this endearment for the cross?

The Church's choice of the readings during the 3 days of the Feast of the Cross, which has been inspired by the Holy Spirit, makes the answer quite clear. The reasons for the Christians cherishing of the Cross are as follows:

1) **God's profound love has manifested itself on the Cross.**
2) **The greatness and divinity of the Crucified.**
3) **Even since the Old Testament's era the Cross had continued to be a sign of conquering the Devil.**
4) **The sacrifice on the Cross purifies Man (The extended sacrifice).**
5) **The Cross is a way of life that leads to Heaven.**

Let us, with the help of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, contemplate

the five previous points guided by the readings of the Holy Church.

1) God's profound love has manifested itself on the Cross.

On the eve of the first day of the Feast of the Cross we read:

(Psalm 4:6-9) "Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us. You have put gladness in my heart…I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety."

(John 8:28-42): "Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My father taught me, I speak these things and He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." As He spoke those words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free". They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say "you will be made free"? Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin and a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever." "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father." They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard form God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father" Then they said to Him, "We are not born of fornication; we have one Father – God" Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come to myself, but He sent Me."

Hence, on the Cross, is God's love in its greatest and most profound forms. He says: "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He …" this means that it is God Himself, incarnate in the flesh, who, on His own accord, came to redeem us on the Cross. "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still

sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8)

The greatness of God's love for Man cannot be conceived by the human mind. We can realize the extent of His love when we consider all the creatures He created for Man's convenience. It manifests itself in His covering of our frailties and His protection of us, in His cure of our diseases, and in all the blessings and gifts He endows upon us. This great divine love showed itself in its most profound form on the Cross as it has freed man from bondage.

"Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)

How intense were God's sufferings on the Cross because of His love for Man!! "Who Himself bore our sins in His own Body on the tree, that we, having died of sins, might live for righteousness, by whose stripes you were healed." (1 Peter 2:24). So our church teaches us to say, in each and every prayer, "O God, have mercy!" forty one times: 39 times for the lashes, and 2 times for the crown made of thorns and the stab of the spear. So that God's love, made manifest by His sufferings for our sake, can remain fixed in our minds. "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 sufferings endured and the sacrifice made on the Cross – these were accomplished by the Son, the Word incarnate, with the utmost joy, "Jesus … for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame…" (Hebrews 12:2)

Why did Christianity spread so far and wide? The secret is in God's wondrous love as manifest in its clearest form on the Cross. This is contrary to heathenism, for example which spread through threats, violence and cruelty. Nebuchadnezzar for example, made an image of gold and whoever did not fall down and worship it was cast into the midst of a burning furnace. Christianity, however, was founded on and spread through God's love which was manifest on the Cross.

2) The Greatness And Divinity Of The Crucified.

The liturgy of the 1st day of the Feast of the Cross:

(Psalm 65:1-2) "Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; and to You the vow shall be performed O You who hear prayer, to You all flesh will come.

Hallelujah."

(John 10:22-28). "Now it was the feast of Dedication in Jerusalem and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If you are the Christ tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you did not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to me is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and My Father are one." Then the Jews took up stones again and to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?" The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God." Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, "I said, You are gods"? If He called them gods, to whom the work God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, "You are blaspheming' because I said, "I am the Son of God"? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me, believe the works, that you know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." Glory be to God for ever.

The Cross derives its strength from the greatness of the Crucified and the greatness of the event that took place on the Cross. So, the readings of the Church on this feast speak about the greatness of the crucified: "The Father is in Me, and I am in Him." "Believe the works that I do".

Who was then Crucified?

Is He like Moses the prophet, or Joshua the son of Nun or David the Prophet? Definitely not! He is not like the other prophets. God incarnate in the flesh is our Lord Jesus Christ who went to be crucified of his own accord saying: "I have the power to lay it down and I have the power to take it again." During Pilate's trial of Christ, Pilate said to Him, "Do you not know that I have the power to crucify you, and the power to release you?. Jesus answered, "You could have not power at all against Me unless it had been given to you from above."

Can you dear reader, do the same and face the devil saying "You have no power over me?" Yes, you certainly can; provided you live as son to Christ and are close to Him for He has said, "I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by means hurt you."

When the troops came to lay hands on Christ in Gethsemane Garden, He came forward to them and said, "I am He". He did not try to run away or flee as they had imagined he would. He is God the incarnate in the flesh who has come to offer salvation for everyone.

Christ was hoisted on the Cross by His own free will. His power became manifest. So, the Church sings this beautiful hymn: "Holy is God who has achieved in weakness what is greater than strength." This means that Jesus, on the Cross, made miracles greater than the miracles He made before crucifixion. The earth quaked, there was darkness on the whole land. The veil of the temple was torn into two from top to bottom and the rocks were split. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." He looked at the criminal on His right and said, "Today, you will be with Me in Paradise" By declaring that, He opened the gates of paradise.

A Short Story:

One day I visited a member of my congregation in his office which was frequented by a lot of people daily. On the wall there was a big Cross hanging which drew my attention. When I entered another room, I saw another big Cross hanging on the wall. In my inner self I wondered how that man was not afraid. But he told me that it was our Lord's Cross that protected him. It is the Cross that annihilates all the powers of the Devil as he remembers that he was vanquished by means of the Cross. St. Paul the Apostle said, "But God forbid that I should boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Cross is, indeed, the pride of all Christians, for in it is all of Christ's love.

A Short Story:

I met with a person who was troubled and worried. During our talk I asked him if he believed in the existence of God. He replied that he did. So I told him that if he ever came to the church and did not see Christ on the Cross with His arms opened for everyone, then he should be troubled, worried and scared. Each time you see Christ on the Cross you find Him with His arms opened for you. He says "I have loved you with an everlasting love" "Come to Me all

you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Whenever you look at the Cross and see Christ's wide arms, embrace your worries and your anxieties will vanish. "Greater love has not one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." Christ was crucified to redeem each and every one of us.

Father Bishoy Kamel used to teach us to look at the Cross for long periods of time, so that it can be imprinted in our inner selves and inspire us with serenity and peace of mind.

3) The sign of the Cross as a sign of victory over the Devil even since the Old Testament.

The Eve of the second day of the Feast of the Cross:
(Psalm 99:5-9), "Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool, he is Holy…Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill; for the Lord our God is Holy." Hallelujah!

(John 4:19-24) "The Woman said to Him, "Sir I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews, but the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Glory be to God forever.

The salvation accomplished on the Cross is an eternal one for all nations and all generations at all times. "For God so loved the world "All the world" St. Paul says: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" i.e. if you lead your life without enjoying the salvation achieved by Christ on the Cross, you are a Christian only by name.

Those of us who do not think of the Cross are Christians only by name. Those who do not draw the sign of the Cross are Christians by name. And those of us who cannot visualize God's love on the Cross are also Christians by name only.

Our salvation from the Devil's slavery has been achieved on the Cross, making us cherish the Cross. "For the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who

are perishing, but to us who are being it is the power of God."

What is the salvation achieved by Christ on the Cross? How can I understand this salvation? And what did Christ save me from? To understand that salvation, the Holy Bible tells us about the deliverance of the children of Israel from their slavery in the land of Egypt. God's saving act represents the salvation achieved by Christ on the Cross. The Book of Exodus mentions this story, which is symbolic to the deliverance of the human soul form the Devil's slavery. The children of Israel spent almost 430 years in slavery doing forced labour in the land of Egypt. And who had the power to deliver a slave who could be sold and bought in the land of Egypt? It is an extremely difficult task. But God almighty is all powerful and nothing is beyond His power.

God took the children of Israel out of Egypt and ended their bondage with His mighty arm. Hence, never despair and never lack courage. A true Christian always has the feeling that God backs him or her. Those who fear are those who are away from God and do not rely on Him. But those who rely on God know that He is able to redeem them from their sins. But what if I had a lot of sins? What if I tell lies, swear, have lusts and a lot of evil – can God redeem me too? Yes, he has offered us salvation by the sacrifice on the Cross exactly as he had delivered the children of Israel from bondage in the land of Egypt. With a mighty arm, he freed them from the grip of the Egyptians who were a symbol of the Devil. God can free you from disease, from sin and from all your troubles. The tenth plague that God brought upon Pharaoh was the death of the firstborn. God told the children of Israel that each family should bring lamb, kill it and sprinkle some of its blood on the two door-posts and the lintel of their house. That blood was a symbol of Christ's Blood. So when the angel of Death passed through the land of Egypt on that night, he struck all the first born of the Egyptians. But he passed over the houses of the children of Israel who had the sign of the blood, because the blood is the symbol of Christ's Blood. Then Pharaoh told the children of Israel to go out from among His people. So they did, carrying with them the articles of silver and the articles of gold they had acquired from the Egyptians. That exodus is a symbol of the freeing of the human spirit from the hold of the Devil. However, no matter how weak I may be, God can save me from the Devil, and He has indeed redeemed me on the Cross.

St. Paul the Apostle relates the two incidents – the exodus and the blood – as this is essential for our creed. Christ came and redeemed us with His Blood. St. Paul says, "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." Some

sect do not place Christ's Cross in their churches. What do you think of a church without a Cross and without an altar? It is not really a church!

Christ spoke to the Samaritan woman about salvation: "for Salvation is of the Jews" Salvation and the Cross form the core of Christianity. God enables them to Cross the Red Sea after He had saved them by the sign of the Blood. So, even the sacrament of baptism is completed only through the Blood of Christ. This applies to all the other sacraments. Had Christ not paid the price and shed His blood for us, the sacraments would not have existed. All the gifts of God and the sacraments are obtained through Christ's Blood, "and I, if I am lifted up form the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it produces much grain." This is also an analogy to the Cross. The grain of wheat is very small and worthless. The wind may blow it away, but if buried in the ground, it is affected by the soil and starts to grow. So, you too, must labour to achieve any successful work. Success is not achieved except through labour, strife, and perseverance in the practical and spiritual life. You have to work hard.

How many people believed at the time of Christ's crucifixion? Only a few. But after the crucifixion Christianity spread throughout the whole world thanks to the power of the Cross.

Christianity did not spread through violence, as some other religions did. It did not spread through threats, or by forcing those who do not adhere to it to pay ransom or money. It spread because of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross to redeem us. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Father Bishoy Kamel used to say that we should cherish the Cross and think of Christ's Cross, of those arms that are extended to embrace all of us. "Come to Me, all of you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Many people come to the church, at times other than those of the holy liturgy, to look at the Cross. It inspires them with peace and serenity as it reminds them of God's love manifested on the Cross.

All the church's sacraments end with the Eucharist. A person is baptized and anointed with the Crisma Oil first, then he or she partakes of the Holy Communion. All the church's sacraments are derived from the redemption achieved by Christ on the Cross.

Also a deacon, priest or bishop is ordained first during the holy liturgy (the sacrament of the holy orders) and then partakes of the Holy Communion. The

original rite of the sacrament of Matrimony was carried out after the morning raising of incense during the liturgy. The bride and groom received the sacrament of matrimony first, and then that of the Eucharist.

"For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast" (1 Corin 5:7). That is, let us rejoice because of the salvation achieved by Christ on the Cross. The Church cherishes the Cross and so everyone of us should not neglect such a great salvation. We should be closely related to the Cross and to the sign of the Cross in our lives. We should make the sign of the Cross, look at the Cross with our eyes, while meditating on the crucified Christ.

There is a popular book entitled "The Crucified Christ". Reading it will send tears to your eyes because of the profound pain endured by Christ for the sake of everyone of us, to achieve our salvation and redeem us from our sins. We have to struggle hard in order to benefit form that salvation that has been freely given to us on the Cross.

The strength of the Cross is not limited to the new testament only. But in the old testament also the sign of the Cross was able to vanquish the devil and all his evil powers. In the book of Exodus Ch. 17, the sons of Israel prevailed and were victorious in their fight with Amalek as long as Moses held up his hands in the form of the Cross. In Numbers 21, anyone who had been bitten by a serpent was cured when he looked at the bronze serpent that was raised by Moses on a pole in the form of the Cross. Jesus Christ Himself mentioned this to Nicodemus (John 3:14-15). When we make the sign of the Cross, we declare our allegiance to the Crucified and our faith and belief in Him. When we make the sign of the Cross, we also acknowledge His death and resurrection and await His second advent. We make the sign of the Cross before we pray as if so say that if it were not for the Cross we could not have approached God as His children. We also make the sign of the Cross to be blessed as it is the source of all blessings. The world was under a curse and under the sentence of death because of sin. But the Crucified removed that curse on the Cross and the Cross has become a blessing for everyone who believes, and lives in virtue and becomes a part of the Body of Christ.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) A true Christian is a peaceful and powerful individual that brings people to Christ. He or she draws all their attributes from the Holy Spirit that is working within them.

Songs

SHERE PI ESTAVROS

" But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal 6:14)

Christ has come to us
With His blood He redeemed us

from heaven to save us
Shere pi estavros

Because Jesus loves us
He died for us

He came and lived with us
Shere pi estavros

He was crucified
With wondrous authority

and obtained victory
Shere pi estavros

The cross is my life
The starting of my prayer

my strength and my hope
Shere pi estavros

A lot of the saints
Conquered the devils

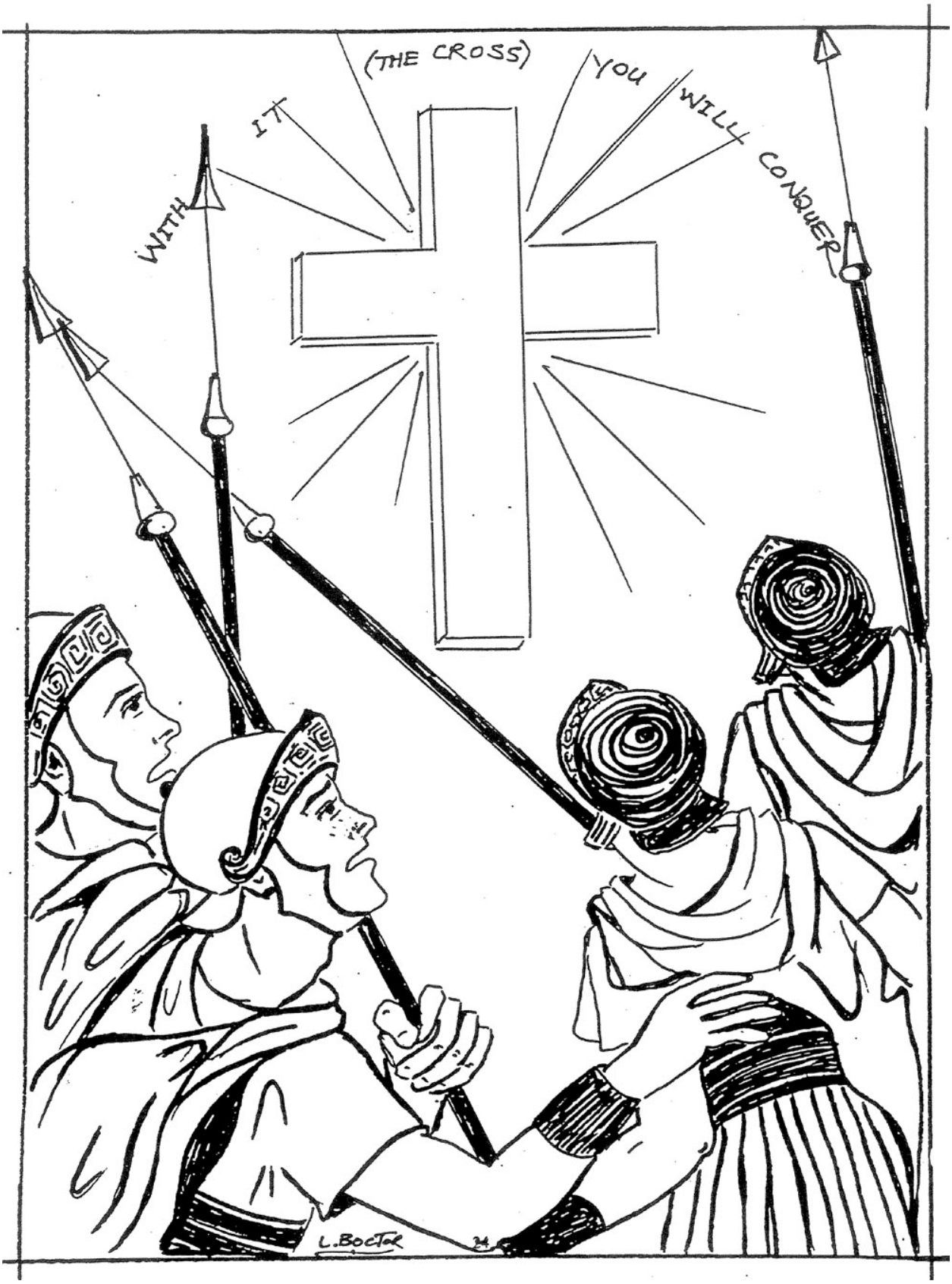
with the sign of the cross
Shere pi estavros

They moved many mountains
Exactly as He said

and the dead arose
Shere pi estavros

And I am their son
I will follow them

proud of the cross
Shere pi estavros


WITH IT (THE CROSS) YOU WILL CONQUER
L. BOCTOR

SEPTEMBER
FIFTH SUNDAY

THE CROSS (II)
AS EXPRESSED IN THE READINGS OF THE CHURCH ON THE THREE DAYS OF THE FEAST OF THE CROSS

Please read the attached articles entitled "Sacrifice", Carry your Cross, be crucified, not crucifier" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is the second lesson in a series of two lessons about the Holy Cross as expressed in the readings of the Coptic Orthodox Church on the three days of the feast of the Cross.

MEMORY VERSE

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hungry, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." John 6:35

Start by reviewing the previous lesson and proceed as follows:

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

4) The sacrifice On The Cross Purifies Man (The Extended Sacrifice)

The liturgy of the second day of the Feast of the Cross:

(Psalm 145: 1-2) "I will extol you, My God O King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Everyday I will bless you, and I will praise Your name forever and ever."

(John 6:35-46) "And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of Life". He who comes

to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day". The Jews then complained about Him, because He said "I am the bread which came down from heaven" and they said "is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know?" How is it then the He says, "I have come down from heaven"? Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught by God." Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God, He has seen the Father."

St. Paul the Apostle expresses the church's cherishing of the Cross by saying: "But God forbid that I should boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). In his preaching he also says, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2).
Someone may wonder, "What is the value of the Cross?" It is more than two pieces of wood! The answer is that the real value of the Cross lies in the greatness of the crucified. The Crucified is God incarnate. He has been crucified to redeem each one of us. It is God Himself who loved us and gave Himself up for our sake. The value of the Cross is also due to the greatness of our salvation from the Devil's bondage – the salvation that has been offered by Christ. By being crucified, Christ has completed the Divine justice. Our God is a God of love. "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness I have drawn you." But He is also a just God. A human being may do injustice to another, but the Just God sees and perceives anything. God's justice is equal to His love. Who else could bring about God's justice? After God created Adam and made him master of all creatures, he disobeyed God's command. So Adam and all his offspring died through sin. As in Adam, all have died. In Christ, all live. God's Blood is enough to redeem all generations and all the people of the world.

"You are not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold… but with the precious Blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world." The sacrifice on the Cross is and everlasting offering that is true from generation to generation. We partake

of it when we have the Holy Communion. This is the subject of the Bible, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

The extended sacrifice is the sacrifice on the Cross. It gives Man inner grace. Some may wonder "Is Christ's crucifixion which took place 2000 years ago a finished act that has nothing to do with the present?" The answer is "NO". The sacrifice on the Cross has an extended effect until now and that is through the sacrament of the Eucharist. So, in the Bible according to St. John, Chapter 6 our Lord Jesus Christ assures us that his offering is neither bread nor wine, but the real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. "For My flesh is food indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood abides in Me, and I in him." The sacrifice on the Cross extends throughout the generations. It purifies us and changes our inner person. "Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Some sects do not believe in this, considering it a mere symbol. How can this be? Jesus Christ asserts that it is real Flesh and real Blood. St. Paul the Apostle says, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My Body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My Blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore, whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body." (1 Cor. 11:23-19).

This is the depth of Christianity. Do you believe that the bread and wine present on the altar are real Flesh and Blood? In the Prayer of the Fraction we pray saying: Present with us on the table is Emmanuel which means "God is with us". This is the most precious gift Christ offered us. He denied us nothing. He showed His love on the Cross. He cured and still is curing, the sick. He bandaged every wounded spirit, and still does. He helps those who are troubled, and is the hope of those in despair. But most importantly, He has given us His Flesh and Blood "Whoever eat My Flesh ….. has eternal life" so a church without an altar is not a church. It is without the core of salvation which is the offering made to redeem

the world. "God so loved the world that he gave us His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish."

Every time we have Holy Communion we pass over from one condition to another – like the blood sprinkled on the two door-posts and lintel of the house. Through that blood they passed over form the bondage of Egypt to freedom. In one of the prayers the priest says, "Let us elevate ourselves and have a cure and salvation for our spirits, bodies and soul." Some may refrain from having Holy Communion for years. When asked about the reason, they say they cannot sit in front of a priest and confess. Why be ashamed of confession? The same priest to whom you confess your sins, confesses his sins in front of his Father of confession. Even bishops and patriarch themselves have fathers of confession. You should take care of yourself. Confess your sins to God and to your father of confession to get absolution to partake of the sacraments and so that your father of confession may with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, tell you how to improve your spiritual life.

A Short Story:

A man, who had a doctoral degree refused to confess because the priest of the village was an uneducated elderly person. The man had so many trials that he almost lost his mind. Some of his relatives advised him to go and talk to the priest. He objected saying "How can I talk to that elderly priest who knows nothing? After a while he got so overwhelmed with his troubles and decided to talk to the priest after all. He voiced all his troubles crying. After listening attentively to him, the priest advised him to go and alleviate his burdens. By that the priest meant that he was heavily ladened with concerns and worries, and what avails man if he wins all the world and loses himself?

Some people have heart attacks in the midst of the night. Why? Because they are heavily laden with burdens all day. The heart may endure them for some time, but finally the heart cannot bear it. God loves us and sacrificed Himself for us, and gave us His Flesh and Blood so that He be steadfast in us and we in Him. All of Christ's offerings and all His love are transferred to us through the sacrament of the Eucharist and so are Christ's personality and all His power.

Was our Lord a loving God? He was certainly loving as He used to go about doing good. A person who partakes of the Holy Communion regularly and with reverence likewise has the power of love in his heart. Christ was full of compassion. He stood with the woman who was caught in adultery, in the very act, and said, "He who is without a sin among you let him throw a stone at her

first." Many a time we judge and condemn others for forgetting God's word, "First remove the plank form your eye and then you will see clearly to remove the speck form your bother's eye." God fills the heart of the person who partakes of the Holy Communion with love and compassion. Saint Rueiss regarded the Holy altar with the greatest reverence. He used to tremble each time he had communion. When asked about the reason for his trembling and fears, he replied, "Can not you see the altar brightly illuminated and the heavenly hosts and the Seraphim and Cherubim standing about?" Thus, some can see the altar with the angels while others have their eyes closed and can see nothing … They wonder all the time if this is a real altar and if this is a real offering! How pitiable are they?

As for St. Rueiss, his heart was full of love and compassion as he was steadfast in his love for Christ. Jesus Christ is all love and compassion and anyone who tastes the sweetness of the Flesh and Blood tastes the sweetness of the love and compassion of Christ. What do you say of a poor person who goes about to sell salt on his camel and then gives the money as alms to the poor? When you receive the Holy Communion do you taste the sweetness of His Flesh and Blood? Is Christ's love and compassion and mercy are transmitted to you so your heart in turn is filled with love. You may hear someone say, "I have been insulted. My pride and dignity have been hurt!" But the Bible says, "Bless those who curse you." Where is Christ then? And where is the Holy Communion?

Christ rose from the dead and by doing so he defeated Death. A person who partakes of the Holy Communion cannot be defeated by death. So when a sick person is about to die, we hasten to ask a priest to administer the Eucharist to him. During communion we take God's real Flesh and Blood "Whoever eats My Flesh has eternal life and I will raise him up the last day." So the communion means resurrection from death.

A Short Story:

A person in Alexandria used to put off taking the Holy Communion. He didn't want to confess because he found repentance difficult. His wife used to tell him that partaking of the Holy Communion cannot be put off. He did not listen to her and went putting it off until he fell seriously ill. He asked his wife to ask the priest to come to him so that he can have the Holy Communion. But, unfortunately, when the priest arrived the man had breathed his last breath a few moments before.

That man wasted his whole life and did not abide in Christ. "I am the vine and you are the branches." We are like these branches that get the sap from the tree. A person who does not partake of the Holy Communion regularly dries up like a

branch that is cut off form the tree. It withers and dies. "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Such a tree does not have the sap which is Christ's Flesh and Blood. A person who examines himself and who partakes regularly and with the readiness of the Holy Communion has his share in eternal life. John the beholder, saw them in heaven, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb." Anyone who does not understand this is a Christian only by name. If you do not believe in the sweetness of the Holy and in the power of the Cross of our Saviour, then you are a Christian only by name. You have not entered to the depth nor have you benefited from God's salvation.

You must believe that God has given you eternal life. "Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." If you do not have faith, you will still rise on doomsday, but you will not have any share in eternal life. Instead you will hear, "Depart from Me you cursed ones, I do not know you."

God loved us and gave us His Body and Blood to live by them. So, do not put off repentance, communion or true life with Christ. For it is written if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts.

5) The Cross Is A Way Of Life That Leads To Heaven

The liturgy of the third day of the feast of the Cross.

(Psalm 61:2-5) "lead me to the rock than is higher that I for you have been shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy. For you, O God have heard my vows. You gave me the heritage of those who fear Your name." Hallelujah.

The Gospel according to Luke 14:25-35. "Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his Cross and comes after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it, lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish! Or what king going to make war against another king does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not

forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Jesus Christ glory to Him, does not care for multitudes nor does He want to deceive anyone into joining Christianity. He was very frank and declared that if you want to follow Him you have to bear your Cross. He wanted to sort people out, a person who does not really care for heaven and eternal life is afraid of the Cross, the hardship, the cost of following Christ and having to give up all his wealth. Whoever "does not hate his father and mother … cannot be my disciple" Not only that, but he also has to bear his Cross (the sign of shame). What does bearing the Cross mean? It means accepting hardships and enduring oppression in order to keep the faith. "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." It also means keeping such commandments as "Bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also."

Is this too much of a cost? Is bearing the Cross possible? The story of Christianity shows that bearing the Cross is possible, if the heavenly grace works within us. A lot of people have borne it. But without heavenly grace, it is impossible to bear it. Jesus Christ said, "Without me you can do nothing." Can I fight the Devil using my own strength only? Never. But "those who are with us are more than those who are against us." Peter the Apostle alone failed to keep his promise when he assured Christ that he could not possibly deny Him. "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." But when he received heavenly strength, when the Holy Spirit came upon him on the Day of the Pentecost, he preached strongly in the name of Christ. Moses the prophet, at the beginning of his service began by killing the Egyptian. This act stemmed from his own motive and was not yet supported by God's strength. Later on he served with great strength and he became God's tool for ending the bondage of the children of Israel and bringing them out of the land of Egypt. We cannot separate bearing the Cross in hardships and sufferings from the grace of Christ. "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). He also said, "If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:17). Pain is the true way leading to glory. All the pains that a believer endures are for God. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18). In (2 Corinthians 5:14) Paul asserts "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) The sacrifice on the Cross we are redeemed. The sacrifice on the cross has an extended effect until now through the sacrament of the Eucharist.

(2) Being the Cross is possible if the heavenly grace works within us. The Lord Jesus said “without Me you can not do anything”.

SONGS

SHERE PI ESTAVROS

“But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Gal 6:14)

Christ has come to us
With His blood He redeemed us

from heaven to save us
Shere pi estavros

Because Jesus loves us
He died for us

He came and lived with us
Shere pi estavros

He was crucified
With wondrous authority

and obtained victory
Shere pi estavros

The cross is my life
The starting of my prayer

my strength and my hope
Shere pi estavros

A lot of the saints
Conquered the devils

with the sign of the cross
Shere pi estavros

They moved many mountains
Exactly as He said

and the dead arose
Shere pi estavros

And I am their son
I will follow them

proud of the cross
Shere pi estavros

Sacrifice
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

The love which does not sacrifice is a barren love, without fruit.

Love is a productive mother that gives birth to numerous virtues such as compassion and affection, a word of encouragement and a word of consolation, attention and care, forgiveness and seeking the salvation of the soul. This is the spiritual love...

Perhaps the most distinguished quality in love... is sacrifice.

This is the big difference between love and lust: love always seeks to give whereas lust always seeks to take.

Lust seeks to take because it is concentrated around the self, but love, as the Apostle said," "...does not seek its own".

Love that does not sacrifice is not a true love.

Love sacrifices everything, does not keep anything from whom it likes, no matter how this thing is precious or essential to it. It gives from its needs.

The greatest thing a loving person can offer is to sacrifice himself, and the Lord said, *"Greater love has no one than this, to lay down his life for his friends. " John. 15:13).* This was shown in depth on the cross...

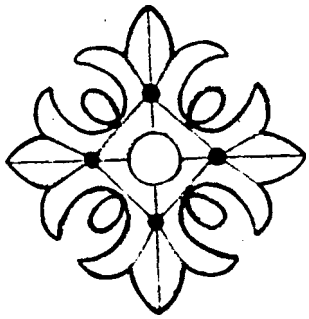
The crucified Jesus is a sacrifice of love... The Bible said,, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. " (John 3:16).*

During the Passion Week, many contemplate on the passions of Christ. Christ's passions are merely a natural result of His love. Love here is the origin, while pain is the outer appearance...

I wish we would contemplate on His love which He revealed through His passions.

The candle melts to give light to others; this is also a kind of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. So, we put candles before the icons of the saints... as a symbol.

Also the incense burns in fire to give sweet smell which ascends to God... it is a delightful burnt offering to God, and it is also a symbol...



CARRY YOUR CROSS...
BE CRUCIFIED, NOT A CRUCIFIER
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

If you are crucified, be assured that God will be with you, restoring your right completely, if not in this world, then in Heaven.

But if you are a crucifier of others, surely God will be against you, till He restores others' right from you, and punish you...

If you crucify others, it means that there is an evil element of attack and violence in you. These are all different aspects of injustice that do not agree with the righteousness expected in you or with the human idealism that laymen need...

But if you are crucified, especially for the sake of truth or faith, be confident that any pain you suffer is counted by God. It has its crown in Heaven and its blessing on earth...

Be sure that Heaven is completely on your side: God, the Angels, and the Saints...

All those who follow what is right, suffer for its sake.

All those who remained firm in faith, paid a price for their faith...

The history of martyrs has many stories of those whose blood was shed for the sake of their faith... Our history, in particular, is full of such stories...

Anyone can be violent, but it does not prove idealism. Injustice is easy and within the reach of anyone but there is no religion that agrees with it...

Therefore, keep your idealism and temper and carry your cross. The falsity that frightens you will never remain forever...

The Lord Jesus who tasted the bitterness of pain and endured the cross, is able to help those who suffer and are crucified at any time and in any place...

Look at the picture of Jesus crucified, you will be comforted.

Be confident that after Calvary, there are the glories of Resurrection...
God saw the blood of Naboth the Jezreelite being shed and He did not remain silent. His reaction was strong...

Therefore, *"Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!" (Ps 27:14)*

If you are crucified, Christ will be by your side... He will see His image in you... Be then an image of Christ.

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

THE DOCTRINES OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA - (I)

Please read the attached material entitled "The Role of the Bible." (Read the materials in the class, if you wish, and explain as you go along), the attached article entitled "Your relationship with The Holy Bible" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson one in a series of 5 lessons on the basic foundations of the Doctrines of our Coptic Orthodox Church. In this lesson we focus on the importance of the Holy Bible.

MEMORY VERSE

"…If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book…"Rev. 22:18-19

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

The Coptic Orthodox Church's doctrines are obtained from the scriptures. These scriptures are the original ones without addition or deletion or alteration. Also, the interpretation of these scriptures are according to the teachings of the Apostles and the early Fathers of the Church.

<u>The Role of the Holy Bible in the Liturgies:</u>

In the Agbia book there are seven hourly prayers. Each one has Psalms and has a reading of the four gospels. Hence, as the Agbia book is used in the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Bible is the centre of the Prayers and is the key part in it.

The liturgy, has the word catechumens, which is various readings from the Holy Bible that are chosen by the early Fathers of the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit to suit the occasion that the church is celebrating. Thus, the reading of the Bible in the Church supports the spiritual life of the believers.
In the Liturgy of the faithful, one can find easily that all the expressions and the meanings are obtained from the Holy Bible.

The Role of the Holy Bible in personal use:

† Individuals can read the Bible as their source of religious knowledge. They can seek explanation for the parts they do not understand.
We can read many religious books and various explanations written by people but it is very important to note that we cannot replace the reading of the Bible itself.

† We must be careful in general when we read an article or a book. We need to be selective in our readings. We may read a book that has wrong information, and get confused. The same applies when it comes to the Holy Bible. There are wrong Biblical translations e.g. the Bible of Mormons or that of the Jehovah Witnesses. People dared to change the original scriptures according to their own views. Avoid reading these deviated bibles. The New King James translation of the Bible is the correct version that our church approves.

† When we read the Holy Bible and do not understand part of it, it does not mean the bible is wrong. It means we have shortcoming in understanding the Holy Bible. We need the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to understand.

† As we need to digest on food in order for our bodies to benefit from it, we need also to read the word of God in the bible: think about it, practice it, pray for God to help us understand it more and digest on it. Only that way we can benefit from reading the word of God.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Be careful not to read any wrong translation of the Holy Bible.

(2) All the Doctrines of our church are based on the correct version of the Holy Bible. So, our faith is right.

(3) Our church has maintained the original explanation, interpretation and tradition of the Apostolic church of early Christianity without alteration.

THE ROLE OF THE BIBLE IN DOCTRINES

The Coptic Orthodox Church doctrines are obtained from the scriptures. It is well recognized that all churches have the same claim to the very same scriptures. But it could be said that the doctrines of the Coptic church have been the same with no addition, or alteration from the teachings of early Christianity.

On one hand, its theology is based on nothing outside the scripture. On the other the doctrines agree in all parts with those of the early church. The tradition which was the proper interpretation of the teachings of our Lord and the Apostles as understood and practiced by the Christians and leaders of the church during the period of the One Universal Church until the disjoin of the 451 AD

It is in the principle of the Coptic Orthodox Church that there must be no contradiction between the Bible and tradition. (i.e. the verbal teachings that we received from the Apostles from generation to generation.)

In Liturgies

The daily prayers are the daily Offerings "the hour," which is a collection of seven groups of prayers to be prayed at seven appointed times of the day and night. They consist mainly of psalms, passages of the Gospels and various prayers.

The Eucharist Liturgy is preceded with songs of remittance of some great Biblical events of deliverance, and concerned passages of praise such as the crossing of the Red Sea and the rescue of the three children. They are quoted directly form the Bible and sung in poetic form as a preparation of the Holy celebration of the Divine Eucharist.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist retains the division made by the ancient church into the Liturgy of the Word of God and the Liturgy of the Sacrament, (or the Liturgies of the Catechumens and the Faithful). In the first part, the whole service is concentrated on the word of God with several readings form the Psalms, Gospels, Pauline Epistles, Catholic Epistles, and Acts of the Apostles as well as other Old testament readings during Lent.

The liturgical prayers have different prayers for the great feasts of the Coptic Church such as Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost and the Transfiguration. Other occasions such as Lent, Holy Week, the consecration of

new Churches and ordinations, all focus on the word of God, from both the Old and New Testaments.

People's Use of the Bible

The individuals have always been provoked to be nourished on the study of the Bible. They recited psalms and passages of the gospel in their seven daily prayers and many learned long portions of the various books by heart.

The first rank in the deaconship, that of a reader, has as its principal function the reading of the Scriptures and their interpretation to the congregation. It almost became a tradition that boys were ordained readers at early age, and were bound to Bible study and its ministry ever since.

Most Coptic Orthodox Churches organize Bible Study meetings held by priests layment which are sources of inspiration to families and private Bible Study.

SONGS

SAINT ATHANASIUS THE APOSTOLIC

The Defender of the Faith,
The great Saint Athanasius,
Who rescued the whole Church
From the heresy of Arius.

When he was yet a child,
Playing on the beach,
He solemnly preformed
A sacrament of the church.

But he was not aware,
That the Pope, Saint Alexander,
From his palace afar
Was watching with wonder.

The Pope then decided
To adopt him as a son,
And that was the start
Of the course he had to run.

He studied the scriptures
And the Gospels, world by world,
Till he found the mystery of
The divinity of the Lord.

When Arius began to den
The divinity of the Son,
He knew that he was destined
For a war that has to be won.

Against the heretics
He began to preach and write,
Proclaiming the truth of God.
With all courage and might.

At the Council of Nicea,
The Faith he did uphold,
Defending the Trinity,
And the doctrines taught of old.

He fought for the Faith,
By word and by deed.
And when the war was won.

Your Relationship with the Holy Bible

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

+ Your relationship with the Holy Bible is concentrated in acquiring the Bible, adhering to it, reading, understanding, contemplating, studying and learning it by heart. And, above all, you should behave according to it and train yourself to follow its commandments.

+ To acquire the Bible does not mean to keep it as a rarity on your desk but to have it for your continual use. You take it with you wherever you go, in your pocket or in your hand bag. That makes it easy for you to read it at all times.

+ It is better to read the Bible on regular basis, this must be daily. It is better to read extracts every morning so that they might be the subject of your thoughts and meditations during the day and fill your mind in your getting in and out.

+ Let your reading in the Bible be with understanding, depth and contemplation. It would be better if accompanied by prayer, so you would say with David, "Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your Law."

+ Let your reading be with a solemn spirit so you may benefit from it. Remember how we stand at Church in great reverence to listen to the Holy Bible. Never slacken in reading or be negligent or thoughtless.

+ What is important is not the amount you read but the depth in reading. That comes when the Lord's words penetrate deep into your heart touching your feelings...

+ Try to learn some verses that give certain principles or impressions or some of God's promises and answers to matters that bother you.

+ Repeat these verses in your heart many times with enjoyment that makes them stick to your spirit and depths.

+ Deal with these verses practically. Make them the subject of your spiritual exercises. Thus you turn the Bible into life and it becomes part of you.

+ In your reading do not focus on the letter but the spirit. And if you need help, do not hesitate to ask...

The important thing is to receive a spiritual benefit from reading.

NOTES

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
SECOND SUNDAY

THE DOCTRINES OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA – (II)

Please read the attached material entitled "The Lord, Our Redeemer", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below. (If the teacher wants, he or she can read it in the class and explain as he or she goes along).

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson 2 in a series of 5 lessons on the basic foundation of the Doctrines of our church. In this lesson we will focus on: (1) the Lord's act of redemption and (2) Who is the redeemer?

MEMORY VERSE

"…for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

(1) The Lord's Act of Redemption:

† In many verses in the Old Testament the believers were taught to expect this graceful act of their Lord.

† The Lord Jesus Christ declared that He is the Messiah Son of God whom the world was waiting for: by his miracles, by direct verses, by the transfiguration, by the declaration of St. John the Baptist, by the declaration from heaven and by His Resurrection from the dead and His Ascension to heaven.

† The Lord's redemption is the only way to the kingdom of heavens. We are saved by Jesus Christ "Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame" (Roman 10:11).

† We are granted a new life as believers of Jesus Christ. A new life means that we are reborn in baptism and live a Christian life. "Has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter 1:3

(2) Who is the redeemer?

All the Christian churches had one faith up to year 451 A.D. They overcame various heresies staying one until year 451 A.D. In year 451 a Chalcedonian council was held. In this council the Western churches declared that the personality of the redeemer the Lord Jesus had two natures united. They called themselves "Duophysites". The Eastern churches joined them. The oriental churches (which include the Coptic Orthodox Church) said that the original faith was that Jesus Christ was God Man, one nature of two not two united natures. They called themselves "Miaphysites". All the indications of the scriptures as well as the saying of the fathers of the church and the act of redemption itself shows that the Lord Jesus has one nature of two. Example of this is a piece of iron which is very hot. It has one nature "iron" but it is very hot). Similarly, the personality of the Lord Jesus is unique.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We are not monophysites, but we are miaphysites which means we believe in one compound nature of the Lord Christ composed of two natures.

(2) It appears as if the difference between the two groups of churches which formed in AD 451 is small but it is not. We believe that "And the Word (God) became flesh and dwelt among us..." John 1:14. Hence, the act of incarnation the Word became flesh.

THE LORD, OUR REDEEMER

His Act of Redemption - New Life for Believers:

Like all Christian Churches, The Coptic Church glorifies the Lord for His grace of redemption which He freely offered to man. At many places in the Old Testament, the believers were taught to expect this graceful act of their Lord.

A short time before the crucifixion, the Lord Christ said the parable of the owner of the vineyard who rented it to some tenants that turned to ill-treat his messengers and killed his son in the end. Jesus Christ was referring to Himself being crucified. He then referred to (Psalm 118: 22-23) which speaks of Him being the only way to the kingdom of heavens. “Have you not even read this Scripture: ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?” (Mark 12:10-11).

St. Peter referred to the same and said “Nor is there salvation in any other for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4: 12). St. Paul, referring to Isaiah 28.16 says “For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.’” (Rom.10:1l)

A sincere Jewish Law teacher went at night to the Lord and expressed a sense of great regard to Him and said “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” (John 3:2) Nicodemus wanted to know who Jesus was and to receive a blessing from him. The Lord’s answer was that what counted then was no question of regard for wisdom or power; it was time to believe in redemption and be reborn. (John 3:5)

This is the new life offered to all human beings who follow the Lord. St. Paul says “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles - if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery. As I have briefly written already by which when you read you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His Holy Apostle and Prophets that the gentiles should be fellow of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel. (Eph. 3:1-6). The simple fisherman St. Peter says “According to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away reserved in heaven for you who are kept by

the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in last time." (I Peter 1.3-5).

Who Is The Lord Jesus Christ?

The Coptic Orthodox Churches is one of the groups called the oriental or Non Chalcedonies Orthodox Churches. The separation between these churches and Europe took place in 451 at the time of the Council of Chalcedony.

There was the controversy about the nature of our Lord whether He would be described as having one or two natures. The oriental Churches clung to the idea of the One Nature in Him and are therefore called Miaphysites in contrast with the Duophysites of the West.

There had been two extreme heresies before the division. Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople said that the Lord was a human being, in whom the Holy Spirit came to dwell at baptism also that, in Him, there is fellowship but not unity between the divinity and the humanity. This concept was refuted by St. Cyril of Alexandria and all the Council of Ephesus in 431, as being a denial that Jesus Christ is God Incarnate.

Eutyches, a monk from the monastery outside Constatinople, who fought strongly against Nestorianism, believed that the divine nature of Christ so a bordered the human as to leave it existing only ephemerally. This view was condemned by the whole church as denying our Lord's full humanity.

At the Council of Chalcedon, Western Churches adopted Pope Leo of Rome's Tone which repudiated the Eutychian heresy, but which spoke in a curious way about two natures in our Lord. "The one (the divine)is resplendent with miracles, the second (the human) submits to insults, The word withdraws not from his equality with the Father's glory; the Flesh does not desert the nature of our kind. And so it does not belong to the same nature to say I and the Father are one...." The Orientals felt that this Duophsitism smacked of reversion to Nestorianism, that there was in Christ only a fellowship and not unity between the divinity and the humanity of Jesus. This belief they understood, shook the foundation of our salvation which could only be based on the ground that Christ has one composite nature.

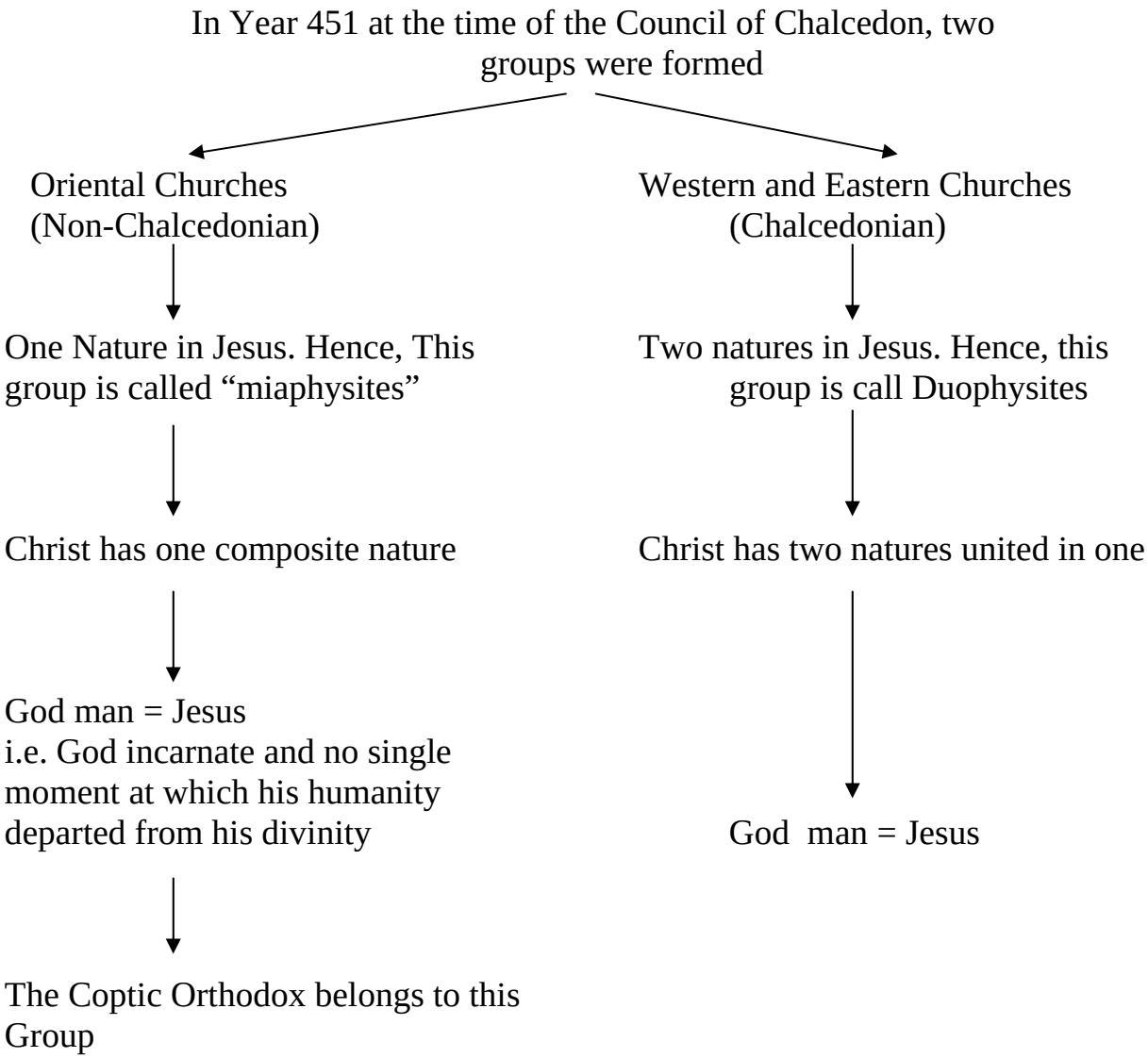
European churches, wrongly envisaged the 'Monophysite" Oriental Churches as Eutychians while the Orientals viewed "duophysitism' to be going hand in hand with Nestorianism.

We believe there was no moment in history at which existed a separate human nature of the Lord to be united to His Divine nature. At the act of incarnation the Word became flesh. "He (= God) dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The Oriental churches have never formulated their Christology in terms of God man = Jesus Christ. They preferred to express their view as God incarnate God man Jesus Christ "that (i.e. God) which was..." (I John 1.1)

Apart from the theological causes of the Schism of 451, recent research has clearly revealed that non-theological factors also contributed to the misunderstanding. Many Church historians have indicated that political divergence even between Imperial and Colonial Churches also played a part in the tragic division of the Church.

The Lord should be praised because the time of emotional controversies has ended. Christians on the various sides can see the right things in each other's doctrines. It is time to express penitence for the past faulty views and acts of ill treatment that befell many good Christians in the name of Him who denied the use of violence.

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?



SAINT ATHANASIUS THE APOSTOLIC

The Defender of the Faith,
The great Saint Athanasius,
Who rescued the whole Church
From the heresy of Arius.

When he was yet a child,
Playing on the beach,
He solemnly preformed
A sacrament of the church.

But he was not aware,
That the Pope, Saint Alexander,
From his palace afar
Was watching with wonder.

The Pope then decided
To adopt him as a son,
And that was the start
Of the course he had to run.

He studied the scriptures
And the Gospels, word by word,
Till he found the mystery of
The divinity of the Lord.

When Arius began to den
The divinity of the Son,
He knew that he was destined
For a war that has to be won.

Against the heretics
He began to preach and write,
Proclaiming the truth of God.
With all courage and might.

At the Council of Nicea,
The Faith he did uphold,
Defending the Trinity,
And the doctrines taught of old.

He fought for the Faith,
By word and by deed.
And when the war was won,

OCTOBER
THIRD SUNDAY

THE DOCTRINES OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA – (III)

Please read the attached material entitled "Salvation, a continuous Process". (If the teacher wants he or she can read in the class and explain as he or she goes along). Give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson 3 in a series of 5 lessons on the basic foundation of the Doctrines of our church. In this lesson we will focus on: (1) God's role in restoring man's son-ship, (2) Man's role in response to God's actions of love. How can man benefit?

MEMORY VERSE

"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace" (John 1:16)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

A. <u>Restoration to God's sons-hip</u>:

❖ Christianity brings man who departed from God because of sin back to his proper position. We know that the reward of sin is death, but our Saviour died for us so that we do not have to die but live.

❖ The sacraments in our church are viewed as actions through which the believer is united with the Lord. When we take communion we are like branches being fed from the tree. But preparations are required before we can come forward and take communion.

B. Man's continuous act of response:

❖ The Lord's act of redemption is complete in its self and sufficient for the cleansing of all human beings at all times and in all places. 'There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ" (Rom. 8:1). The new spiritual life that we receive from Him is similar to that of newly born child who sustain his life from his parents.

C. To maintain the new life:

❖ To be on guard against the ills of the old nature, as the devil will continue to fight through many temptations, we have to be careful.
❖ We need to be nourished on the foods of the new life; this can be achieved by regular prayers, readings of the Bible and regular attendance in the church.
❖ We need to maintain the activity of the new nature. This can be done by living a heavenly life while we are here on earth and lay up for ourselves a treasure in heaven.

What shall we do specifically to maintain the New Life?

❖ We must do positive efforts. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil2:12). Let us take our spiritual life very seriously.

❖ "That man always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). The life of prayers is the back bone of the spiritual life.

❖ We must translate our faith into action and behavior as sons and daughters of God.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) No one can stand blameless in front of God. But a true Christian can stand without condemnation in front of God through the Blood of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ who saved us.

(2) God is so great in His love, mercy and gifts. The important thing is to be able to receive those gifts from God. The Saints are people who are able to humbly respond to God's call of love, receive His gifts and enjoy exercising a true Christian life. The key word is to actually exercise those spiritual acts (prayers, reading the scriptures and partaking of the Holy Communion) to the utmost best efforts of the individual.

Songs

MY COPTIC ORTHODOX 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 Anathony 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

SALVATION IS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

Restoration to God's son-ship

There is a mystery about man's creation that he was completed by a breath of God. He is, in a sense, meant to be a sharer of God's nature. He is made in God's image "in our image, after our likeness (Gen 1:2)...men who have been made in the likeness of God" (James 3:9)

There is this mysterious act that brings man, whose sin has separated him from his God the Father, back to his proper position. God's son was sent "taking the form of a bond servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil: 2:7), even the likeness of sinful flesh, "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh an account of sin, He condemned sin in the flesh." (Rom. 8:3)

The Lord made us branches in Him once more to live with Him forever. "And of His fullness we have all revived and grace for grace." (John 1:16). "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. We all, however, with an 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. (II Cor. 3 17=18). "those who were created in His own image are no more alien to Him, but have been called "to His own glory, and become partakers of the divine nature"." (II Peter 2: 3=4). Having been recreated in Him, they continue to live on Him for ever. "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (I John 3:2) "Assuredly I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (Mark 14.25)

It is in this concept that the sacraments are viewed in the Oriental Church. They are actions, through which the believer is made part of, growing in the Lord. The Lord's supper, for instance, cannot be merely a meal of commemoration of sharing food and drink but a fact that becomes the sharing of the substance of the stem.

Man's continuous act of response

The Lord's act of redemption is complete in itself, sufficient for the cleansing of all human beings, "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). The New Life that we receive from Him is similar to when children are born. They are fully, not partially born from their mothers. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellent, by which He has

granted to us His precious and very great promises" (II Pet. 3=4).

This life, however, has to be maintained healthy and in continuous growth. To achieve this, it could be said that a Christian has to be responding in three directions:

a. To be on guard against the ills of the Old Nature
b. To be nourished on the foods of the new life;
c. To maintain the activity of the new nature as well as the functioning and the productivity of its powers.

St. Peter proceeds, from the previous passage, to say ".. .that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (II Pet. 1:4)

The Lord who said "....For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Mat. 11:30) said also "Go in through the narrow gate, because the gate to hell is wide and the road that leads to it is easy, and there are many who travel it. But the gate to life is narrow and the way that leads to it is hard, and there are few people who find it." (Mat 7.13-4). "Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation." (Phil 2. 12)That is why I run straight for the finishing-line; that is why I am a boxer who does not waste his punches. I harden my body with blows and bring it under complete control, to keep myself from being disqualified after having called others to the contest." (I Cor. 9:26-27).

These are blessings obtained through private and commune relation with the Lord. Prayer is to be practiced individually communally and at all times "That men always ought to pray and not lose heart." (Luke 18-1). The Scriptures are another fundamental source of power. "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Mat. 4:4). Spiritual gatherings for worships, Study and praise are a basis for life. Fasts and contributing to the needs of other are proper acts of worship. "I appeal to you; offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God-what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect," (Rom. 12:1-2).

As for active functioning, St. Peter again say; "For this very reason do your best to add goodness to your faith; to our goodness add knowledge; to your knowledge add self control; to your self control add endurance to your endurance add godliness to your godliness add brotherly affection, and to your brotherly affection

add love. These are the qualities you need, and if you have them in abundance they will make you active and effective in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is so short-sighted that he cannot see and has forgotten that he has been purified from his past sins. So then, my brothers **,** try even harder to make God's cal and his choice of you a permanent experience, if you do so, you will never abandon your faith. In this way you will be given the full right to enter the eternal Kingdom of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (II Peter 1:5-11).

St. Paul also says "Having then gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. If prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving, he who teaches..., when who exhorts..., he who contributes..., love one another with brotherly affection... Never flag zeal, be aglow with the Spirit. (Rom. 12:6-11).

"Hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Thes. 5:22-23)**.** "For salvation is nearer to us now than we first believed." (Rom. 13:11)

NOTES

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
FOURTH SUNDAY

THE DOCTRINES OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA (IV)

Please read the attached material entitled "The Sacraments, practices of sanctification". If the teacher wants he or she can read in the class and explain to the students as he or she goes along. Please read also the attached article entitled "How can you confess?" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson 4 in a series of 5 lessons on the basic foundation of the Doctrines of our church. In this lesson we focus on the three parts of Christianity: (1) Belief, (2) Acceptance of the mystery of recreation (Baptism) and (3) continuous participation in the new life (Communion).

MEMORY VERSE

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

Man's Whole Nature:

- God's dwelling in man is a mystery in itself "You are the altar of God and the spirit of God is inside you." God's dwelling in man cannot be measured; it can only be experienced.
- Christianity consists of belief, joyful acceptance of the mystery of recreation and continuous participation in the new life. Remember also that everything in Christianity is based on God's love for each one of us and His desire to enter into a fellowship and love with each of us.

The Sacraments:

❖ The sacraments are means of sanctification that are granted to the church believers through the salvation that was completed on the Cross by the Lord.

Baptism: The believer is cleansed from the life of death with which he was born. (1Peter 3:21)

Confirmation: The dwelling of the Holy Spirit in us, (Acts 19:2-7)

Penance: Restoration to full communion with Christ. (1 John 1:9)

Holy Communion: The believer is reconfirmed in the Lord. (John 6:56)

The Unction of the sick: 'is any among you sick? Let him call the priests of the church...." (James 5:14-15)

Matrimony: The sacrament of marriage. "And the two shall become one" (Mark 10: 9-10)

Holy Order: It is the sacrament through which the clergy are ordained (1Tim 4:14)

❖ We must not separate the sacraments from the central process of salvation. The sacrament must go hand in hand with faith. Unfaithfulness on the part of the believer make him incapable of benefiting from the grace offered to him.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Repentance, confession and communion is the way of sanctification for a Christian when he or she falls into sin.

(2) Confession does not mean getting rid of old sins to start new ones. But confession means true repentance and insistence on having righteous life asking God to help you achieve this.

Songs

MY COPTIC ORTHODOX 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 Anathony 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

The Sacraments - "Practices of Sanctification"

Man Whole Nature

The relationship between God and the believers is not one of intellectual response in which, for example, He gives and they receive or He commands and they obey. The religious experience is rather an involvement. Christianity is not a theory or a gospel to be taught. The new life, the change of nature which the faithful person goes under is a fact, and it takes place through a totally divine act. "for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). That God's spirit dwells in man is not based on any human virtue, but is favor of His grace.

Moreover, God's dwelling in man is a mystery in itself. It cannot be subjected to human measure; it can only be experienced. When Nicodmus wanted to hear about this invisible operation, the Lord illustrated it with simple emphasis "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit... .we speak and testify of what we know and to what we have seen." (John 3:8-11)

Christianity of the middle ages in Europe might have misinterpreted the mysterious work of God in people when it deprived it of the conscious belief and response on man's part. The following ages highlighted the individual's awareness of the work of redemption. The Christian experience may be explained briefly to consist of belief, joyful acceptance of the mystery of recreation and continuous conscious participation in the new eternal life.

Sanctification - A Continuous Act

In the story of creation, God rested on the Sabbath, but ever since then, He has been continuously at work, maintaining the created universe. The act of the new creation of man was achieved during the period of His incarnation. This period came to an end, but the work of the renewal of the creatures is continuous.

A Christian has to be aware of this fellowship with the Lord. He prays to Him, praises Him, listens to and obeys God's instructions. He always has to be responsive to His purifying and regenerating activity.

The Sacraments

The Sacraments are continuous means of sanctification. A believer is sanctified through baptism, and is cleansed from the life of death with which he was born. "Baptism' says St. Peter "Which corresponds to this (The Ark of Noah) now saves you, not as removal of dirt from the body, but as and appeal to God for a clear conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 3:21)

The dwelling of the Holy Spirit takes place through confirmation of "Chrismation" which was originally the laying of the bishop's hands. "And they said" no, we have never heard that there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, 'into what were you baptized?" They said "Into John's baptism." And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is in Jesus." On hearing this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them the Holy Spirit came on them. (Acts 19:2-7). The combined act of Baptism and confirmation is the gift of the new life. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Gal 3:27).

Yet a Christian is liable to commit mistakes and therefore must be available to him a way to be continuously cleansed and restored to full communion with Christ. He has, to offer his feet to the Church, to be washed and dried. If he refrains from doing so, he loses his position in the Lord. "If do not wash you (your feet) you have no part in me." (John 13:8). The Sacrament of penance brings us into this process of the renewed action of purification. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, will forgive your sins and cleanse us from all of our unrighteousness."
(I John 1:9). the initial act of cleansing in baptism cannot be repeated; its work is to be renewed in Penance. "He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over." (John 13:10).

In the sacrament of the Holy Communion, the believer is reconfirmed in the Lord. "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him." (John 6:56). Accordingly, the Coptic Orthodox Church allows children to take communion since baptism.

The Unction of the Sick also has a clear place in the life of the Church. 'is any among you sick? Let him call the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him. Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord...." (James 5:14-15). whenever a believer is ill, he may ask to be anointed; the unction of the Sick is not reserved only of those at the point of death.

Christian marriage is not simply a transaction between two individuals. It is a bond which the Lord himself forms and sanctifies “And the two shall become one. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” (Mark 10:9-10). “A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. This is a great mystery.” (Eph 5:31-32).

Priesthood is a great sacramental gift for the maintenance and solidarity of the Christian community, the church, and the member individuals. God bestows upon a certain man the power to officiate the sacraments and undertake the pastoral responsibilities of the flock. “This is how one should regard us, as savants of Christ and stewards of the secrets of God.” (I co. 4:1). The Holy Spirit grants him these powers through the prayer of the bishops (successors of the Apostles) and the laying on of their hands. “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” (I Tim 4:14).

Their Foundation

The administration of these acts of sanctification was entrusted to the disciples by the Lord whom He trained for this job. For instance, He baptized people (John 3:22) and had the disciples baptize under His supervision (John 4:1-2). They anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.” (Mark 6:13). They received the capacity to declare the forgiveness of sins. “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mat. 18:18).

Nevertheless, the believer must never fall into the error of separating the function and efficacy of the sacraments from the central process of salvation and redemption and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The sacraments are based on God’s redeeming activity, and laws go hand in hand with conscious faith. The efficacy of the sacraments depends, on God’s unfailing promises and the work of the Holy Spirit. But Unfaithfulness on the part of the believer renders him incapable of benefiting from the grace offered to him; and insincerity on the part of the priest makes him an unworthy instrument - deserves condemnation. Thus the sacramental gift of the Church demands that the believer be involved with and committed to the mystery in which he participates constantly renewing his responsiveness and submission to the work of salvation which God is accomplishing in him. In this way he is sanctified and grows in communion with God.

HOW TO CONFESS ?
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Confession is not to sit and tell stories. You might spend a long time talking about your tales with people, without referring to what wrong you have done!

But confession is to judge yourself...

It is condemning yourself in front of God and within the hearing of a priest...

You say: I sinned by doing this and that...

Confession is not to complain about others and to explain people's wrong doings to you. It is to condemn yourself...

Therefore, confession is not to sit with your confession father and blame him and reproach him for neglecting to visit you or direct you, how he did not follow your case or ask about you or give you any spiritual training. In all this you are not judging yourself or referring to your faults... you are in fact judging your confession father!!

Confession is not just being freed of old sins to fall in new ones, without changing your spiritual state.

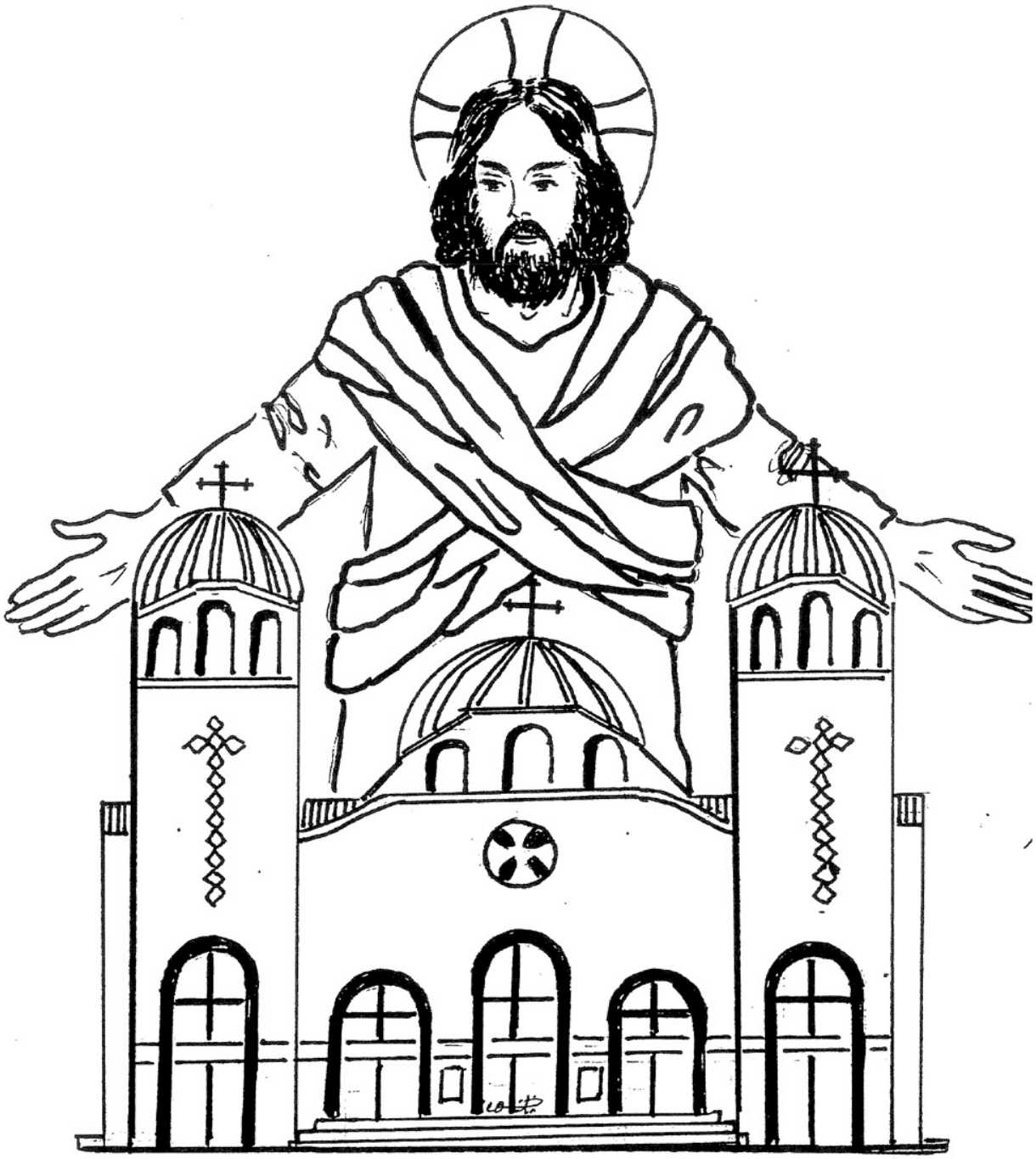
Confession means repentance, therefore it is called the Sacrament of Repentance.

Confession is not determining in your heart to do something and asking your confession father to agree with you. Otherwise you become upset and persist in asking for his approval, pretending that you are not acting according to your wish, but on the advice of your confession father! !

Confession is to explain your case and humbly ask for guidance. Confession is not just sitting with the priest anywhere, even in a friendly way. It is not a matter of talking to him and letting him use his intelligence to guess what fault you fell in.

Confession is a holy sacrament that has its reverence. By doing it, you feel that you regret what you did and confess to God your sins, while the priest is listening.
Confession is to sit with yourself first, to examine and know all its faults and weaknesses. Then you rebuke yourself for all of that and determine to lead a virtuous life, asking for God's help...

Then, you come to your confession father with a contrite heart. You tell him what you have done wrong, ask for forgiveness and remission, seek advice and guidance and prayer for yourself...



NOVEMBER
FIRST SUNDAY

THE DOCTRINES OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA – (V)

Please read the attached material entitled "The Church, the Campus of All", (If the teacher wants he or she can read in the class and explain to the students as he or she goes along) and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below. Please read also the attached article entitled "Division".

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

- This is lesson 5 in a series of 5 lessons on the basic foundation of the Doctrines of our church. In this lesson we will focus on the church "the Body of Christ".

MEMORY VERSE

"…the head over all things to the church, which is His Body" Eph. 1:22-23

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

A. <u>The Church is the Body of</u> <u>Christ</u>:

- After man had lost his holiness, God re-created him though His incarnation. "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). It is repeatedly said that the church is the Body of Christ. By receiving communion, we also receive the Lord Jesus and the church inside us. Therefore, the church (which is the community of the believers) becomes the Body of Christ. When we say that the church is the Body of Christ we mean what St. Paul said: "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and

gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord one faith one baptism one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4:1-6)

It means we as Christians must have the thinking of Christ, the unity in Christ, the love of Christ, and the unity in Spirit. The thinking in Christ must be pure, impartial and heavenly.

We have to eliminate all differences and maintain the unity of Spirit and peace. The devil would like to cause problems and break the unity of the Church, homes and the community. We have to be aware of that and defeat all his attempts by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. <u>The Church is in Heaven and on Earth</u>:

The Lord's Body includes the believers who are still striving on earth as well as the victorious in heaven. The believers' communion with the Lord is, at the same time, communion with the saints whether they are still in the flesh or beyond it.
Our communion with the saints is strong; their care for us is great and their prayers for us are very helpful.
The Saints pray on our behalf but do not have a redemption work for our salvation. Only our Lord Jesus can give salvation for His believers. Read (I Tim 2:5-6.) But the saints, can pray on our behalf so that God may have mercy on us. Read (Rev. 8:4).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We are sons and daughters of God. We are members of a church which is the Body of Christ. We must look at the saints as good examples for us (Please give examples of saints). We must believe that the Lord Jesus is our only way of salvation.

(2) If we are the Body of Christ we must be united: in thinking, in intentions and in love. Nothing can destroy the church or the family or the community more than division. The devils always attempt to cause division.

(3) To be united we have to respect one another and to practice bridging the gaps in opinion with others.

Songs

JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

"Now you are the body of Christ and members individually." (1Cor 12:27)

REFRAIN

Jesus Christ our Lord Saviour of my soul

Let my thoughts be Your thoughts that is all in all

Let my senses be Your senses that is all in all

Let my heart be Your heart that is all in all

Let my will be Your will that is all in all

Let my deeds be Your deeds that is all in all

Let my way be Your way that is all in all

DIVISION
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

One of the saints once said, "If ten thousand angels assembled together, they would have one opinion, but when few humans gather together, they disagree!..

Division could be an evidence of the existence of the self...

The self that works on its own, far from the Spirit of God:

+ which aims at enforcing its own opinion, no matter what the outcome would be...

+ which does not care about the dangerous results that are caused by division!

What are these consequences?... A writer once said ***"Two eagles had a fight over a prey; it was taken by the fox... "***

For this, the Lord Jesus said, *"Every city or house divided against itself will not stand. " (Matt 12:25)* Splitters always forget this saying.

Very often, a group would take an act of division and leaves behind a ruined atmosphere, then goes its own way as if it has done nothing! But God seeks the blood of what its actions destroyed...

Division among brothers is a sign of lack of love...

The division of the young against the old means rebellion, lack of obedience and lack of respect to superiors... These are all sins.

Division also proves pride in oneself or selfimportance. Most likely, the Confession Father is left out of all this; he is not consulted...

In St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, he rebuked them for their division and described them as being carnal (1 Cor. 3), as the splitters are far from the unity of the Spirit.

Members of the one body collaborate together for the good of that body.

If they all felt this unity, they would work jointly for the good that everyone is aiming at.

Unity needs respecting others' opinion, or at least training oneself to do so, without revolt, anger, defamation of others or destruction...

A piece of advice to anyone who leads away of division:

+ Try to gain others instead of splitting from them.

+ Be objective and stay away from personal affairs.

+ Train yourself to co-operate with the spirit of a group.

THE CHURCH, THE CAMPUS OF ALL

The Church Is The Body Of Christ

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust on the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being." (Gen. 2:7) There is no wonder that after man had lost his holiness, God re-created him through the physical involvement with Himself "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14). The Church (ecclesia = community) is His body. "And He is the head of the body, the church ... (Col. 1:18).

Three Significances:

The word "church" has three significances:

A) The community of believers "and great fear came upon the whole church..." (Acts 5:11).

B) The Clergy: "And if he refuses to hear them (mediators) tell it to the Church, Assuredly, I say to you whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Mat 18: 17-18).

C) The house or the meeting place, which is the common usage. See (I Cor. 14:19 and 34). Through the Coptic liturgy, there are three intercessions repeated many times which encompass the various aspects of the church, the Intercession for the community, (generally known as the intercession for peace), that of the Fathers and the third, for Congregational houses

The Church is in Heaven and on Earth

The Lord's body includes the believers who are still striving on Earth as well as the victors in Heaven. "And by Him to reconcile all things to Him by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven." (Col. 1:20) The believers' communion with the Saints occurs whether they are still in the flesh or beyond it. All join in praising the Lord, in supplication and brotherly love.

In the metaphysical world, distance loses significance. A spirit can see things at very large distance and can cross space in no time. The spirits' capacity for knowledge is incredibly greater than humans on earth. "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimiy, but then face to

face. Now know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known." (by heavenly creatures) (1 Cor. 13:11-12). Our communion with the saints is strong, their care for us is great, and their prayers for us are very helpful.

Nevertheless, we do not believe they have any co-redemptive powers. "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all." (I Tim 2:5-6) The saints do not give bounty to striving humans out of the surplus of their benevolence achieved during their early life. However, no matter how good a person is, he is imperfect in comparison with the Lord. The indispensable role of the heavenly spirits - angels and human - is in their prayers and supplications. "Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand." (Rev 8:3-4)

It is noteworthy that through communion there are prayers on both sides - earthly and heavenly. During the Liturgy, there is a part of the commemoration of these saints in which some are mentioned in name and 'all the others' in general. The response of the congregation is uniquely significant for the practice of mutual prayers. "Their holy blessing be with us all. Amen. Glory be to thee, Lord. Lord have mercy upon us, Lord, give us their blessing. Lord give rest to them, Amen."

Lisa Bocler

NOVEMBER

SECOND SUNDAY
WHO IS THE REAL RICH PERSON?

Please read (Luke 16:1 9-3-1), the attached article entitled "Evaluation and Priorities", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

To emphasize that the real value of human beings is not in what they own but in their share in eternal Life. In this lesson we focus on the evaluation and priorities in life. If one gives his or her share in heaven as the highest priority, then he or she will be in the right track.

MEMORY VERSE

"So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom." Luke 16:22

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

INTRODUCTION

What is your definition of success?

- Success means different things to different people. To some people success means wealth and good career. To wise people, success means peace, happiness, and a strong relationship with God which guarantees a place in heaven.

Who are the Pharisees?

- People who are very proud of themselves and their achievements and who ignore and refuse to help poor people. They are surely mistaken in what true Christianity is. (Luke 16:14) "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him." The Pharisees' love for money led them to refusing to recognize the Saviour because He was poor.

They were blinded by money and missed their own salvation.

- ❖ Please read the parable in (Luke 16: 19-3-1) and give a detailed description as you go along. It would be useful to put it in a storytelling fashion to make it more effective.

What is honourable for a human being?

- ❖ It is our personality and what we do in following God's will. It is not an honour for a person to love money and hate eternal life. It is also not honourable to live without feelings of love towards others.

- ❖ The Lord Jesus praised the people who were considerate to the poor and needy and filled them with love. Please read (Luke 21: 1-3) "And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all."

- ❖ Lazarus did not have clothes to completely cover his body. When death came to him, he was not tied up with any love to money or to the world, but he was pleased to be with Jesus in heaven. On the other hand, when death came to the rich man, he felt very bad. He did not want to leave the money that he loved and all that he owned. He was forced to leave and go to a place where he will suffer forever. Which man would you consider to be rich?

- ❖ Lazarus died and started to enjoy heaven forever. The so called "rich man" died and started to suffer forever. Which man would you consider rich?

Why did one of them gain eternal life and the other one lost it?

- ❖ The reason is not because one was rich and one was poor. Gaining eternal life depends on worshipping God with a pure heart that is full of love. David was rich and he was good. St. Anthony became poor by his choice and he was good. Hence, the value of a human being is not measured by what they have, and what they do not have; but by the depth of their love and life with God.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) True success can be achieved by focusing on the strength from inside, This can be achieved by the life of prayers and following the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) Let us re-evaluate our priorities in life. We must give the highest priority to our prayers and our fellowship with God.

(3) If we have our share in eternal life as the highest priority, then we will be careful with what we say or do so that we do not lose our heavenly share.

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

Evaluation and Care
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Your concern or lack of care about every matter depends on your evaluation of it. This shows that evaluation is of great importance.

For example, if you neglected praying, this would be an implied confession that you do not care about prayer, whether as a means for solving your problems or for expressing the love that exists between you and God.

Do not deceive yourself and do not try to defend. It is the truth.

Since you put praying last on your list - if there is time left you would pray and if not, you would not without feeling any loss or danger.. if that is the case and praying does involve your concern, then it is of little value in your opinion. No doubt also that throughout your life, you depend on the human power and not on God...!

If you ask me: What can I do to pray! Do I force myself? I'll say that it is more important for you to feel the value of prayer, for your life on the earth and for your eternity.

The same applies to other matters.

Your evaluation of people's feelings makes you care about the way you deal with them and the style and words you use when talking to them.

Your evaluation of the importance of friendship and of gaining people's love makes you careful about them so you would not lose any one, endure and sacrifice for this...

Your evaluation of eternity and its importance makes you precise in your life on the earth; you will try not to sin so you would not lose your eternity... When you sin, it proves that eternity at that time has no value in your opinion.

Your evaluation of time decides the way you spend it...

The one who spends his life in extravagance, in trifles, admits that time has no value in his life...

Your evaluation of sins, dividing them into big sins and small sins makes you negligent about the small sins and your conscious would not trouble you when committing or confessing them.!

I wish you would reconsider your way of evaluating many points.

Perhaps there are serious matters which you make light of when evaluating them.

NOTES

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

NOVEMBER
THIRD SUNDAY

HOW TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE?

Please read Roman 12:9-21, the attached articles entitled "How to deal with people?", "When should you speak?" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

To learn the Christian way of dealing with people. To deal with people effectively, one should listen more and speak less.

MEMORY VERSE

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep"(Rom. 12:15).

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

INTRODUCTION

- It is not easy to deal with various people and be in peace with them. Be a good example and be firm in keeping your values. The Holy Bible is an excellent guide to help you achieve effective relationships with people.

- One can summarize the Christian way of dealing with people as follows: Take the Lord Jesus as your example. See what He did with people when He was on earth and behave in kindness and love to others as He did. This can be detailed in: Do not compete with others, tolerate others, praise, respect, and encourage people, do not criticize them, excuse them, and give generously. Be humble with people, understand them and share their feelings.

- If you want to get a good result from talking to people, one has to select the

proper timing to talk, to select the proper words to say things in a proper voice and respect the people in front of you.

The question now is how to deal with personal conflicts when they arise?

- ❖ Be assured of God's love: "all things work together for good to those who love God." (Romans 8:28).

- ❖ God gives us strength to face all conditions. (Philippians 4:12).

- ❖ Return good for evil. (Matthew 5:38-48) and (Luke 6: 27-36).

- ❖ Settle conflicts in a loving way:
  Settle differences privately as friends/brothers. (Matthew 5:21-26).
  Do not judge other's motives. (Matthew 7:1-6).
  Help restore wrong-doers to the fellowship. (Galatians 6:1-5).

- ❖ If we deal in a Christian way with other people, we are actually glorifying God's name, as He said "That they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt 5:16).

- ❖ If we want God to be kind to us, we have to be kind to other people. "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged." (Matthew 7:2).

- ❖ Put yourself in other people's situations and think from their point of view, then you will understand them more and learn to treat them nicely without conflicts.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) To improve in dealing with people is very important. To achieve it, one has to pray for it and try hard.

(2) Talk only when it is proper to talk. Remember that "listening is loving".

(3) Try your utmost best not to enter into a conflict with anyone.

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

WHEN DO YOU TALK?
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

If you talk just for the sake of talking, that is one thing.

If you want to achieve something through your talk, that is a different matter, which makes you talk objectively and effectively.

In this latter case, you need some useful advice:

+ Talk when there is an ear ready to listen to you. If you find that the person to whom you are talking is not listening to you, stop talking. Do not talk to a person who is exhausted or tired, either physically or psychologically or who is under pressure...

Do not talk to a person who is busy and has no time to listen to you, or does not have the time to understand and discuss your point of view...

As it has been wisely said, *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. " (Prov 25:11).*

Before you talk to a person, choose the right time, when he is feeling the best, to present your opinion and he will be ready, in heart and mind, to listen and understand you, and accept your talk...

If you want your talk to be effective:

Win your listeners, then you'll win the talk and its outcome.

Many aim at winning the discussion by any means, even by losing the one to whom they are talking... which results in the loss of everything. Logic alone is not enough without the psychological side...

1. The one who defeats his discussant and proves him wrong, especially in the presence of others, could never gain anything good from this person...

2. Whoever interrupts who speaks to him, without giving him a chance to talk, and answers back before the speech is finished and acts as an opponent, will never

find in the heart of his discussant the ability to respond or be convinced, no matter how logical his opinion may be.

3. The one who mocks the ideas of another, showing how they are weak and rivial, impractical and illogical, will also achieve no result...

Therefore, respect the opinion of the other speaker, no matter how much you are against him...
Answer him politely and courteously...

Try and reach the heart of the one you speak with, before, you reach his mind. Then surely you'll win the heart as well as the mind.

HOW TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE?

There are many ways which allow you to deal with people and get to their hearts. By this you lead them with love in a spiritual way. “And he who wins souls is wise.” (Prov. 11:30)

1. Be an example to the people in your life, to live the idealities which they look forward to.
2. Desire not what is in the people’s hands so they will love you. Do not make others feel that you are competing with them to get your hands on what they have or what they are after.
3. Tolerate others in time of weakness. Win them to your side through patience, forgiveness and an open heart. They will definitely be ashamed of themselves for their trespassing against you.
4. Praise people and show appreciation for them. Show your admiration and awareness of the good deeds they do.
5. Respect others and treat all in politeness not only the elders and these who are superior, but also the young and those who are less than you.
6. Encourage people and never let them down.
7. Do not criticize people but if you have to, let your words be kind and not to hurt or mistrust them. Do not be a hawk hunting for their mistakes and do not make them feel that you are their critic or enemy.
8. Excuse people and defend them as much as you can in truth without hypocrisy
9. Give generously with sacrifice. Those you cannot help, give them a kind word, a gentle smile or a true compliment. Fulfill your responsibility towards all people.
10. Deal with people in humility and meekness, kindness and gentleness, for these are the fruits of the spirit. (Gal. 5:22)
11. Understand people and let them understand you quietly, with good spirit. Live with them in love and mutual understanding.
12. Share with people their compassion “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” (Rom. 12:15)

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NOVEMBER
FOURTH SUNDAY

LESSON BENEFITED FROM THE LIFE OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Please read Luke 14:25-35, the attached article entitled "The Truth", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

To study the life of St. John Chysostom "The golden mouth" and benefit from it. The focus here is on his witness to the truth regardless of the outcome. He had no fear of anyone.

MEMORY VERSE

"and whoever does not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

❖ St. John Chrysostom was born in 347 AD in Antioch-Syria. He was very well known as a great public speaker. The name "Chrysostom" means the "Golden Mouth." St. John became the Patriarch of Constantinople. He was exiled many times for his outspoken criticism of the Royal court. He preferred to be exiled rather than to stay on his throne as a Patriarch and compromise his values. He always said the truth regardless of the outcome.

❖ He was born to a very rich family. They raised him very well. His parents sent him to Athens which was the most well known place for education. He was brilliant. He left the world and became a monk at an early age. When his father passed away he did not take any of the money that was left for him. He left all the money for the poor.

❖ **Remember that we, as children of God, were given our parents to help us to be raised well. But we must listen, cooperate and obey.**

❖ He was given a special talent from the Holy Spirit. He wrote many books.

❖ He was ordained a priest by the guidance of an angel to St. Phiabianos, If you go to any school of theology you will find many of his books still being used as text books for graduate and post-graduate students. Some pursue a Masters degree or a Ph.D. to understudy part of his work.

❖ He became Patriarch of Constantinople. He taught his people very well, not only by his writings and sermons but also by his good example in love, sacrifices, and dedication to righteously living with God.

❖ One time Queen Ozeksia (the wife of King Arkdius) took by force a garden that belonged to a poor widow. The widow complained to the Patriarch (St. John) who tried hard to convince the Queen to return the garden. When she refused, he stopped her from entering the church and from taking communion. Then her husband exiled him. The whole congregation came around the palace shouting all night. There was a huge thunderstorm, so that all the people including the Queen thought that it was a sign that he must come back from exile. They brought him back.

❖ Remember that the church authorities treat all people the same way regardless of their jobs or their abilities. The people of the church must be fair as Christ was fair. Also, taking communion requires repentance, confession, and humility. The church has the authority to stop an individual from taking communion if he or she has not achieved the requirements for taking communion.

❖ After he returned, the same Queen ordered a big statue for her made of silver to be placed in the largest center of the town. After they placed the statue it became a place of dancing. St. John Chrysostom criticized this action. He was exiled again. This time for long time until he passed away. Remember what St. John The Baptist did with King Herod who wanted to take the wife of his brother to be his wife.

❖ Please read also (Luke 14:25-35).

❖ God sent his prophets to say the truth and witness to it.

❖ We celebrate the Feast day of St. John, the Golden mouth, on the 17th of Hatour (around November 26) every year.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us rely on God, do our best, and stick to our values.

(2) We must be careful in all our actions. We must not deviate from the truth. We must also stick to the truth in all our actions.

Songs

WHEN HE LEADS ME I WILL FOLLOW

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

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

The Truth
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

As God is Love, He is also the Truth. He said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. " (Jn. 14:6).*

And about Himself He said also, *"...And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. " (Jn. 8:32)*

So, he who sticks to the truth, is attached to God Himself. And he who keeps away from the truth, keeps away from God...

Therefore, a believer is said to be a truthful or an upright person.

He knows the truth, walks in the way of truth, says the truth and accepts nothing but the truth.

For the sake of the truth, he fears no blame.

He says the truth, whatever the consequences may be, as in the case of John the Baptist who said the truth and paid the price.

The truthful person says the truth even against himself, or his dearest ones; he does not treat with partiality.

God sent the prophets to witness for the truth in a world where evil prevailed among people. He also sent the pastors, priests and teachers to witness for the truth.

The purpose of judiciary in the world is to witness for the truth.

The Faculty of Law is named in Arabic "Faculty of Justice" because the word "Justice" is more effective than the word "law".

How nice is the Bible's saying about being just in judgment even in the normal dealings among people: *"He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord. " (Prov. 17:15).*

Look at yourself; are you always on the side of justice and truth?

Are all your words true and sincere, whether in what you utter or in what you want your listener to understand?

Do you favour any of your friends, relatives or beloved ones, and for his sake you do not mind telling the news in a way which is good to him, even if it hurts the others?

Do you follow the truth in your practical life, principles and beliefs, and not only in your talks?

Do you restore to the others their rights with you?

Is the truth lost because of your exaggerations, jokes and justifications?

62

DECEMBER
FIRST SUNDAY

THE FAST OF NATIVITY

Please read the attached materials entitled "The fast of Nativity", "Fasting and its spirituality", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

- To encourage students to fast and pray. Emphasize the meaning and the purpose of the nativity fast.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"I tell you this man (tax collector) went down to his house justified rather than the other (Pharisee)."***
> ***Luke 18:14***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

- Please start by reading Luke 18:9-14 to illustrate the good and the bad ways of fasting. Emphasize that fasting is not to show off or a mere habit. It is a "real life" that is associated with spiritual feelings and growth.

- Fasting is not just avoidance of certain kinds of food for a period of time. It is a spiritual act and spiritual method that affects not only what we eat but also what we say and do. It must be accompanied by humility and prayers. Fasting is then the method that helps the transfer of the flesh desires into spiritual growth.

- The church determines certain fasts by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There are two types:
    1. Fasting related to certain occasions such as the 'Fast of the Nativity' and the 'Forty days fast.'
    2. Fasting in itself (away from being tied with any occasion) is also practiced and is very beneficial. The Lord Jesus Christ said about the evil

spirits that, “this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:2 1)

- The fast of nativity helps us grow spiritually and be more attached to God. When we celebrate Christmas we accept with joy the mystery of God’s incarnation and the birth of our Lord Jesus from the Virgin Mary. The ordinary person who indulges in food, drinking; and parties cannot celebrate Christmas in a spiritual way. With fasting before Christmas we prepare our minds and souls to concentrate on the love of God for us because He came for us.

- The Nativity fast in our church is known as the “rejoice fast” because we are celebrating the happiest occasion in the history of mankind which is the birth of the Lord Jesus. All the Hymns in the church have a special joyous tune in them. The church spends every Saturday night for four weeks (the month of Kiahk) before Christmas Eve in singing, praying, and praising God.

- When we fast before Christmas we witness to Christ who is living among us. At the same time the church gives new power to the believers to have Christ in their lives. Remember: “Emanuel” means “God is with us.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Preparation is needed to celebrate any important occasion. To celebrate Christmas (i.e. God is with us) one has to fast in order to be ready for this holy occasion and to get its blessings in his or her life.

(2) Fasting gives the individual the virtue of “self-control”. This virtue is very important in both the spiritual life and the practical daily life.

(3) In addition to abstaining from food during fasting, one has to nourish his or her soul with spiritual nourishment. The non-spiritual fasting (i.e. without spiritual nourishment) is not accepted by God.

Songs

THY MERCIES, O MY GOD

Thy mercies, O my God
And Thy tender mercies

are countless
are too plenteous

All the rain drops
And the sand of the sea

are counted by Thee
is before Thine eyes.

How much more are
Manifest before

the sins of my soul
Thee, O my God

The sins that I have done
And count not

remember not my Lord
my iniquities

For Thou has chosen the publican
And the right-hand thief

the adultress Thou hast saved
Thou hast remembered

And me too
Teach me, O my Master

the sinner
to offer repentance

For Thou desirest not
But rather that he

the death of a sinner
returns and lives

Restore us, O God
And deal with us

to Thy salvation
according to Thy goodness.

For Thou art good
Let Thy tender mercies

and merciful
speedily prevent us

Have compassions on us all
And have mercy upon us

O Lord, God and Saviour
according to Thy great mercies.

Remember those
Be Thou amongst us

O Christ our Master
and proclaim and say :

My peace I
The peace of My Father

Give unto you
I leave unto you

O King of peace
Accord to us Thy peace

give us Thy peace
and forgive our sins

Disperse the enemies
Fortify her

of the church
and establish her forever

Emmanuel our God
In the glory of His Father

is now in our midst
and the Holy Spirit

FASTING AND ITS SPIRITUALITY
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Fasting is not just a bodily virtue... It is not just abstaining from food for a period of time then not eating food with animal fat. There is a spiritual element in it...

he first spiritual element is controlling the will. With the same will that regulated food, one can command one's talking by not using unsuitable expressions as well as controlling thoughts and feelings. Mar Isaac said, *"Abstinence of the tongue is better than abstinence of the mouth; and abstinence of the heart is better than both."*

The second element in the spiritual fast is repentance:

In the fasting of Nineveh, we notice that the people did not only abstain from eating but, "everyone turned from his evil way and from the violence that was in his hands. " God looked to the repentance more than the fasting, "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God relented from the disaster that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it. " (Jn 3:8-10).

So fasting has to be accompanied by humility and contrition in front of God as it was clear in the fasting of the people of Nineveh. They also covered themselves with sackcloth and sat in ashes. It is also clear in Joel, *"Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly... Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room. Let the priests, who minister to the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, let them say, spare your people, O Lord...' " (Joel 2: 15 - 17).*

Fasting does not mean just depriving the body of its food, but there must be a positive side, which is the feeding of the spirit.

Therefore, fasting is con nected with prayer as in the Church's prayers and as it happened in all the well known fasts in the Bible such as that of Nehemiah, Ezra, Daniel and the people of Nineveh.

This is evident in the saying, *"call a sacred assembly... "*

It is a spiritual opportunity to mortify the body in order to elevate the spirit:

Mortifying the body is just a means, but the aim is to elevate the spirit through prayers, meditation, readings and all the means of grace, far from bodily hindrances...

We have to remember here that God rejects the fasting which is not spiritual: as the hypocrites' fasting (Mt 6:2), and the Pharisee (Lk 18:11) and the wrong way of fasting, described by Isaiah. (Is. 58:3-7).

THE FAST OF NATIVITY
"This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21)

All the Fathers of the church taught us, and they themselves practiced, the discipline of fasting. Around the year 396 AD, St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan in Italy, wrote in his letters teaching the Christians of Italy about fasting, telling them the following:

> "Therefore also the Lord Jesus Christ wishing to make us more strong against the temptations of the devil, fasted when He was about to fight with him. That we might know that we can in no other way overcome the temptations of evil"
>
> Letter 63:15

The Church also teaches us that fasting is a preparation we must take before meeting our God. For when the Holy Prophet Moses went up to the mountain to appear in the presence of God, he fasted for forty days, so we read in the Bible;

> "So he (Moses) was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water."
>
> Exodus 34:28

When we partake of the Holy Communion in our church, we should all fast starting from the midnight before.

The Bible tells us the story of another prophet of God who, like Moses, fasted for forty days to purity' his soul in preparation for meeting God. This is the mighty Prophet Elijah, about whom the Bible says:

> "So he arose, and ate and drank, and he went in the strength of that food [that is, without eating any more forty days and forty nights."
>
> 1 Kings 19:8

The Fast of Nativity, begins at the last week of November and continues for forty-three days. The fast is followed by the FEAST OF NATIVITY of our Lord and God Jesus Christ, always on the 29th day of Kiyahk (seventh of January).

66

DECEMBER
SECOND SUNDAY

WHAT PRESENT TO GIVE TO THE CHRIST-CHILD?

Please read the attached material entitled "St. Nicholas", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

- To learn how to get the blessing of the feast of Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. To learn how to prepare my heart and try to keep it away from sins.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"And the Word became flesh and dwelt on us" (John 1:14)***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

A. <u>The Spirit of Christmas is the Spirit of "Love of one another":</u>

(1) Tell the story of St. Nicholas and clear all doubts about Santa Claus. Ask questions as you go along. Loving one another is the true spirit of Christmas.

(2) Helping the poor was the main thing in St. Nicholas' life. We have to learn to help other people. At least we have to smile and be cheerful to other people.

(3) Use the example of Santa Claus to show how the society changes the reality of things into meaningless things. We have to be careful and examine what the society is telling us.

(4) The spirit of Christmas in the Bible is very different from all the commercials that we see during Christmas.

B. <u>The Spirit of Christmas is the Spirit of "God is with us":</u>

❖ The deep meaning of our Christmas celebration is the actual living of this verse "and the Word become flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:14). So we get a strong relationship with the lord Christ and enter into a fellowship with Him in every part of our life, study, home, service, and in the church.... etc.

❖ How can I reach this fellowship level with the Lord Christ? When our Lord Jesus chose some people to see Him when He was born, they were preparing themselves for the occasion to enjoy this happy fellowship with the Lord. Examples:

The Lord chose St. Mary to take flesh from her because of her humility, purity of heart, and body. We must learn and take St. Mary as an example of how to make our tongues say only the good things, our ears to hear only the good things, and our eyes to see only good things. Let us pay more attention to this from now on.

The Lord chose the wise men because they were so anxious to see God Incarnate and they did their best to achieve that. They spent nights and nights looking at the sky and studying the stars. They came from very far places with their precious gifts. Are we preparing gifts to be ready for the Nativity Feast?

The Lord chose the shepherds because they were spending the nights tending their sheep. Are we spending the nights in prayers, reading of the scriptures and doing spiritual things?

C. <u>What is your gift for the Christ-child?</u>

Whoever heard of going to a birthday celebration and everyone receiving a present except the birthday child? This Christmas, let's make the "guest of honor" the first person on our gift list.

But what do you give the "Man who has everything?" You give Him your heart, your obedience, your love, your anger, your bitterness. Why, He even takes your burdens and accepts them as precious gifts. This upcoming

Christmas, think of something you would like to give the Christ-child. Let each student in the class decide what present to give the Christ-child and privately write the item on a piece of paper. Please commit to it.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

In order for us to enjoy a strong fellowship with the Lord Christ we have to learn from the people who enjoyed the Lord Christ from the very beginning when He was born. These people were humble, kind and obedient.

Songs

THY MERCIES, O MY GOD

Thy mercies, O my God — are countless
And Thy tender mercies — are too plenteous

All the rain drops — are counted by Thee
And the sand of the sea — is before Thine eyes.

How much more are — the sins of my soul
Manifest before — Thee, O my God

The sins that I have done — remember not my Lord
And count not — my iniquities

For Thou has chosen the publican — the adultress Thou hast saved
And the right-hand thief — Thou hast remembered

And me too — the sinner
Teach me, O my Master — to offer repentance

For Thou desirest not — the death of a sinner
But rather that he — returns and lives

Restore us, O God — to Thy salvation
And deal with us — according to Thy goodness.

For Thou art good — and merciful
Let Thy tender mercies — speedily prevent us

Have compassions on us all — O Lord, God and Saviour
And have mercy upon us — according to Thy great mercies.

Remember those — O Christ our Master
Be Thou amongst us — and proclaim and say :

My peace I — Give unto you
The peace of My Father — I leave unto you

O King of peace — give us Thy peace
Accord to us Thy peace — and forgive our sins

Disperse the enemies — of the church
Fortify her — and establish her forever

Emmanuel our God — is now in our midst
In the glory of His Father — and the Holy Spirit

ST NICHOLAS
CALLED "OF BARI", BISHOP OF MYRA

The great veneration with which this saint has been honoured for many ages and the number of altars and churches which have been everywhere dedicated in his memory are testimonies to his holiness and of the glory which he enjoys with God. He is said to have been born at Patara in Lycia, a province of Asia Minor. Myra, the Capital, not far from the sea, was an Episcopal sea and this church falling vacant, the holy Nicholas was chosen bishop, and in that position became famous by his extraordinary piety and zeal and many astonishing miracles. The Greek histories of his life agree that he suffered imprisonment for the faith and made a glorious confession in the latter part of the persecution raised by Diocletian, and that he was present at the Council of Nicea and there condemned Arianism.

We are assured that from his earliest days Nicholas would take nourishment only once on Wednesdays and Fridays, and only in the evening according to the canons. "He was exceedingly well brought up by his parents and trod piously in their footsteps. The child, watched over by the Church with the care of the turtle dove for her chicks, kept untarnished and innocence of his heart." At five years old he began to study the sacred sciences, and "day by day the teaching of the church enlightened his mind and encouraged his thirst for sincere and true religion." His parents died when he was a young man, leaving him well off, and he determined to devote his inheritance to works of charity. An opportunity soon arose. A citizen of Patara had lost all his money, and moreover had to support three daughters who could not find husbands because of their poverty; so a rich man was going to give them money for prostitution. This came to the ear of Nicholas, who thereupon took a bag of gold and, in darkness, and threw it at the open window of the man's house. Here was a dowry for the eldest girl, and she was duly married. At intervals Nicholas did the same for the second and third. The last time the father was on watch, recognized his benefactor, and overwhelmed him with his gratitude.

Coming to the city of Myra when the clergy and people of the province were in session to elect a new bishop, St. Nicholas was indicated by God as the man they should choose. This was at the time of the persecutions at the beginning of the fourth century, and as he was the chief priest of the Christians of this town and preached the truths of faith with the holy liberty, the divine Nicholas was seized by the magistrates, tortured, then chained and thrown into prison with many other Christians. But when the great and religious Constantine, chosen by God, assumed the imperial diadem of the Romans, the prisoners were released from their bonds and with them the illustrious St. Nicholas, who when he was set at liberty returned

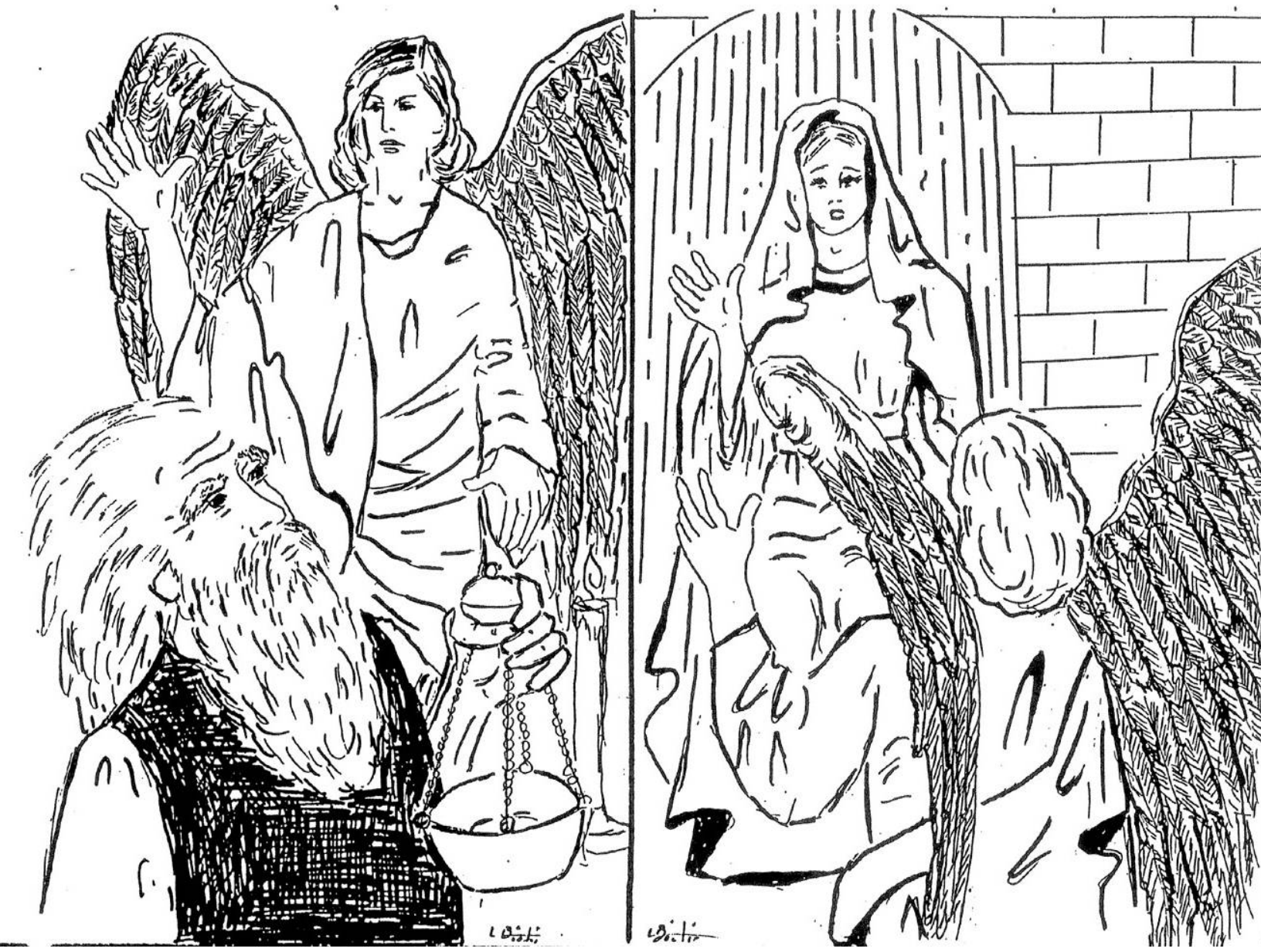
to Myra. St. Methodius asserts that; “Thanks to the teaching of St. Nicholas the metropolis of Myra, that alone was untouched by the filth of the Ariusan heresy, which it firmly rejected as death-dealing poison,” but says nothing of his presence at the Council of Nicaea in 325**.** According to other traditions he was not only there but so far forgot himself as to give the heresiarch Arius a slap in the face. Whereupon the council fathers deprived him of his Episcopal insignia and committed him in prison; but our Lord and His Mother appeared there and restored to him both his liberty and his office. As against Arianism so also against paganism, St. Nicholas was tireless and took strong measurers. Among other temples he destroyed was that of Artemis, the principal in the district, and the evil spirits fled howling before him. He was the guardian of his people as well in temporal affairs. The governor Eustathius had taken a bribe to condemn the death of three innocent men. At the time fixed for their execution St. Nicholas came to the place, stayed the hand of the executioner, and released the prisoners. Then he turned to Eustathius and did not cease to reproach him until he admitted his crime and expressed his penitence. There were present on this occasion three imperial officers who were on their way to duty in Phrygia. Later, when they were back again in Constantinople, the jealousy of the prefect Ablavius caused them to be imprisoned on false charges and an order for their death was procured from the Emperor Constantine. When the officers heard this they remembered the example they had witnessed of the powerful love of justice of the Bishop of Myra and they prayed to God that through his merits and by his instrumentality they might yet be saved. That night St. Nicholas appeared in a dream to Constantine, and told him with threats to released the three innocent men, and Ablabius experienced the same thing. In the morning the emperor and the prefect compared notes, and the condemned men were sent to be questioned. When Constantine heard that they has called on the name of St. Nicholas of Myra, who had appeared to him, he set them free and sent them to the bishop with a letter asking him not to threaten him any more but pray for the peace of the world. For long this was the most famous miracle of St. Nicholas, and at the time of St. Methodius was the only thing generally known about him.

The accounts are unanimous that St. Nicholas died and was buried in his Episcopal city of Myra, and by the time of Justinian there was a basilica built in this honour at Constantinople. An anonymous Greek wrote in the tenth century that “The West, as well as the East, acclaims him. Wherever there are people, in the country, town, or in the villages, in the frothiest parts of the earth his name is revered and churches are built to the honour. Images of him are set up, stories are preached, and festival elevated. All Christians young and old, men and women, boys and girls, reverence his memory and call upon his protection.”

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



DECEMBER
THIRD LESSON

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE "FULLNESS OF THE TIME"

Please read **(**Galatians 41:7), the article entitled "Late thinking", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

To learn about the meaning of the fullness of the time. On the practical side we would like to learn that one must think and act at proper 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." Galatians 4:4-5

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

INTRODUCTION

When God does something, He does it perfectly and in due time. This means that God does things when all the circumstances are right, all the factors are considered and the best results are guaranteed. This is the fullness of time. At the fullness of time God created Adam and Eve, sent the flood in the days of Noah, gave Abraham a son from Sarah etc. Explain.

A. Timing is important in everything in life:

- The seeds grow gradually until a certain due time comes to bring forth fruit.
- The little baby in his mother's womb cannot rush his birth but he or she has to grow until he/she comes out in due time.
- A student studies hard and does the utmost best and in the fullness of time will

get the best result.

B. The fullness of time regarding the incarnation of the Word of God:

❖ God promised Adam and Eve salvation and many centuries went by. God's promise still holds and He sent His Only-Begotten Son. Explain and discuss the memory verse. The fullness of time came at hand for the incarnation of the Word of God when the following factors were achieved:

Many prophets had spoken hundreds of years before Christ about His coming and what it entailed in detail.

It was necessary to get a very humble person like St. Mary the Virgin to give birth to Christ by the Holy Spirit.

It was necessary that darkness and corruption prevailed in the world at that time to necessitate the coming of Christ to shine upon it. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." (Matt. 4:16)

It was necessary that the human race becomes very anxious for the Lord Christ to come and finds in Him the fulfillment of all the symbols of the Old Testament.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Things take time to happen properly. So be patient, pray, and be in peace.

(2) As the Lord taught us we have to think and do things in proper time. We must think before we act. Timing of doing things is very important. There is time to study, time to say something, time to take vacation…etc.

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

THE LATE THOUGHT

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Sometimes, one takes an action instead of thinking of its results first; he works without any consideration of the consequences. Then after it is done, he starts thinking of the outcome when it is too late.

This kind of late thinking is wrong...

Another person makes vows without thinking if it is within his ability to fulfill them or not... And after making the vow, he starts thinking, tries to change it or declares his inability...

It is late thinking that happens after its proper time.

A wife could lose her husband, through certain ways of treatment, or taking the wrong advice from a relative, making her lose his love. Then she refuses any interference for reconciliation. After her husband reaches the point that his life with her is unbearable, she begins to think that losing him is not in her favour...

But this is a late consideration which comes too late.

A father fails in raising his son properly, thinking that pampering is a sign of love. So the child grows up used to disobedience, recklessness and carelessness. These faults become deeply rooted in his personality, causing bitterness in the heart of his father, mother, sisters and all those connected to him. By that time, the father starts thinking of changing his method of up-bringing and turns to strictness after it becomes too late...

The father fails because his thinking was late.

It is not enough for one to have good thoughts. This thinking ought to be alert, right from the beginning, not after missing the chance...

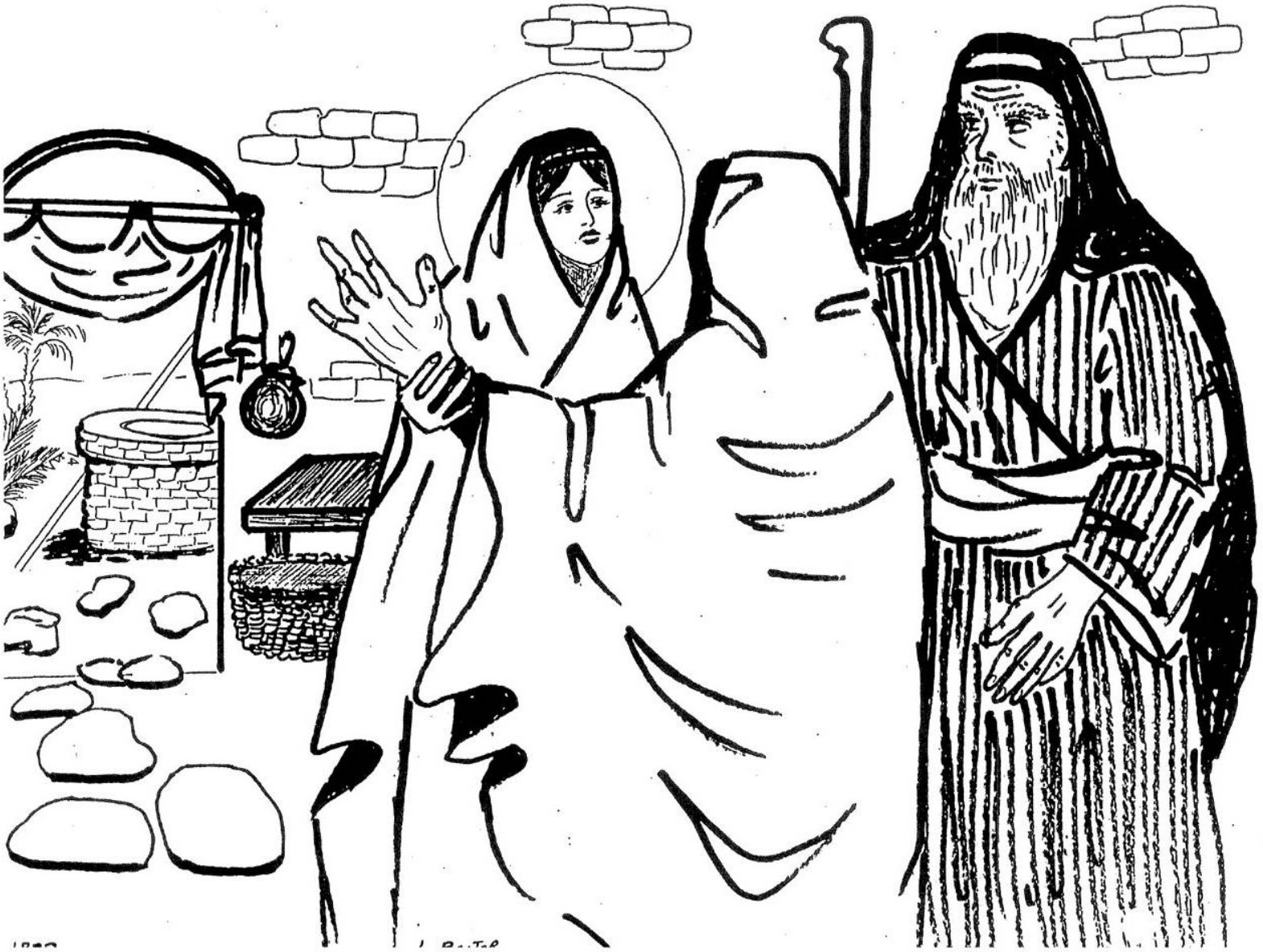
The foolish virgins returned to God with their lamps, but after the door was shut... They did not enter.

The virgin of the song arose to open the door for her beloved, but after he had turned away and was gone. Therefore she says, *"My heart went out to him when*

he spoke. I sought him, but 1 could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. " (Song 5:6)

Many started thinking late, so they did not benefit and lived in continual regret and sorrow... It is like what happened to Esau who cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry of repentance but it was not given to him. Esau came after Jacob took away his birth-right and his blessing. The matter was all over.

How beautiful is the psalm that says, *"Early will I seek you" (Ps 63:1),* and how it is that, *"... those who seek me diligently will find me. " (Prov 8:17)* **They think early.**



DECEMBER
FOURTH SUNDAY

THE LOVE OF CHRIST FOR US AS MANIFESTED IN LUKE CHAPTER 1, AND THE SYMBOLISM OF THE CANDY CANES

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

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

To emphasize the love of Christ for us through all the events described in Luke chapter 1. In our daily lives now, can we list things in our life that show God's love?

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"And His mercy is on those who fear Him" Luke 1:50***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

A. <u>The Love of Christ is above the level of speech: (Luke 1:8-22)</u>

When the angel of the Lord declared to Zacharias that the Lord will answer his prayers with his wife to have a son, he could not believe. So the Angel said to him "But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time." Luke 1:20. This means that the angel was saying to Zacharias that the love of God and His precious gifts is above the level of comprehension and talk. For this reason Zacharias had to be mute until the love of God, is above the level of discussion, was fulfilled.

B. The Love of Christ was declared by the angel to the Holy Virgin Mary on our behalf: (Luke 1:26-38)

The Lord chose the Holy Virgin Mary to stand on behalf of the whole human race to receive the message of God's love through Archangel Gabriel. God chose her because she was humble, simple, and obedient. How did she gain all these virtues? She gained all these things because she was praying and listening to the word of God, as she was in the house of God since she was three years old. The angel told her the most important news that God Himself is coming to take our flesh through her by the Holy Spirit. He blessed our nature by doing that and there is no love more than this. We do not deserve all this love from God because of our many sins.

C. The Love of Christ was declared by St. Elizabeth in her welcoming of the Holy Virgin (Luke 1:39-56)

When the Holy Virgin Mary went to serve St. Elizabeth while she was pregnant at her old age, St. Elizabeth declared the utmost love, that is God was coming for us. "Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!' But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:42-43) So, St. Elizabeth was declaring that St. Mary is the Mother of the Lord. There is no love for the human race more than this.

D. The Love of Christ was declared by St. Zacharias: (Luke 1:57-80)

After St. Zacharias saw the fulfillment of God's promise to give him a son, he now declared that his son is just an ambassador before the coming of the Lord Christ Himself. He declared this utmost love when he said "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people" (Luke 1:68)

E. The symbolism of the Candy Canes:

Perhaps one of the sweetest western Christmas tradition is giving and receiving candy canes. Many who enjoy eating this treat or hanging the canes on their trees are unaware of the symbolism that is rooted in the person of Our Lord Jesus.

The shape, like a shepherd's staff, symbolizes the love, guidance and protection of our good shepherd. Upside down, the cane forms the letter "J" for Jesus.

The color red symbolizes the atoning sacrifice of Christ's shed blood. The color White symbolizes the Saviour's purity and holiness.

The candy cane is sweet to represent the beautiful life that an individual lives with the Lord Jesus Christ.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us live in God's love for us. We must look at His commandments for us as initiated by His love. We must exchange love with Him.

Songs

AGIOS O THEOS

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

JANUARY
FIRST SUNDAY

LESSONS BENEFITED FROM THE BIRTH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST - "HUMBLENESS AND SIMPLICITY"

Please read (Luke 2:8-20), the attached material entitled "The contrite prayer", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

Learn about the humbleness and simplicity from the birth of our Lord Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"But made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7).***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

INTRODUCTION

- There are various lessons that we can gain from the events that accompanied the birth of Jesus. Among these lessons are humbleness and simplicity.

(A) The Lesson of Humbleness

- The Lord Jesus was born in a manger to teach us that true greatness is not in wealth, houses, or money but true greatness is in humbleness. He is God the creator of everything, but by His own choice He did not have a place inside a house. "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2:8 Hence the birth of Jesus is the greatest lesson of humbleness, St. Mary also was very humble. If we want to celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus in our lives, we have to be humble. Can we evade glorification from other people? Can we be

obedient to our parents even if we disagree with them? Can we stop talking about how good we are? Can we remember to pray in full humbleness to God?

What is the meaning of humbleness?

- ❖ Humbleness is the thinking, feeling and acting of a person devoid of self-esteem. Humbleness means taking the last seat. It means also giving all glory to God in all achievements.
- ❖ Humbleness is the condition of the Holy Spirit working inside an individual. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." James 4:6 Humbleness is the virtue that is common in all saints.
- ❖ Pride is the factor that makes many people fall. Even an Archangel fell and became Satan because he was filled with pride and wanted to be as high as God. Adam and Eve fell because of pride, so did the Pharisees and the Jewish priests in the days of the Lord Jesus.

(B) The Lesson of Simplicity:

- ❖ From the birth of our Saviour we learn the lesson of simplicity in thinking about things, in learning the Holy Bible and in accepting the faith.

    - † Our Lord Jesus chose the shepherds (very simple people) and did not choose the Pharisees and the Scribes. He knew that the shepherds would believe the angels, leave their work and come to see Him. The Pharisees and the Scribes at that time were expecting a Messiah that would come in triumph and earthly glory.
    - † The Wise men were also chosen. They were very rich people but simple at the same time. They believed the star, traveled a very long distance and brought their gifts.
    - † Therefore The Lord Jesus chose a type of poor (the shepherds), and rich (the Wise men) to get the blessings of seeing Him when He was born. But both groups had one thing in common; They were simple people and they did not question things.

- ❖ Being a simple person is different from being naive. The Bible said "be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Matthew 10:16

- ❖ St. Mary believed the Angel's message without arguing. She was a humble and simple person.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us be humble so that we may gain the blessings of God.

(2) Let us accept with complete faith and with no doubt all what the Bible and the Church teach us.

(3) In our prayers we must remember that we are dust. We must pray in full humbleness confessing our sins, thanking a lot and asking for very little and seeking the mercy of God. The humble prayer is a very important aspect of our spiritual life.

Songs

WE COME TO WORSHIP YOU

"They saw the young Child with Mary His Mother, and fell down and worshipped Him" (Mat 2:11)

OH Holy Child , Oh Holy Light
Oh Glorious sight

Babe in a manger gift supreme
Oh glorious king

REFRAIN
We come to worship you
Lord no one else will come before you

We come to worship You

Oh Lord most high Oh Lord most Holy

Bring now on me. Set this spirit free
Till Your face I shall see

We come to worship You
Oh Lord most high, Oh Lord most Holy

We come to worship You
To praise You with a song Oh

Now in your presence
We praise you

the prince of Heaven
will reign forever

to praise and magnify, honour, adore You
You fill our life, our every need

to Lift your Name, exalt, proclaim,
adore You, Your glory
we come to worship You

come now in Your glory
You are the face I shall see

To lift Your name, exalt. Proclaim, your glory
we come to worship You

to honour You
my dear Saviour we Come to worship You

The Contrite Prayer
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

There are many characteristics that distinguish a spiritual prayer. One of these is to pray with faith and humility, with understanding, concentration, love, depth and warmth. It is a prayer from the heart, not only from the lips. We would like to talk now about prayer from a contrite heart.

+ "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. " (Ps. 51:17).

God never rejects the contrite. The contrite prayer of the tax-collector was accepted by God. So the tax-collector went out justified though his words were few... only one sentence.

+ The contrite prayer is a prayer of a person who confesses his sins and his unworthiness.

There is no self-justification in such a prayer, nor excuses but confession that one deserves judgment. In such a prayer, the tax-collector did not dare to lift up his eyes but stood afar in humility...

+ The contrite prayer might sometimes be accompanied with tears.

It is like the prayer of Hannah, the mother of Samuel and like Peter's tears after he denied the Lord. But these tears should not be artificial or fake nor be a matter of boasting that makes oneself great in one's own eyes or in the eyes of others.

+ The contrite prayer gives more thanks than demands. In such a prayer one feels unworthy to ask for anything or feels so ashamed of one's sins that one does not dare to ask for anything except God's mercy. In such a prayer one thanks for everything, feeling that one deserves nothing.
+ The contrite prayer is at the same time a solemn prayer.In prostration, it is not only the head that clings to the dust, but one says with the psalmist, *"My soul clings to the dust. " (Ps. 119:25).*

It is a prayer that stands in reverence before God, talks to Him with respect, nderstanding and humble words.

+ The contrite prayer is a prayer of dust and ashes.

It is the prayer of one who sees himself as nothing more than dust and ashes. Like Job after the trials (Job. 42:6) and our father Abraham (Gen. 10) and Nehemiah in his humility, tears and confession (Neh. 1).

'Who am I Lord to talk to You?! it is a great modesty from the Lord of Lords to listen to dust'.

JANUARY
SECOND SUNDAY

LESSONS BENEFITED FROM EPIPHANY
We Have to Withstand Other People's Mistakes Against Us

Please read (Matthew 3:13=17, John 1:18-34, Jo 3:1-13) the three attached materials "what is Epiphany?", "The Baptism of Jesus Christ" and "Contemplation on Epiphany", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

To learn from the Lord Jesus a lesson to carry other people's mistake on us or at least not to judge them.

MEMORY VERSE

"I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" (Mathew 3:14)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

- Start by describing the events of the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan. He did not need to be baptized, but He did for many reasons:

  To establish the sacrament of baptism,
  to open the way for us to be baptized and accept the Holy Spirit inside us,
  to bless the water and to declare that He was carrying our sins on Him as He went down in the Jordan River.

- When Adam committed the sin, he did not repent and did not even try to say sorry. Now we see our Lord Jesus Christ the Saviour, who never had a single sin, standing in front of John, on behalf of Adam and all his descendants, offering repentance. He carried our sins on Him not only on the Cross but also while He was living as the Son of man. Therefore, God the Father declared:

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3:17)

- Adam put the blame on Eve for committing the sin saying "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." (Genesis 3:12) But our Lord Jesus Christ did not blame anyone. On the contrary He carried our sins on Him and offered repentance and baptism. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us." (2 Cor. 5:21).

- Our Lord Jesus was not ashamed to line up with the sinners to seek baptism from St. John. Not only that, but Jesus said in a humble way "Please let it be now."

- In this way the Lord Jesus gave us a practical example in our lives: to carry the sin of other people and even pay for them with full satisfaction. Can we do that? we cannot, at least can we start by not judging other people for their behaviour. We must not stand to defend ourselves even if we did not do anything wrong. Can we do that? if we cannot, at least we should not attack other people and become offensive.

Please Read (I Peter 2:19-25) in which St. Peter is advising us to follow the footsteps of the Lord Christ who did not do a single sin but He put our sins on Him and paid the price of our sins.

- How can we be called children of God?
  When we follow Jesus' example in our lives. It is an honour and obligation to be children of God.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) The Lord Jesus is our Saviour. He carried all our sins on Him. His blood on the Cross is capable of giving us complete salvation. The important thing is that to make benefit of His blood we have to believe in him and do as He told us to do.

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

CONTEMPLATION ON THE EPIPHANY (El Ghetas)
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Adam sinned and did not ask for forgiveness or seek it...

As for the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy and the only one without sin, **He stood in front of the Baptist as a repentant, representing Adam and his descendants. The Lord offered on their behalf, a baptism of repentance in its most sublime form.**

He carried their sins not only during his crucifixion, but in His life as a Son of Man. Therefore, God was pleased with Him and said, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. " (Mt. 3:17)*

It does not please God to see one justifying himself, finding excuses as Adam and Eve did. Instead of judging themselves in front of God they started blaming some one else.

The Lord Jesus did not blame anyone. He took the sin of another, carried it instead of him and offered a baptism of repentance. Therefore, He pleased the Father who said, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. " (Mt. 3:17)*

The one who is without sin, carried sin for our sake... He did not feel ashamed to walk forward with the sinners and ask his servant, John, to baptize Him. When the great prophet became shy of the situation, He gently said to him, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. " (Mt. 3:15)*

By doing this He gave us a practical lesson. **He gave a lesson to carry the sins of others...**

To happily pay the price on their behalf...

Not to justify ourselves, no matter how innocent we are...

And by this we fulfill all righteousness...

Would you be able to train yourself to gain this virtue?

St. John Chrysostom says, "If you are unable to carry the sins of others and relate them to yourself, try at least not to judge another, and let him carry your sins...

If we fail to carry the sins of other people, try at least to endure their failings towards us and forgive them...

In this manner, we become like Christ, and become worthy of being called sons of God. And with the same kindness that we deal with people, God is going to deal with us...

WHAT IS EPIPHANY?

"EPIPHANY' is when Jesus was baptized.

Why was Jesus baptized?
He did not need to be baptized because He did not have any sins. He was baptized to teach us to follow His example. Imagine, Jesus bowing His head under the hand of John the Baptist, although He is his Creator. Does this not teach us a lesson in humility?

At first, John refused to baptize Jesus and told Him; "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14) Then Jesus told him "Permit it to be so now." Jesus was so courteous and polite in answering John. Are we courteous and polite in dealing with others? Do we always say 'please" and "Thank you"?

When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Trinity was manifested. The Father appeared in the form of a voice form heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3:17) The Son was in the Jordan River, and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove.

Jesus was baptized to teach us that we should be baptized. But why should we be baptized?

I am sure you do not remember the day when you were baptized because you were a little baby. But, you have probably seen one of your brothers, sisters, or relatives being baptized. Do you know what happened that day, the day of your baptism? The priest immersed you three times in the water, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This had a great meaning. This was the most important day of your life: On that day, the sins inherited from Adam, were washed away, and you became a child of God. What a great honour and privilege. Do you know what it means to become God's Child? Your heavenly Father is God Himself the King of Kings. If you were the son or daughter of an earthly King, I am sure you would feel secure because many guards would protect you. When you become the son or daughter of the Heavenly King, you will feel secure because He will protect you with His Angels. He will take care of you wherever you go because you are His Child. Whenever you are in trouble, whether you are sick or have a hard test, He will surely help you. A father wants to always please His children. Your Heavenly Father always wants to please you. He wants you to be happy in life. "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

(John 10:10) He will take care of you. He watches over you even while you are sleeping.

When you became God's child on your baptismal day, you do not only have rights as God's child, but you also have responsibilities. Any King's child has to appear in a respectable manner. It will be a shame if a King's child behaves sinfully. If you are the child of the King of Kings, you have to behave in a Christian way and to reflect your Father's image. You have to behave differently at school, even if they make fun of you, because you are a special person, the child of the Great King, God.

Never forget the most important day of your life, the day of your baptism, the day of becoming God's Child.

The Baptism of Jesus Christ
JANUARY19 (according to the Julian Calendar)

Geographical Setting:

At the very end of The Jordan River and just before it spills 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 ”Bathabar” (the crossing way). There, for many years merchants and travelers 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 color of lead. There too, were located the lost cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (read Gen. 13-19) The smell of sulfur still hangs in the air as if it is reminding men forever that “For the wages of sin is death.” (Rom. 6:23)

Winter is a bit better because of the cooling breeze that blows down the Jordan Valley in the evening to replace the heat of the summer

Introduction:

In this unfriendly spot of land, one day, a prophet or a messenger of God appeared around the year 30 AD. He was a strange, rough-looking man. His only garment was a camel’s 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 ax 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 hearer to the river’s edge and dipped their sweaty, dust-covered bodies into the refreshing water, just as the water stained souls. The Prophet called this “baptism.” That is why we call that messenger of God ‘John the Baptist.’

The word ‘baptism’ is derived from the Greek word ‘baptisms’ which means ‘Eurasian’,

Crowds Come to John the Baptist:
In the early Jewish tradition, and until the coming of the Messiah, God used to send a prophet every hundred years or so 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 came from far and near 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 streamed into the water to be baptized by John and to be cleansed from their sins.

One day, someone asked another, "can this be the promised Saviour, the Messiah?" In a 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, 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 does 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 need baptism from you, and yet you come to me?" But Jesus insisted. "Do you know why?? It is 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. This is why He is called "The Saviour."

Something else happened at His baptism. After His immersion in 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 favor rests on Him."(read Mat. 3 and Luke 3)

Epiphany in the Orthodox Church:

In the Orthodox church, we celebrate this event, the Baptism of Jesus Christ, as one of the major Feasts of the Church. It is called ‘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 in the shape of a dove.

On Epiphany eve, 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 the Lord while standing in it. In this service, the priest asks God’s blessing of this water. He says: “bless this water that is set before them and give it the blessing that you gave to the Jordan by the decent 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. The people also fill small bottles with that water and take them home to use when there is sickness in the family or to bless a new home, office, business, car.... etc.

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JANUARY
THIRD SUNDAY

JONAH (I) - "THE METHODS"

Please read chapter 1 of Jonah, the attached article entitled "The means" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

- This is lesson one in a series of 4 lessons in the book of Jonah. In this lesson we focus on choosing the right methods to achieve our goals. God may come in and correct our wrong methods.
- When we escape from God, we become in trouble during our escape.

MEMORY VERSE

"But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

- Jonah is an Old Testament prophet, chosen by God to exemplify in his life the death and resurrection of the Lord Christ. God ordered him to go to Nineveh and ask its people to repent and return to God so that God may not destroy them. Nineveh was a gentile city and Jonah was sent from God in the Old Testament to preach to the gentiles. This is why Jonah could not accept this mission, not because he was escaping from serving God, but he was concerned about his own people, the Jews. Jonah thought that God was only for the Jews and faith was only for the Jews. He could not accept the idea of going to the gentiles. He knew that if the Jews refused God, God was to be accepted by the gentiles. As St. Paul said "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!" Romans 1:11-12

- Jonah was a prophet for Israel between 825 to 784 before Christ. He wrote his book after he preached Nineveh.
- There are two books in the Old Testament written to the gentiles: The book of Obadiah and the book of Jonah. The book of Obadiah announces symbolically the destruction of the old man of blood and flesh and the life of the spiritual man. The book of Jonah announces symbolically the acceptance of the gentiles to the preaching and their repentance and acceptance of God.
- The Lord Jesus himself mentioned "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here." Man. 12:41

Please read chapter one with the students and discuss as you go along.

- Jonah could not accept the salvation of the gentiles at the expense of his own people
- The escape of Jonah refers to the person who does not obey the bible or the word of God or uses the wrong method to handle his or her problem. He tries to escape to the world. But the world has no mercy on him and he will stumble

Jonah's flight

- God sent a mighty storm
- Jonah was sleeping because of the sadness that filled him because he was escaping from God.

Confession and Surrender

- Jonah confessed to the mariners. They agreed with Jonah's suggestion and threw him into the sea. The mariners became afraid of the true God, when they saw that the sea became quiet again as soon as they threw Jonah into the sea.
- God intervened to correct the wrong method that Jonah adopted to insist on not preaching to Nineveh.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1)God cares for all his people regardless of their origin or nationality. A true Christian should not be racist.

(2) When we reject our disobedience to God, our life will be peaceful again.

(3) Whenever we have a problem or a goal to achieve, we have also to choose the proper method to do what we want. Escaping from God is certainly a wrong method to do anything. No one can escape from God. Getting angry at people or insulting people or staying away from the church are indeed wrong methods.

Songs

HEAR MY CRY, I PRAY TO THEE

"Out of the depths I have cried to Yu, O Lord, hear my voice." (Ps 130:1)

REFRAIN

Hear my cry I pray to Thee and to my voice incline Your ear
Hold me and have mercy on me for You O Lord I am in great need

My soul is troubled within me and my eyes are full of tears
I call for You in time of need please hear my voice and stay near.

All the waves overcame me I was drowned in the deep sea
I know that help could only be in the hands of my Lord Dear

My heart is trembling in great fear troubles are surrounding me
Out of the depth I cry to Thee save my soul and set me free

In the whale Jonah did kneel and asked the Lord to have mercy
The Lord answered Jonah's plea and the whale set Jonah free.

THE MEANS
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Often, the problem for people is the means, not the aims.

Everyone definitely aims at his happiness, and most probably the happiness of others too. But his first problem is the means used to achieve his aims.

Some turn to means that are not spiritual...
Some turn to a human hand to rely upon...

Others turn to the easiest and most handy means, not the most successful, the most guaranteed and the most pure means.

Another person takes the advice of those who are close to him without examining or discussing this advice... Or he might follow the steps of others, once more without examining them...

Very often, these means lead to the opposite of what is aimed at...

In spite of that, one might continue in the same way without learning!

One continues, either due to stubbornness or helplessness, or just for being confident in others, depending on time, hoping to achieve something...

The reasonable and wise person is the one who chooses the way and the method...

He chooses the right way that enables him to reach his aim.

He chooses the correct method that has no fault.

He chooses the wise advice, without depending on one opinion.

God gave Man two ears: to hear the first opinion with one, and to listen to the opposite opinion with the other. The mind is in between, to weigh each opinion and choose the best...

The wise person changes his means if it proves to be wrong or does not lead to any good...

But the one who continues in a blind alley that has many holes and pits, many defects and dangers, no doubt has a fault either in his heart or in his way of thinking...

Many times one refuses to correct one's-way due to pride... He worries about his dignity or his reputation and what people might say if he does change. It is like admitting that this way was wrong!... But many are the saints who changed their way of life without letting pride become an obstacle.

And many did not change, and God interfered to change their way... For example: Lot, Saul of Tarsus, the prophet Jonah, Moses and others.

JANUARY
FOURTH SUNDAY

JONAH – (II) - "BENEFITING FROM THE MISTAKES"

Please read chapter 2 of Jonah, the attached material entitled "Benefiting from mistakes" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

- This is lesson 2 in a series of 4 lessons in the book of Jonah. In this lesson we focus on Jonah's benefiting from his mistakes and going deep in his prayer.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"And he said: I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, And He answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You Heard my voice.' (Jonah 2:2)***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

A. <u>Jonah's Prayer from the belly of the fish:</u>

- Who of us could imagine the suffering that Jonah had inside the belly of the fish? Jonah inside the belly of the fish became a symbol of Christ inside the Tomb.
- Jonah concentrated with all his heart and mind on God and not on the fish or the dangers. See Verse 1: "Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly." Jonah called God before, the Lord of Heaven (Jonah 1:9), but now he was calling Him his Lord.
- Jonah taught us beautiful prayers from the belly of the fish. This teaches us that we should pray anywhere and everywhere. It also shows that Jonah is now benefiting from his mistake and coming back with a strong prayers to God.

B. <u>Between Sheol and Heaven</u>:

- ❖ Jonah called his Lord from the belly of the fish which represents Sheol where the Lord Jesus went when he was crucified to save the people of the Old Testament who were in Hades. Please note that in Jonah 2:2 "I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me," this sentence is in past tense because he was so sure of God's salvation to him in one hand, and on the other hand, he also knew as a prophet that this was a symbol of the Messiah who is to come and suffer on our behalf
- ❖ Verse 2:4 "I have been cast out of your sight." This is similar to our Lord Jesus saying on the Cross "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Matthew 27:46
- ❖ Verse 2:5 reads "The waters surrounded me, even to my soul...." symbolizes Jesus when He descended into Hades to free the spirits that were jailed by the devil. Please read (Ephe 4:940).

C. <u>Jonah's Praising the Lord</u>:

- ❖ (Jonah 2:9) "But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pray what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." Now Jonah, is thankful and vows to offer his offerings to God similar to Jesus who gave himself as offering or a Lamb for our salvation.

D. <u>Jonah is Alive</u>

- ❖ God has given Jonah lessons of kindness because he was not kind to the Gentiles of Nineveh. The fish was kind to him, it did not hurt him and even when the fish threw him out, it was so gentle on him.
- ❖ Read (Psalm 16:10), "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption"
- ❖ Jonah came out of the fish victorious over death. Similarly, Jesus arose from the dead.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) The Lord may allow some sufferings to come about, similar to Jonah's sufferings, in order to straighten up our act, so that you may lead a spiritual life.

(2) After the Cross there is always Resurrection. If we carried our Cross we will also enjoy the peace and joy of the Resurrection.

(3) Everyone is liable to do mistakes, but the important thing is that the person should benefit from his mistakes and proceed in the right direction. One of the Saints said "I do not remember that the devil was able to make fall in the same sin twice".

Songs

HEAR MY CRY, I PRAY TO THEE

"Out of the depths I have cried to Yu, O Lord, hear my voice." (Ps 130:1)

REFRAIN

HEAR MY CRY I PRAY TO THEE
HOLD ME AND HAVE MERCY ON ME

AND TO MY VOICE INCLINE YOUR EAR
FOR YOU O LORD I AM IN GREAT NEED

MY SOUL IS TROUBLED WITHIN ME
I CALL FOR YOU IN TIME OF NEED

AND MY EYES ARE FULL OF TEARS
PLEASE HEAR MY VOICE AND STAY NEAR.

ALL THE WAVES OVERCAME ME
I KNOW THAT HELP COULD ONLY BE

I WAS DROWNED IN THE DEEP SEA
IN THE HANDS OF MY LORD DEAR

MY HEART IS TREMBLING IN GREAT FEAR
OUT OF THE DEPTH I CRY TO THEE

TROUBLES ARE SURROUNDING ME
SAVE MY SOUL AND SET ME FREE

IN THE WHALE JONAH DID KNEEL
THE LORD ANSWERED JONAH'S PLEA

AND ASKED THE LORD TO HAVE MERCY
AND THE WHALE SET JONAH FREE.

BENEFITING FROM MISTAKES

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Everyone is liable to errore but a wise person benefits from his mistakes. He gains spiritual experience, knowledge and care not to sin in the future. In this respect, one of the fathers said, *"I do not remember the devil agitating me with the same sin twice. "...*

A spiritual person attains humility through his faults...

He realizes and becomes aware of his weakness and how he is liable to make mistakes like others. He would not be proud or arrogant or think himself special. As St. Paul the Apostle said. *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. " (1 Cor 10.12).*

When the ignorant person falls, he could weaken and continue in his fault becoming used to falling. He might despair, gets depressed and collapses.

As for the wiseman, he understands the devils' tricks and combats through his sin. He learns how the devil gets to the human soul and becomes more precautious and precise. It might even help him to guide others, as he becomes more aware of the way...

A spiritual person benefits from his mistakes through sympathy with others, as the Apostle says, *"Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also. " (Heb 13:3)*

Therefore, when the spiritual person falls, he becomes more sympathetic towards others without judging or rebuking, as he himself knows the power of devils and the weakness of human nature.

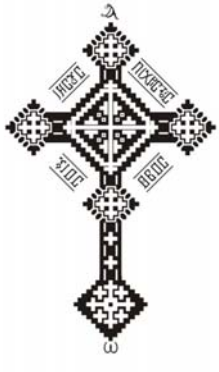
The spiritual person benefits from his mistakes by the practice of praying for himself and others. He is completely certain that man's victory does not depend on is strength and cleverness, but on God's help, as He leads us to victory. Therefore, one gets more attached to prayer, saying to God, *"Hold me up and I shall be safe. " (Ps 119:117) and "Our God will fight for us. " (Neh 4:20)*

The one who searches for benefit, profits from his mistakes as well as others' mistakes...

Therefore, God permitted in His Holy Bible to mention others' mistakes, even those of prophets and righteous people, so we may benefit from their mistakes...

Our God who said, *"And out of the strong came something sweet" (Judg 14:14)* is also able to give us a useful lesson from each sin, for the salvation of our selves...

And so we benefit from all those we meet in life, from the righteous we take an example and from our sins and those of others, we gain experience and cautiousness...



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JANUARY
FIFTH SUNDAY

JONAH – (III) - "THE SPIRITUAL FASTING"

Please Read Chapter 3 of Jonah, the attached material entitled "Spiritual fasting", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

- This is lesson 3 in a series of 4 lessons in the book of Jonah. The Gentiles accepted the faith, fasted and repented.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"So the people of Nineveh believed God"(Jonah 3:5)***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

A. <u>Jonah was invited again to work</u>: (Jonah 3 1-4)

- As Jonah went out from the belly of the fish similar to a person resurrected from the dead, Jonah started to enjoy the new life. He obeyed directly and went to Nineveh. Note that God did not blame him for what had happened and did not hurt his feelings. God invited him again. Nineveh is described as a great city that requires 3 days for a person to see it. Jonah said that after 40 days the city will be destroyed. The number 40 in the Bible always refers to the completeness of our life on earth. Note that the emphasis here is that the numbers in the Bible are sometimes used to explain or symbolize a meaning.

B. <u>The faith of</u> <u>Nineveh and its repentance</u>: Jonah 3:5-9

- While Israel has resisted the faith and did not believe, the gentiles believed. And look what they did: "They fasted and put on sackcloth." They started with fasting meaning that fasting is one of the best methods to return to God. They

repented and God accepted them. They fasted and God accepted their fasting and did not destroy their city. All the people participated although Jonah did not say one word of hope or talked about God's love, but still the people of Nineveh became an excellent example of fast-response to God's call. They had a change of heart. Another point is that the people of Nineveh had hope and joy as a result of their repentance. See verse 9

C. <u>The people of Nineveh enjoyed the mercy of God:</u> Jonah 3:10

❖ Repentance is "Turning from evil acts." It is a change of heart. Repentance needs a change in heart as the people of Nineveh did.

† In the statement "God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it." (Jonah 3:10) The word evil means the punishment that God was to do to them. Also, God repented does not mean God was doing something wrong or He changed His mind. But this expression is used to let us understand that as soon as man changes his or hers bad and evil attitude, God changes His judgment on that person and accepts him or her.

† God is a merciful Lord. However, He states the possibility of punishment so that man may stop doing evil things.

What do we learn from this lesson?

(1) Everyone of us must repent as the people of Nineveh did. Repentance means a change in heart.

(2) Daily repentance is a very good spiritual practice for everyone.

(3) We must learn that the spiritual fasting is not just about changing food, but it must be combined with repentance, prayers, more spiritual readings and stoppage of doing anything wrong.

Songs

FORGIVE ME MY REDEEMER

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

REFRAIN

Forgive me my redeemer
My eyes are filled with tears

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

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

Lord overlook our sins
And place your hands upon us

We are Your Hands creation
All sinners and believers

O lord we are not worthy
Your love is overwhelming

Our hearts you are seeking
With all his heart repenting

and bless me O Lord Jesus
pleading for forgiveness.

very soon You will come
and wipe away our tears.

we fall into tribulations
we are pleading O Lord.

be gracious unto us
please bless us one and all.

Your servants and Your children
lead us to still waters.

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

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

SPIRITUAL FASTING

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Lent is one of the oldest and most holy fasts of the year, where we remember the forty days fast of the Lord, to which we add the Passion Week, which is a treasure for the whole year.

It is important to experience this fast as a spiritual period. Therefore, we have to contemplate together the spirituality of the fast and train ourselves to practice it.

Fasting is not just abstaining from food, this is just a means to control the body in order to elevate the spirit.

During fasting, do you completely control your body? Do you take interest in positive actions that help you grow spiritually?

As you deprive your body from food, do you give your spirit its food?...

Therefore fasting has always been connected with prayer, contemplation and other spiritual activities, such as reading, singing hymns, spiritual gatherings, spiritual exercises and judging oneself.

As fasting is accompanied by prayer, it is also accompanied by repentance. Nineveh is such an example, with all the humility it involved. There is also the fasting described by the prophet Joel (2:12-17). God is pleased with fasting in hich sin is abandoned more than mortifying the body. We read about the fasting of the people of Nineveh, *"Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it. " (Jn 3: 10)*

Fasting has also to be accompanied by acts of mercy. We act mercifully towards people so that God may have mercy upon us. We experience people's pain when we feel hunger, so we have pity on those who are hungry and feed them...

One of the best sayings of the Fathers about fasting is, *"... if you do not have what to offer these saints then fast and offer them your food. " This has been explained by the Prophet Isaiah (58).*

fasting is a period of forsaking material matters and whatever relates to them.

Forsaking means having no concern about food, its types, cooking and arrangement, which would make the fast lose its spirituality and become a formality... The Prophet Daniel said this beautiful saying during his fast, *"I ate no pleasant food. " (Dan 10:3)*

Forsaking food by abstaining from it and from its cravings is, in general, an evidence of asceticism because of the preoccupation of the heart with whatever is spiritual and beneficial for the eternal life...

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FEBRUARY
FIRST SUNDAY

JONAH – (IV) - "HOPE"

Please read chapter 4 of Jonah, the attached article entitled "Hope", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson 4 in a series of 4 lessons in the book of Jonah. As the Lord had mercy on the people of Nineveh and changed their heart. He can help us to repent. So, never lose hope.

MEMORY VERSE

"You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored And should not pity Nineveh" (Jonah 4:10-11)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

A. <u>Jonah in his sadness</u>: (Jonah 4:1-4)

Jonah became so sad to the extent that he was asking to die rather than to live. The reason for of his sadness is that he realized (by the spirit of prophecy) that Israel (his own people) will lose their salvation through the salvation of others (i.e. the gentiles) by the mercy of God.

B. <u>Jonah east of the city:</u> (Jonah 4:5)

Jonah sat east of the city watching what is going to happen to the people of Nineveh who are repenting and being welcomed by God. Jonah was similar to the older son in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:25-31) as he was watching the acceptance of his father to his young brother

C. <u>Jonah is under the plant</u>: (Jonah 4:6-9)

God created a plant to shade and comfort Jonah who was very sad. Then

God sent a worm which attacked the plant and destroyed it. God then also sent a sultry east wind, which hit Jonah's head to the extent that he asked to die. God wanted to teach him a lesson.
WHAT DID GOD MEAN SENDING ALL THESE THINGS (i.e. plant, worm and wind)?

† God always speaks to man with the language that causes a response and effect on man. God spoke to Jonah before through the storm, the ship and the marines, the big fish and now He is speaking to him through the plant, the wind and the worm.

† With the language that God speaks to us we discover the secrets of our lives and should understand what to do.

D. <u>Final talk between God and Jonah</u>: (Jonah 4:10-11)

† God revealed to Jonah in an explicit way His love to human kind, which He made. He declared to Jonah through many symbols and events that God means mercy and salvation for the people He created.

What do we learn from this lesson?

(1) God hates sin but loves the sinners. He searches for them and exercise tremendous patience for their salvation. There are many examples for that in the Old Testament, New Testament and in our daily lives now. Let us meditate on these cases to recognize God's love for us and never lose hope.

(2) The spiritual person never loses hope. He or she always has hope in all the details of his or her life: in study, in work, in sickness, in repentance and in difficult circumstances.

(3) God many methods to reach us and make us respond, as He did with Jonah. This is also a source of hope and joy for us.

Songs

FORGIVE ME MY REDEEMER

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

REFRAIN

Forgive me my redeemer
My eyes are filled with tears

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

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

Lord overlook our sins
And place your hands upon us

We are Your Hands creation
All sinners and believers

O lord we are not worthy
Your love is overwhelming

Our hearts you are seeking
With all his heart repenting

and bless me O Lord Jesus
pleading for forgiveness.

very soon You will come
and wipe away our tears.

we fall into tribulations
we are pleading O Lord.

be gracious unto us
please bless us one and all.

Your servants and Your children
lead us to still waters.

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

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

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

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in the class

FEBRUARY
SECOND SUNDAY

THE WEDDING AT CANA OF GALILEE
THE LORD JESUS SHOWED HIS GLORY AND HIS HUMBLENESS

Please read (John 2: 1-11), the attached article entitled "The Basic Virtues", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

To show that the true Glory and humbleness of our Lord Jesus is the best example in our life. We have first to be humble and everything else will fall in place.

MEMORY VERSE

"This the beginning of His signs Jesus did at Cana of Galilee, manifested glory; and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

✞ Please tell in a story fashion the wedding at Cana of Galilee. Emphasize that Cana is a small Village in the province of Galilee. In this tiny village, The Lord Jesus started His miracles; He did not start to perform his miracles in a large city in front of a large crowd. He did not start in Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria or Rome. He was also born in a village called Bethlehem in the province of Judea. He wanted to teach two things; (1) humbleness and (2) true glory does not come from the outside appearance.

In the memory verse we observe three things:

1. He did the first miracle at Cana of Galilee where the humble people were. St. Mary and His disciples were also there.

2. He manifested His glory. This was the first time in which our beloved Lord Jesus showed His disciples His glory and His power, which are beyond the human being power. St. John said, **"**This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me" (John 1:15). After that Jesus showed His glory in many other miracles, in His teaching, in His good character with people, His transfiguration on the mountain, His resurrection and ascension to heaven. Now we can understand what St. Paul says about Jesus: "Lord of Glory" (I Corinthians 2:8).

3. When He did these miracles, His disciples believed in Him. This shows us the main purpose of miracles. It is not to show power for the sake of showing off. It is not to get the admiration of people. It is only for the sake of leading the people to salvation. They see the signs and believe that Jesus is God incarnate.

† Do you think that this miracle means that drinking wine or alcohol is OK? The answer is NO. Our Master and Lord Jesus changed the water into a "new wine" which was called by the bridegroom "the good wine." It was just only a natural grape Juice that tasted beautifully and much better than the previous wine that they were drinking. Also, this wine made the steward of the feast awaken to the extent that he said "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!" (John 2:10) Jesus said "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares for this life." (Luke 21:34)

† The Lord, as a result of His kindness and the intercession of His mother, the Holy Virgin Mary, performed this miracle. She holds an outstanding position in the heart of the Lord Christ. So, take her as your mother and ask her to intercede on your behalf so that the Lord will help you as He helped the people at Cana of Galilee.

† This miracle had in it: the love of the Lord Jesus and His mother to the people, the submission of the servants and the humbleness of the Lord.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Humbleness and Glory go together hand in hand. Do you want to witness the miracles of God? Everyday is a miracle from God; look towards heaven, look at the plants, look at the wind and look at the new born baby of animals, birds and human beings.

(2) Changing the water into wine by the Lord Jesus does not justify at all the drinking of alcoholic wine or liquors (as explained above).

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

THE BASIC VIRTUES
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Some virtues are partial and one struggles hard to attain them, but there are basic virtues which include various merits within them; that is the topic of our talk...

Ahead of all these virtues is: Love.

The Lord Jesus Christ said that all the Law and prophets are concerned with this virtue.

St. Paul explained the various sorts of the virtue of love and said, "Love suffers long and is kind, love does not envy, love does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (1 Cor 13:4-8)

Therefore, whoever has love, has all these virtues.

All that St. Paul mentioned was our love to our neighbours...

As for our love to God, no doubt, it includes various matters:

It includes prayer with all its levels, contemplation, deliberation, reading the Bible, loving the church and its sacraments, spiritual gatherings, fasting, prostrating... it also includes following all commandments as God says, "He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. " (Jn 14:21)

Another leading virtue is the life of submission...

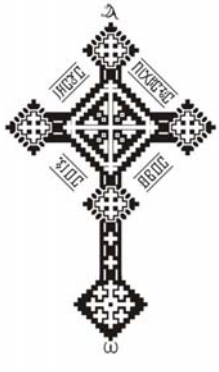
Submission means the complete surrender of one's self to the Holy Spirit that works in his heart, to run his life...

This person will show the fruits of the Holy Spirit that St. Paul explained in Galatians 5:22, by saying, "But the fruits of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and selfcontrol."

One of the mother virtues is also humility...

A humble person acquires gentleness quietness, stays away from anger and judging others and keeps himself from cruelty...

Humility also includes contrition of heart, selfreproach, the virtue of tears, love, blessing everyone, seeking the blessings of everyone, listening more than talking, never boasting or elevating oneself or self praising, contentment with everything, satisfaction, thankfulness and simplicity.



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FEBRUARY
THIRD SUNDAY

PERSONALITIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT - (I)
EZEKIEL, PROPHET OF RENEWAL AND UNITY

Please read the attached material entitled "Ezekiel, prophet of renewal and unity" (2 Kings 24:8-16), (Ezekiel 37:1-10), (Ezekiel 36:25-27), the attached article entitled "The Holy Spirit in your life" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

Ezekiel the prophet prophesied about, the new life in the Lord Jesus Christ and the unity of the church. Life in the Lord Jesus Christ is obtained by the action of the Holy Spirit.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"…I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26)***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

A. <u>The defeat of</u> <u>Jerusalem by the Babylonians</u>: (2 Kings 24:8-16)

When the people of Israel did evil things in the eyes of God, He let them be defeated. Sometimes God let this happen so that people taste what sour life is like away from God and when they come back to Him they appreciate how sweet living with God is. God does not want to punish us, but He may allow us to suffer when we sin in order to repent and have a righteous and happy life.

B. <u>The Prophet Ezekiel:</u>

Ezekiel prophesied about the exile well before it happened. But the people did not believe him. During exile he continued with his prophecies: (Ezekiel 37:1-10)

C. The Prophecy of Ezekiel (37:1-10) was fulfilled:

A prophecy is a message declared to a person by God and then told to the people by that person. The prophecy of Ezekiel had two meanings:

1. **Historical:**

   The historical fulfillment took place about 50 years after the prophecy, when Cyrus, King of Persia permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple.

2. **Spiritual:**

   The spiritual fulfillment took place on the day of the Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given in order to enable human beings to live the new life in Jesus.

   The gift of the new life: The dry bones in Ezekiel's vision stand for humanity, which was condemned to death because of sin. Then Christ came and His light shone. We are given a new heart full of love and kindness instead of a heart of stone. (Ezekiel 36:25-27). The new life in the Lord by the action of the Holy Spirit is further explained. St. Paul the Apostle in his letter to his disciple Titus. "the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things-- that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility" (Titus 2:3-7)

   The source of unity in the church: The Holy Spirit is the source of unity in the church as Ezekiel prophesied, "Come from the four winds, 0 breath, and breathe upon the slain, that they might live." (Ezekiel 37:9) As Jesus wanted in His last prayers "that they may all be one." (John 17.21). The unity of the church is further emphasized by St. Paul in Ephesians "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." (Ephe 4:7).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) There are prophecies about the Holy Spirit and His work in the New Testament; one of them is by prophet Ezekiel. We have to remember that the Holy Spirit inside us will work if we respond to His voice and live according to His guidance

(2)The "newness of life" in all it's details: study, work, prayers, meditation, service…etc. is obtained as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Thus, the Holy Spirit helps the believer to be Christ-like or united with Christ in every action.

Songs

WHEN THE SPIRIT

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

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

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

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

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?

EZEKIEL, PROPHET OF RENEWAL AND UNITY

The Defeat of Jerusalem by Babylonians

Around 597 BC, the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem under the leadership of King Nebuhadnezzar. Jehoiachin, who was then King of Judah, was taken captive, along with all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and even the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained except the poorest people of the land Nebuchadnezzar carried them all away as prisoners, the people of Jerusalem, all the royal princes, and all the leading men, ten thousand in all. He also deported all the skilled workmen, including the blacksmiths, leaving only the poorest of the people behind in Judah. Please read (2 Kings 24:14)

The Prophet Ezekiel

Before the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel, the great Prophet, had already prophesized of the exile. The people, however, had not listened to him. During Ezekiel's exile, he continued to prophesy. He was in Babylon then, and the people asked him about the day of their deliverance. Ezekiel prophesied saying: "The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones... And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord God, You know." Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live..." and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. Also He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord God:
"Come from the four winds, 0 breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live."'" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army." Ezekiel 37:1-10

This prophecy had an immediate historical fulfillment, as well as a later spiritual fulfillment. The historical fulfillment took place about fifty years after the prophecy, when Cyrus, King of Persia Permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple. (Ezekiel 1:1-4)

The Spiritual fulfillment took place on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given in order to enable human beings to live the new life in Christ. And now this new life is available to all that are ready to accept it. For "God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, and raised us up with Him."

The Work of the Holy Spirit

1. **The gift of the new life:** The dry bones in Ezekiel's vision stand for humanity, which was condemned to death because of sin. Then Christ came, and His light shone. Therefore it is written: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." Ephesians 5:14 On the Day of Pentecost, sounds from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind. And the members of the first Church were filled with the Holy Spirit. From that day onwards their lives were full of power. The New man, who had risen with Christ, began to live his new life by the power of the Holy Spirit. "Therefore we were buried with Him through

baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Roman 6:4 "He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" Titus 3:5

2. **The source of unity:** Ezekiel Prophesied concerning the unity of the Church where the Lord's Spirit is at work: "Come from the four winds, 0 breath, and breathe upon the slain, that they might live." Ezekiel 37:9 The four winds stand for the four regions of the earth. The Holy Spirit is at work in His ONE Church, leading it and guiding it in holy unity. This is what Christ prayed for: "That they may all be one" (John 17:2 1)

A New Heart and an New Spirit

Ezekiel the Prophet wrote: "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 'I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them." (Ezekiel 36:25-27) St. Augustine wrote: "Come to the cross with your sins; come with a sincere desire to find Christ. The Holy Spirit will then remove the burden of your sin, and will give you a new life. Then you will become a holy temple of the Lord; for His spirit will live in you."

For Memorization

Ezekiel 36:25-26

Questions

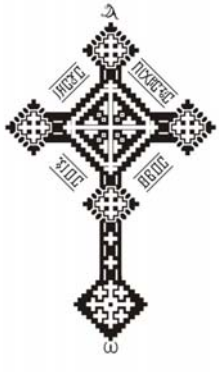
1. Explain how captivity stands for the sinful life, while the return from exile stands for salvation

2. What picture did Ezekiel give of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church?

3. What is the meaning of renewal or the new life? When do we obtain it?

4. What does the ONE church mean? How does the Holy Spirit unify the Church?

5. How can we walk in "newness of life", and "uprightness of spirit"?



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FEBRUARY
FOURTH SUNDAY

PERSONALITIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT – (II)
ISAIAH, PROPHET EVANGELIST

Please Read the attached articles entitled "Isaiah, Prophet Evangelist", "You yourself be a good news" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

† Our faith grows when we know that all that happened to our Lord Jesus was prophesied before his coming. Isaiah prophesied about all "the joyful news" the whole world had been waiting for i.e. the coming of the Messiah, Son of God. We also have to be a source of joy for others.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"... we suffer with him, that we may so be glorified together" (Roman 8:17)***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

INTRODUCTION

† Isaiah is one of the greatest Old Testament prophets. He lived about 800 B.C.

† Through prophecy, Isaiah was able by the guidance of the Holy Spirit to give a clear picture about the Messiah. From this came the title "Prophet Evangelist" and some admirers call his book "The Gospel of Isaiah".

† He came from a Royal Family. Isaiah witnessed the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel before the King of Babylon and the carrying away of its people into captivity.

How did he see Christ?

† The Messiah- God Incarnate: Isaiah 7:10-16 and Isaiah 9:1-7
† The Messiah - The Suffering Servant: Isaiah **53:4,5,7,9,12**
† He gives a clear picture of the greatness of the act of sacrifice
† The Messiah - The Everlasting King: Isaiah 11:1,4,6,8,9
† Comparison between passages to show in which manner the prophecies were fulfilled

PROPHECY	**FULFILLMENT**
Isaiah7:14	Mat 1:23
Isaiah 42:1-4	Mat 12:18
Isaiah 53:4	Mat 8:17
Isaiah 53:5	1 Peter 2:24
Isaiah 53:10	2 Cor. 5:21
Isaiah 53:12	Hebrew 7:25
Isaiah 6l:1	Luke4:18-21

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour is very well established on the Old and New Testaments. Let us read both regularly and carefully.

(2) Isaiah the prophet prophesied about the “joyful news” that the whole world was waiting for: the salvation of the whole world by the Messiah Son of God. We also as true Christians must always bring joyful news. (the word Gospel means joyful news).

Songs

O OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

O our Lord Jesus Christ
Count us with Thy sheep

who caries the sin of the word
who shall stand upon Thy right

And in Thy second coming
May never hear Thee say

awesome and full of glory
I know ye not

Rather may we be worthy
Which is full of joy

to hear Thy tender voice
proclaiming and saying:

Come ye unto Me
And inherit the life

O blessed of My Father
that endures forever

All the martyrs shall come
And the righteous shall come

bearing their afflictions
bearing all their virtues.

The Son of God shall also come
To reward everyone

in His Father's glory
according to his works

O Christ, Logos of the Father
Grant us Thy peace

the Only-Begotten God
which is full of joy.

As Thou has said unto
Likewise say unto us

Thine holy Apostles
My peace I give to you.

My peace, which I have taken
I leave unto you

from My Good Father
now and forever

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

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

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

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

May God bless us
And may His praise be

and let us bless His Holy name
always on our lips

Blessed be the Father and Son
The perfect Trinity

and the Holy spirit
we worship Him and glorify Him.

You Yourself Be Good News

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

• People need one who makes them happy and alleviates their troubles. With the hope that he has, he can let in light to shine amidst their tribulations making them disappear and giving a new hope...

• You too, be like that. If you have a joyful word, give it to people. If you have inconvenient word, postpone uttering it in order not to cause trouble to others.

• Blessed are the words of the Bible, *"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things. " (Rom. 10:15).*

• Be cheerful with everyone and do your utmost to spread happiness among people.
• Meet people with a gentle smile and a sweet word, for people do not like frowning or angry looks that make them lose the peace of heart and quietness.

Make people happy to meet you, make them feel that you bring them joy and that your arrival is good news to them.

• Look how people draw a good omen and rejoice in a happy word that they read in the horoscope or fortune-book. It could fill their heart with joy and boost their morale although nobody knows the future except God. What made them happy was nothing but a word...

Can't you see that the word Gospel means Good News?!

Preaching the Gospel was the announcing of the Good News which the Angel gave to the shepherds, *"I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. " (Luk. 2:10).*

• Look how the Lord Jesus Christ said to the people, *"Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. " (Matt. 11:28).*

So, if you are unable to carry people's burdens, at least do not cause them troubles.

Look how the photographers ask people to smile before they take their photo. They want the picture to be a happy one. You too should be smiling so that your face might be a source of joy for people...

Some wrongly think that religion means a gloomy face and that gloominess indicates seriousness! Religion is in fact joy and gentleness and joy are the fruits of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22).

ISAIAH, PROPHET EVANGELIST

Isaiah is one greatest of the Old Testament prophets who lived about 800 BC He prophesied about Christ the "awaited Messiah", His suffering and His Kingdom. Isaiah was able through prophecy to give a clear picture of the Messiah to the coming generations as though he was a contemporary of His. This is true to the degree that some of his admirers came to call his book "The Gospel of Isaiah."

A Royal Upbringing

Isaiah came from a royal family. He spent about half a century living in royal courts and participating in running the affairs of the State due to the confidence of Kings in him. He called for total reform particularly when he came in close touch with the problems of the poorer class of the people suffering from social injustice.

Isaiah witnessed the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel before the king of Babylon and the carrying away of its people into captivity.

How did he see Christ?

The most wonderful of all of Isaiah's words were those of his sayings about the coming of the promised Saviour. The following are a number of pictures given by Isaiah in Prophecy:

1 The Messiah - God incarnate:

Isaiah tells us about the conception of the Messiah, the Virgin and the Birth and considered it to be the highest of all prophecies as in Is, 7:10-16

The prophecy was repeated clearly in Chapter 9, showing that He is the true light which shine on the world. Is 9:1-7

2. The Messiah - the suffering Servant:

The true Son of God who came to redeem the world is pictured by Isaiah as sent by God taking the form of the "The suffering Servant" (Is 53). This was a very new and unusual way of describing God.

- † Picturing Him as bearing the suffering of mankind. "Surely, He has borne our grieves (Is 53:4)
- † Picturing Him wounded on the cross. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." (Is 53:5)
  Picturing Him as the Lamb who bears our sins. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent." (Is 53:7**)**

† Although He did not sin, yet He was numbered among sinners. ..... Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth ... And He was numbered with the transgressors" (Is 53:9 and 12)
† Lastly picturing Him condemned to death in place of sinners. "He poured out His soul unto death. And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors. (Is 53:12) Isaiah gives a clear-cut picture of the greatness of the act of sacrifice. His (the Messiah) suffering became the means for the salvation of mankind, a sacrifice made out of love, which converts sorrow into a fellowship of love. Thus suffering is a means to succeed in achieving the blessed goals aspired to us the Orthodox Church reads passages from the prophecies of Isaiah which, is about the suffering of our Saviour during the Pascha prayers in the Holy Week. Showing how those prophecies were fulfilled.

3 The Messiah - the everlasting King

† Picturing the son of Jesse as a wise and mighty King ruling over all nations of the world: "There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse,... And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding." (Is 11:1)
† Justice will rule his Kingdom: "But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth." (Is 11:4)
† Peace will reign over His Kingdom. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, **...** The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them." (Is 11:6)
† He saw men's hearts full of peace and security. "The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den." (Is 11:8)
† The knowledge of the Lord will spread holiness while the evils of society will disappear. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord." (Is 11:9)

All these descriptions apply to Christ's spiritual Kingdom that, He founded on earth in the hearts of believers.

For Memorization

"...we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." Rom. 8:17. "The spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor, He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted." (Is. 61:1-3)

Prayer

Read Is. 53, it includes prophecies about the suffering of our Lord. Remember to thank God for those life-giving pains joining the Church in its six o'clock and nine o'clock prayers.

"O Lord, Thou who on the sixth day and at the sixth hour was nailed on the cross for the sin committed by our father Adam, wipe away our sins O Christ our Lord...." 'Dear Lord, by the nails which fixed you to the cross, save our minds from rash actions and render us to remember by holy judgments according to thy grace.

NOTES

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in the class

MARCH
FIRST SUNDAY

EFFECT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE PERSONAL ATTITUDE (I)
"CHRISTIANITY AND LOVE"

Please read (Luke 10:30-37), the attached material entitled "Love Sacrifices" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

† This is the first lesson in a series of 4 lessons on the effect of Christianity on man's attitude in life. In this lesson we will focus on the Christian personality that is filled with love as a result of being Christian.

MEMORY VERSE

Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spiteful use you and persecute you." (Matthew 5:44)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

INTRODUCTION

The personality of people is a result of a collection of many characteristics and components which make up this person. He or she is a unique individual by himself or herself and different from another person. The personality of a person is formed from several aspects:

1. **The body aspect:** This involves the various components of the body, the various senses and the nervous system.
2. **The mind aspect:** This involves the component of the mind and its knowledge and abilities to know things.

3. **<u>The emotional aspect</u>:** This involves all the personal emotions as fear, anger, love and hatred.

4. **<u>The Social aspect</u>:** This involves the relationship between the person and groups of people, family ties and society customs.

5. **<u>The spiritual aspect</u>:** This involves the spiritual values, beliefs and the religious background. Peoples in all ages are worshipping something that affects their personalities.

† All the factors mentioned above affect and interact with each other to form the personality of individuals. These factors do not work in isolation.

† In this series we will understand how Christianity as originated from the teaching of the Lord Jesus affects the personality of a man or a woman.

<u>Christianity and Love</u>

† Love is the main foundation on which the Christian religion is based on. In Christianity all the teachings involve the love of God and people. Hence, love is the main thing that affects the personality of a Christian. He or she becomes a loving person. Love in Christianity has two main aspects:

1. **<u>Love includes all people</u>:** Love in the old testament for the Jewish people included only the relatives and family. Please read Luke 10:27. Christianity opened the circle to include all people. Read here the parable of the good Samaritan Luke 10:30-37. Please read also, Matthew 5:43-44. Remember that Matthew 5 and 6 represent the backbone of Christianity. “Sermon on the mountain”

2. **<u>Love is deep as our Lord Jesus loved us</u>:** “As I have loved you, that you also love one another.” John 13:34. Jesus’ love to us was so deep; He loved us more than Himself. St. Paul loved the Jews who hated him more than he loved himself. Please read Romans 9:1-3. St. John the Evangelist while he was so old and could not move, they were carrying him from place to place to speak to them. He was speaking only about love. Please read John 15:12,1 John2:9-11,3:10-11,3:14-15

† <u>Remember the martyrs, the confessors and the Saints with beautiful personalities filled with love.</u>

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us take love from Christianity and let it shows in our personalities. We will become loving people and we will be wiser here on earth and up in heaven.

(2) Even under very difficult conflict of interest one must not loose his love towards others. Life needs a person with a big heart who is willing to accommodate people's mistakes without losing love towards them or getting angry at them.

Songs

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE

Love, love, love, love
Love your neighbour as yourself

Pantocrator
You created heaven and earth

Jesus Christ
You are our Sacrifice

Holy Spirit
You sanctify our souls

Coptic Church
Through Your Sacraments we are saved

Agios O Theo-os
Agios Athanatos

The Gospel in a word is love
Love, love, love

You are my Creator
I adore You.

You are our Redeemer
I love You

You are our Comforter
I need You

You are our blessing and pride.
I serve you

Agios Ees- shiros
Eleison ymas
Eleison ymas

LOVE SACRIFICES
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Love is tested through suffering, tribulation and sacrifice.

The one who is not able to sacrifice is the one who does not love.. Once he loves, he will sacrifice everything.

Abraham, the father of fathers, because of his love for God, left his people and the house of his father, and lived a stranger in a tent...

But Abraham's love for God reached its peak when he laid his only son on the altar. He placed wood and fire around him and raised his hand with the knife, to sacrifice him.

When Daniel loved the Lord, he sacrificed himself and accepted being thrown into the lions' den. The same with the three youths who proved their love through selfsacrifice, to be case into the burning furnace...

St. Paul, the Apostle, said about his love for the Lord Jesus, *"I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him. " (Phil 3:8-9)*

Our fathers the martyrs and the confessors, because of their love for God, sacrificed their blood, their lives and comfort. They experienced torment and never feared, because of their great love...

There are obstacles that hinder Man from sacrifice: his love of comfort, love of dignity and the love of slef... But real love does not care for comfort, pride or self...

One sacrifices everything for the sake of the one he loves...

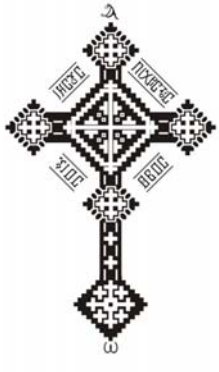
Jacob, the father of fathers, when he fell in love with Rachel, sacrificed much for her sake. He toiled for twently years, with the sun burning him during the day and the cold at night... He considered all these years as a few days because of his love for her.

And what have you sacrificed for Jesus, who sacrificed Himself on the Cross for your sake?...

The one who loves, sacrifices himself for God and for people.

He has to practise first to sacrifice what is outside himself, such as wealth, time and possessions. But the one who is unable to sacrifice what is outside himself, how would he sacrifice himself?!

If you are unable to sacrifice, then you do not love others; you only love yourself...



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MARCH
SECOND SUNDAY

Effect of Christianity on the Personal attitude (II)
"Christianity is Against Partiality"

Please read (John 4:1-42), the attached article entitled "Prejudice" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

† This is the second lesson in a series of 4 lessons on the effect of Christianity on man's attitude in life. In this lesson we learn that man must not be biased or partial.

MEMORY VERSE

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

Example of Partiality

✞ **The Jews were very partial to their own people:**
- † There are several examples of that in the Holy Bible. One of these examples was Jonah when he was refusing to go to Nineveh, the Gentile city just to tell them that God is going to destroy the city if they do not repent. We studied this already in previous class.
- † The Greeks were also, thinking that they are the only educated people and all others are not.
- † The Romans were thinking that they are the Masters and all other people are the salves.

✝ In several countries war started between the people of one nation because they made groupings each of which is only partial to his own self.

Christianity came to teach impartiality:

† Our Lord Jesus visited the Samaritans (Please Refer to the reference (John 4:1-42). The Jews do not mix with the Samaritans and consider them low class. Our Beloved Lord went to them and preached Christianity to them.

† One time, one of the Jews asked our righteous Saviour, who is my relative? The Lord answered by the parable of the Good Samaritan to remove completely the partiality even to the people of the same family. Please read (Luke 10:25-37).

† In the book of Acts 6:1-8, we read that the twelve Disciples took very seriously the complaint from the Greeks that they were treated unfairly with regard to the daily need of their widows. The Disciples then appointed seven deacons who were filled with the Holy Spirit to serve in this area and make sure everything was working fairly.

† In the letters of St. Paul he emphasized that we are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON

(1) As Christians we must develop the attitude that we are all one family with the whole world. We must not be partial to color, religion, race or any other factor. We have to follow our Lord's example.

(2) Partiality does not go along with love. Since Christianity is about love, then a true Christian must not be partial.

(3) Partiality also does not go along with fairness and truth. So, partiality causes destruction.

Songs

THEY WILL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS

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

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

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

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

by our love, by our love
by our love.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PREJUDICE

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

You might be a son of God, a servant of the Church, regular in doing spiritual deeds, but you are under the influence of prejudice, yielding to its effects...!

Prejudice is to attack someone, without knowledge, without thinking and probably without reason...!

At the same time, you support and defend someone, in the same way which is void of knowledge, thought or reason!

Prejudice has Paul and Apollos, which the Apostle criticized by rebuking the Corinthians, saying, "For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another," I am of Apollos," are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:4)

Prejudice does not agree with the spirit of love...

The person you criticize, attack and oppose, you definitely do not love... "and love does not behave rudely, thinks no evil." (1 Cor. 13:5)

Prejudice does not agree with truth and justice...

Mostly, attacks which fall in the sphere of prejudice, are not all true or just... At least they have a touch of exaggeration or incrimination, which is the outcome of spite in the heart...

Prejudice does not build but destroys...

It weakens strength and splits unity. It uses energy not in a natural course... but wastes it in quarrels, splits, criticism and contradiction.

Prejudice is against the unity of spirit and thought...

It is an embodiment of one's self... and does not agree with the Holy Church about whose children it was said *"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. " (Act 4:32)*

Prejudice is against the command of the Apostles who said, *"..endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one God, one baptism. " (Eph 4:3-5)*

Prejudice could adopt the spirit of competition or contradiction or contradiction to others, and the spirit of boasting to oneself...

It could take an aspect of "worshipping of heroes" or belonging to the public.

All that remains in your sight is our group, our society, our branch, our church (on the district level), our country, our village...

MARCH
THIRD SUNDAY

PALM SUNDAY:
"WHY DOES THE WORLD REJECT THE LORD JESUS"

Please read (Matthew 2l:1-11), (Mark 11:1-10), (Luke 19:28-40), (John 12:12-16) and give this lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

† To show that in today's life the story repeats itself. The simple people accept the Lord Christ as their personal Saviour whereas the rest of the world reject Him as they feel they are not sinners and do not need Saviour.

MEMORY VERSE

'...Hosanna in the Highest" (Matthew 21:9)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

(A) **INTRODUCTION:**

On Palm Sunday the Lord Christ entered Jerusalem as a king. He did not have any problems from the Romans. But He had a problem from His own people. The leaders of Jews differed with Him in the meaning of the kingdom.

(B) The difference in the meaning of the kingdom:

(1) The Lord Christ wanted Spiritual Kingdom and they wanted earthly kingdom

The Lord wanted to establish a kingdom that is not of this world. A kingdom that is based on love in which God reigns not people. The Jews wanted a kingdom the

like the one under Samson, Joshua or Gideon. They wanted the outside appearance, the army and the nation with an earthly king. He, however, wanted to save them from sins (His name is Jesus means the Saviour). When He entered Jerusalem as a king, the simple people rejoiced and greeted Him, whereas the rest of the Jews became angry and rejected Him because of their self-desires, ego, pride and competition.

(2) <u>The story repeats itself now:</u>

So many people of the world today do not like to admit that they are sinners and need the Saviour. So many people of the world today want someone to give them materialistic things of this world and want to satisfy their lustful desires so they reject the Lord Jesus Christ.

(C) **<u>Christ the King</u>:**

(1) Christ did not refuse the kingdom in general but only refused the earthly kingdom.

(2) <u>The Kingdom of Christ is eternal</u>
The Lord Jesus was called twice in the book of Revelation "The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords" Rev. 19:16 and Rev. 17:14, and also in Dan. 7:14. Since His birth, the wise men came asking "where is the born King of the Jews" Matt. 2:2 and the first gift they offered Him was gold to signify His Kingdom. He is called the King of Peace (the Hymn of Eporo). In the Niche of the church we have an icon for Christ as a King sitting on His heavenly throne surrounded by the Angelic powers. On His Cross they had a plate written on it "Jesus the King of the Jews". Matt. 27:37
So Christ has:

(1) Spiritual Kingdom so He reign over the hearts through the blood which He shed on the Cross and

(2) Heavenly Kingdom which is eternal and this is His Kingdom with the Father due to His Divine Nature.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Lessons in the Holy Bible events repeat themselves now.

(2) The Kingdom that the Christians want is a heavenly kingdom filled with love and peace. This kingdom is also eternal. Whereas the world wants money, lusts, positions, competition and earthly force. So the world does not find these things in the Lord Christ and so they reject Him.

(3) Take the Lord Jesus as your personal saviour. Believe in Him, follow His example and abide in Him through the partaking of the Holy Communion. Receive Him in your heart

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)

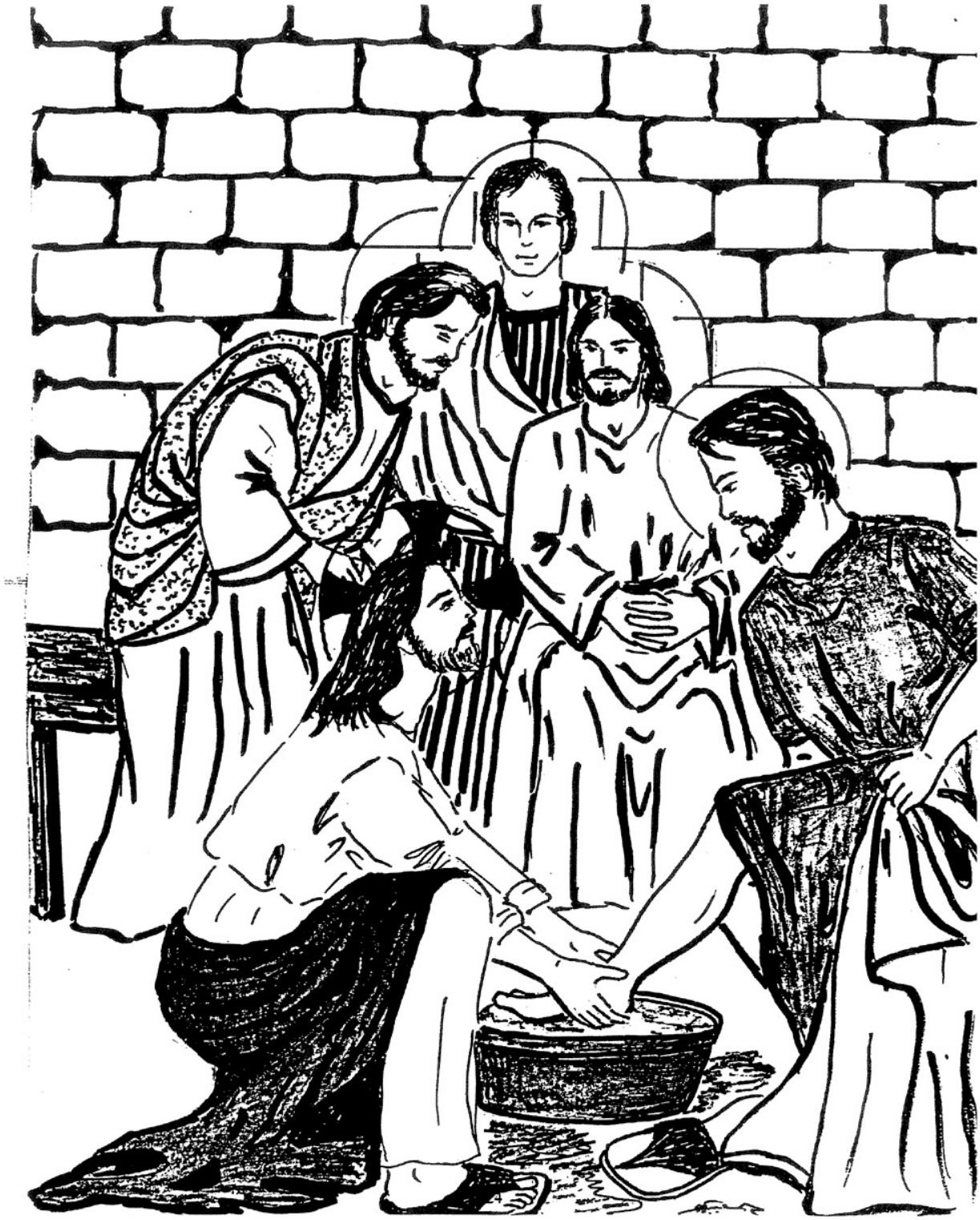
He Who is above the Cherubim — today appeared in Jerusalem
With great glory riding a colt — surrounded by ranks of ni-angelos.

REFRAIN

Oussana khen ni – et – chocee — fai pe epouro empi - Israel
Ef-es-maro-out enjevi-ethni-yo — khen efran em epchoice ente nigom.

On the way they spread garments — from the tress they cut branches
With joy and praise they did sing — Hosanna to the Son of David.

Today God fulfilled many words — the prophecies and the proverbs
As Zachariah prophesied — this prediction of Jesus Christ.



MARCH
FOURTH SUNDAY

CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE PRAYER OF THE HOLY WEEK (I)

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This lesson is the first of a series of two lessons about the prayer of the Holy Week. This is a praise for the Lord that is above any regular prayer or requests. It is a praise that fills the soul of the person spiritually.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"Thine is the power and the glory and the blessing and the strength …***
>
> ***The hymn of the Holy Week***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

With this praise "Thine is the power and the glory and the blessing and the strength" we praise the name of the Lord all throughout the Holy Week: As He went from Jerusalem to Bethany, as the chief priests got mad at Him because He cleaned the altar, as He knelt down to wash the feet of His Disciples, as He was praying in the garden of Gethsemane, as they arrested Him, as they put the crown of thorns on Him and as they crucified Him. In all these conditions we follow the Lord up and praise Him with this beautiful praise.

(B) **Thine is the Power (Thok Te tigam):**

In our Coptic Orthodox church we do not separate between the passion of Christ and His almighty power. This is the reason that we start our praise in the Holy Week saying "Thine is the power". As St. Paul said "Christ the power of God". 1 Cor. 1:24. They thought He was weak, but we know you are God the Almighty.

(1) He was powerful in His miracles and Holiness.

The Lord Jesus proved His power as "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did" John 15:24. He showed His power over nature (Ps. 89:9), His power sickness and death (John 11), His power in creation (Luke 9), His power over demons. No one can count His miracles as St. John said "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" John 21:25.

(2) He was powerful in moving forward towards death.

The Lord was very strong in moving forward towards death. He know that the bad people are coming to arrest Him. He knew the time and said "You know that after two days is the Passover and the Son of Man will be delivered to be crucified" Matt. 26:2. He declared His authority and said "I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me. But I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again". John 10:17-18

(3) He was powerful when they arrested Him.

"Whom are you seeking" they answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth", Jesus said to them, "I am He". And Judas … They drew back and fell to the ground" John 18:4-6

(4) He was powerful during His trial.

The chief priests were very surprised about His calmness and patience. The high priest said "Do you answer nothing? What is it these men testifying against You? But Jesus kept silent" Matt. 26:59-60

(5) He was powerful during His Crucifixion.

While He was on the Cross, the sun darkened and "Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn into two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split" Matt. 27:51-52. He was great on the Cross to the extent that the centurion said "Truly this was the Son of God". Matt. 27:54

(6) He was powerful even after His death.

The first thing the Lord did after His death was that He tied up the devil for a thousand year. Afterwards "He descended into the lower parts of the earth" Eph. 4:9. He preached those who were laid down on hope and led them with the right hand thief to Paradise.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Only the full picture of things is suitable. The Lord's suffering cannot be separated from the Lord's Power in every step of the Holy Week.

(2) The prayer of the Holy Week is a great praise that fills the individual spiritually.

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 raptured soul shall find

by my glory ever
rest beyond the river

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

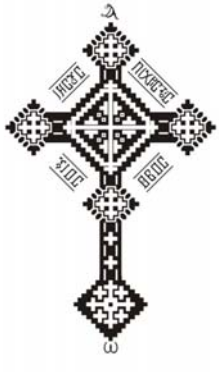
love and mercy found me
sheds His beams around me

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

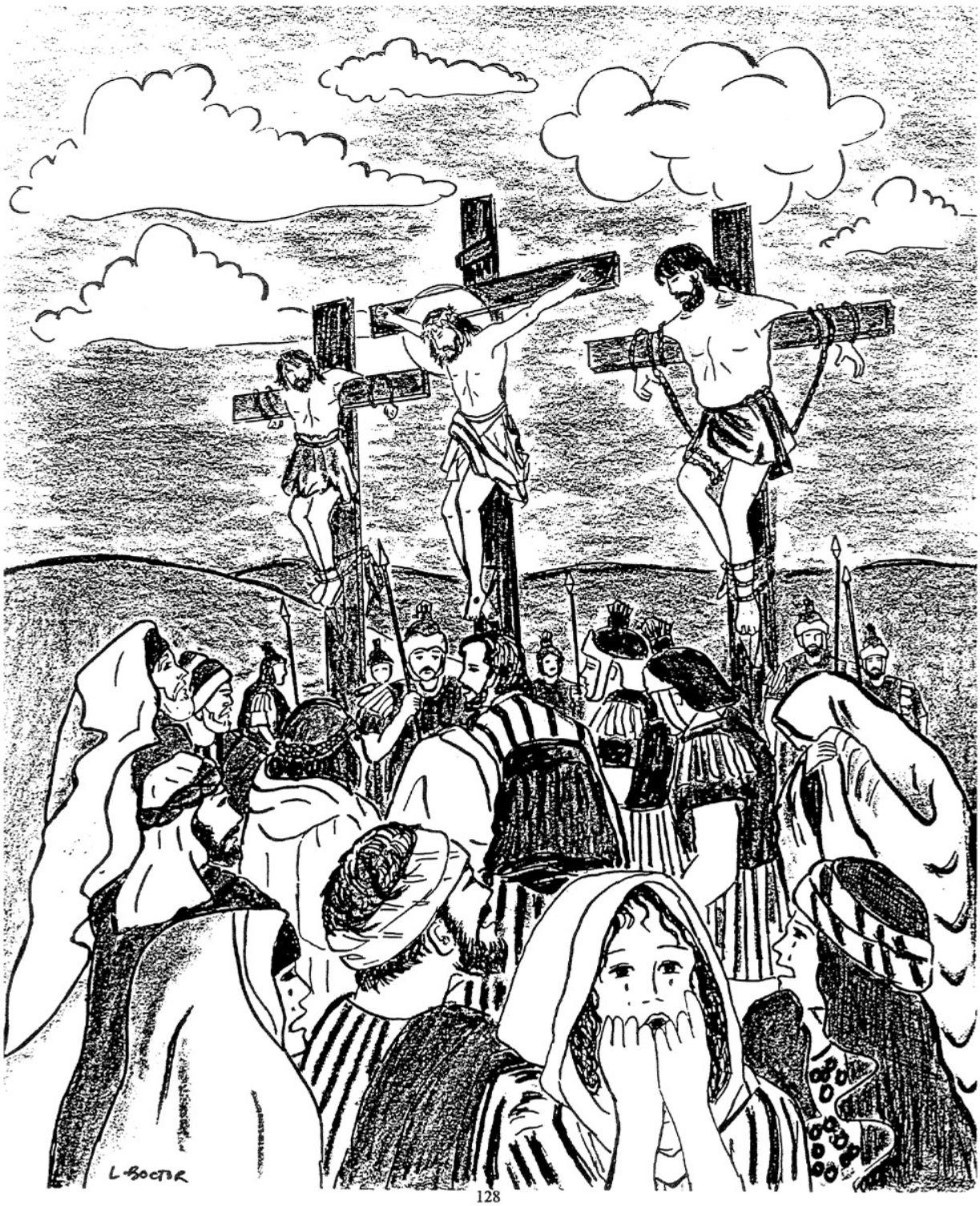
hoping trusting ever
just beyond the river



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

HOLY BIBLE

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



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APRIL
FIRST SUNDAY

CONTEMPLATION ON THE PRAYER OF THE HOLY WEEK (II)

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson two in a series of two lessons about the prayer of the Holy Week. This is a praise for the Lord that is above any regular prayer or requests. It is a praise that fills the soul of the person spiritually.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"Thine is the power and the glory and the blessing and the strength …"***
>
> ***The hymn of the Holy Week***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

Start by reviewing the previous lesson as we contemplate on the above mentioned hymn of the Holy Week and proceed as follows:

(A) <u>And the "Glory"</u>

In the Holy Week we see the Lord Christ as Isaiah the prophet described Him "He is despised and rejected by men …" Isa. 53:3. As we see Him like this we continue to praise Him saying, "Thine is the power and the glory and the blessing and the strength". He did not only deny Himself all glory during the Passion Week but He did that all through out His life on earth; He ate with the tax collectors and sinners. They insulted Him saying there is a devil in Him. They refused to glorify Him because He rejected any glory from them and said, "I do not receive honor from men" John 5:41. So He refused to be an earthly king. We know your true glory as a heavenly king and king of kings.

You are our Glorified Lord because we know: You are in Your Father and Your Father is in You (John 17:10). You are the One who existed in the bosom of the Father forever (John 1:18). You are the One who is worshipped in heaven and in earth (Phil. 2:10), You are the One glorified by the Angels at Your Birth, You are the One who was glorified during Your Baptism, You are the One who were Transfigured on the Mountain, You are the One who showed Your Glory in Your miracles, You are the One who showed Your Glory to St. John in the Revelation and You are the One to come back in full glory.

When we glorify you our lips are purified. You do not increase of course. We glorify you not only in Your second coming, but we glorify You in the midst of Your suffering.

(B) **And the Blessing:**

We follow our Lord Christ during His crucifixion and say "Thine is the Blessing". The Bible says "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" Gal. 3:13. Therefore it is essential to bury in the same day the person who deserved to be hanged so that He does not defile the earth, because the person who is hanged is cursed from God. (Dent. 21:22-23). This is why the Lord carried on our behalf the curse of the Law and "having became a curse for us" Gal. 3:13.

We know that He is Holy without a sin and the curse that He carried; He did it on our behalf. We are the sinners.

As the Jews look at the Cross of the Lord as a symbol of humiliation, we say to Him "Thine is the Blessing on Your Cross". Through your Cross we get great Blessing in everything and every time the priest put the sign of the Cross: in Baptism, in Chrismation in the Eucharist … and in all the Sacraments of the Church.

Thine is the Blessing which we lost when Adam sinned and we waited until this day waiting for you to give it to us. Thine is the Blessing which we say about in the Divine Liturgy "You have blessed my nature in thee".

Sin used to hinder us from Your Blessings, now we can have great blessings from You as you removed our sins.

(C) **Thine is the strength:**

Thine is the strength because You are the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Rev. 17:14). Thine is the strength because to You all respect and fear.

Thine is the strength because they could not arrest You until Your hour came.

Thine is the strength during all your life on earth and the Cross is a reaction of their fear from You.

What do we learn from this lesson?

(1) The Blessings that we get from our Lord Jesus and His Cross are heavenly.

(2) We must not focus on the outside appearance of things. From outside the Lord Christ during the Holy Week was in a very bad shape. But in reality "Thine is the power and the glory and the blessing and strength".

Songs

REMEMBER ME O LORD

" Assuredly , I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise." (Lk 23:43)

Remember me O Lord, when You come into Your kingdom.

Remember me O Holy, when You come into Your kingdom.

Remember me O Master, when You come into Your kingdom.

Remember me O God, when You come into Your kingdom.

Remember me O Saviour, when You come into Your kingdom.

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APRIL

SECOND SUNDAY

Your spirituality in the fifty days after Easter

Please read (John 20:1-23), the attached article entitled "Your Spirituality during Elkhamasin" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

In this lesson we would like to show that misunderstanding of the meaning of the fifty days after Easter can result in getting busy with food and losing all the spirituality that we gain during the great lent and holy week. Living the true resurrected life during these fifty days will result in tremendous joy and depth in our spirituality.

MEMORY VERSE

> "The Disciples were glad when they saw the Lord". (John 20:20)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

(A)<u>The spiritual setback during the fifty days after Easter:</u>

Many Christians, from the Easter celebration and all through the fifty days after Easter, focus on eating non-fasting food. During this period of time there are no fasting even on Wednesdays and Fridays and no kneeling (Metanya). When you do not fast, no kneeling and focusing on food you come up with a situation in which the person would lose the spiritual gains and depth that he or she accomplished during the prayer, fasting and kneeling that happened during the holy lent and holy week. This is not what is intended by the church for us during the fifty days after Easter celebration. Those days are supposed to be similar to the days in which the disciples lived after the resurrection of the Lord filled with peace, joy and pure feelings. How can this happen to us now? To answer this question we will have to address two points, the first is to study the

joy of the disciples in this period and the second point is to study how to apply it to our life now during those days.

(B) "<u>The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord</u>"

- The disciples of the Lord were filled with joy when the Lord Christ came to them in the upper room while the doors were shut. He said to them peace be with you and they were filled with peace and joy to see the Lord Jesus again. This is the heavenly joy. If an individual instead of seeing the Lord Jesus and focusing with Him, is focusing only on food and materialistic things He will only gain the lusts of the senses but will never gain inner joy. On the contrary the inside of the person will be filled with misery.
- The disciples, in the upper room, were promised by the Lord before His crucifixion that He will see them again and He will give them joy in their hearts that nobody can take away. After His resurrection the Lord fulfilled His promise, came to them in the upper room and changed their sadness and doubt to heavenly joy.

- What is the resurrection of the Christ? It is His continuous presence in the Church among His people and with His people in their homes. It is the dwelling of Christ with us. We do not see Him by our eyes but we can feel the resurrected Christ in our lives and the inner joy that He gives us.

- How about Thomas? He left the disciples in the upper room initially and he was deprived from the joy that the disciples had when they saw the resurrected Lord. However, the Lord Christ, out of His mercy came especially again one more time for Thomas while he was with the disciples in the upper room. The Lord restored his faith when He showed him His side, which was opened by the spear. The Lord wanted Thomas to have the same capability and the same faith as the rest of the disciples so that in their upcoming preaching job, they can give a total picture to the world about the Lord Jesus, including His resurrection.

- True peace and joy can be in us only when we enjoy the fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, not when we focus on materialistic things.

(C) <u>How can we overcome the luke warmness during the fifty days after Easter?</u>

- ✞ Do not let your joy during this period of time to be based on food, but in fact control yourself on the desire and the intake of food.

- ✞ Practice in this period to sing the joyful hymns of the Church for example "Ekhrestos Anisti". Practice the presence of God with you as you pray with the psalms; as you pray with your personal prayer and as you thank God for the joyful salvation that He has given to you.

- ✞ During the forty days after the resurrection the Lord Christ was talking to His disciples about things related to the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Similarly in this period of time we should practice not worldly parties or worldly joy, but we should practice thinking about heavenly praises and hymns and also believe in a spiritual way.

- ✞ All the virtues, commitment and improvements that we got during the Great Lent period and the Holy Week must not be lost but must be maintained and practiced during the fifty days after Easter and even afterwards.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Our beloved Church provides for us a complete spiritual program. During the holy lent especially that the holy week we gain a lot in our spiritual depth due to fasting and prayers. During the fifty days after Easter the Church's program of joyful hymns, meditation on the presence of the Lord Jesus among us, and partaking of the Holy Communion would lead us to another depth in our spirituality that we all need. This is the spirituality of joy that we all need as well.

(2) Remember not to lose your repentance and the commitment of purity during the fifty days after Easter.

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

YOUR SPIRITUALITY DURING EL-KHAMASIN PENTECOSTI

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Truly, El-Khamasin are days of joy, no fasting and no prostration, even on Wednesdays and Fridays...

But we can also be spiritual during joy...

Otherwise, how are you going to be spiritual in paradise, and the Kingdom of Heaven, where there is eternal joy?!...

What you miss of fasting and prostration could be substituted by more prayers, more spiritual readings, more meditation, more hymns and singing psalms, following the Bible's saying, *"Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms... " (Jas 5:13)*

You could also be nourished by contemplating on God's love which created salvation... the love of God who wanted to spend forty days with His Disciples, after the Resurrection, *"...being seen by them during forty days and speaking of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. " (Act 1:3)*

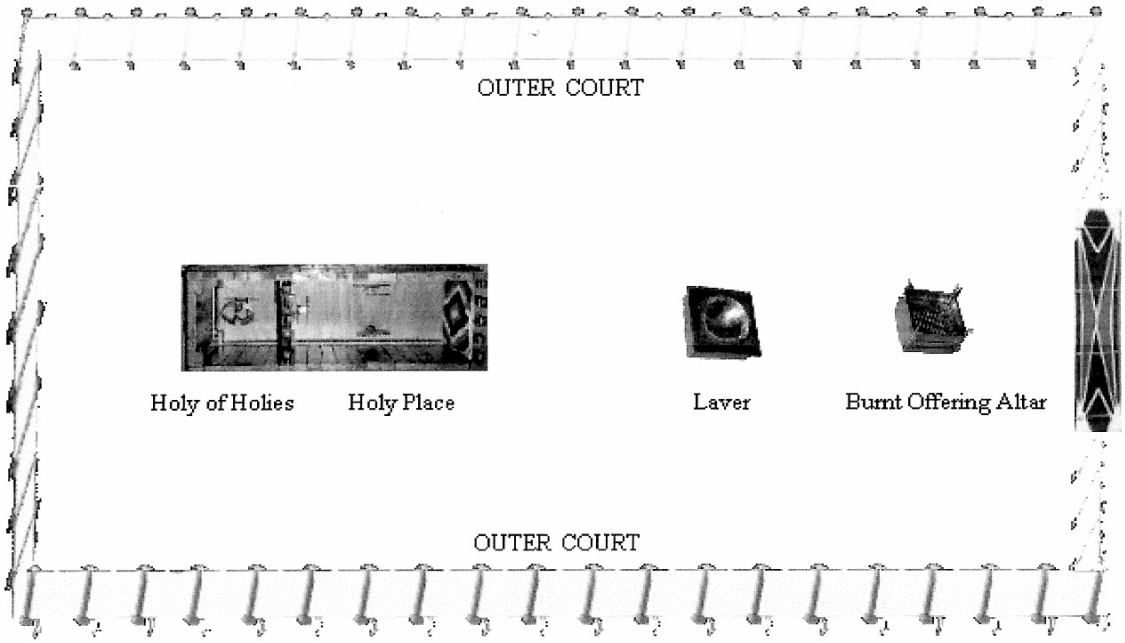
During this period, exercise talking to God and be in His presence, by reading psalms, having personal prayers and thanking God for His amazing salvation... Keep away from anything that could hinder you from being in the divine presence...

Live a life of joy in the Lord. But do not make your joy a physical one, by being extravagant in eating.

Fast breaking does not mean persevering in the desire
of food.

Self control is also needed while not fasting...

Plan View of the Tabernacle Structure



APRIL
THIRD SUNDAY

THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING
(ITS SYMBOLIC, PROPHETIC AND SPIRITUAL MEANINGS) (I)

Please read (Hebrews 8-10), (Exodus 35-40), (Leviticus 1-10), and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson one in a series of two lesson to study the tabernacle of meeting and its symbolic, prophetic and spiritual meanings.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"… I may dwell among them"***
>
> ***Exodus 25:8***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

The tabernacle of meeting occupied significant parts of the Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament, it occupied Exodus 35-40 and Leviticus 1-10. In the New Testament, St. Paul the apostle referred to the tabernacle of meeting. The tabernacle of meeting has plenty of symbols for the presence of the Incarnate God among His people in the church of the New Testament. So the tabernacle of meeting was a symbol of the church of New Testament. The design of the tabernacle of meeting was not left to any human being to do, but God Himself designed the tabernacle and Moses did it accordingly. This shows us that God cares a lot about his house, the church. St. Paul the apostle explained many of the symbols of the contents of the tabernacle and its parts. He said "but Christ came as a High Priest of the good thing to come, with the greater and more perfect

tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own Blood He entered the most holy place one for all having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. 9:11,12). In our church today the midnight praise has many songs and hymns interpreting the contents of the holy place (the sanctuary) and the most holy (the holiest of all) as being God, the Lord Jesus Christ being incarnated and coming from St. Mary the Virgin.

(B) From The Meeting Tent To The Tabernacle Of Meeting

1. The meeting tent:

There was a meeting tent mentioned in (Exodus 33:7-11), which Moses had erected outside the camping place of the people of Israel. There are no details about it. When Moses went into that tent, all the people came out and stood, each at the door of their own tent. They would watch the pillar of cloud as it rested at the entrance of the tent of the meeting while God spoke to Moses. Then they would fall on their knees. When Moses returned to the camp, Joshua, the young son of Nun, remained inside the tabernacle and never left it.

2. The tabernacle of meeting:

God designed the tabernacle of meeting and Moses set it up exactly as God told him in Sinai. On the first day of the second year after the people of Israel left Egypt (Exodus 40:17). It was placed in the midst of the twelve tribes of Israel, whether they were traveling or resting. The glory of God rested and filled the tabernacle of meeting (after it was anointed and sanctified) in the form of a cloud that provided share during the day and light during the night. When the cloud descended the people rested. When it ascended, they traveled (Exodus 40:34). When the journey across the wilderness was over the people of Israel crossed the river Jordan. They were led by the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant and as their feet touched the water, the water parted (Joshua 3:15) so that the people were able to cross and enter the land of Canaan. There the tabernacle of meeting was set up, first in Gilgal, then in Shiloh.

Afterwards the tabernacle of meeting was transported to other places a number of times. At one point in time, the Ark of Covenant was taken by the Palestinians who kept it for seven months after which they returned it. It then remained in the house of Obed (David's grandfather). It was then taken to the hometown of David (Bethlehem). During the reign of King Solomon, the ark and the contents of the tabernacle of meeting was carried to the altar, which He had built. During the

reign of the evil kings of Judah, the ark was removed from the altar, and the Holy Bible does not mention it again. This could be due to its transportation to Babylon during the captivity and it was not returned.

(C) Use of the tabernacle of meeting at the time of Moses:

During the days of Moses the prophet, the tabernacle of meeting was a sign of God's presence in the midst of His people. This gave people a sense of security and confidence that God is dwelling with them. The tabernacle was also a place manifesting God's glory, which the people could come to pray and feel close to him.

(D) The symbolic nature of the tabernacle of meeting:

God Himself dictated all the rises of worship and offering in the tabernacle of meeting. This was exercise of obedience in one hand. On the other hand these rites were symbolic of the incarnation of the Son of God, His appearance among people and the value of the redemption that He offered through his holy and precious Blood.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. It's a great feeling of an individual he or she would feel God so close. The tabernacle of meeting in the Old Testament was a symbol of the holy church in the New Testament.

2. The church of the New Testament gets its value, strength and importance from the presence of the Lord Jesus among His people in the church. He is the true Lamb of God. All the sacrifices and offerings in the tabernacle of meeting were symbols of the true sacrifice our Lord and master Jesus Christ.

SONGS

HOW NICE TO GATHER

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Mat 18:20)

How nice it is to gather today
When two of you gather in My name
in love as our God did say
know I am there just the same

REFRAIN

Oh Lord come now and hear us
Give us the peace that comes from within
we call on You to be with us
and keep us from the harm of sin

The Lord is the One that makes us sure
And a friend when no one is there
in all the ways that we endure
who keeps our hearts with loving care

The Lord is always by our side
He hears us when we call His name
and in His care we're satisfied
and by our side He will remain

NOTES

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APRIL
FOURTH SUNDAY

THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING
(ITS SYMBOLIC, PROPHETIC AND SPIRITUAL MEANINGS) (II)

Please read (Hebrews 8-10), (Exodus 35-40), (Leviticus 1-10) and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson two in a series of two lessons to study the tabernacle of meeting and It's symbolic, prophetic and spiritual meanings.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"… Sins are not forgiven without blood"***
>
> ***Heb. 9:22***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Start by reviewing the previous lesson. In this lesson we will talk about the various parts of the tabernacle of meeting explaining the various meanings of these parts. The tabernacle of meeting contained two parts, the outer court and the inner court. We will describe the contents of each part and dwell on the spiritual meaning of it.

(a) <u>The outer court of the tabernacle of meeting:</u>

1. <u>The gates of the tabernacle of meeting</u>

The description of the gates of the tabernacle of meetings is in (Exodus 38:18-20). We have indicated that the tabernacle of meeting was intended to signify God's presence in the midst of His people. The person entering, however, needs to pass

through a gate. This gate was a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ through whom we can enter heaven. He is the way that leads us into God's presence. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the door. If anyone enters by me he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." (John 10:9). Thus the door of the tabernacle of meeting was a symbol of Christ. The door consisted of curtains, hung up on four pillars. The curtains were made of four kinds of material:

- ✞ Blue thread cloth (light blue) as a symbol of Christ's heavenly person
- ✞ Purple thread cloth (vivid red) to denote the king of glory – purple is a royal color
- ✞ Scarlet cloth (dark red) to denote the Lord Jesus who was wounded for us
- ✞ White fine linen (twined) as a symbol of our Lord's nature spotless and without sin – thus denoting our redeemer.

The curtains were hung up on four pillars made of Acacia wood overlaid with gold. These stand for love of Christ that encompasses the whole four corners of the earth.

2. <u>The bronze altar for the burned offerings:</u>

- ✞ This is the first thing that meets a person entering the court. It is considered the biggest piece in the tabernacle of meeting. It was in the form of a case that was five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high. It was made up of acacia wood overlaid with bronze. It had four protruding horns at the four corners. The altar was hollow and this became filled with fuel and ashes of the offerings as presented on it.

  The fire was never put out so that it continually burned (Lev 6:9). The Lord started this fire in the day of His sanctification and it was the priest's job to add dry fuel only. The bronze altar and all the offerings presented on it were symbols of the Lord Christ who suffered on our behalf "but He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5).

  The offering presented had to be without blemish. The sinner had to place his or her hand on its head and confess his or her sin. Then the priest would burn it all on the altar. It was the promise that God had made to forgive the sin of those who presented an offering, "sins are not forgiven without blood" (Heb. 9:22). Atonement and salvation are indicated by the horns of the altar,

which symbolizes the power and efficacy of Christ offering. The horns at that time served as a means of salvation to anyone who sought refuge in them. There, they could be safe until their innocence was confirmed.

The offering was tied to the horns of the altar before it was presented and burned. This symbolizes the tie of love, which made the Lord look towards Jerusalem and Golgotha. Although the offering was considered a bearer of sin upon presenting it, yet God ordered that its ashes be gathered in a pure pot. These were sprayed over sinners as means of purification (Num. 19:9). If the blood of rams and bulls and their ashes could sanctify, how much more can this offering do – the pure blood of the Lord Jesus. It can certainly it can purify us from all dead acts (Heb. 9:11-14).

3. The bronze laver:

The bronze laver description can be found in Exodus 30:17-21. It was put in the outer court between the bronze altar and the entrance to the sanctuary. It was filled with water and the priests had to wash in its water when they had to present offerings on the altar. Similarly they had to wash before entering the sanctuary, so that they will not die. The bronze laver symbolizes our baptism. It is through baptism that we become qualified to be members in the church. The laver was used as well as by the priests to wash their legs and feet with its water daily before drawing near the altar of burning incense or the holy place. This represent sour daily struggle to adhere to purify and holiness for our well-being.

(b**)** **The inner court of the tabernacle of meeting:**

We will describe the following parts:

1. Coverings:

The first layer consisted of fine linen, blue, purple and scarlet silk. This layer symbolizes spiritual virtues, which the Lord grants to the inner soul.

The second layer consisted of coverings made of coarse goat's skins. Their color denoted the hardship believers and the church tolerate due to external persecution. Inwardly, however, they are filled with the grace and consolation granted by God "I am dark but lovely…like the tents of keda, like the curtains of Solomon:" (Song of songs 1:5).

The third layer was made of ram's skins, dyed red, which reminds us of the leather clothes that God made for Adam and Eve to cover them up.

The last layer was a covering made of dark badger skin (a sea animal) and strongly resistant to weather conditions. It indicates the Lord's protection over His children "I clothed you … of badger skin" (Ezekiel 16:10).

2. The contents of the sanctuary (or holy place):

✞ The table of the showbread

The description of the showbread table, which signifies the presence of God, can be found in Exodus 25:23-30 and 37:10-16. This is the first time in the Bible where the table for serving the Lord is mentioned. It is a symbol of our Lord, who offered Himself as the "Bread of Life". It is a symbol of the Holy Communion to which the Lord invites us to His Holy Body and Blood as food of life.

✞ The golden lamp stand

The golden lamp stand description can be found in Exodus 25:31-40 and 37:17-24. Since there were not windows in the tent to give light the lamp stand had the function to give light. It is a symbol of our Lord who is Light out of Light. As the Lord is the Light of the world He told us also "you are the light of the world." We can become the light of the world through the action of the Holy Spirit in us (Eph. 4:30).

✞ The altar for burning sweet incense

The description of the altar for burning sweet incense can be found in Exodus 30:1-10 and 37:25. Aaron, the priest, used to burn sweet incense on it every morning and evening when he refueled the lamp stand. The altar for burning incense is a sweet symbol of our Lord who offered Himself as a sweet offering for our sakes, and the smell went up to His Father.

✞ The Veil

The description of the Veil can be found in Exodus 26:31-33. The Veil divided the tabernacle into two, the holy place (sanctuary) and the Most High. So there were things inside the Veil like the Ark of the Covenant and things outside the Veil (contents of the sanctuary).

3. The holy of holies

The description of which can be found in Exodus 25:10-22 and 37:1-9

✞ The ark of covenant

The Ark represented the Presence of God in the midst of His people. It was called the Ark of Covenant (Deuteronomy 31:26) in reference to the blood of the covenant, which allowed the priests once a year to approach the ark to obtain God's blessing and confirm the promise of mercy and forgiveness. It had the tablets of the covenant on which the Ten Commandments were written, it had the Manna (a sample of the food that God gave them in the wilderness) and it had the budding rod of Aaron.

✞ The mercy seat

The mercy seat was made up of pure gold with two cherubim of gold at each end. The cherubim stretched their wings above, covering the mercy seat and facing each other. God told Moses, "there I will meet with you and I will speak with you …" (Exodus 25:22).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) God cares about the ritual aspects of worship. This is clear from all the worship system in the tabernacle. We also have to keep the rites of the church (without being too rigid).

(2) As the Lord filled the tabernacle of meeting with His glory He can also fill our hearts with His heavenly peace and heavenly glory.

(3) We are fortunate in the New Testament as we enter our church and can experience with great joy the holiest place of all places where the Lord Christ Himself comes to us on the altar through His Body and Blood in the sacrament of the Holy Communion.

SONGS

HOW NICE TO GATHER

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Mat 18:20)

How nice it is to gather today
When two of you gather in My name
in love as our God did say
know I am there just the same

REFRAIN

Oh Lord come now and hear us
Give us the peace that comes from within
we call on You to be with us
and keep us from the harm of sin

The Lord is the One that makes us sure
And a friend when no one is there
in all the ways that we endure
who keeps our hearts with loving care

The Lord is always by our side
He hears us when we call His name
and in His care we're satisfied
and by our side He will remain

NOTES

L.S.
140

MAY
FIRST SUNDAY

LESSONS BENEFITED FROM THE SACRIFICES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (I)

Please read (Lev. 1-7), and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson one in a series of two lessons about the sacrifices in the Old Testament. Committing a sin is something to be taken seriously. All these sacrifices were just symbols of the true sacrifice of the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"… Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" John 1:29***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

(A) **INTRODUCTION:**

✞ The Old Testament is known to be the shadow of the New Testament. When it comes to the personality of our Lord Jesus Christ, there were many prophesies, symbols and personalities who represented similarities to the Lord Christ (e.g. Jonah the prophet).

✞ From the beginning God showed us that sins are not to be taken lightly. Sins are done against God Himself. When Adam and Eve committed the sin of disobedience against God and they wanted to cover it up with fig leaves, the Lord

showed them that this is not enough. So, covering sins up is not enough. God taught them that they either need to die as a result of their sin or someone else has to die on their behalf. So, god removed the fig leaves and replaced it with tunics of skin, "also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). This showed clearly that offering a sacrifice was needed instead of Adam and Eve to die.

✞ The offering of sacrifices was passed from generation to generation, till God gave the precise description on how to offer the sacrifices. These sacrifices symbolized the sacrifice of the Cross. In the fullness of time, God sent His only begotten Son, born of St. Mary the Virgin to bring happiness to the whole creation through His sacrifice, which saved the believers from death.

✞ The epistle to the Hebrews is considered to be a good spiritual commentary on the book of Leviticus. It reveals the path to the Holy One through Christ, who is simultaneously the Priest and the Sacrifice. Thus it connects the sacrifice to the life of sanctity.

✞ The Leviticus is a book of unity. One community with a single altar and priesthood form a single tribe (levites).

(B) <u>What is a sacrifice?</u>

✞ A sacrifice is what one gives up as an offering to God for some reasons. It is supposed to be:

1. An agreement and commitment with God not to do the sin again.
2. To satisfy God's justice and please Him.
3. To thank God.
4. To seek the forgiveness of the sins from God.

(C) <u>Sacrifices before the time of Moses</u>

✞ When Adam and Eve committed the sin against God and listened to the devil, God showed them that the matter is quite serious because the result of sin is death. He sacrificed a sacrifice, made tunics of skin for them to cover their nakedness (Gen. 3:21).

✞ "<u>Abel</u> also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering. But he did not respect Gain and his offering" (Gen. 4:4-5)

✞ Noah's sacrifice. "Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake" (Gen. 8:20-21).

✞ Abraham's sacrifice. Abraham also built an altar for God (Gen. 12:8). God tested the faith of Abraham and asked him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice "Your only son whom you love". Isaac was the symbol of the great sacrifice of Christ. When Abraham passed the test, he deserved to hear from God His great blessings (Gen. 22:16-18).

✞ Also Isaac and Jacob offered sacrifices to God as their fathers did (Gen. 26:25, 28:18, 31:54, 33:20, 35:7, 46:1).

(D) The five sacrifices at the time of Moses:

✞ God gave specific instructions to Moses regarding the different sacrifices, which should be offered in the Tabernacle of meeting.

✞ As the sacrifice of the Cross was unique concerning its kind and abilities, it was not possible for one kind of sacrifice to cover all of its aspects. Thus, the book of Leviticus presents to us five different sacrifices and oblation:

1. The burnt sacrifice (holocaust): a sacrifice of obedience indicating the obedience and love the Beloved Son offered on our behalf.
2. The oblation: the communion with God in His Son.
3. The sacrifice of peace: the life of eternal peace and thanksgiving.
4. The sacrifice of sin: constant washing away of our sin and weaknesses.
5. The guilt offering: salvation from trespasses we committed.

(E) Comparison between the sacrifices of the Old Testament and the sacrifice of the Lord Christ:

1. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin" (Heb. 9:22). So, in the Old Testament sacrifices there was shedding of blood on the Cross. Thus we can appreciate that sins are not to be taken lightly.

2. The sacrifice of the Old Testament was through an animal, which could not sin, or trespass and therefore it could substitute for the sinner. Being unable to sin is another symbol to Christ, who is without sin.

3. The sacrifices of the Old Testament needed to be offered everyday; because of its corrupt nature. It had only a temporary effect. Thus it showed the need for a permanent sacrifice. A sacrifice that can remain alive "Who does not need daily as those high priest, 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." (Heb. 7:27).

4. There are so many types of sacrifices mentioned in the book of Leviticus. These reflect the nature of sin and its complexity, which required many sacrifices and offerings. The sacrifice of the Lord Christ could not be symbolized only with one sacrifice.

5. The continuous presence of death, blood, and the fire in the tabernacle illustrated to the Israelites the awfulness of sin and its consequences.

(F) Types of animals used in Old Testament sacrifices:

1. Animals like cows, sheep and goats. These must be clean, i.e., of the types of animals that were allowed to be eaten. These were symbol of the eating from the Body of Christ. These animals must be pure, and without blemish to be a symbol of Christ.

2. Birds:

✞ Turtledoves and young pigeons because old doves are better than the small doves and young pigeons are better than the old pigeons.
✞ Sparrows for the purification from leprosy. The sacrifice without blood, which represents white flour and wine.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) The idea of offering a sacrifice to God has been around for a very long time. It is a sign to show that the reward of sin is death. Sins are not to be taken lightly.

(2) All the sacrifices of the Old Testament were only symbols of the precious sacrifice of the Lord Christ for the remission of our sins. None of these sacrifices in the Old Testament was able to remove sin form anyone.

SAINT GEORGE

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight." (Heb 12:1)

I will tell you a story
Known to us all

of great martyr
as St. George

He was a solider
Of the king who's name

in the army
was Diocletian

The king ordered him
And worship idols

to deny our Lord
or else be killed

He was put in jail
And a paving stone

where they tied his feet
was put on his chest

Every day in jail
'My Only God

he prayed in faith
is Jesus Christ“

When a poisoned drink
He made the sign

was offered to him
of the cross over it

When he drank from the cup
And the pagans believed

he was not hurt
in our God

It's the life-giving cross
That saved St. George

of our Saviour
glory be to God.

THE IDEA OF THE SACRIFICE

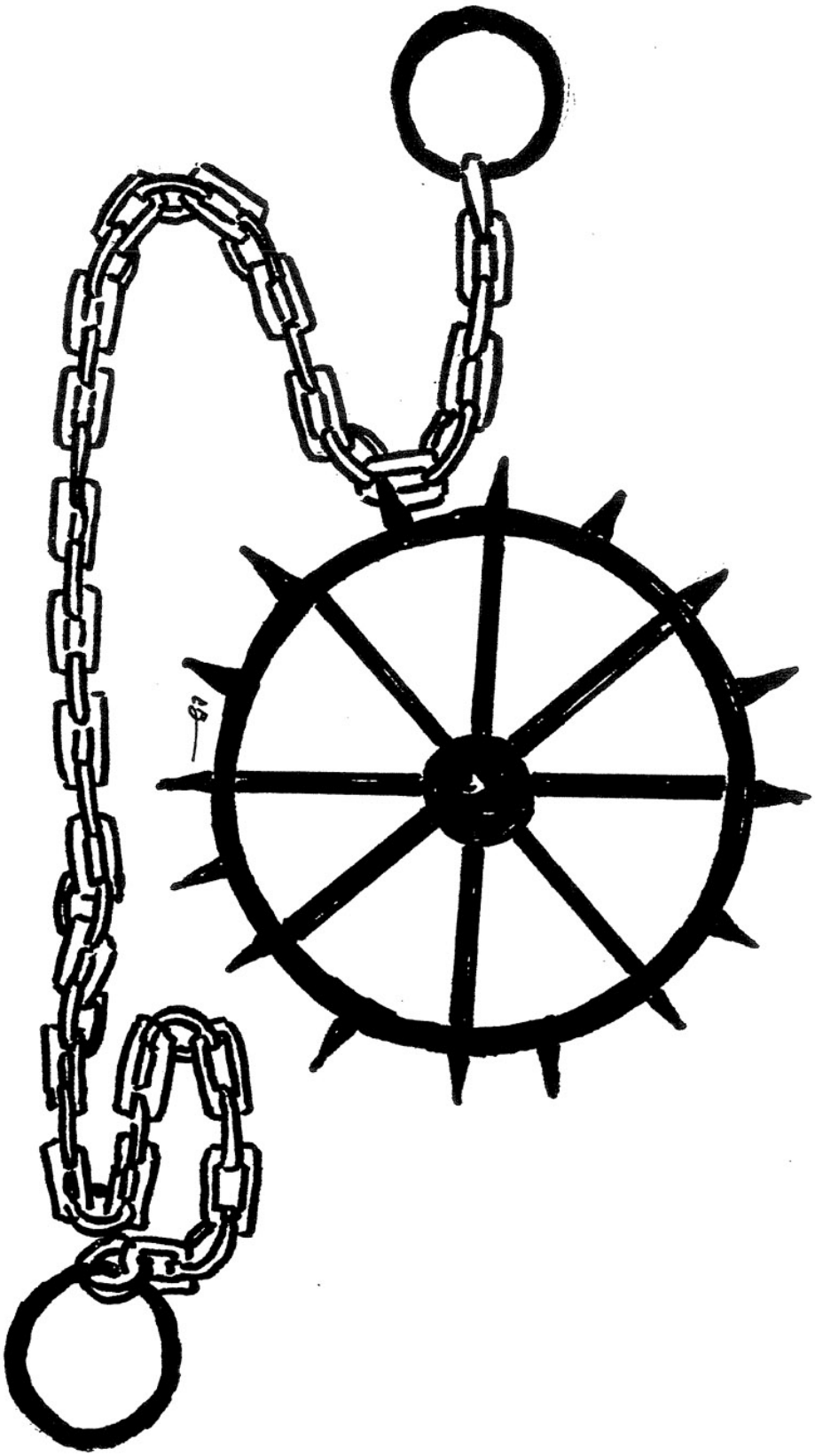
The idea of the sacrifice revolves around an innocent animal that dies on behalf of the sinful man so that when the man comes forth to the door of the tabernacle of meeting along with the "animal" sacrifice, he feels the following:

1. That he is a sinner and he is confessing his sin.

2. His confession that as a result of his sin, he deserves death because "the wage of sin is death" in addition to "grieving the heart of God".

3. His acknowledgement of the concept of redemption, which implies that a soul that is without sin, redeems another soul worthy of death because "without shedding of blood, there is no remission". The blameless soul bears the sin and as a result, it is considered a bearer of the sin in spite of it being without sin. Hence, we find that the person who comes forth with the sacrifice, places his hands upon it, and confesses his sins. In doing so, the sins are transferred to the sacrifice.

NOTES



MAY
SECOND SUNDAY

LESSONS BENEFITED FROM THE SACRIFICES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (II)

Please read (Lev. 1-7), (Heb. 8-10), and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON:

This is the second lesson in a series of two lessons about the sacrifices in the Old Testament. Committing a sin is something to be taken very seriously. All these sacrifices were just a symbol of the true sacrifice of the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE:

> ***"… Without shedding of blood there is no redemption"***
>
> ***Heb. 9:22***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Start be reviewing the previous lesson. As was mentioned in the previous lesson, there were five sacrifices and oblations, which we will talk about in a bit more detail.

(A) **THE BURNT SACRIFICE: Leviticus chapter one.**

✞ This was offered according to the means of the person, from cattle (1:2-9), sheep (1:10-13) or birds (1:14-17).

- ✞ This sacrifice is the first and most important one. It shows the most important aspect of the sacrifice of the Cross, which is the complete obedience of the Lord Jesus to God, the Father. "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross." (Phil. 2:8)
- ✞ The fire shall continue to burn upon the altar; it shall never go out. This is a symbol to the sacrifice of Christ, which became a continuous burnt offering before God the Father at all times, so that He may have mercy on all His people.

- ✞ After sacrificing the animals on the north side of the altar before God the priest would collect the blood and sprinkle it around the altar. This was a symbol that the sacrifice of Christ is atonement for the whole world. Aaron's sons would arrange the pieces together with a head and the fat on the altar. Then they place its entrails and legs (unclean parts), and burn all on the altar as burned sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.

(B) <u>The Oblation Grain Offering: Leviticus chapter two</u>

- ✞ The oblation, in all its forms, represents the communion with God in His Son, through the shedding of His blood. The oblations were connected to the blood sacrifice (Corban-gift).

- ✞ <u>Flour offering:</u> The person brings the fine flour, pours oil on it, and puts frankincense on it. Aaron's sons, the priest take this and burn it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet aroma unto the Lord.

- ✞ <u>Grain offering baked in the oven:</u> unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil.

- ✞ <u>Grain offering baked in pan</u>: fine flour unleavened mingled with oil. This is cut into pieces, and oil is poured on it.

- ✞ <u>Grain offering baked in a frying pan:</u> it shall be made of fine flour with oil.

- ✞ The grain offering was usually offered together with sacrifice.

(C) The sacrifice of peace: Leviticus chapter three

✞ This was also known as offering of completion. This is offered to God as an expression of thanksgiving. It is a sacrificed associated with joy and gladness, because it was allowed for the person and the priest to eat of it in the presence of God. The peace sacrifice was offered for thanksgiving to God, and the sacrament of the Holy Communion is called the sacrament of Eucharist i.e. thanksgiving. There are three types of peace sacrifice: (1) sacrifice of thanksgiving, (2) vow offering, and (3) freewill offering.

✞ This is an offering of cattle (3:1-5), sheep (3:6-11) or goats (3:12-17)

✞ The placing of hands on the head of the victim is not for confession of sins, but for acknowledgement of God's mercies and favor for us.

(D) THE SIN SACRIFICE: Leviticus 4:1-5:13

✞ The three preceding offerings all have the same theme: "a sweet aroma to the Lord". Whereas, the sacrifice of sin and the guilt offering, is the substitution of the sinner with the slaughtered animal, who bears the curse of the Law, under which we have fallen, that it may be removed on our behalf.

✞ In these sacrifices we see the image of the Son of God carrying our sins to pay for our debts. The sin sacrifice is offered for the sinful person, in general or unintentionally (for example if a person has seen something and did not witness it, if a person touches any unclean thing, if a person swears and lies). There are four types of the sin sacrifice:

1. A sin sacrifice for a priest
2. A sin sacrifice of the congregation
3. A sin sacrifice for a ruler
4. A sin sacrifice for any one of the common people

(E) The Guilt Sacrifice: Leviticus 5:4-6:7

✞ It is divided into two kinds: sacrifices for guilt causing loss to the Holy (5:14-19) and those causing loss to the brethren (6:1-7)

✞ Sin against holy things of the Lord: occurs when a person forgets or does not know to give, one the flock is offered. He gives the value of what he was

supposed to give before plus one-fifth more to it.

✞ Sin against the brethren: if a person lies to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping or if he has found what was lost and lies concerning it. He restores the full value of what he has stolen, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping to the lost thing, which he found, full value, and adds one-fifth more to it.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) A first analogy between all these sacrifices and the sacrifice on the Cross is obedience. We too have to be obedient to God's commandments to the last breath to be acceptable to him.

(2) The burnt offering was always on the Tabernacle of meeting, which was an analogy for the continuous effect of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus on the Cross.

(3) The peace offering was offered for thanksgiving to God and was a symbol of the sacrament of the Holy Communion. The peace sacrifice was allowed to eaten by for the person and the priest to eat of it.

(4) Everyone is liable to fall in sin. No one is perfect. No one is immune form falling in sin. This is why there was a sin sacrifice for a priest, a sin sacrifice for the congregation, a sin sacrifice for a ruler and a sin sacrifice for anyone.

I WILL SING THE WONDEROUS STORY

"But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8)

I will sing the wondrous story
How He left the realms of glory

of the Christ Who died for me
for the cross on Calvary.

Yes, I will sing the wondrous story
Sing it with His saints in glory,

of the Christ Who died for me
gathered by the crystal sea.

I was lost but Jesus found me
Raised me up and gently led me

found the sheep that went astray
back into the narrow way.

Days of darkness still may meet me
But His presence still is with me

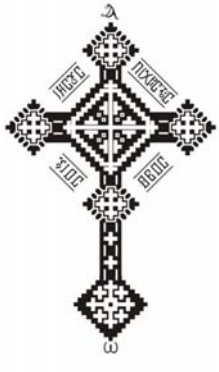
sorrow's path I oft may tread
by His guiding hand I'm led

He will keep me till the river
Then He'll bear me safely over

rolls its water at my feet
made by grace for glory meet.

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Sing it with His saints in glory

of the Christ who died for me
gathered by the crystal sea.



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MAY
THIRD SUNDAY

EFFECT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE PERSONAL ATTITUDE (I)
"LIFE OF SERVICE AND SACRIFICE"

Please read (John 4:1-42), (Matthew 10:5-10), the attached article entitled "The spirit of serving" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is a series of 2 lessons on the effect of Christianity on man's attitude in life. In this lesson we learn that individuals have a life of service and sacrifice as a result of his or her Christianity.

MEMORY VERSE:

> ***"And He said to them 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature'." Mark 16:15***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

❖ **Introduction**

Christianity is a religion based on love. Love must be translated into actual service and sacrifice to others. In this lesson we will discuss the areas in which the students of this age can start to practice in service.

(A) <u>Service and sacrifice from the life of</u> <u>the Lord Jesus Christ</u>

He gave Himself for us. He went on the cross and accepted all sufferings to give us salvation.

During His life on earth He walked a long distance and waited for the Samaritan Lady John 4:1-4. He spoke with her very nicely until He won her over. She confessed that she had no husband and went to the Samaritan people preaching to them.

(B) The disciples and the saints of the church have a life of service and sacrifice

Matthew 10:5-10 read the memory verse.

EXAMPLE: St. Paul and St. Peter both traveled to many countries to preach the word of God. They suffered a lot and they sacrificed a lot for the name of Jesus. Several other Saints of the Church maintained Christianity and served all of us by keeping the faith as it is given to them from the Lord Himself. They gave up their lives for that.

(C) What can the students do to live a life of service and sacrifice?

1. **Life of Mercy on Others:**
   - † **Visit people and friends in the hospital. Do not be late doing this. Go and visit as soon as you hear that someone is ill.**
   - † **Give encouragement to any person who is having a problem. A** word **may be very effective. Even a smile may be effective.**
     Pray for others, even to those who do bad to you.
   - † **Help others** at **school.**

2. **Give Part of Your Money:**
   - † Even if you have very little now, you can practice the spirit of giving. A good example is the lady who gave 2 pennies and was praised by Jesus. It is not the amounts of money that is given, but the amount of love behind it.

3. **Serve Your Family:**
   - † You are now at an age in which you can help in family matters. Help the younger ones and help your parents in a positive way. Do not put pressure on your parents. On the reverse be a peacemaker. Remember that the Lord Jesus Himself although He is God Incarnate, but He was obedient to His mother St. Mary the Virgin and St. Joseph the carpenter.

4. **Outreach:**
   You can ask about anyone missing Sunday school class, missing the mid-night praise or missing church activities.

5. **Missionary Act:-**
   At least attract people to the Lord Christ be telling them your experience living with God, your church and unite with your friends against the temptation of the world.

6. <u>Serve The Country</u>:

Jesus asked us to serve the society in which we live in. Please read (Matthew 22:21). Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." You can give a good example to others in your behaviour in the society. Never break the law. Never be even aggressive with anyone.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Christianity has given its people a special attitude in life. This attitude means that Christians do not look after their affairs only, or behave in a selfish manner but they serve others.

(2) Make clear and firm in your mind that a true Christian must be a servant of Christ. Take a step forward to serve others.

Songs

<u>I PUT MY LIFE INTO YOUR HANDS</u>

I put my life into Your hands
Lead me and guide, hold my hand
Please protect me lest I fall
Bless me and sanctify my soul

my Saviour and my Lord
and help me serve Your word
Your Holy name I always call
until I see the Lord

<u>REFRAIN</u>

Your tender voice I hear
Come to Me o troubled come
Come to Me heavy laden come

whether I am far or near
I will help you to overcome
and I shall give you rest

When life's troubles worry me
All the clouds will disappear
The Lord is my shield and my hope
His love protects me from the foe

when darkness is so near
when the Lord's light appear
He is my strength and my goal
until I see the Lord

Lord, have control over my life
I call Your sweet name day and night
That I may return back again
I ask You to strengthen my faith

and guide me through Your way
so please answer my prayer
to fill my heart with Your grace
until I see the Lord

When my life's end becomes so near
The Lord will come in a glorious scene
The Good Lord will wipe every tear
His love to me, His cross revealed

I feel a great relief
and take me to His feast
and fill my heart with His peace
I long to see the Lord

The Spirit of Serving
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).

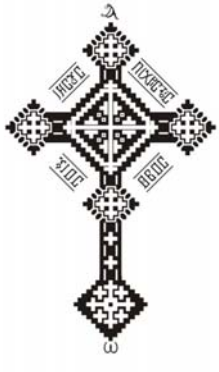
How beautiful are the words of the Bible in this respect, "And with great power the Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus And great grace was upon them all. " (Acts 4:33)

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.

NOTES



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MAY
FOURTH SUNDAY

EFFECT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE PERSONAL ATTITUDE (II)
"LIFE OF PATIENCE AND TRUST IN GOD"

Please read (Luke 24:44-53), (Acts 1:1-2, 6-25), the attached materials entitled "Notes on the ascension of Jesus", "Hope", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

To learn about the 10 days between ascension and Pentecost while waiting for the promise of God. This is lesson two in a series of two lessons on the effect of Christianity on man's attitude in life. In this lesson we learn that man should have a life of patience and wait on God.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Luke 24:49***

Please Emphasize

† Describe first the events of ascension as mentioned in (Luke 24:44-53) and (Acts 1:1-2, 6-11)

† 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 heavenly power.

† Days are moving by, and the Holy Spirit did not come. The Disciples were in the upper room with St. Mary, mother of the Lord Jesus waiting for the promise of God, and spending the time in prayers. It was a difficult period for the

Disciples. This is a lesson for us. We have to be patient and wait for God. When we ask him for something, we must trust Him and wait until the right time comes and He gives us what we need and a lot more.

Examples of People Who Waited Patiently for God

Note: Please tell the class the following stories from the Bible:

1. Abraham waited a long time for God to fulfill his promise and give him a son in his old age. Please review Genesis Chapter 16 up to Chapter 21. Emphasize this verse "And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken." (Gen. 21:1)

2. Elijah waited for God to give rain. God stopped the rain when Elijah had asked Him to stop it because the people were very bad and did not worship God. Please review (l Kings 17:1-24). Please tell the stories in this chapter in details showing that the Lord took care of Elijah who was patient and waited for God. We must believe that we are part of God's plan and nothing can hurt us if we trust Him. The selection of Matthias instead of Judas was done between Ascension and Pentecost (Acts 1:15-26). So, Matthias joined the eleven Disciples and was with them in the Pentecost. Matthias was with them". The whole time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us" (Acts 1:21). The 10 days represent the preparation of the heart to receive the Spirit of God. So always in our church, there is preparation before the sacraments of the Holy Spirit. This preparation is in the form of fasting, prayers and dedicating time and thought for God.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) In a speedy world like ours, let us be patient, obey the commandments of God, place our trust in Him and every aspect in life will work well for us.

(2) A Christian is leaves his or her life in the Hands of God. Therefore, we are part of His plan. We proceed under His direction, we wait to hear His voice and we wait for Him particularly to take us by His merciful Hands to our best destination.

SHEPHERD OF MY SOUL

O thou Whose presence delighteth my soul,
My comfort by day, and by night my refuge

Shepherd of my soul, I beg Thee to tell
For why should I roam in the valley of tears

I charge you to tell me, daughters of Zion
I seek Him in vain in the night of my soul

Shepherd of my soul, I shall follow Thee
So guide me and lead me and show me the way

I am my Beloved's, and He is mine too
Oh how do I long for the day we shall wed

and Whom in my distress I call
my stronghold, whenever I fall

where Thou makest Thy sheep to rest
and wander as one who is lost?

have ye seen the One I adore?
but, lo, I can find Him no more.

Oh how sweet Thy voice is to me!
my only desire is Thee.

He calleth me sister and spouse
In heaven, in his Father's house.

NOTES ON THE ASCENSIONS OF THE LORD JESUS TO HEAVEN:

- No prophet or Saint died, arose from the dead and ascended to Heaven except Jesus Christ the Lord
- The Ascension of Jesus after His resurrection is a proof of His Divine Nature
- When Jesus talked to Nicodemus He told him "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is the Son of Man who is in heaven." (John 3:13). So the Master Christ when he was speaking with Nicodemus he was at the same instant in heaven.
- But Jesus ascended with His flesh, which He took from the Virgin Mary that is with my flesh and your flesh. Hence, Jesus blessed our bodies and opened the gate of heaven for us. "And raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:6). He ascended into heaven so that we realize that we should be busy thinking about heaven and should not let the worldly things overwhelm our lives.
- We can remember the ascension in the following:
    - Every time we pray the Lord's prayer and say "Our father who art in Heaven..." We realize that Jesus meant that praying is standing in heaven
    - In the Divine liturgy, when we stand in the altar as if we are standing in heaven.
    - Every time we neglect the world and concentrate on Jesus, we ascend to heaven.

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.

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L. Bocток

JUNE
FIRST SUNDAY

BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT –I

Please read: (Acts 2), the attached article entitled "The Holy spirit in Your Life", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON:

This is lesson one in a series of two lessons about how to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we focus on the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in our life and to learn some of the things that we have to do to enjoy the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

MEMORY VERSE:

> ***"… but be filled with the spirit"***
> ***Eph 5:18***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

"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 to 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. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, and the spirit gave them utterance". (Acts 2:1-4). Please describe all the events that led to the command of the Lord Jesus, who told them before his ascension to go back to Jerusalem and stay together until the power from above would come upon them. They stayed together, were in one accord, and spent their time praying together

waiting for the promise of the father to send them the Holy Spirit.

(B) Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of God" (Gen. 1:2). We can even say the Holy Spirit is God, because "God is Spirit" (John 4:24)

In the Agpeya we call the Holy Spirit "A right and life giving Spirit, a filial Spirit of Truth, the Comforter; who is everywhere and fills everybody…The treasure of goodness and giver of life…" We ask the Spirit to "Graciously come and dwell within us, purify us from iniquity and save our souls."

The Holy Spirit bears fruit. This fruit is attained when a person's spirit is led by the Holy Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control." (Gal. 5:22,3)

(C) The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of power and comfort

But shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me…(Acts 1:8)

God's children are distinguished for their power. They exist in God's image, and God is powerful by nature. Secondly, God's Holy Spirit works in them and is the spirit of power and might. (Isa 11:2)

Such power, which God's children have, is not physical power, but spiritual and intellectual power. It is also power in the life of holiness, in overcoming wars of the devil, in steadfastness and strong personality that knows no fear or anxiety.

Do you work with the Holy Spirit, or are you resistant?… The dwelling of the Holy Spirit in you is an enormous power given to you, do you benefit from this power or not?

Do not grieve over the past, but listen with hope to the words of the Bible: "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). If you have lost the power of the Spirit, you can renew its action within you again … pray to God's Spirit to give you the power to repent, and the power to work.

(D) The fiery Holy Bible

A person who has God's Spirit should be fervent in spirit. Thus a person becomes fervent in prayer, in ministry and in love to God and to the people. Whatever the person does, it should be done fervently.

We usually pray, but do our prayers have the fire of the Pentecost? Do our prayers have the heat of the day? A fervent prayer comes from the heart and is said in fervent words. Even the body becomes hot as the spirit does. Think of the Lord Jesus Christ's prayer in Gethsemane and how it was (Mt. 26:39-45).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) To be filled with the Holy Spirit we have to be obedient to God's commandment. We have to avoid being different from one another and do our best to maintain the love between one another i.e. stay in one accord as the disciples were together in the upper room.

(2) The upper room was the first church in the New Testament. We must be regularly attending the Divine Liturgy and all the services that are suitable for our age in the church.

(3)We have to evaluate regularly our relationship with the Holy Spirit and ask ourselves do I have a true spiritual life? Are my words spiritual words? If the answer is no then I have to pray, humble myself and ask the Lord to work in me with His 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

NOTES

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of this Sunday
School Program
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refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

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

JUNE
SECOND SUNDAY

PENTECOST - BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (II)

Please read (Act 2), and the attached article entitled "How?", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON:

This is lesson two in a series of two lessons about how to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we focus on the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in our life and to learn some of the things that we have to do to enjoy the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

MEMORY VERSE:

> ***"… but be filled with the spirit"***
>
> ***Eph 5:18***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

INTRODUCTION

Start this lesson by reviewing the pervious one

Four ways of fighting the Spirit

I. Quenching the Spirit
II. Grieving the Spirit
III. Resisting the Spirit
IV. Blasphemy against the Spirit

External cause of quenching the Spirit

1. A sinful environment
2. Problems and occurrences
3. People's talk
4. External wars

Internal cause of quenching the Spirit

(1) Sluggishness and Slackness

A spiritual person is characterized by seriousness, enthusiasm and commitment in all spiritual practices. If a person begins to slack off, the Holy flame is quenched. One of the means of treating slackness is force; a person forces him or herself to do spiritual work.

If the spirit calls upon you to do a holy deed, do not linger or delay, for delaying is a kind of slacking and love for your body.

Do not cover your slackening with excuses and pretexts. Your slackness will encourage Satan to interfere. Do no be slothful in dismissing sinful thoughts.

(2) Neglecting prayer:

Neglecting prayers is among the causes of quenching the Spirit. Prayers deepen the relationship with God, creating heat in the heart towards God. So, do not neglect your prayers; pray even a word or a short phrase. Satan might fight you by saying that you have no time to pray; but it is an exposed well-known war. Prayer does not need time, it needs a heart .. a heart that longs to talk to God, even a few words for a few seconds … And do not say you do not have a few seconds! It's impossible. Be assured that once you start, the grace of God will work within you to help you complete your prayer and give you the desire to continue. You will find that seconds turn into minutes! God wants to be remembered while you are busy with your worldly work.

(3) Lust and love of the world:

The lusts of revenge, money and possession, dignity and vain glory, adultery, praise and worldly enjoyments … quench the Spirit because they remove the

person away from God, and from the spiritual atmosphere. "Friendship with the world is enmity with God" (Jas 4:4)

(4) Faltering between two ways:

This leads to quenching of the Spirit, because a person has a double personality; not purely spiritual, not purely secular.

(5) Frivolity:

Frivolity of the senses and thoughts is meant here. It is understood that senses are the doors of the mind. If the senses are frivolous, the mind will have news and images that come to it from sound and sight. Can spiritual fervor be kept when interest is taken in other people's affairs?

Train yourself to guard your senses and gather your thoughts in order to concentrate on spiritual matters. Frivolity leads to distraction in both prayers and thoughts at other times …all of which lead to quenching of Spirit.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) A Christian who is keen about being filled with the Holy Spirit must avoid all external and internal causes of quenching of the Holy Spirit as mentioned above in this lesson.

(2) One of the key areas to maintain the work of the Holy Spirit in us is the depth of prayers. One has to ask him or herself: do I have an effective prayer? Do I bring my problems or lusts inside the prayer so that I just lose track and cannot focus? Do I wish to leave my

Songs:

LET US ALL PRAISE THE LORD

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REFRAIN	
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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

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JUNE
THIRD SUNDAY

MY COPTIC CHURCH HAS TAUGHT ME (I) REGARDING BAPTISM

Please read the attached article entitled "Do not Despair", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON:

This is lesson one in a series of three lessons on specific questions related to our Coptic church's way of doing things and its faith. In this lesson we focus on baptism and the rites of the church in doing it. There is God's grace that can work on the infants. So never lose hope.

MEMORY VERSE:

"And when she and her household were baptized, She begged us, saying, 'if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.' So she persuaded us." (Act 16:15)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Why do we allow children to be baptized while they are infants?
Do they appreciate the value of baptism?

† We urge for the baptism of the little children while they are very young in order to become sons and daughters of God and deserve eternal life.

† The Holy Spirit dwells inside the little children after their baptism and protects them. The Lord Jesus has blessed the children. Mark 10:14. "Let the little children come to Me**..."**
† The little children cannot come to Jesus except through baptism.

† In the part about appreciation of baptism by the little children, we say if God gives us only what we appreciate, then our share will be very little. Baptism is a gift from God given freely. The child does not appreciate the value of baptism but his parents do and the child gets all the precious gifts of baptism. Children are not exempted in case of God's anger on people and therefore they need the baptism. An example of that, when the people of God sinned, He sent fiery serpents which killed a lot of them (old, young, and children). When they repented God ordered Moses to make a bronze serpent and raise it, so that if anyone (Old, young or child) looked at it was healed. (Number 21:9) In this case it was essential for the children to be healed to take a look at the bronze serpent. So, Children are not exempted from the judgment of God and hence they need the new birth through baptism.

† Another example, does a child appreciate the value or benefit of a medicine they need? No, but we give them medicine and they benefit of it. Similarly, a child does not appreciate the value of baptism, but he/she takes it and benefits of it.

† Children were baptized, as mentioned in the New Testament Acts 16:13-15, 1 Cor. 1:14-16, and Acts 10:44.

Why do we dip the baptized in the water and not just spray him or her with water?

† Our church asserts that baptism is by dipping in water and not spraying it on the baptized for the following reasons:

1. The word baptism is derived from the Greek word "baptism" which means "dying" and to dye is something that occurs when you dip the material inside the liquid

2. Baptism is burial with Jesus and resurrection with Him to a new life. (Romans 6:3-4). "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

3. The burial cannot be by spraying water.

4. Jesus Christ himself was baptized by being dipped in water. (Matthew 3:16)

5. Similarly Philip baptized the Ethiopian by dipping them in water (Acts 8:36-39).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We learn how our Church administers the Sacrament of Baptism to conform with the Bible's teachings and the holy traditions.

(2) As God can work on the infants in the Sacrament of Baptism and give them new life, we must never lose hope in anything. God can do wonders in supporting us. The grace of God can help you no matter how weak you are sinful you are.

(3) Take <u>one</u> step forward. Then move in the right direction and the Lord can work with you with His Holy Spirit to a deeper spiritual level. Never loose hope. Just be committed to God and the church.

Songs

<u>JUST LIKE THE BIRD</u>

<u>REFRAIN</u>

Just like the bird when it found its home
Your House O Lord, I love

Your House is prayer , praise and candles
Just as I love Your House O Lord

Your House is full of blessings
We celebrate there the liturgies

Your House we read there the Bible
And hear there the blessed hymns

Bless are they who are blameless
Confirm me in Your luminous way

just like the happy dove
Your House O Lord, I love with honesty

Your House is love, light and peace
I will love You unto the end of days

protected against all demons
they're prayed for the saints

we learn the nicest songs
and praise You all our lives

O Lord in Your House living
Forever and ever Amen

Do Not Despair
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

However weak your spiritual life may be, do not despair; for desperation is one of Satan's wars by which he wants to weaken your morals and stop your resistance, to fall in his hands.

Even though you despair of yourself, never despair of the grace of God. If your deeds do not lead you to repentance, God's work for you might do.

Sometimes, in your spiritual life, the cause of despair may be setting before you ideals above your level, or taking steps which do not comply with the necessary gradual progress.

And because you cannot achieve what you want, you despair.

Therefore, it is better to put before you a gradual system within your power and abilities and within the gifts God gave you. Be aware that God wants only one step from you and if you take it He will lead you to the next and so on...

You might despair because you cannot stand before the Lord unless, first, you make yourself better.

It is preferable to say to Him I cannot reform myself and then come to You, but I come to You so you can make me better.

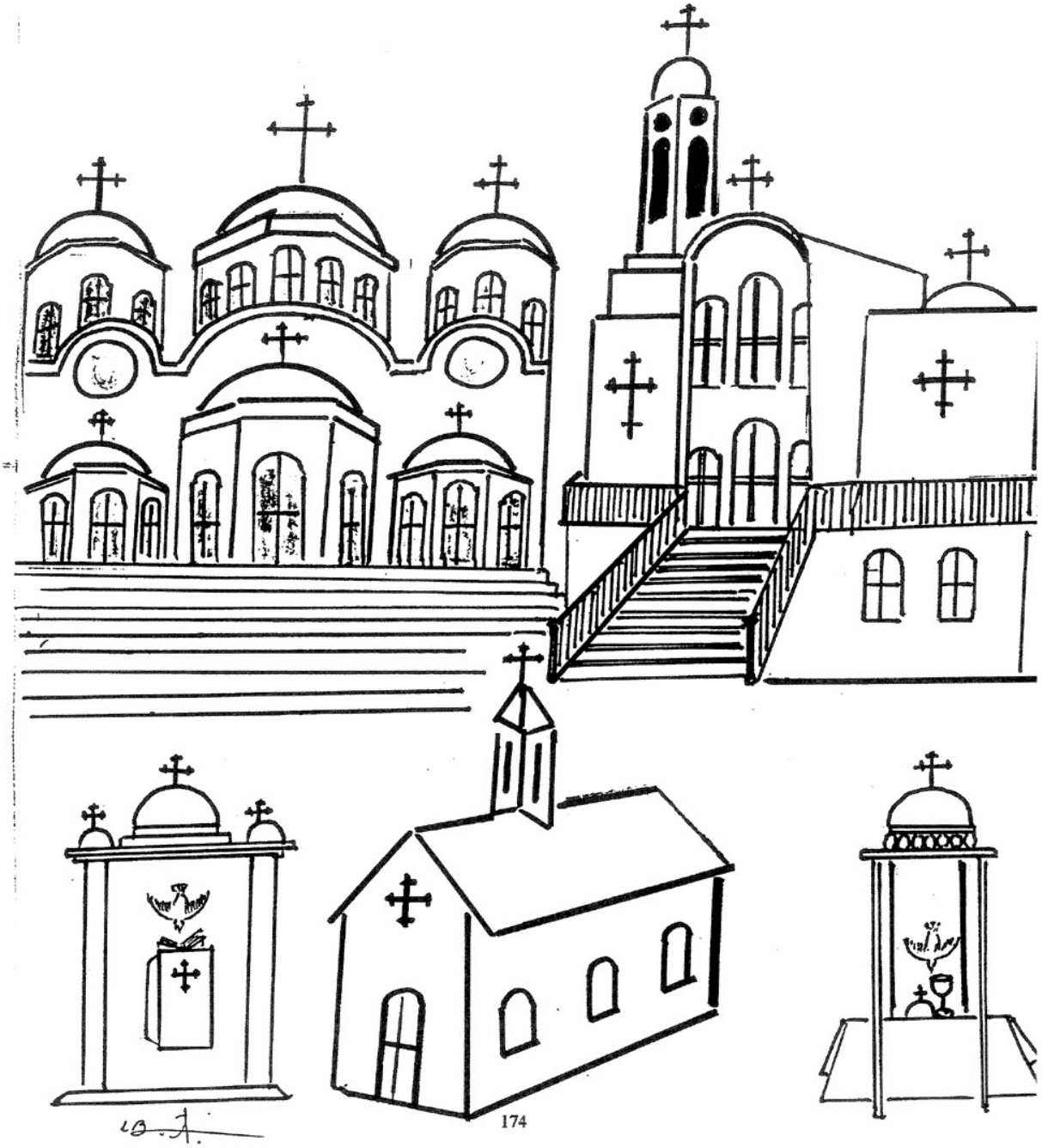
Do not despair if you feel that you do not love God. Do not say what is the use of all my works since I do not love Him!

Say rather if I do not love God, it is a comfort that He loves me and with His love He can make me love Him.

If you practice the spiritual means but do not feel a true attachment to God, do not despair.
Keep on the spiritual readings, even without understanding. Keep on praying, even without warmth, confess always even though you feel no penitence. Perhaps because of your perseverance, the Grace of God may seek you and give you the understanding, warmth and penitence.

Your mere perseverance in the spiritual means puts God in your mind even without repentance! But if you despair and break the commandments, you might go downwards and forget God completely.

Even if you are in a weak state, do not despair. It is better for you to stay as you are, than to be led through despair to worse.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JUNE
FOURTH SUNDAY

MY COPTIC CHURCH HAS TAUGHT ME (II)
REGARDING CONFESSION

Please read the attached article entitled "The Father Confessor", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

"This is lesson 2 in a series of 3 lessons on specific questions related to our Coptic Church's way of doing things and its faith. Why do not I confess directly to God?

MEMORY VERSE:

"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:18)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

<u>Confession Has Two Steps</u>:

1. Repentance and confession to God. This must be done regularly; preferably daily.

2. Confession to the church represented by the priest to hear from him the word of forgiveness and acceptance (the absolution). This also must be done regularly with a specified frequency as agreed with the father of confession.

† The Lord Jesus established His relationship with the church as the relationship of the head to the body. When a person sins, his or her sin is

against Jesus (the head) and the church (His body). And the sin causes separation form Jesus - in heaven - and separation from Jesus' body- the church- on earth. Hence, a person confessing his or her sin is seeking the return of good relationship with Jesus and the Church. The two steps mentioned above are the only ways to accomplish this. As repentance must be followed by confession, whoever repents only resembles to a person who goes to the doctor but does not get the prescription to take it.

B. <u>Examples in the Old Testament</u> <u>About Confession</u>

† God invited Adam to confess by asking him. (Genesis 3:11) "And He said 'who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?."

† In Leviticus we read "And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing." (Lev. 5:5)

† When David sinned, God sent to him Nathan the prophet to confess his sin to him. Please read (2 Samuel 12:1-15). Please tell this story in detail.

† In Proverbs we read "He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13).

C. <u>Examples from the New Testament About Confession</u>

† The people of Jerusalem went out to John the Baptist confessing their sins. (Matthew 3:6)

† Our Lord Jesus gave the authority to the priests to bind and to loose matters of the believers on earth. (Matthew 18:18)

† After the resurrection of Jesus, He met His Disciples in the upper room and said to them. "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." (John 20:2 1).

† In the book of Acts, St. Luke mentioned. (Acts 19:18) "And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds."

† St. John also said. (1 John 1:9), "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

D. <u>Additional Benefits of</u> <u>Confessing to the Priest</u>:

† The priest has more experience in spiritual matters and he can give us advice by the guidance of the Holy Spirit to him.

† The priest is a very confidential person. When we have any problem we need to talk it over with someone who can keep your matter confidential, we can go to the priest.

† As His Holiness Pope Shenouda III puts it, "Confession gives solution and absolution."

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We must confess our sins to God and to the priest on a regular basis. The most important aspect is that we must be accurate in our confession and be obedient to our father of confession.

(2) The father of confession is: (a) your Father, i.e., kind and trustworthy, (b) your reminder of God, i.e., His commandments and His beautiful promises to you, (c) trying too hard to make you committed to God, i.e., not to himself and (d) the one who takes your sins away from you and puts it on Christ who carries away the sins of the whole world.

SONGS

CHANGE MY HEART O GOD

Change my heart O God — make it ever true
Change my heart O God — may I be like You

You are the potter — I am the clay
Mold me and make me — this is what I pray

The Father Confessor
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

+ He is the person whom when you see, you remember God, His rights and commandments and also remember your promises before God.

+ He is the one who can change your life to better with his deep spiritual effect as well as with his knowledge, relation with God and good example.

+ He is an oasis in the desert of your life where you rest and think of God, not of the oasis or the rest.

+ He is not a bridge you cross to reach the other side!! but he is a plane on which you fly over all coasts and reach with it your target.

+ He is the one who can make you cry, but you rejoice in crying more than in any pleasure and laughing. sometimes, he is harsh on you, or you imagine him so; but such harshness would be more tender and gentle than the kindness which makes you lose your life.

+ He is not the father who considers you a child all your life, carries you on his shoulders, guides you in all matters, but he is the wise leader who carries you for some time until you learn wisdom and discerning and until you can stand on your feet and carry others on your shoulders and teach them in turn.

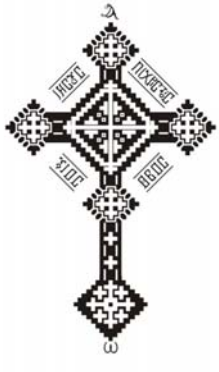
+ A true father confessor does not attempt to tie you to him and to his love and obedience, but he ties you to the heart, love and obedience of God. He tries, rather to disappear so that God appears in you. He does not consider himself the owner of the vineyard, but only a steward sent by God to His vineyard to prune it that it may bear more fruit...

+ The father confessor is not a master who always asks for obedience, submission and respect, but as a father he is full of love and affection. He is not a fetter restricting your will, but a person who trains your freedom in the love of God.

+ The father confessor is a carrier of sins and takes them off your head and puts them on the head of Christ who bore the sins of the whole world. He is a person who lays his hand on your head so you feel that a heavy burden has been removed... He is a source of peace, announcer of good news. He announces to you God's forgiveness and reveals God's love opening before you a gate of hope to lighten the darkness of your life...

+ The father confessor is the practical example of every virtue; you take from his life and his doctrine, and benefit from his manner of life not only from his guidance... He is the person whom whenever you see, your spiritual passion and love to God increases.

NOTES



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JUNE
FIFTH SUNDAY

MY COPTIC CHURCH HAS TAUGHT ME (III) REGARDING THE INTERCESSION OF THE SAINTS

Please read the attached article entitled "The full truth", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON:

† This is the last lesson in a series of 3 lessons on specific questions related to our Coptic church's way of doing things and its faith. Why do we seek the pleadings and prayers of the Saints and the Angels on our behalf?

MEMORY VERSE:

> ***"... and pray for one another, that you may be healed."***
> ***James 5:16***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

INTRODUCTION

What is the meaning of intercession in general?

Intercession is when a "high rank" person talks to a king, for example, to forgive a person (of a lower rank) who did something wrong. In religious context if someone pleaded to God on behalf of another, we call this person an intercessor.

Our Coptic church believes that there are two types of intercession (as mentioned in items (A) and (B) below).

A. Ransom Intercession:

This appertains only to The Lord Jesus Christ: '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" (1 Timothy 2:5-6). This means that by the death of Jesus on the Cross for us, we gained through His blood the forgiveness of sin. This type of intercession is only by Jesus Christ who is God Incarnate. "And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2: 1-2).

B. The Intercession of the Saints:

† This is through the saint's help in their prayers on our behalf (See Memory verse).

† We must ascertain firstly the fact that we pray only to God and we seek from the Saints, who are in Paradise closer to God than us to pray on our behalf. For example in the hymn called "Hitni Ep-risphia" we sing: "through the pleadings of Virgin Mary, God grant us the forgiveness of our sins."

† Simplified example to show the meaning of the intercession of the Saints:

Let us imagine a young boy who keeps spilling the ink from its bottle, thus messing everything around. His father tells him not to do this again because it is very bad from all aspects. But the son keeps on doing it. Now the time comes that this son needs the approval of his father to go on a trip with the school. The son does not dare at all because of his disobedience to ask anything from the father. But the son finds a way. He goes to his mother and says please intercede on my behalf to my father and I promise that I will not do it again. Now the mother proceeds, because of her love for her husband and the husband respect for her, towards the father and asks him for approval. Then he will do it because of the intercession of the mother, and the promise of the son not to disobey again.

† In the New Testament the Lord raised us to the rank of children. He said "No longer do I call you servants, **...,** but I have called you friends." (John 5:15) He also said, "When you pray say: 'Our Father in heaven....'. . . **."** (Luke 11:2) So, it is by God's mercy and love that He calls us His children. This is half of the truth. But on our part, we know that we are sinners and do not deserve to be called His children. This is the other half of the total truth.

We also know when someone sin he or she is a slave to sin not a child of God. Therefore, because of our enormous sins, breaking of the commandments of God, and repeated mistakes of many kinds, we need the intercession of the Saints to bring us closer to Christ. Christ in turn can cleanse us with His blood and make us acceptable to the Father. Remember that the Saints, such as the Virgin Mary, St. George, St. Mina . . . etc, are described in the bible as **"...** partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Pet. 1:4)

C. Intercession of the Saints in the Holy Bible:

† Abraham was interceding on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah. Please tell the story from (Genesis 18:16-33).

† Elisha interceded on behalf of his servant to be comforted and God would open his eyes to see God's salvation. Please tell the story in details from (2 Kings 6:15-20).

† The First miracle that was performed by our Lord Jesus was through the intercession of the Virgin Mary. Please tell the story in detail from (John 2:1-11)

St. Paul was asking for the prayers of his people "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men" (1 Timothy 2:1).

† There are so many miracles that are still-being performed through the intercession of the Saints until this time and up to the end of time. For example, when the Virgin Mary appeared in her church in Zitoun, Egypt, many healing were performed through her intercession.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We must have friendship with the Saints and seek their help and prayers on our behalf and follow their footsteps in our lives.

(2) Christianity is a religion based on the full truth. Are we all sinners? Yes indeed. Therefore, we all need the two types of intercession to be accepted by God. We need the ransom intercession (the blood of the Lord Jesus which purifies us form all sins) and the intercession of the Saints (the prayers of the Saints on our

behalf to be added to our prayers so that God would look at both prayers and have mercy on us). Remember the full truth: God is love and also God is fair.

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.

THE WHOLE TRUTH

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

The talk about God's love might make you joyful, while the talk about his justice troubles you. But you have to face the whole truth.

This is the divine truth... that does not separate God's justice from God's love. God's justice is merciful and God's mercy is just. God's justice is full of mercy and His mercy is full of justice...

The two together are the whole truth, the complete truth...

We do not act in spiritual matters according to half the truth...

Articles about hope might cheer you up but you would be troubled by articles about righteousness, purity, commandments and the duties required of you.

No matter how you try to avoid the talk about purity, you are required to possess it whether you listened or not. You have to put the whole truth before your eyes. Rejoice in God's commandment like David who found it light for the eyes.

You have to know the whole truth and face it, whatever comforts you or moves you to tears.

No matter how difficult the commandment looks in your eyes, face it. It is God's grace which is in you that will help you to carry it out.

The Lord Jesus also followed the way of the whole truth with us. He told us, *"In the world you will have tribulation. "* This is half the truth. The other half follows, "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (Jn 16:33).

Therefore, we do not escape from the phrase, *"You will have tribulation, "* and be comforted by leaving it out. No, we remember it, no matter how difficult it gets. But we also remember its second half, *"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. "*...

In spite of the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit, it is still half the truth. The other half is our part by sharing in the work.

Half the truth is the great salvation granted to us by Christ.

The other half is how to obtain this salvation.

Half the truth is that you are God's son.- The other half is that he who is born of God does not sin.

This is the whole truth...

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JULY
FIRST SUNDAY

THE APOSTLES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (I)
THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLES

Please read (Mark 6:7-13) the attached article entitled "The Apostles fast", and give the lesson with emphasis points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON:

This is lesson one in a series of 4 lessons about the Apostles. In this lesson we learn that God always gives power and authority to His people. We do not mean materialistic power or authority at all. Fasting is an excellent method to obtain heavenly power and authority.

MEMORY VERSE:

> ***"And He called the twelve to Himself... and gave them power"***
> ***Mark 6:7***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

† Every fast in our church has its own special feelings and has its own spiritual meditation and benefits. For example, in the Holy forty days lent we remember that our Lord Jesus fasted for us 40 days and 40 nights and defeated the devil on our behalf and showed us how to defeat the devil. Please review the temptation on the mountain and how to defeat the devil as the Lord showed us. The Apostles' fast reminds us of serving God and serving the church as our Apostles did.

† The word Apostle is applicable to certain men of the first generation of the Church and missionaries of the Gospel.

† Jesus sent Apostles in front of Him twice:
    † He sent the 12 Disciples (also are called Apostles) (Mark 6:7-13)

    † He sent the 70 Apostles (Luke 10:1-17).

† In both missions, Our Lord Jesus the Saviour gave them heavenly power. When the 70 came back from their mission, they were so happy saying; “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name” (Luke 10:17). In addition to that, He granted them the precious gift of peace so that they were giving it to others when they visited them. They also healed many sick people.

† In every generation, God’s people are given deep power and authority:

    † Adam before his fall in sin was given authority over all the other creatures. The animals, the plants and the fish....” He named them and he was never afraid of any of them.

    † After Moses completed his tremendous service of leading the Israelites out of the slavery in Egypt and Joshua took over the leadership, God assured him that He will give him authority and power as He gave Moses. Please read (Joshua 1:5-7). Naaman’s leprosy was healed. (2 King 5:1-16)**.** Please mention this story in full details to show the authority that was given to the Prophet Elisha, the man of God.

    † St. Peter at the gate of the Temple healed the lame man. (Acts 3:1-10). Please mention also this story in detail to show the power that was given to St. Peter the Disciple of the Lord

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) The Lord who filled the Apostles with the gifts of the Holy Spirit can give us power to endure all suffering and to achieve all our goals with full success. But we have to follow the footsteps of the Apostles in their life of prayer and total reliance on God's help.

(2) The Apostles fast is the oldest fasting known to the church in all its generations; fasting when accompanied by prayers results in heavenly power and authority. The world is in search of power and authority from the materialistic point of view. But this will not give any real power or authority over sin and the devil. "The devil cannot come out except through fasting and prayer".

Songs

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Hiten ni evki ente nachois enioti en apostolos nem epsepi ente ni matheetis Epchois…

Through the prayers of my masters and fathers, the apostles and the rest of the disciples, O Lord…

THE APOSTLES' FAST
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Nobody should think little of the Fast of the Apostles', as it is the most ancient fast he Christian Church has known through generations. The Lord referred to it by saying, *"But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and they will fast. " (Mt. 9:15)*

Our Fathers, the Apostles, started their service by fasting. The Lord Himself started His service by fasting forty days on the mountain.

The Apostles' Fast, then, is specially for the service and the Church.

It is said about our teacher, St Peter, the Apostle, that he fasted, *"...then became very hungry and wanted to eat. " (Act 10:10)* During his hunger, he saw heaven open and saw a vision about the acceptance of the Gentiles.

As their fasting was accompanied by vision and divine guidance, it was also associated with the work and coming of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, *"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said "Now separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down Seleucia... "(Act 13:2-4)*

There are certain aspects that mark out the fast of our Fathers, the Apostles, such as: fasting, praying, serving and the work of the Holy Spirit.

It pleases us that the Holy Spirit works during fasting...

The divine call also comes during fasting....

Ordination of ministers is done during fasting and ministers start by fasting before they begin their service.

There are fastings related to repentance, such as Jonah's fast and the fast related to humility as mentioned in the book of Joel.

Other fastings are for specific requests, such as Esthere's fasting.

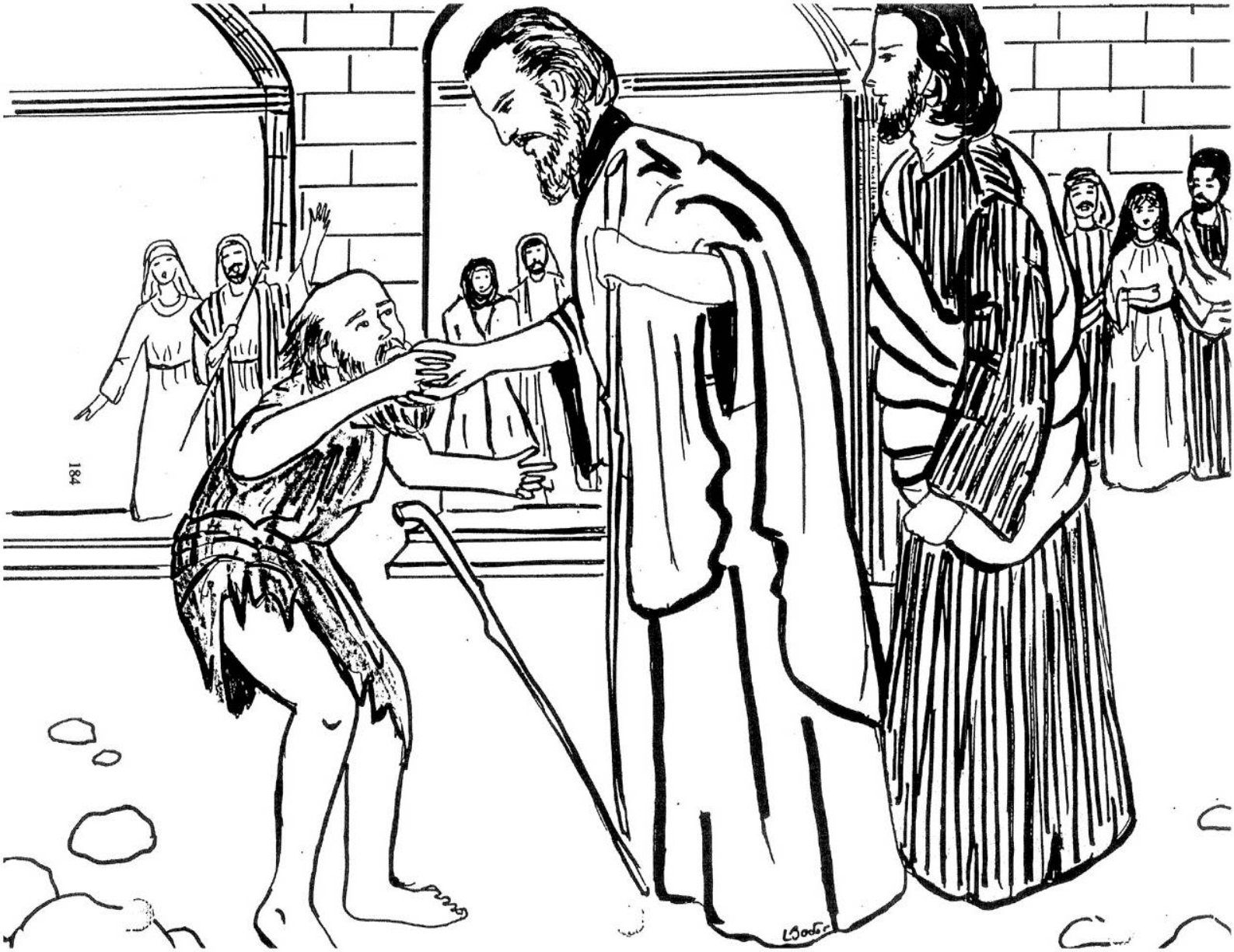
Fasting for casting out evil spirits, as the Lord said, *"However this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. " (Mt. 17:21)*

There are fastings before we receive any of the Lord's Graces, in the sacraments such as Baptism, Confirmation (Marion), Holy Communion and Priesthood.

As for the Apostles' Fast, it is for service and the Church, at least to teach us the necessity and benefit of fasting for the service.

We fast that God may interfere in the service and support it. We also fast to serve while we are in a good spiritual condition being aware of our weakness...

How we longed for this fast to come while we were during the Holy *"Khamasein ".*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JULY
SECOND SUNDAY

THE APOSTLES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (II)
GOD WANTS US TO HAVE POWER AND AUTHORITY

Please read (Acts 13:4-12), the attached article entitled "Christianity is a religion of strength", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON:

† This is lesson 2 in a series of 4 lessons about the Apostles. In this lesson we learn that sin prevents us from having the power and the authority that God wants us to have. Christianity is a religion of strength and joy.

Memory Verse:

"Jesus answered (Pilate),'You could have no power at all against Me.'" John 19:11

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Review the previous lesson and continue to show situations where God gave His people power beyond the realization of the mind. More examples:

† St. Paul was so strong against the false prophet who was trying to deceive the King. (Acts 13:4-12)

† Our Master told Pilate the Governor that he had no authority on Him. (John 19:11)

† Our Saviour **was speaking with** authority. (Mark 1:21-22)
One of our Saints say a Christian is like a king with full control on himself or herself. He or she controls all his or her thinking and all his or her behaviour. This type of power and authority over one's self is a result of being so deep in faith.

† The centurion i.e. the commander over 100 soldiers, when he sent people to the

Lord Jesus saying: “But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority having soldiers under me.” (Luke 7:1-10). Please tell the story in detail.

† The three Lads, (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), when the king was furious with them and forced them to worship idols, they defied him saying “0 Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter” (Daniel 3:16). This shows that even at the most difficult time the 3 young men had power and authority over the King. Please read Daniel chapter 3 and tell the story in detail.

What prevents us from exercising the authority that God gave us?

† Sin is the absolute factor that separates us from God. When we are separated from God who is the source of power, we become powerless. Examples:

† Adam after committing the sin and eating from the forbidden tree was cast out of paradise and lost his power.

† Jonah when he rejected God’s command to go and preach to Nineveh, lost all control and found himself inside the whale.

† Judas Iscariot was one of the 12 Disciples. He was capable of even performing miracles like the other Disciples. However, when he betrayed his Master, he lost everything and committed suicide.

The Meaning of Authority:

† The authority that we are talking about here does not mean that we should have power over people and condemn their deeds. The authority here means our deep belief that we are in the hands of God and hence we fear nothing. It also means full control of ourselves.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) As true Christians, we must refrain from doing evil things. Then God will grant us His precious peace and His heavenly power.

(2) Power and authority in Christianity is spiritual in nature, i.e., it is internal strength in the individual. “I can do everything in Christ who strengthens me”.

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

Christianity, Relegion of Strength

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

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

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

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

The Bible also says, *"And with great power the Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all, " (Act 4:23) as if "... the Kingdom of God present with power. " (Mk 9:1)*

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

He also says about the strength in serving *"...I also labour, striving according to his working in me mightily. "* (Col. 1:29) It is power, inspite of obstacles, as the Lord said to Paul, *"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you and no one will attack you to hurt you. "* (Act 18:9,10).

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

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

The Lord Jesus, despite His gentleness and humility, was powerful. It was said about Him, *"Gird your sword upon your thigh, O Mighty One. "* (Ps 45:3). He was powerful, *"...for power went out from Him."* (Lk 6:9).

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

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

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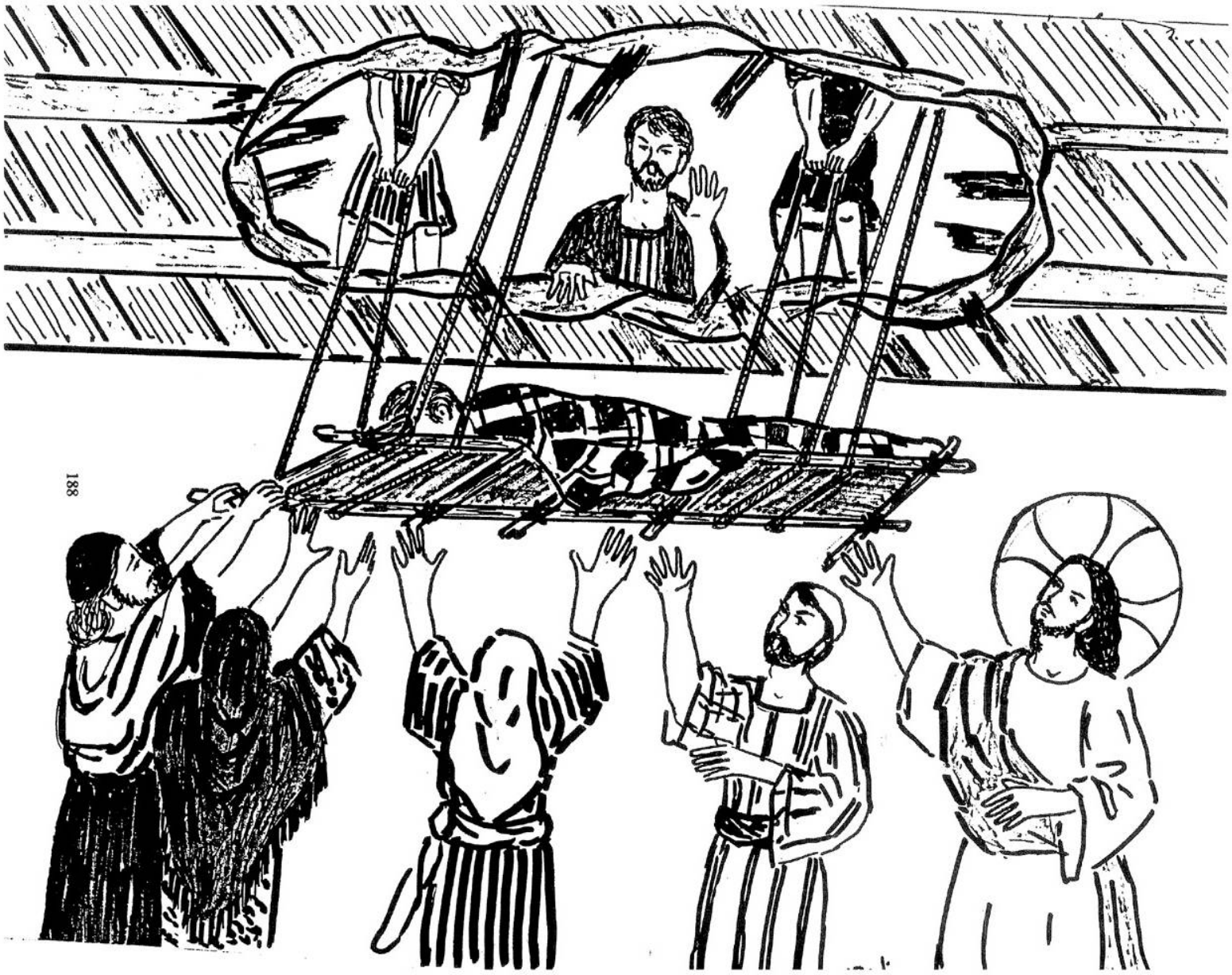
the teacher should
refer to the

HOLY BIBLE

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



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JULY
THIRD SUNDAY

THE APOSTLES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (III)
THE ESSENCE OF THE APOSTLES' MINISTRY

Please read (Luke 5:17-26), the attached article entitled "Visits in Ministry" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON:

This is lesson 3 in a series of 4 lessons about the Apostles. In this lesson we learn that every Christian must serve the church based on his or her love and faith. One thing we can do is to serve in the service of outreach.

MEMORY VERSE:

"When He saw their faith, He said to him, 'Man your sins are forgiven you'." Luke 5:20

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

INTRODUCTION

† The ministry of the Apostles was established based on what they were taught by the Lord Jesus Himself and in what they saw. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that were made." (John 1-1-3).

- † The gospel reading for the first Sunday of the Apostles' fast is taken from (Luke 5:17-26).
- † This shows us that to serve God in the general sense is not confined to teaching or preaching, but in practice by His people as an act of love. Please tell the story in detail emphasizing that the role of the four men is similar to the role of the Apostles.

† The general meaning of serving is to help the needy regardless of their origin or nationality. Please read the parable of the good Samaritan in details as mentioned in (Luke 10:30-3 7).

† Our Lord Jesus also explained the meaning of serving people and God in a general sense.

† Please read (Matthew 25:34-40). Every time we help someone, it is as if we helped Jesus Himself and we will get our reward from Him here on earth and up in heaven.

† Therefore, the importance of studying the ministry of the Apostles and its essence is not only a study but it gives us background as servants of God. A Christian must be a servant as well.

† The Apostles' role was to deliver all what the Lord had given them. Our role is to then give the same faith to the next generation over and to reach out with our faith to society.

The Apostles' Ministry is Founded on Love in Heart

† Jesus said to St. Peter "Do you love me.... Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). This shows us that the main thing for serving people is love. If there are other motives to serving other than love, then the service will not be strong.

† All the Apostles in their ministry founded their preaching on the basis of love.

† David also applied the principle of love in all what he did with King Saul who wanted to kill him. David had several opportunities to kill King Saul but he did not. In addition, David's son Absalom wanted to kill him. David said to his people: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom"**.** His love as a father stood strong against the desire of his son to kill him.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. We must serve the Church, the family and the society as Christians. The main reason for our service is Love.

2. Maintain the faith as it is from generation to generation as we received it from the Lord Jesus Christ and His pure Apostles.

3. One thing of service that we all can do is to ask about one another i.e. outreach. We can make it part of our system to ask about the younger ones, the weak people, the sick, the needy and anyone who is under pressure of any sort.

Songs

O TELL ME JOHN

"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us." (Eph 5:2)

O tell me john, O tell me
about His shining face
And how you were so lucky
on His chest your head laid.
Please answer me and tell me
John answered me and said,
He called me the "Beloved'
in His eyes I found grace
He trusted me with His Mother
I took her to my place
His heart is ever beating
with love for the human race.

And dear peter please tell me
about the rock of faith
And how you were appointed
a pillar in His church.
Please answer me and tell me
Peter answered and said
In spite of all denials
His love for me was great
And though I was so bitter
my sins He did erase
His heart is so forgiving
for sinners in every place

And dear Thomas how did you
doubt that He is raised
When you were not believing
He appeared just for your sake.
Please answer me and tell me
Thomas answered and said
I saw with my own eyes
the places of the nails
And in His side, the hole
where Blood and Water drained
By all his wounds and sufferings
He opened heaven’s gate

And all you His disciples
tell me again and again
How when you were in trouble
for you He took good care.
All the disciples answered
we can never explain
The life that is awaiting
those who believe in His name
So joyful and so peaceful
there is no worry or pain
Our life is all for Jesus
and that is really a gain

Visits in Ministry
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Visiting is a kind of pastoral care. St. Paul said about it, *"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 doing. " (Acts 15:36).*

Visiting a person or caring for him is essential for whoever is in a position of responsibility.

The Bishop and the Priest visit the flock, the servant visits and asks about his children and the father looks after his children. Even an ordinary believer should sit to himself and review his life, to see where he is going...

Visiting others means being concerned about them and wishing to make sure they are all right.

Therefore, visits create a deep feeling of mutual love. You visit or ask about the one you love, and the one whom you visit or ask about will love you for being concerned about him...

The opposite is also true; lack of care creates a feeling of loneliness and depression. How easy it is for one to say, `There is nobody to ask about me, not even the Church and the Priests!'.

Many of our brothers were lost because nobody visited or cared for them or when this took place it was too late... This is either because matters, by that either because matters, by that time had become complicated or their hearts became void of responsive feelings, love of goodness and love of the one asking about them...

For this reason, the quick action whether visits or care solves problems before they become serious.

This applies especially to those who are young, weak, new in faith or those who are facing tribulations or temptations or suffering certain pressures and are unable to save themselves or find a solution...

There is a big difference between such a visit full of care and concern and a mere social visit...

You might visit a person but without being concerned about him!

You might visit him and talk about many things without referring to God and the extent of this person's relationship with Him. A pastoral visit means getting into one's life, finding out his problems and helping in solving them... creating a deep relationship between him and God...

Pastoral care means to visit others, bringing God with you... And when you leave, you must have left God in their homes and in their hearts.

I wish in conclusion that you would ask yourself: who needs your visit or care? Whom have you visited but not actually cared for?!

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of this Sunday
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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

THE APOSTLES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (IV)
THE ESSENCE OF THE APOSTLES' MINISTRY

Please read (John 10:7-18), the attached article entitled "The sense of Responsibility" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is the last lesson in a series of 4 lessons about the Apostles. In this lesson we continue to learn about the principles upon which the Apostles established their ministry.

MEMORY VERSE

> ***I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. (John 10:11)***

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

A. <u>The Apostles' Ministry is Founded on Sacrifice and Courage</u>

† Review the last lesson and emphasize that the Apostles were very dedicated to maintain and deliver the faith that they got from the Lord Himself to the church, no matter what sufferings and sacrifices they had to endure. Please see the memory verse.

† The Apostles gave up their lives because of their love to Jesus and their aim at letting all people know how sweet is the life with Jesus. Many of them ended their lives as martyrs for example St. Paul as well as St. Peter.

† There are several examples in the bible to show that the people, who had faith in God, had sacrificed to help other people. Abraham rescued Lot his nephew who dwelt in Sodom. Please read it detail from (Genesis 14:8-16) and please tell it in detail.

B. The Apostles Ministry is Founded on Prayers for the People Whom They were Serving

† St. Paul mentioned repeatedly in his letters to the nations to whom he preached, that he was praying for them and that he wanted them to pray for him. This is the most important part to pray for other people. Praying from the heart to God is an important practice in our spiritual life and in serving God.

† A very good example is what Mary and Martha did on behalf of their brother. They sent messengers to their beloved Lord Jesus saying "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick. (John 11:3) This is a very deep prayer, to submit your problem to God and He will solve it no matter how difficult it was.

† We must support our help to other people by praying for them.

† The church was praying on behalf of St. Peter who was a prisoner held by King Herod. The Angel of the Lord was then sent and saved St. Peter from the hands of Herod. Please read (Acts 12:1-10) and tell the story in detail.

C. The Apostles Ministry is Founded on the Strength Given By the Holy Spirit

† Please read (1 Corinthians 2:1-5) and explain it to the students. "And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." (1 Cor. 2:4)

† The Lord asked His Disciples not to depart from Jerusalem before they gained the power of the Holy Spirit. They gained the power of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We must sacrifice our time and our comfort to help others, pray for others and rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in dealing with people.

(2) Everyone is responsible towards himself or herself, the society, the family and the church members. We must never give excuses and think that others are responsible not us. We are all responsible.

Songs

O TELL ME JOHN

"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us." (Eph 5:2)

O tell me john, O tell me
And how you were so lucky
Please answer me and tell me
He called me the "Beloved'
He trusted me with His Mother
His heart is ever beating

about His shining face
on His chest your head laid.
John answered me and said,
in His eyes I found grace
I took her to my place
with love for the human race.

And dear peter please tell me
And how you were appointed
Please answer me and tell me
In spite of all denials
And though I was so bitter
His heart is so forgiving

about the rock of faith
a pillar in His church.
Peter answered and said
His love for me was great
my sins He did erase
for sinners in every place

And dear Thomas how did you
When you were not believing
Please answer me and tell me
I saw with my own eyes
And in His side, the hole
By all his wounds and sufferings

doubt that He is raised
He appeared just for your sake.
Thomas answered and said
the places of the nails
where Blood and Water drained
He opened heaven’s gate

And all you His disciples
How when you were in trouble
All the disciples answered
The life that is awaiting
So joyful and so peaceful
Our life is all for Jesus

tell me again and again
for you He took good care.
we can never explain
those who believe in His name
there is no worry or pain
and that is really a gain

The Sense of Responsibility

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

The spiritual person realizes that his life on the earth is a responsibility.

His life is a message. God will ask him how his life was fruitful, productive and beneficial to all those who were in contact with him... God will ask him about what he has done and what he could have done, but he did not do...

Formally speaking, this responsibility might be limited. But with regard to love, this responsibility is boundless. Love has room for everyone, and is always ready to serve and help.

The spiritual person questions himself before he is questioned by God: What has he done for all his acquaintances? Is there anyone among them whom he knew not, who needs his help; he ought to know them to be able to serve them.

Philip was walking on the road when he saw an Ethiopian eunuch reading in the Book of Isaiah. He felt a sense of responsibility towards him. He did not leave him till he felt the service has been completed and he led him to God.

St. Mark was sitting in the shop of a cobbler called Anianus, who was fixing the saint's sandal. St. Mark had a sense of responsibility towards this cobbler. He took
advantage of this opportunity and started talkig to him till he believed in the Lord and so did his household..

Both of them learned from Christ when He sat at the well near Samaria. A Samaritan woman, who was a sinner, came to draw water from the well. The Lord felt responsibility towards her. He led her and all her townspeople to salvation.

These three meetings seemed, at the beginning, as just passing by incidents, but the sense of responsibility turned each into a chance for salvation.

If that is the case with those one meets accidentally, how ought it be with the formal responsibilities of a person in life?
Fatherhood is a responsibility, motherhood is a responsibility, marriage is a esponsibility and serving is a responsibility. Even friendship is a type of responsiblility.

Do not try to apologize by passing the responsibility to others. God is going to ask you about what you have done according to your abilities...

The more one's sense of responsibility grows, the more the circle of his service widens. It all happens through love, not through formalities. One even volunteers to do many acts of love.
His heart makes him keen to do this as the Bible says, *"...To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." (Jas. 4.17)*

NOTES

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
FIRST SUNDAY

LET US STICK TO OUR PRINCIPLES AND TRUST IN GOD

Please read (Daniel 3:8.-30) the attached article entitled "God's Solutions", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

To show that if we trust God and adhere to our values and principles we shall be successful. God is going to act with His great solutions for our problem.

MEMORY VERSE

"...Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from burning fiery furnace" Daniel 3:17

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

INTRODUCTION

In a world of many beliefs, values and principles where do we stand? Let us take a decision to stick to our values, beliefs and principles
Let us first explain and discuss what do we mean when we say: we are Christians, we are Coptic and we are Orthodox?

† We are Christians

- ☩ It means that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. He is God Incarnate who came, was born of the Holy Virgin Mary, died on the Cross, arose from the dead on the third day, ascended to heaven and sent us the Holy Spirit to stay with us inside us.
- ☩ We believe in the Holy Bible in its entirety. For us it is the book of life and it sets out clearly the guidelines for our daily behaviour.

† **We are Coptic**

It means our home land is Egypt and our mother church is in Egypt.
We are proud of our church in Egypt being one of the oldest churches in the world. Not only that but it is also the church that is mentioned even in the Old testament in the book of Isaiah Chapter 19. “In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border.” (Is. 19:19).
Our Church is the one that offered the greatest number of martyrs throughout history of mankind.
Our Church is the one that started the monastic life in the whole world.
Our Church is the one with the first theological school in the whole world (the school of Alexandria) established by St. Mark the Apostle.

† **We are Orthodox**

It means we belong to a church that maintains the Apostolic faith without swerving to the left or the right. As one of the famous writers puts it “If you want to look at a Church that is the closest to the Church of the Apostles in the first century, look at the Coptic Orthodox Church and you will find it.”

❖ The word Orthodox literally means the “right Praise”. “Ortho” means right or straight, “dox” means praise.

† Do not deny your faith. To the contrary take every opportunity to assert that you are Christian, you are Coptic, and you are Orthodox. Do not be afraid of anyone. This is the faith that is the most precious thing you have inherited from your Forefathers, the Saints and Martyrs of the Church.

† A good example of an individual who adhered to tell what he believed in was:- St. John the Baptist. Please read (Matthew 3:1-12) and (Matthew 11:7-15)

† Please read the story of the three young men Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego from the bible (Daniel 3:8-30) and discuss with the students.

† These 3 young men Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were Israelites and they were taken away from their homeland after it was conquered. King Nebuchadnezzar was a bad king, when he took the Jews away from their home and he wanted them to turn away from worshipping God and worship his own idols of golden images.

† These 3 young men trusted God and insisted on worshipping God only. Please see the memory verse.

The 3 Young Men Saved in Fiery Trial

The King ordered the furnace to be heated seven-fold and put the 3 young men in it because **they disobeyed him and insisted on their position. The Lord** came down and walked with them in the midst of the fire and they were not hurt and even the smell of the fire was not on them. The people who put up the fire died from the heat while they were putting up the fire. But the 3 young men emerged unscathed.

The King Praised God

When the King saw that, he spoke saying "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His angel and delivered His servant who trusted in Him." (Daniel 3:28).

Let Us Trust God in Everything We Do

† In the society today, people will try to dissuade us from Christianity. Just as this King wanted to dissuade the three young men from worshipping God to worship his idols.
† The choice is ours to follow the world and the people in what they do. OR to follow Our Lord Jesus, trust in Him and follow Him. The Apostles were put in jail but they were singing. They knew that the end result is that they will be victorious. How could they be happy and singing while they were in jail? They trusted in God.
† In all aspects of our life: education; family; society; and work we must trust in God. Leave room for God's work and trust in him.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Let us all trust God and stick to our Church.

(2) God has many solutions for our problems. We think about our problems. The world is putting pressures on us to leave our Christianity. But as He did with the three young men, He can and He will come in with His great ways. These great ways of God, we may never think of or imagine or even dream of.

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.

GOD`S SOLUTIONS
By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Truly God has many solutions...

We think of our problems, using our human mind, which is limited. As for God He is unlimited in His knowledge and His wisdom.

When matters become complicated, their complication is relative for us human beings. As for God nothing becomes complicated, everything is easy and the solutions are many.

God interferes at the right time and in the suitable way. It could be a solution that never crossed our minds, one that we never thought of or expected...

"The things which are impossible, with man are possible with god. " (Lk 18:27).

With God, everything is possible, nothing is hard, as Job the righteous said, "And that no purpose of yours can be withheld from you." (Job 42:2).

God controls everything, sees everything and nothing is hidden from Him. He plans in secret or in the dark. Everything is uncovered before His eyes and the answer is known.

Therefore, it is good what Moses the Prophet said, *"Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace. " (Exd 14:13-14).*

God's solutions are strong, and His salvation is great...

The faithful wait hoping for God's salvation, and they rejoice in hope...

God's work for them in past days increases their faith in God's doings now, in the future and at all time...

God is God. He does not change in His love or His care...

Therefore, it is said in the psalm, *"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)*

In our life we deal with God, not with people. We are all in His hands. Nobody is independent of God or outside His dominion.

Therefore we are confident in God's work with us...

We are sure of His interference, listening to the psalmist saying, "*Wait for the Lord. Be strong and comfort your heart. Wait for the Lord. "*

May God's name be blessed forever.

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

HOLY BIBLE

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

AUGUST
SECOND SUNDAY

HOW TO DEFEAT THE DEVIL?

Please read (l Peter 5:8-l1) the attached article entitled "Temptations", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

To learn how to defeat the devil.

MEMORY VERSE

"... the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

INTRODUCTION

One of the key objectives of the coming of the Lord Christ has been to give strength so that we can defeat the devil after he has defeated the human race for many generations. The Lord said to His Disciples and to us "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19).

A. Take the Devil Seriously

See the memory verse. Many Saints who did not take the devil seriously even for one time, fell and committed **sins.** The **devil is continuously** watching to hurt man. So, we **have to be alert at all times.** An example of someone who fell was Samson. Please read and tell his story as in (Judges 16:1-22)

B. Understand Sin as Coming from Within You

Either make the tree **good** and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. ... "(Matthew 12:33-35) In other words, we have to watch our thoughts and feelings. When we fall into a sinful action it is a result of the temptation of the devil coupled with our inner willingness or desire for this action.

C. Resist Temptation

Never give up. When we resist the devil he escapes from us. We must not give up to any bad thoughts. Just cut it short. Please read (1 Cor. 10:6-13). Emphasize that we have to learn from our mistakes as well as other people's mistakes in order to avoid yielding to the devil's pressure on us.

D. Trust in God's Strength and Understanding

Following Jesus our Saviour the Lord is the basic remedy for sin (Acts 13:38-39 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." Please read also (Galatians 2:16-21).

E. This Kind Does Not Go Out Except By Prayer and Fasting (Matthew 17:21)

† One of the key methods to defeat the devil, as mentioned by the Lord Himself is fasting and prayer. Many Christians have adopted this practice and found it to be very effective in defeating the devil and making him flee away.

† By fasting we can come close to God and by prayer we can attain from Him all the blessings and help we need. Example, St. Anthony the Great defeated all the wars of the devils by fasting and prayer.

F Be aware of the Bindings of the Devil

† "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house." (Matthew 12:29). Some of the bindings of the devil to a person may be some bad thoughts, lustful thoughts, pleasures, love of money, being too busy to pray or paying attention to a spiritual life....etc.

† The best way is to avoid being bound by the devil. When the certain aspect binds someone, then it becomes very easy for the devil to steal all of his or her spiritual blessings and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

G. Examples of People Who Defeated the Devil

† Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), the woman who was known to be sinner in the city (Luke 7:36-50)**,** David the prophet and King, Joseph (in the Old Testament (Genesis Chapter 39).. .etc. Please tell some of these stories to the students to assure them that they too can defeat the devil.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Many of the temptations come from the envy of the devil When we pray the Lord's prayer, let us pray from the heart saying "Lead us not into temptations".

(2) As the Lord Christ defeated the devil, He gave our human nature the method and the ability to defeat the devil.

(3) We must not fear the devil. But we must be aware of him and take all precautions as mentioned in this lesson

Songs

DO NOT LEAVE ME ALONE

Do not leave me alone
Be always near to help me

O shepherd of my soul
and hear me when I call

REFRAIN
My lord, I'm nothing without Thee
So take my right hand
Forever in Thy way

I am nothing at all
O Lord, and lead me

Do not leave me alone
And hold me lest I fall

My guardian and my guide
whenever my footsteps slide

Do not leave me alone
When outward things are strong

if I'm tempted to sin
keep watch, O Lord, within

Do not leave me alone
Subdue Satan before me

whenever I feel frail
and let him not prevail

Do not leave me alone
But take my hand and lead me

when I have gone astray
again into Thy way

Do not leave me alone
But rather, Lord, forgive me

whenever sins abound
and turn my life around

Do not leave me alone
But rather reassure me

when hope has fled away
and teach me to watch and pray

TEMPTATIONS

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Many temptations happen because of the envy of the devil...

If the devil finds a highly spiritual person, he becomes furious and envious. He attacks him with temptations to see how firm he is in the life of the spirit...

That is what happened with the Lord Jesus Christ...

The devil was not happy about the great glory that the Lord Jesus received at the Jordan River, where the Father witnessed for Him saying, *"This is my beloved Son, in who I am well pleased. "* (Mt. 3:17). Then the Holy Spirit descended on Him as a dove. Also, John the Baptist witnessed for Jesus saying, "... *whose sandal-strap I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. "* (Mk 1:7)... Therefore, the devil followed the Lord with temptations on the mountain.

The devil's combat sometimes proves the success of the spiritual work, which makes one confident in his work.

The devil's temptations are divided into two types:

Tribulations and enticement...

Tribulations do not hurt, but one can benefit from them and learn patience. They enable us to experience God's help. St. James, the Apostle said, *"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials. " (Jas 1:2)*

But the trouble is in the trial by sin...

A sin could tempt the faithful to do or think in a harsh way. In spite of his refusal, it continues fighting him till he cries to God saying, "lead us not into temptation."...

Temptations indicate that the devil does not give up...

He does not give up, no matter how long it takes. He kept on tempting the Lord Jesus for forty days. And in spite of his failure, and God dismissing him, he left for a while then returned to tempt Him, even when the Lord was on the cross.

We do not fear the devils' combats.

The grace within us is much stronger than all the tricks of the devil. And the Holy Spirit that works within us is able to defeat the devil. Besides, God gave us authority over all the devils...

As the Lord Jesus Christ has triumphed over all trials of the devil, He gave our human nature the spirit of victory and became our leader in His procession of triumph.

May the Lord be blessed in our trials as in our worship...

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AUGUST
THIRD SUNDAY

ST. MARY (I)
ST. MARY'S PERPETUAL VIRGINITY

Please read the attached articles entitled "Practicing Ceaseless Prayers", "St. Mary's Perpetual Virginity", "St. Mary and the Original Sin" and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson one in a series of 2 lessons about our mother St. Mary. In this lesson we emphasize our Coptic Orthodox's view of St. Mary's perpetual Virginity. We also by praying at all times we can be purified by God and enjoy an intimate relationship with God.

MEMORY VERSE

"Emanuel, Whom you had brought forth, preserved you in incorruption, and kept your virginity sealed" Theotokia of Saturday 7:2

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

INTRODUCTION

There are prophecies in the Old Testament for all actions or events related to Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ that were fulfilled in the New Testament. The fact that He was to be born of a virgin and her virginity is sealed was also prophesied about. "Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And the Lord said to me; 'This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut'." Ezekiel 44:1-2

† Two sources of information emphasizing the continuous virginity of St. Mary:

(A) <u>The Apocryphal Books</u>

† In the first century of the church several books appeared, some of these books were ascribed to the Disciples. Our church did not accept these books from the beginning. However, there are many sayings and views in these books that agree with what is in the Holy bible and can be taken as reference. These Apocryphal books stated clearly that St. Mary continued to be virgin after giving birth to Jesus

(B) <u>The Fathers' Writings</u>

† St. Peter of Alexandria was among several Fathers who wrote about St. Mary's continuous virginity. St. Peter of Alexandria gave her the title of "Iparthenos." This Greek word IPARTHENOS means continuously virgin.

† St. Aphram the Syrian said "as The Lord entered and the doors were closed similarly the Lord came of the Virgin's womb and the virgin gave His birth without pain. Her virginity stayed intact."

<u>St. Mary and the Original Sin</u>

† The Orthodox Church, whose love towards St. Mary is deeply rooted, considers her more holy than all the heavenly creatures, while a natural member of the human race. We do not, however, set her apart from the human race by assuming that she was born without original sin, as if she was born not of human seed. Please read the attachment for details.

<u>Marriage or Betrothal</u>

† St. Mary was called "St. Joseph's wife" although they were betrothed and not married. In the Jewish tradition, the nuptials consisted of two steps: "Betrothal and proper marriage. The betrothal was in every respect equivalent to our marriage except for any sexual relationship. The betrothed woman was called the man's wife and she became widow if her betrothed died.

<u>The Brothers of Jesus</u>

† The brothers of Jesus were the sons of St. Mary of Clopas. the wife of Alphoeus and the sister of Virgin Mary (John 19:25). The word "brothers" is used in the Holy Bibles for:

Blood brotherhood
Common nationality
Friendship
The close relative, as in the case of Jesus' brothers. Abraham called his brother's son "Lot" his brother (Gene. 13:8)

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) We must know our Orthodox Church's view of St. Mary. We do not have to argue with other Christian sects, but we must know our church's belief and trust it.

(2) What about us? Is there anything we can benefit of this? Yes indeed. We cannot reach in one step the purity or the holiness or virtues of those saints which they obtained over years. But we can practice the life of prayers at all times (please review the 10 points in the attached article). We are then going to be on the right track towards a peaceful and enjoyable life with Christ. Remember that Christianity is a religion of joy.

Songs

HAIL TO MARY

"For behold, henceforth generations will call me blessed." (Luke 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

Virgin Mary as we stand here
Of the Lord we ask through you

Chanting of her endless virtues
With adoration and love to Mary

Hail to Mary , queen of heaven
All the nations and forever

You are the Mother of us all
We shall always praise your majesty

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

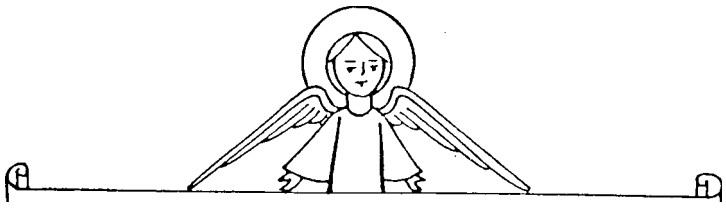
and raise our eyes to the sky
on her always we can rely.

seeking thy presence this hour
to fill us with holy power

give her always unceasing praise
our voices to her praise

on the right side of the King
praise to her we always sing

your protection on us impart
and keep you in our heart



Practicing Ceaseless Prayers

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

You cannot reach at once what the saints attained in several years. Therefore, you need to follow these gradual steps:

1 - Decide, for yourself, on a short prayer that suits you. You may repeat it several times, in depth, expressing your personal feelings.

2- Use this prayer at your leisure to keep yourself busy lest your thoughts should wander over trifles or sins. That is how you can gain a double profit: praying and also resisting evil thoughts. At the same time, you use your time in what helps you spiritually.

3- Keep your mind busy with prayer while you are among people whose talk has nothing to do with your salvation. You do not benefit from it, and, at the same time, you'll be embarrassed to withdraw from them. At least, be there physically, but, as for your heart, keep it busy with God in prayer without anybody noticing.

4- You may also busy yourself with these prayers during the time you spend in public transport or in waiting for it, or while you are waiting for somebody. This could also save you from anxiety.

5- You may repeat these short prayers while you are having your meals. It feeds your spirit while your body is receiving its food. At the same time, you'll keep table etiquette.

6- If anyone talk to you during these prayers, do not ignore him by remaining silent thus getting yourself into trouble, but answer him briefly and quietly, then go back to your prayers...

7- You may also repeat these prayers while you are in bed before you go to sleep. This will keep your subconscious busy with spiritual things, besides the act of praying. By doing this, your bed will be sanctified and your dreams kept pure.

8- When you wake up, start also by repeating these prayers, even before washing your face. Thus your first thought becomes spiritual and the first one you talk to will be God.

9- Whenever you find a chance to pray, take advantage of it. That is how you overcome the problem of "wasting time" and get used to prayer.

10- All these prayers shall not prevent you from practicing the Agbeya prayers or your personal prayers, and standing in reverence before God...

ST. MARY'S PERPETUAL VIRGINITY

Emanuel, whom you had brought forth, preserved you in incorruption, and kept your virginity sealed. Theotokia of Saturday 7:2

Vow of Virginity

According to the apocryphal work "protoevangelium of James", which reflects the popular trends of second century, St. Mary was born of Joachim and Anne, when they were already old. The mother vowed that her child would serve the Lord all her life.

At the age of three, she was presented to the Temple, where she was nourished by angels. According to the Coptic tradition the Marian feast of "her presentation to the Temple" is celebrated on the third Keiahk, in which we remember the child Mary as a virgin living among the virgins. We sing the following two hymns:

> "At the age of three, you were presented to the Temple, 0 Mary You came as a dove, And the angels hurried to you"
>
> **"**She was among the virgins**,** Praising and giving hymns with them, When she entered the Temple in glory and honor"

At the age of twelve, the priests assembled to discuss what they had to do with Mary. They called twelve men from the tribe of Judah and deposited their rods at the Temple. On the next day, the high priest Abiathar brought the rods and gave each one his rod. As St. Joseph stretched his hand to receive his rod, immediately a dove went forth from its top, whiter than snow and most beautiful and fluttering a long time among the pinnacles and the temple, until at last it flew towards the heavens. Then all the people congratulated the old man, saying "You become blessed in your old age, father Joseph, in that God has shown you fit to receive Mary."

St. Joseph, at first, refused because of his age, but then obeyed when the priests warned him of the wrath of God.

Marriage or Betrothal

According to the Jewish tradition, the nuptials consisted of two steps: Betrothal and marriage-proper. After certain financial arrangements, the couple would be

betrothed to one another. The betrothal was in every respect equivalent to our marriage except for sexual relationship. The betrothed woman was called the man's wife. In case of infidelity she was liable to the same punishment be dismissed without a bill of divorce.

If the betrothed woman had not been married previously, she usually waited a year before the second step, the marriage proper, was taken.

Now, we can understand why St. Mary was called "St. Joseph's wife", although they were betrothed and not married.

Someone might ask if there was an agreement between St. Mary and St. Joseph to live in virginity even after the second step of marriage was to take place.

St. Augustine confirms this in his comment on St. Mary's question to the angel "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (Luke 1:34) Surely she would not say that, unless she had previously vowed her virginity to God" and intended to keep it.

Objection

Helvidius, in the fourth century, used the sentence of (St. Matthew 1:25) "and he did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn son," to indicate that the gospel opposed, the perpetual virginity of St. Mary, as Jesus was her firstborn son who had other brothers, also sons of Mary.

St. Jerome answered: "It is the custom of the scriptures to ascribe the title 'firstborn' not to one who subsequently had brothers or sisters, but to one who was born first" (see Exod. 34:19-20). As St. Jerome stated so trenchantly, the scriptural firstborn is an only child.

Likewise, the expression "he did not know her until she brought forth her firstborn son" by no means implies that St. Joseph "knew her" after the birth of Jesus. For the term "until" does not in any way predict what may happen. "Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children till to the day of her death" (2 Sam 6:23). This does not mean that she gave birth to a child after her death.

The Brothers of Jesus

Around the year 382 AD Helvidius wrote a book supporting that after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary consummated their marriage, and that Mary later gave birth to other children, "the brothers of Jesus," mentioned in the Gospel. This book did not survive, but its allegations are well known because of St. Jerome's reply to it.

A few years later, the same idea was put forward by Jovinianus and Bonosus, bishop of Naissus in Yugoslavia. They refer to the expression mentioned in the Gospel "brothers of Jesus" Mark 3:33, Mat **13:55, 56**

The Great Origen saying "no one whose opinion on Mary is sound would claim that she had any child save Jesus." What then does the Gospel mean by the words "the brothers of Jesus"?

1. The Epiphanian view

The writer of the apocryphal work "protoevangelium of James"' in defending the virginity of St. Mary, referred to "the brothers of Jesus" as sons of St. Joseph from previous marriage. Some Coptic, Syrian and Greek documents followed the same idea.

Even some great Fathers did the same, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Hegesippus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Hilary of Potiers, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, Ambrose, and Epiphanius of Salamis in Cyprus who advocated this idea warmly so that it was attributed to him.

Nevertheless, some theologians reject this idea for the following:

A. If those brothers of Jesus having been born of an earlier marriage, why are they not mentioned in the infancy narratives, especially the escape to Egypt?
B. The impression left by the Gospel (Luke 2:41-52) concerning the story of Jesus in the temple is that even twelve years after Jesus' birth, the Holy Family consisted of the three persons only.
C. St. Matthew refers to Jesus as the heir of Joseph, the son of David, but if there were other older brothers of Jesus, (Son of Joseph), Jesus would not have been the only heir.
D. If Jesus had brothers, He would have left His mother in their home and would not have entrusted her to St. John.

2. ST. Jerome's view

St. Jerome replies that the term "brothers" is used in the Holy Scripture for:

A. Blood brotherhood.
B. Common nationality
C. The close relatives
D. Friendship

In the case of the Lord's brothers, the third meaning applies. Abraham called his brother's son, Lot, his brother (Gene. 13:8), and Laban used the same term for his son-in-law (Gene. 19:15).

It is well known that at that time cousins were called brothers, for they often lived under the
same roof in one large family. Until today the same term is used in some villages in Upper
Egypt. where they feel very ashamed when a person does not call his cousin "Brother." In the Aramic language all these types of relationships were referred to simply as "Brothers." According to St. Jerome's theory, the brothers of Jesus were the sons of Mary of Clopas, the wife of Alphaeus and the sister of Virgin Mary (John 19:25).

ST. MARY AND THE ORIGINAL SIN

The Orthodox Church, whose love toward St. Mary is deeply rooted, considers her more holy than all the heavenly creatures. Whilst a natural member of the human race. We do not however, set her apart from the human race by assuming that she was born without original sin, as if she was not born of human seed.
This reality is depicted in the following Theotokia:

"How deep is God's abundance and wisdom,
that the womb that is liable to judgment that
gave birth to children through groaning pain,
became the source of immortality,
giving birth to Emanuel without human seed,
through destroying corrupt of our nature"

Thus, the church sets a distinction between St. Mary's life before and after the moment of Divine Incarnation
"The Holy Spirit filled you entirely,
Filled every part of your soul and body,
0 Mary, the mother of God"
St. Mary herself declared her joy to God, her Saviour, for indeed she was in need of salvation.

To this effect St. Ambrosis says:
"When the Lord wanted to redeem the world,
He began His work with Mary,
That she, through whom salvation was prepared for all,
Should be the first to draw the fruit of salvation from the son"

St. Augustine also says:
"Mary sprang from Adam, and died in consequence of sin,
Adam died in consequence of sin,
And the flesh of the Lord, sprang from Mary,
And died to destroy sin"

Lastly this Orthodox concept preserved our Church form any exaggeration or confusion between Christ and His Mother. No Orthodox theologian calls St. Mary "Coredemptrix" and no worship is offered to her, but only veneration and praise.

In other words, in the Orthodox church there is an accurate line that divides Christ from St. Mary, His Mother.

NOTES

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

ST. MARY (II)
OUR NEW EVE

Please read the attached articles entitled "Our new Eve", "Theoretical thinking and Practical life", and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson is about our mother St. Mary. In this lesson we learn to take St. Mary to be our mother. If we took St. Mary to be our spiritual mother, we must take steps to achieve a certain life.

MEMORY STATEMENT

"Hail to Mary, the mother of all the living, we ask you to intercede on our behalf" Theotokia of Tuesday

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

<u>New Eve</u>:

Our church calls St. Mary 'The mother of all the living", "mother of the new life" and' the second Eve." Eve lost the meaning due to her name: - "Mother of every living" Gen, **3:20** for by her disobedience to God she obtained only death for her children instead of life, and became the mother of the dead. Her daughter, St. Mary, took her place; for by her faith, obedience, and humility she became, through the Holy Spirit, the mother of 'life." She offered to Adam's children the "tree of life" to eat and thereby live forever.

<u>St. Mary is Our Mother</u>

St. Mary is the mother of all believers. This relation between the New Eve and all believers is declared officially by the Second Adam on the Cross, when He says to the new Eve, "woman, behold your son!" and to His believers represented by John "behold you mother!" (John 19:27-28)

Comparison Between Eve and St. Mary

Eve, an undefiled virgin, conceived the word of the serpent and brought forth disobedience and death. But the virgin Mary, filled with faith and joy when the Angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the Most High would overshadow her, and that therefore the Holy One born would be the Son of God That she replied "…Let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)

Do You Want St. Mary to be Your Mother?

If you want St. Mary to be your mother, as Jesus intended when He gave her to St. John while Jesus was on the Cross, do the following:

1. Follow what St. Mary said:
Every son must follow what his mother tells him. St. Mary told us about the Lord Jesus "Whatever He says to you do it." (John 2:5) So, the advice of our mother St. Mary is to follow all what Jesus is telling us to do. Jesus told us to love one another.., even to love our enemies

2. Ask her intercession in your prayers:
Every time we pray we must remember that we are not worthy to ask God and call Him "Our Father..." and ask Him to do a lot of things for us, because of our sins. However, we must seek the help of our mother St. Mary to pray for us so that our Lord Jesus Christ may accept us according to His mercy.

3. Behave as she did.
Usually a son learns from his parents. St. Mary was humble, obedient, and helpful to others. Please discuss with the students these characteristics and each one of them to mention an adequate event for St. Mary to illustrate.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

(1) Take St. Mary as a spiritual mother for you. Follow her footsteps in humbleness, obedience and love.

(2) Theoretical thinking is one thing. Practical life is a totally different thing. We all love St. Mary the Virgin. We all say she is our Mother. But do we live our live similar to her? Let us be practical. We have to do some steps in the right direction to God, so that we can claim that we are children of St. Mary.

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.

THEORETICAL THINKING AND PRACTICAL LIFE

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Theoretical thinking is just a thought without experience or actual study of the fact. This kind of thought imagines that matters proceed very naturally, without obstacles on the way!... following certain rules that this thinker put in his mind.

It is exactly like a person who says that the distance between two countries by sea is so many miles. If the ship sailed at a specific speed, it should arrive on such a day, at such an hour... The ship then gets into the actual fact, where it could be hit by waves or wind and fail to move; or resist with difficulty or change its direction. It might arrive after days, or it might never arrive! !

The actual fact is full of obstacles and hindrances that nobody knows, except the one who has experienced the practical life in its minute details.

The one who thinks theoretically sits at his desk and writes thoughts, just thoughts... and will be puzzled why they did not work!! He might criticize and blame. He might even go far in his criticism to accusation!... He would at least accuse others of negligence or carelessness or lack of knowledge! !

In these theoretical accusations, he would not be aware of the practical obstacles, as the saying goes, *"Woe to the thinker who is worse than a fool."*

If this person was aware of the nature of the situation and the practical results and obstacles, he might have connected most of his thinking...

One obstacle may change many wise plans...

A practical person who has faced reality and experienced life would perfectly understand that matters do not proceed according to his plans and likings.

He knows the ground that he walks on... He assumes some plans, this is also taken into consideration... Any failure he faces will add to his experience and knowledge and make his future thinking more practical...

The theoretician might think that reformation is carried out by issuing a number of orders and decisions... while the practical thinker asks what would be the effectiveness of these decisions...

When he takes a decision, he follows it practically to see its line of progress. Does it move naturally or stop? And if it does stop, why? What is the solution? Does it need any modification?

My brother, do not be theoretical in your thinking. Do not be hasty in criticizing others, but study the facts and be practical.

OUR NEW EVE

Hail to Mary, the mother of all living, we ask you to intercede on our behalf Theotokia of Tuesday

NEW EVE

The Church calls St. Mary, “the mother of all living”, “Mother of the New Life”, and “the Second Eve.”

Eve lost the meaning due to her name: “Mother of every living” Gen. 3:20, - for by her disobedience to God she obtained only death for her children instead of life, and became the mother of the dead. Her daughter, St. Mary, took her place for by her faith, obedience, and humility she became, through the Holy Spirit, the mother of ”Life.” She offered to Adam’s children the “tree of life’ to eat, and thereby live forever.

Through the mystery of the Divine Incarnation, St. Mary became “the mother of the Head of the mystical body and also the Mother of its members, as St. Augustine says, “She received universal motherhood to all the believers.”

The holy Fathers consider St. Mary’s holy womb as the bridal chamber, the meeting place where the heavenly Bridegroom is united mystically with the Bride, i.e. the whole church, There we accept Christ, her Son, as our Bridegroom and the Firstborn Brother; and we accept St. Mary, His mother, as our own mother.

“The Word is joined to flesh The Word is wedded to flesh, The bridal chamber of this exalted marriage is your womb. Let me repeat, the bridal chamber of this exalted marriage between the Word and the flesh is your womb, ‘He, the bridegroom, goes forth from His bridal chamber’. **St. Augustine**

God the Father arranged the nuptials for God, His son, when, in the womb of the Virgin, He united Him to humanity, when He willed that He who is God before all the ages should, at the end of the ages, become man.

He united the Holy Church to Him, through the mystery of the Incarnation.

Now, the bridal chamber of this bridegroom was the womb of the Virgin Mother. That is why the Psalmist says, “He has set His tabernacle in the sun: and He is as a bridegroom coming out of His bridal chamber” Ps. 18:6. And it was as a bridegroom is in fact that He came forth from His bridal chamber, because to unite

the Church to Him, the Incarnate God went forth from the inviolate womb of the Virgin. **Pope Gregory (The Great)**

The second Adam declares this relation between the New Eve and all believers officially on the Cross-. When He says to the New Eve, "Woman, behold your son!, and to His Believers "John, behold your mother!"

Through the Cross we received our New Eve from God. In this effect Tertullian Says "God knew that it is not good for man to be alone, and He knew how good it would be for him to have a woman with him, first Mary and then the Church"

We received St. Mary as our New Eve**,** to say with Adam to our God: "New Eve, the woman whom you gave me to be my helpmate, gave me to eat from the Tree of Life, i.e., The Cross of her Son!"

Origen sees that every perfect Christian can, like St. John, receive from the Crucified Son, St. Mary as his own mother. He explains the words "behold, your Son!", "Whoever is perfect, no longer lives only himself, but Christ also lives in him. Since Christ lives in him, it is said to Mary of him: "Behold, Your Son, Christ!"

Eve - St. Mary Parallel:

It is possible that the remote origins of the "Eve- St. Mary parallel!" is traced far back to Papias, Bishop of Heliopolis, in Asia Minor, at the turn of the first century"

In the second century, St. Justin Martyr (c. 165) drew attention to this Eve - St. Mary parallel in his dialogue with Trypho, as he says: "(The Son of God) became man through the Virgin, that the disobedience caused by the serpent might be destroyed in the same way it had originated.

For Eve, an undefiled virgin conceived the word of the serpent and brought forth disobedience and death. The Virgin Mary filled with faith and joy as the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings. The Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the Most High would overshadow her, and that therefore, the Holy One born would be the Son of God---, that she replied: Let it be to me according to your word (Luke 1:38)

It is clear that St. Justin's concept as portrayed in the above-mentioned parallel - is focused not on St. Mary, but on the Saviour, her Son.

St. Irenaeus (c. 172), the father of Mariology, had developed the above-mentioned passage, that the Eve - St. Mary analogy combined, for the first, with a theology.

“Just as Eve, while wife of Adam, was still a virgin -- and became by her disobedience the cause of death of herself and of the whole human race. So Mary too, espoused yet a virgin, became by her obedience the cause of salvation of both herself and the whole human race.

The Knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosened by Mary’s obedience. For what the Virgin Eve had bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened through faith. According to St. Irenaeus, St. Mary had a distinctive function in God’s plan toward our salvation. For she offered her free consent to God, i.e., her obedience, issued through her faith

He Also calls her “Eve’s Advocate”:

“Whereas Eve had disobeyed God, Mary was persuaded to obey God, that the Virgin Mary might become the Advocate of the Virgin Eve...”

Similarly, Tertullian, writes in his book, “The Flesh of Christ”:

“For into Eve, as yet a virgin, the word of the devil had crept, to erect an edifice of death;

Thus, through a virgin, the Word of God was introduced to set up a structure of life.

What had been lost by one sex, was by the same sex restored and saved.

Eve had believed the serpent, Mary believed Gabriel,

That which one destroyed by unbelieving the other set straight, by believing--

God, therefore, sent down into the Virgin’s womb His word, our good Brother, to blot out the memory of evil.”

The Alexandrian Teacher, Origen, alludes to St. Mary as restoring the womankind the honor it had lost through Eve’s sin; in this way, the woman “finds salvation in childbearing” (I Tim 2:15) He also said

“The joy trumpeted by Gabriel to Mary destroyed the sentence to sorrow leveled by God against Eve.”

Just as sin began with the woman and then reached the man, so too the good tidings had their beginning with the women (Mary and Elizabeth)

In the fourth century, Zeno of Verona, mentioned this parallel but in a new sense, “Because the devil had wounded and corrupted Eve, creeping in by persuasion through her ear, Christ’s entering Mary’s ear, eliminates all vices from the heart. He cures the wound of the woman when He is born by the Virgin.

St. Ephraem, who said; “This harp of the Holy Spirit never sings sweeter songs than when it has set its strings to sing the praises of Mary, developed the Eve -o St. Mary Parallel, saying: “In her virginity Eve clothed herself with leaves of ignominy.”

Your mother has clothed herself in virginity with the garment of glory, which is sufficient for all. A piece of clothing (i.e. the body) she had given to Him who clothes all”

“With the eye Eve perceived the beauty of the tree, and the advice of the slay one was fashioned in her mind
With the ear Mary perceived the Invisible one, who came in the voice, She conceived in her womb the Power that came to her body

He also says:
“Let Eve, our first mother, now hear and come to me Let her lift up her head that was bent low under the garden’s shame Let her uncover her face and give thanks to you, because you have taken away her confusion.
Let her bear the voice of perfect peace, Because her daughter has paid her debt”

“The serpent and Eve dug a grave and thrust the guilty Adam into hell But Gabriel came and spoke with Mary, and thereupon was laid open the mystery Whereby all the dead are raised again”

‘God’s Eden is Mary, in here there is no serpent that harms No Eve that kills, But from her springs the Tree of Life that restores the exiles of Eden?”

The insight of those Fathers is repeated in the writing of Ambrosia, Jerome,

Augustine, Epiphanius of Salamis and others, from which I quote the following passages:

† Eve is called the Mother of the human race, but Mary, Mother of Salvation **St. Ambrosia**

† After the Virgin conceived and had borne her son for us- the curse was dissolved: death through Eve, life through Mary. **St. Jerome**

† Mary was included in Eve, but it was only when Mary came that we knew who Eve was. **St. Augustine**

† Eve looks to Mary, and her very name, "Mother of all the living" is a mysterious presage of the future, for "Life" itself was born of Mary, whence she became more fully "the mother of all the living"

† Nor can we apply the passage: "I will put enmities between you and the woman" (Gen. 3:15) as the Eve alone; it received its true fulfillment when that Holy and Unique One came, born of Mary without human seed. **St. Epiphanius of Salamis**

† The woman found her advocate in a woman. **St. Gregory of Nyssa**

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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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