

Πατριάρχης Ἀριστείδης
Ἀριστείδης
Ἰερεὺς Ἀριστείδης



**The Coptic Orthodox
Diocese
Of the Southern USA**

Sunday School Curriculum

Grade 9







TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	I
PREFACE	IV
INTRODUCTION.....	V
FILLER LESSONS.....	1
1 - School of Alexandria	2
2 - Jewish Feasts	7
3 - The Epistle to the Galatians.....	12
4 - Gambling	14
5 - Deborah the Judge	18
6 - The Holy Bible is Free from Perversion.....	20
7 - St. Philip	24
LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER.....	27
Week 2 - Martyrs in the Cause of Chastity	28
Week 3 - The Holy Cross.....	31
Week 4 - The Ten Commandments: First: You shall have no other gods before Me	34
LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER	39
Week 1 – The Ten Commandments Second: You Shall not Make for Yourself Any Carved Image.....	40
Week 2 - The Ten Commandments Third: You Shall Not Take the Name of The Lord Your God in Vain	43
Week 3- The Ten Commandments Fourth: Remember That You Keep Holy the Sabbath Day	46
Week 4 - The Ten Commandments Fifth: Honor Your Father and Your Mother	50
LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER.....	53
Week 1 - The Ten Commandments - Sixth: You Shall Not Murder	54
Week 2 - The Ten Commandments - The Seventh and Tenth Commandments	57
Week 3 - The Ten Commandments - The Eighth And Ninth Commandment	62
Week 4 – Our Bodies Are For the Lord.....	66
LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER.....	71
Week 1 - Different Kinds of Soil.....	72
Week 2 - St. Luke the Apostle.....	76
Week 3 - The Hymns of Kiahk.....	78
Week 4 - How to Begin a New Year	83

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY	87
Week 1 - Glory to God in the Highest	88
Week 2 - Proverbs	91
Week 3 - The Wedding at Cana	94
Week 4 - Trinitarianism and Monotheism	97
BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY TILL JONAH'S FAST	101
LESSONS FOR JONAH'S FAST.....	103
Week before Fast - The Final Judgment	104
Week after Jonah's Fast - The Book of Habakkuk	107
LESSONS FOR THE GREAT FAST PERIOD	109
Week 0 - The Old Testament	110
Week 1 - Church Fasts	115
Week 2 - Sacrifices in the Old Testament (I).....	118
Week 3 - Sacrifices in the Old Testament (II)	122
Week 4 - The Forgiving Father.....	127
Week 5 - Jesus and the Samaritan Woman	131
Week 6 - Dedication of All	134
LESSONS FOR THE PENTECOST PERIOD.....	137
Week 1 - The Power of Resurrection.....	138
Week 2 - David's sins, results and repentance	141
Week 3 – The Value of Time.....	145
Week 4 - Translations of The Old Testament	148
Week 5 - Translations of the New Testament.....	153
Week 6 - Closing the Generations Gab.....	158
Week 7 - How to Deal With My Brothers and Sisters?	162
THE APOSTLES' FAST PERIOD	165
LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF JULY	167
Week 2 - Church Vessels	168
Week 3 - Pentecost and the Birth of the Church.....	171
Week 4 - Ananias and Sapphira.....	175
LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST	177
Week 1 - Freedom and Discipline.....	178
Week 2 - The Titles of St. Mary	181
Week 3 - The Gospel of St. John	184
Week 4 - A Cloud of Witness	188

LESSON OF THE FIRST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER.....191
Week 1- I am Responsible192



PREFACE

The Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States, under the auspices of His Grace Bishop Youssef, felt the pressing need for a modified Sunday School Curriculum which would be better suited to address the problems and issues facing children both in America and the lands of immigration. Therefore, the efforts and time of many faithful servants have been dedicated to modify and improve the presently used English translation of the syllabus published by the Youth Services Committee of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate. This has resulted in the elimination of many existing lessons from this syllabus and the substitution with new lessons that are more appropriate for our youth in American society. These additional lessons give greater consideration to the differences in quality of life, education, media influence, cultural differences and the surrounding diversity of beliefs between Egyptian society and that of the west

We pray that God may bless this work for the spiritual growth of our children in the immigration countries. We also thank His Grace Bishop Youssef for his continued support, prayers and motivating guidance in this service.

May God reward every servant who offered time and effort toward the completion of this Sunday School Curriculum.

“ Thus Far The Lord Has Helped Us”

(I Samuel 7:12)



INTRODUCTION

This grade 9 Sunday school curriculum has been modified by substituting 21 lessons from the previous curriculum published by the Youth Service Committee of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate with new lessons that are suitable for the youth in America. The order of the lessons has also been changed to follow the major events in the church. This resulted in the following order assuming the starting date is the first week after the Coptic New Year celebration (El Nayrooz) on September 11:

- 3 lessons for the month of September
- 4 lessons for each month from October through January
- Variable number of filler lessons for the period between the beginning of February and Jonah's fast.
- 2 lessons, one before and one after Jonah's fast
- 7 lessons during the Great Fast
- 7 lessons for the period between Easter and the Feast of the Pentecost
- Variable number of filler lessons between the Feast of the Pentecost and the Apostles' Feast
- 3 lessons for the remainder of July after the Apostles' Feast
- 4 lessons for August
- 1 lesson for the first week of September

Please note that filler lessons can also be used for the occasional fifth Sunday in any month. These filler lessons are in the beginning of the book and it is preferable that they be used in sequence for the sake of unity in all the churches.

The students of grade 9 are at high emotional peak of their teenage period. These energetic feelings should be directed totally towards the knowledge and love of God. Spiritual activities are very essential. It is also a very critical age where reading the Bible and knowing its contents should be emphasized. They are probably hungering for the facts and the details. It just has to be introduced to them in an interested manner. They need good effort from the teacher to keep them interested and focused on the lesson. The students' interest increases when they participate in the lesson either by holding frequent discussions in the class or by assigning research projects to one or few students for next class. They should be encouraged to search and perform their own projects. The use of audiovisual aids is still very important at this age. They also start to question many of the previous learned facts of faith seeking understanding. The new lessons inserted in this curriculum stressed more Bible information, and social topics relevant to this age. It also provides multiple lessons about love and the emotional aspect, which predominates their feelings at this age.

After all, this is a preliminary modified curriculum for grade 8 that will require your feedback as a servant in order to continue the improvement process. Any inquiries or comments can be forwarded to ssc@suscopts.org

May the Holy Spirit guide every servant using this curriculum

FILLER LESSONS

These lessons are to be used for the fifth Sunday in a month and to fill the empty weeks due to the changing date of the Resurrection Feast.

1. School of Alexandria
2. Jewish Feasts
3. The Epistle to the Galatians
4. Gambling
5. Deborah the Judge
6. The Holy Bible is Free from Perversion
7. St. Philip

1 - School of Alexandria

Objective:

- ❖ Show the greatness of our church and how it influenced the whole world.
- ❖ Christian spirituality does not contradict with science.

Memory Verse:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19)

References:

- ❖ <http://www.saintmark.com/topics/patrology/schoolofalex/>
- ❖ “School of Alexandria” Fr. Tadros Malaty

Introduction:

Long before the establishment of Christianity in Alexandria, the city was famous for its many schools. By far, the largest school was the “*Museum*,” which was founded by Ptolemy and became the most famous school in the East. The *Museum’s* library, whose directors were among the most remarkable scholars of the world, grew to the point where it housed 700,000 volumes, making it an arsenal of knowledge that was astounding for its time.

Alexandria soon became famous as a rich center of knowledge. Numerous Jewish schools were also scattered everywhere. The geographical position of Alexandria gave a special flavor to the thought that developed in the city. Jews with their Scriptures were not the only ones who had come to Alexandria, but Babylonians had also come with their astrology, as well as Persians with their dualism, and many others with different and often confused religions. In other words, Alexandria, the cosmopolitan city, was chosen as a home for learning, and a unique center of a brilliant intellectual life, where Egyptian, Greek and Jewish cultures together with eastern mystic thoughts were nourished and gave rise to a new civilization.

In such an environment, there was no alternative but to establish a Christian institution to enable the church to face the battle which was waged by these powerful schools. The school of Alexandria was undoubtedly the earliest important institution of theological learning in Christian antiquity. It was a college in which many other disciplines were studied from the humanities, science and mathematics; but its main discipline was religion.

Lesson Outlines:

I. The Christian School

St. Jerome records that the Christian School of Alexandria was founded by St. Mark himself. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to establish it to teach Christianity, as this was the only way to give the new religion a solid foundation in the city.

The School became the oldest center for sacred sciences in the history of Christianity. In it, the first system of Christian theology was formed and the allegorical method of biblical exegesis was devised.

II. Its Development

We are not, of course, to think of school buildings in any modern sense; we are not even to think of church buildings. Instruction was in the teacher's private house.

This Christian School started as a Catechetical School, where candidates were admitted to learn the Christian faith and some Biblical studies to qualify for baptism. Admittance was open to all people regardless of culture, age or background.

III. Influence on the church

By the second century it became quite influential on church life as can be seen from the following:

1. It was able to satisfy the thirst of the Alexandrian Christians for religious knowledge, encourage higher studies and create research work in a variety of fields. G.L. Prestige gives us a picture about the students of Origen, the dean of the School, saying: "So their education was completed. No inquiry was closed to them; no knowledge was withheld from them. They had the chance to study every branch of learning, Greek or foreign, spiritual or sociological, human or divine. We were permitted with entire freedom to compass the whole round world of knowledge and investigate it, to satisfy ourselves with every variety of teaching and to enjoy the sweets of intellect."
2. It gave birth to numerous spiritual and well-known church leaders along the years. Many of them deserved to sit on the throne of St. Mark.
3. Through its missionary zeal, it was able to win many souls to Christianity from Egypt and abroad.
4. In a true ecumenical spirit, it attracted students from other nations, many of whom became leaders and bishops in their own churches.
5. It established a common awareness of the importance of education as a basic element in religious structure.
6. It offered the world the first systematic theological studies.
7. It used philosophy as a weapon in dealing with pagan philosophers, and thus beating them by their own game.
8. Although the School of Alexandria was a church school, and had its spiritual and educational effect on the clergy and laymen and many of its deans were ordained Popes, nevertheless it did not interfere in church affairs (organization).

IV. Its Program

It would have been a grave error to have confined the School's activities to theology. Its teaching was encyclopedic; first presenting the whole series of profane sciences, and then rising to moral and religious philosophy, and finally to Christian theology, as set forth in the form of commentaries on the sacred books. This encyclopedic conception of teaching was an Alexandrian tradition, for it was also found in Alexandrian pagan and Jewish schools.

Three courses were available:

1. A special course for non-Christians, which introduced candidates to principles of Christianity.
2. A course on Christian morals.
3. An advanced course on divine wisdom and sufficient knowledge for the spiritual Christian.

Worship went side by side with study in the School. Teachers and their students practiced prayer, fasting and diverse ways of asceticism. In addition to continence in food and drink, they were also continent in earthly possessions. In purity and integrity their lives were exemplary. Celibacy was a recommended ideal, and was observed by many.

V. Famous Alexandrian School Deans

A quick glimpse of the names that headed the Christian School of Alexandria provides self-evidence of the history of the school and its rank among similar institutions. Among these are Athenagoras, Pantaenus, Clement, Origen, Heraclas, Alexander, Dionysius, Theognostes, Peter, Macarius, Didymus the Blind, as well as Athanasius the Apostolic, Cyril of Alexandria, Dioscorus, etc.

St. Mark the apostle, in his last days, appointed Yostius as the new dean of the School. The new dean was the contemporary of four Patriarchs who succeeded St. Mark, until he was ordained Patriarch for Alexandria in the year 121 AD.

The western historians do not mention Yostius, Eumenius, and Marcianus, the first three deans of the School of Alexandria, for the following reasons:

1. Since the pastoral care of the Fathers kept them quite busy, especially with non-Christians, they either had little opportunity to write or their writings were lost.
2. The learned philosopher Athenagoras influenced the School greatly due to his philosophical ability; which brightened his star over his predecessors. Hence the beginning of the School was related to him, especially that his writings were universally interchanged from the first century even though his name as a writer was not mentioned as we shall see. Many historians believe Athenagoras was the first principal of the School.

A. Athenagoras

He is a philosopher holding an academic position in the *Museum* at Alexandria, and is regarded as a leader in paganism. He was attracted to search in Christianity for mistakes and corruption just as other Platonic philosophers.

He was anxious to write against Christianity. He read the Holy Scriptures in order to aim his shafts of criticism more accurately, but **he was so powerfully seized by the Holy Spirit that he became a defender of the faith he was attacking.** Not only was he converted to Christianity (c. 176), but he also became one of the most famous deans of the Christian Theological School.

He was called the Apologist. This name was especially given to Christian writers who first addressed themselves to the task of making a reasoned defense and recommendation of their faith to outsiders.

B. Pantaenus

Besides being a great teacher, he was credited as one of those who adopted the Greek alphabet in the Coptic script. His works of exegesis have been lost. In the course of his service, Patriarch Demetrius I elected him for the Christian mission to India.

C. Clement

Titus Flavius Clement was the father of the Christian philosophy of Alexandria, and was well-versed in the Holy Scriptures. He was born around the year 150 A.D.

His parents were not Christians. Clement was a converted person, not a birthright Christian. Nothing is known about the date, circumstances or the motives of his conversion. He was religious-minded. He was seeking God. But God had to satisfy him religiously, intellectually, and morally. He found that the God of the Christians could do this. The gods of the Greeks seemed to him empty of power, philosophically inept, and morally corrupt and corrupting. So, reluctantly, gradually, thoughtfully, he rejected them, and found among the Christians the God he was seeking. It is known that he made extensive travels to Southern Italy, Syria, and Palestine. His purpose is to seek

instruction from the most famous Christian teachers. He was searching unceasingly for God. At the end of his journey, he reached Alexandria where St. Pantaenus' lectures attracted him to the extent that he settled there and made this city his second home.

He became the disciple, and assistant of St. Pantaenus. He was ordained a priest in Alexandria, discharged his catechetical duties with great distinction, and followed St. Pantaenus as head of the School before 190 A.D. Among his disciples were Origen and Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem. It is clear, alike from his general attitude and from specific references, that he was a shepherd of souls as well as a formal teacher, a minister to the needs of others.

Clement wrote abundantly although much of his work was lost. His chief works are *Protrepticus* (An Exhortation to the Greek), *The Pedagogus* (on Christian life and ethics), and his *Stromaties* (miscellaneous studies) in which he compiled treatises of various characters. He was regarded as one of the leaders of Christian liberalism, as he attempted to reconcile Greek culture and Christianity.

D. Origen

St. Didymus the Blind, the head of the School of Alexandria in the latter half of the fourth century, described Origen as "the greatest teacher in the Church after the Apostles."

Origen (c. 185 AD - c. 254 AD) followed Clement about the year 215. He was Clement's most brilliant student. As a young man, he was extremely ascetic by nature. He carried the word of the Gospel (Matt. 19:12) literally and to the extent of mutilating himself. This fact of becoming a eunuch contributed of his future troubles with patriarch Demetrius I.

Origen devoted himself with the utmost ardor not only in studying and teaching the Holy Scripture, but also giving his life as an example of evangelical life. His disciple St. Gregory the Wonder-maker says that "he stimulated us by the deeds he did more than by the doctrines he taught."

His wandering extended from Arabia and Syria to Greece and Rome. As a Biblical scholar and philosopher, his creativity was massive. His amazing critical edition of the Old Testament, the Hexapla, combined in six parallel columns all the available text in both Greek and Hebrew scripts:

1. The **Septuagint**, the Greek translation of the Old Testament which the church employed.
2. **Aquila**, who lived at the beginning of the second century, made a new translation into Greek, a word-for-word translation. His translation was very literal, preserving Hebrew word order and idiomatic turns of phrase.
3. A second Jewish proselyte, living at the same period, **Symmachus**, produced a translation in more acceptable Greek. His work was more in the nature of a revision of the Septuagint.
4. Another Greek translation, that of **Theodotion**.
5. An anonymous version he acquired at Nicopolis during a visit to Greece.
6. Another anonymous version, this was only partial, had been discovered in the neighborhood of Jericho in a jar that contained a number of Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

His monumental exegetical commentaries, the *Scholia*, were partly put into Latin by Rufinus. In the realm of theology, his most important work was the *De Principiis*, in which he systematized the whole of the Christian doctrine. In a treatise called *Contra Celsum*, Origen defended Christianity from attacks by the second-century pagan philosopher Celsus. He wrote a number of ascetic works, two of which have come down to us: *The Exhortation to Martyrdom* and *On Prayer*.

During the Decian persecution of 250, the great master suffered tremendously; he was imprisoned and tortured. Though he regained his freedom, his health began to decline, and he died at Tyre in 255.

E. Heraclas

Origen's immediate successor was Heraclas, his former student and assistant who later followed Demetrius as Patriarch from 230-246 AD. It is said that when he increased the number of local bishops to 20, the presbyters decided to distinguish him from the rest of the bishops by calling him "Papa." Thus, he was the first to bear the title of Pope, long before it was known to Rome.

F. Dionysius

The next head of the School, another famous student of Origen, was Dionysius of Alexandria, later surnamed the Great. He occupied that post until he became patriarch (246-264 AD).

G. Didymus

At a later date, St. Athanasius entrusted Didymus the Blind (313-398 AD) with the headship of the school. Among his students were St. Gregory of Nazianzen, St. Jerome and the historian Rufinus. He cared for the welfare of the blind, as he had been blind since the age of four, by promoting a system of writing for them. In this method, he anticipated Brailled by fifteen centuries.

VI. Its Decline

After Didymus, we entered the obscure period in the history of the school. After the first split of the Church which happened as a result of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, the emperors of Constantinople closed the School in their persecution against the Copts. In 1893 AD, Pope Kyrillos V inaugurated the new seminary in Cairo. Beside this main one, Pope Shenouda III has established another six seminaries in Alexandria, Tanta, Menoufeia, Menia, Mouharrak Monastery and Beliana, in addition to two seminaries in the USA, and one in Australia.

Conclusion:

- ❖ The school of Alexandria is a strong historic indicator of the care of the Orthodox Church to religion education and theology on high standards. It is a cornerstone in many of the fathers' sayings and our understanding of the Bible.

Applications:

- ❖ AssiGenesis one of the students to do a project about the School of Alexandria and present it to the class.

2 - Jewish Feasts

Objective:

- ❖ To be familiar with some of the traditions and feasts of the Jews to help better understand many of the bible events.

Memory Verse:

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16, 17)

References:

- ❖ “Feasts” Fr. Marcorious Anba Bishoy
- ❖ “Our Christ Above Time” Late Bishop Youannes of Gharbia

Introduction:

The Old Testament is full of different feasts and occasions that the Jews used to keep conservatively. Many of these feasts were religious and related to instructions given to them from God through the prophets. Understanding some of these feasts sheds a light on the Old Testament events and increases our understanding of the Bible.

Lesson Outlines:

I. Feast of the Trumpets

- ❖ This was on the first day of the seventh month of the religious calendar which was the beginning of the civil calendar.
- ❖ “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a Sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord” (Leviticus 23:23-25).
- ❖ The priest would blow the trumpets from sunset of the evening before the feast till sunrise, thirty times. It was allowed for the people also to blow the trumpets.
- ❖ As the trumpet gathered the people in front of God, “And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31).
- ❖ The trumpets were a symbol of the trumpets on the last day, so this feast is a symbol of the general resurrection.

II. Feast of Atonement (YOM KIPPUR) (Leviticus 16, 23)

- ❖ This was celebrated on the tenth day of the seventh month of the religious calendar.
- ❖ According to Jewish tradition and the Talmud, Yom Kippur has been one of the great Jewish Feasts celebrated annually. In ancient times the people would joyfully dress in white, anticipating their purification from sin.
- ❖ It was only once a year, on this day, that would allow the High Priest to enter behind the veil into the Holy of Holies. And this could be done only after sacrificial blood had been shed to

cover his own transgressions as well as those of the Jewish nation. In the Holy of Holies, he could then approach the mercy seat and receive assurance that God had sanctified the sacrifice for sin.

III. Preparations for the Feast

A. People

- ❖ All the sons of Israel should fast that day from evening to evening. They had to stop eating, drinking, bathing, wearing shoes and marital relations. “For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people” (Leviticus 23:29, 30).
- ❖ This feast symbolizes Good Friday, so our church established the same level of fast and asceticism since this is the day of true atonement.

B. The High Priest

- ❖ This feast was served by the High Priest only. He would leave his home for seven days and live in the Temple, so that he may not touch anything unclean and cannot carry the service.
- ❖ Elders would review with him the rituals of the day and make sure he knows every detail.
- ❖ He does not sleep the night of the feast but stays awake reading the Holy Scriptures.
- ❖ He would wash himself 5 times and his hands and feet 10 times.
- ❖ He has to pay for the sacrifices offered on his behalf from his own money.

C. Sacrifices offered

- ❖ Daily sacrifice (Morning and evening).
- ❖ Sacrifices of atonement: One bull for the High priest, his house and the priests and two goats for the people as Sin Sacrifice.
- ❖ Special sacrifices for the feast: “You shall present a burnt offering to the Lord as a sweet aroma: one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year. Be sure they are without blemish. Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the one ram, and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the sin offering for atonement, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings” (Numbers 29:7-11).

IV. The feast

- ❖ After finishing the morning sacrifice the priest washes himself and wears white clothes.
- ❖ The priest takes the bull for the sin sacrifice on him, lays his hand on its head and confesses his sins.
- ❖ After this, “He shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the Lord’s lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering: “But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness” (Leviticus 16:7-10).
- ❖ They tie a red thread on the goat for the Lord and a scarlet one on the goat for the scapegoat; called Azazel (Note: They put a scarlet robe on Our Lord-Matthew 27:28).
- ❖ Then they let the scapegoat face the people, waiting to carry their sins (Note: Pilate brought Our Lord and let Him face the Jewish people).
- ❖ The bull for sin is killed and his blood is kept aside.

A. Offering incense

- ❖ The priest takes from the fire on the altar of burnt offering and enters the Holy of Holies and put the incense in the censer. Then the incense fills the Holy of Holies, so he does not see the glory of God.
- ❖ He then takes from the blood of the Bull and sprinkles on the Mercy Seat one time towards himself (eastward) and seven times towards the Arc of Covenant.

B. Offering the first goat

- ❖ The first goat is offered to the Lord and the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies again and sprinkles the blood the same way.
- ❖ He then sanctifies the Holy place with the blood.
- ❖ The High priest does all this by himself alone, as a symbol of our Lord who entered heaven alone with His own blood.

C. Offering the second goat

- ❖ The high priest puts his hands on the goat and confesses his sins and the sins of the people and then he faces the people and say “you will be purified”.
- ❖ Then they let go of this goat in the wilderness as a symbol of removing the sins and sending it away. This is also a symbol that the sins are not really removed but kept away from the people (cover).
- ❖ The meat of the bull and goat of the sin sacrifice is burnt (God hates the sin).

D. The burnt offering and the sacrifice of sin

- ❖ The priest enters the Holy of Holies and takes the censer.
- ❖ He washes himself and offers the extra sacrifices for the feast.

V. The atonement is repeated every year

- ❖ “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4).
- ❖ The solution was the full atonement: “He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:26).
- ❖ “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).
- ❖ “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:12).
- ❖ “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14).
- ❖ “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12).

VI. The Feast of Tabernacles

- ❖ This was the most joyful feast since all the crops are put in the barns.
- ❖ This was the third feast when every man should come in front of God.
- ❖ It was on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and lasted for seven days.
- ❖ All sons of Israel would live these days: “You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 23:43, 44).
- ❖ The eight days was a feast to the Lord, same as the eighth days is the eternal life after being sojourners in the flesh. A lot of extra sacrifices are offered on that day.

- ❖ This feast had two special things, pouring water and lighting.

A. Pouring water

- ❖ Every morning of this feast, the High Priest would go to the lake of Siloam, takes water in a golden jug, goes to the temple accompanied by singers and people carrying palm leavens, and pours it together with wine on the altar as a symbol of Moses getting ***
- ❖ Our Lord watched this feast in the eighth day and said: “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37-39) reminding people that He is the rock (1 Corinthians 10:4).

B. The lighting

- ❖ In this feast four big lampstands are lit in the temple. Also our Lord pointed to this “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).

C. The symbol

- ❖ Zechariah the prophet describe the last days “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16).
- ❖ This is a symbol of the end of the world and the second coming of our Lord: “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Revelations 7:9-10).

D. The new moon

- ❖ This reminded the Jews that God is the Master of Nature.
- ❖ “And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me, says the Lord” (Isaiah 66:23).
- ❖ Extra sacrifices are offered.

VII. Sabbatical Year, Year of Release

- ❖ This is the seventh year.
- ❖ The land takes a rest: “but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard” (Leviticus 25:4).
- ❖ The Jews learn to depend on God for the crops of the sixth year should be enough.
- ❖ Whatever grows or is left in the land is left for the poor.
- ❖ All the debts are released “At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the Lord’s release” (Deuteronomy 15:1, 2)
- ❖ In the end of the sixth year, the Hebrew slave is set free.

VIII. Jubilee

- ❖ This is the fiftieth year (7x7).
- ❖ All the slaves are released.
- ❖ All the lands return to their original owner.

- ❖ “And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family. That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine. For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field. In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession. And if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor’s hand, you shall not oppress one another. According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbor, and according to the number of years of crops he shall sell to you. According to the multitude of years you shall increase its price, and according to the fewer number of years you shall diminish its price; for he sells to you according to the number of the years of the crops. Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 25:10-17).
- ❖ Every one feels that he is a sojourner on the land. He should leave things with his own will before he leaves it against their will “The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me” (Leviticus 25:23).
- ❖ Every tribe then keeps its share.
- ❖ This is a symbol of the law of our Lord that restores our inheritance in Heaven.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Feasts in the Old Testament had deep religious meaning to the Jews and was meant to bring them closer to God. Similarly we should celebrate the feasts of the church with great reverence and with great sense of spirituality, particularly Christmas. We should not imitate the world in earthly pleasures during feasts celebrations.

Applications:

- ❖ Correlate between the Old and New Testament feasts.
- ❖ Search for another Jewish feast that was not mentioned in today’s lesson.

3 - The Epistle to the Galatians

Objective:

- ❖ To introduce the epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians as an encouragement to read the epistle.
- ❖ To learn from the main theme of this epistle: the true gospel versus the false gospel.

Memory Verse:

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

References:

- ❖ The Orthodox Study Bible by Fr. Peter E. Gillquist (project director)

Introduction:

Sometimes the youth has a difficulty keeping up with daily biblical readings. This could be contributed to the lack of knowledge about the book being read or the lack of divine guidance. First we need to do some research on the book we're about to read. For example, who is the author, which in some case is very obvious, why the book was written, to whom it was written, and the main theme of the book. If one prepares his/herself before reading a specific book, they would be able to better understand and hold more interest in continuing to read it. Secondly and most importantly, one needs to ask the Lord for help to understand the book and guide the person to what the Lord wants to send him or her as a message from that specific book. So through this lesson we would like to get some background information on the epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians. Hopefully through this introduction, you will be able to better understand the epistle. Again, this would only be beneficial if we raise our hearts to the Lord before we open the bible and ask Him to guide us to our personal message. Let's begin.

Lesson Outlines:

- ❖ The author of this epistle is obviously St. Paul. Galatia was a province in Asia Minor; in this case St. Paul is addressing a number of churches, which are all in Galatia.
- ❖ The main theme of this epistle is the true gospel versus the false gospel.
- ❖ The false gospel refers to the teachings that were held in Galatia by the Jewish legalizers. This group of people believed that in order for somebody to be a true Christian, he/she must follow Jewish traditions first and then the Christian ones.
- ❖ St. Paul asks the mislead Galatians to come back to “the grace of Christ” (Galatians 1:6).
- ❖ This epistle is often mistaken for saying that works has no significance in the New Testament. However, this though is inaccurate because St. Paul was focusing on solving the misunderstanding of the Galatians, which was the overemphasis on works just like the Pharisees did as Jews.
- ❖ The Lord intends for works and faith to be distinguished but not separated. They both come hand in hand for a Christian and considered equally essential.
- ❖ St. Paul is pointing out to us that being bound to something such as the act of baptism is different from being in bondage to it. For example, baptism as an act by itself is not sufficient

for salvation, but it must be accompanied by faith, which in the case of our church it is the faith of the parents that the child's baptism is based on.

- ❖ Also we used to be in bondage to the law and the flesh before the salvation from Jesus Christ; now we are bound by our own free will to righteousness and the spirit.
- ❖ We as Christians choose to be bound to spiritual discipline so we would be free of bondage. This is attained by being bound to God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. To be independent from the lusts of this world is the true freedom that God intended for us to have after the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.
- ❖ St. Paul also reminds us to take Christ as an example in that "we might be free in Him, justified by faith, to live fruitful and righteous lives, obeying the truth" (Study Bible 423). St. Paul thus tell us to "not grow weary while doing good" (Galatians 6:9) and to "do good to all" (Galatians 6:10).
- ❖ Subthemes of this epistle include:
 - St. Paul defending his authority from Christ (Galatians 1:1 - 2:21)
 - The fruit of the Holy Spirit and His role in the church (Galatians 5:1 - 6:18)
 - The cross of Christ (Galatians 6:11 - 15)
 - Living in faith (Galatians 2:15 - 4:7)

Conclusion:

- ❖ We should try to read the epistles of St. Paul as personal messages to us, and we will see how beneficial these epistles could be.
- ❖ Many times we face the same issues in our lives that St. Paul addresses, and through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit we should take advantage of this advice for our spiritual growth.
- ❖ Whenever we are hitting a hard spot in our struggles, we should quickly bring our focus on the crucified Christ that He may give us strength.

Applications:

- ❖ Read this epistle during this week. The servant should also encourage the students to take side notes in their bibles to correspond the points mentioned in this lesson.
- ❖ Discuss the students' notes and questions about this epistle after their personal reading.

4 - Gambling

Objective:

- ❖ To understand that gambling is a social disease, affects also spiritual values that leads to loss in temporal and eternal lives.

Memory Verse:

“You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24)

References:

- ❖ New Testament and Internet

Introduction:

Gambling is an easy way to get rich, with least effort. Many have dreamt to join the millionaires club over night. Persons who prefer gambling would rather cut corners and use every deceitful way, and refrain from hard honest work to gain money. These little moments in the spot light, ends in great loss, poverty and despair. Many look at the beginning and less people find out about the end of their stories

Lesson Outlines:

IX. Different ways of gambling: Concept of Gambling

There are different forms of gambling and society likes to accept under some other expressions. It can be in the form of lottery, most well known form, which is cards, or in general, betting on any game for financial gains, or raffle. Internet even made it easier to play poker with any one locally or globally and at your convenience, while staying at home.

All of us watched in TV or read in papers, how some person won millions of dollars. Or some billboard invites people to casino for guaranteed prizes.

X. Understanding Gambling

Let us understand gambling in its simplest forms, which is raffle. There is a portable color TV that is retailed for \$95.00, and the cost of tickets and fliers is \$5.00, so total costs are \$100.00. And it was sold 150 tickets at \$1.00 each. On the assigned day a drawing was done and a winner was announced for the portable color TV. Now we have a winner who got a brand new TV. For one dollar, and an owner who won net 50% profit, **but we did not hear about 149 losers**, who bought tickets for that TV.

This story can be applied on casinos, lottery, and playing cards. Gambling casinos in their grand openings allow maximum of 5% goes toward prizes. Meaning for every \$100.00 spent, only \$5.00 for prizes. Rest of money is to subsidize free drinks and low cost rooms at the hotel. No one will reveal the number of loser next to happy winners.

Gambling like any other vice, starts as an innocent play for fun, and grows by time till it matures and reaches addiction. So many families have been destroyed from gambling. A family member can bring down the family to bankruptcy. Please do some search and follow those who won the lottery and

find out how their lives turned out after 3-5 years of winning the grand prizes. Some went back poorer than they were before, some filed for bankruptcy, and others lived normal with their same problems.

Seeking fortune is a valid dream for any one, but not quick and easy ways to accumulate money. The saying “Easy come easy go” is true. Hard work will build the future step by step, and grow normally.

Why gambling is so appealing and all of us is attempted to try it, or put some efforts to avoid it? Gambling pretends to offer money, again gives you the illusion of having money, and in reality gambling takes your money. Look around you, and ask in the immediate family, neighborhood, or at school: “How many successful gamblers do we know? How many people took advantage by betting, playing cards, or playing the lottery?”

Media is so good to put those winners in the spot light for a day or two, and we know little or none about their lives after such dramatic change. Adds for lottery sometimes brings old winners and portrays them as members of millionaires club, and invites you to join them in that club. The message is so simple and the cost of membership is so low, just pay one dollar. Yet winning a lottery, is a chance of one in a 4 million, you do the math. Added to that, those who won a large fortune were they ready to handle large amounts of money? The answer is negative; they keep their old habits of mismanagement and their end become worse. Many became victims of large prizes.

Now Let us assume that a person who is always lucky, smart and takes calculated risks. This person is a good candidate for a successful gambler. Let us see his gains versus his losses through understanding of the following definitions:

- ❖ Gains (Money and material gains): even money can be counted against him if he is unable to manage money. Easy money comes with management problem. Those who won are unable to budget and control their spending. So the person enjoys short time of temporary pleasure.
- ❖ Losses (Controlled by money, not the other way around): Following the easy way of earning money and seeking money to gamble from family friends and acquainted ones will hurt all his relationships with people and with God.
- ❖ Matthew 6:24 “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon”
- ❖ Mammon: A Chaldee or Syriac word meaning “wealth” or “riches”. In Luke 16:9-11, it also means personification or the god of riches.

XI. Gambling is Against Christian Teaching

Christianity does not encourage easy way of living, as we mentioned in the raffle example one dollar bought a new color TV. On the other hand the Lord set an example for us. After fasting for forty days, He refused to use any easy way, and refused all Satan’s offerings as written in **Matthew 4:2-10** “And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said: If thou be Son of God, command, that these stones become bread. But He answered and said: It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him: If thou be Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He shall give his angels charge concerning you, and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest dash your foot against a stone.’ Jesus said to him: It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’ Again the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory, and said to Him: All these things will I give You if, You fall down, and worship me. Then Jesus said

to him: Away with you Satan, for it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only alone shall serve.’”

XII. Gambling is Selfishness; Not teamwork

It is “I” win and others lose by any means. It is the wide door and paved gate as it is written in **Matthew 7:14** “Because narrow is the gate, and difficult is the way, which leads unto life, and there are who find it.”

XIII. Love of money

The Lord rejected the rich man because of love of money. St. Paul also teaches us “For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil: for which some strayed from the faith, in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10).

We all pass through many financial difficulties, and temptations press hard for quick and easy fix. This is the real challenge to stand up and resist the many causes of failure. It is normal to pass through many difficult times, but have to stand up and be watchful against such temptations. Money is a powerful weapon, and the source of many problems. Let me share this true story with you.

A church in the US used to have its annual fund raising every August. One year the regular priest has to go to a different city for emergency. The other priest arrived on July and observed the preparation for festival. This festival lasts 3 days, which are Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The new priest made some dramatic changes in this festival:

1-On Friday only serving vegetarian food

2-No raffles or gold auctions

3-Any one like to participate in raffles or gold auctions, can donate money in assigned boxes.

Some members of congregation objected and warned that funds this year will drop dramatically. The priest stood firm and explained:

* How can an Orthodox Church serve beef on Friday, and does not observe fasting.

* How can we promote gambling inside the Church?

Every one was convinced to a certain degree, but they became firm believers when they found out that fund raising this year exceeded last year, and no visitor objected vegetarian food. This congregation became more mature after this event, and they improvised in their festivals later on.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Please remember that gambling is a temptation, which may lead to addiction. When gambling controls a person, all his thoughts will be directed to getting money on the spot. This leads material thinking about current time, and forgets about eternal life. Christianity teaches us in the Creed to set our mind to the life of the age to come.
- ❖ Money is placed at the feet of the apostles, because it is a good servant. Having a normal job will put you in control for you can protect and manage your investment, which in turn makes money a blessing not a curse.
- ❖ May God help us all to overcome all temptations, and support us when we are subjected to financial problems?

Applications:

- ❖ Free trips and coupons to casinos are early steps towards gambling. We are inquisitive and seek knowledge, and also like to have fun but let us know first our Bible as much as we would like to know about gambling.
- ❖ Control our vocabulary by eliminating the expression (You Bet), if you are sure, by just saying yes or no.
- ❖ Do not deceive yourself by having fun with gambling, even if the money is used for a gift or for food. This is the first step toward addiction.
- ❖ Search in the libraries or Internet about gamblers and what changes affected them in the long run.
- ❖ Casinos are established to gain huge profits, and they are not social welfare to give away money.

5 - Deborah the Judge

Objective:

- ❖ To learn from the courage and strong faith of this judge.
- ❖ To encourage female students to participate actively in the church and the service.

Memory Verse:

“I, even I, will sing to the Lord. I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel” (Judges 5:3)

References:

- ❖ The Applied Explanation of the Bible
- ❖ The New Open Bible- New King James
- ❖ “Judges” by Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Introduction:

- ❖ Open an introductory discussion asking the students about the role of women in our church and service.
- ❖ How are the functions of the males and females coordinated in our services?
- ❖ Finally ask them if they know of any female leaders in the Bible? And what was their role?

Lesson Outlines:

Deborah was the fourth Judge in the era of judges in Israel. The judge in the Old Testament was perceived as the person that God uses to lead His people to freedom and light. The Judge was supposed to help alleviate any oppression falling on his people from their enemies. The judge was also used by God to communicate with His people to help them overcome sin and face temptations. Thus he was their spiritual leader and guide.

There were no special physical requirements or characteristics that God required in anyone who became a Judge. They could be rich or poor as Gideon, weak or strong as Samson, male or female as Deborah, right handed or left handed as Ehud, even when left handed people were considered disabled at that time. They were all human that had their slips and mistakes sometimes but they had a pure and strong heart and most importantly they were able to communicate with God and hear His voice clearly. God was able to overcome their weaknesses and use them to lead His people to repentance and triumph so that they may glorify the name of the Lord.

After the death of Ehuh, the Israelites were strayed away from God into the path of sin. So God allowed them to be overtaken and humiliated by the Canaanite. They were under the ruling of the Canaanite for 20 years till Deborah the prophetess prayed and asked the Lord to save her people from their oppression.

Deborah was a wise and faithful woman who cared very much for her people. She was able to judge between her people using the laws of God. Thus her people accepted all of her decisions and ruling. When she felt the suffering of her people under the Canaanite, she asked God to save them and liberate them. So, God instructed her on what to do and she carried the instruction to Barak. She told him that God has commanded Barak to take 10,000 of his troops and go to fight the Canaanite. Barak was worried and wanted to be sure that God’s messenger is with him and that these instructions are

truly from God. He asked Deborah to come with him to the fight and she surely did. However, she told Barak that you might lose the glory of the triumph because people will think that because Deborah, a prophetess, was with you won the war. She really was referring to the fact that Barak did not believe the promise of God through her and depended on her presence, a human, to assure him that he will win the war.

Deborah, courageously, left her place under the trees where she used to judge between the people and went with Barak's troops to fight the Canaanites and God led them to victory. Then, Deborah and Barak sang a praise song to the Lord (Judges 6) to glorify Him and thank Him. The song was also to remind the sons of the Israelites with God's great salvation to them. This is a great example of how we should remind ourselves and talk to others about the great things God is going for us each and every day of our life.

God had chosen Deborah at that time because she was the right person for this great task. She was the only woman judge among 12 men judges for Israel.

Conclusion:

- ❖ God can use a man or a woman for His great and wondrous work and service. He can use a woman to lead as long as her strength is the word and the promise of the Lord.

Applications:

- ❖ In the light of this lesson, discuss with the students or give them a project to research why the Coptic Church does not allow women to priesthood.
- ❖ Invite all your students to participate equally in the service in the church and the community.

6 - The Holy Bible is Free from Perversion

Objective:

- ❖ Refuting the doubts that occur to young people concerning the correctness of the Holy Bible.

Memory Verse:

“I am watching over my word to perform it” (Jeremiah 1:12)

References:

- ❖ “The Holy Bible” Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ “The Holy Bible is the Book of all ages” Bishop Gregory
- ❖ “The Holy Bible is the word of God” Mahaba Book shop
- ❖ “The Impossibility of the Bible being perverted” St. Dimyana Church, Al Haram
- ❖ “The Impossibility of the Bible being Perverted” St. George Church, Sporting
- ❖ “The Infallibility of the Holy Bible” Yassa Mansour
- ❖ “The Stones speak” Dr. John Alder, translated by Dr Ezzat Zaki
- ❖ “The conformity between Modern Science and the Holy Bible” St. George, Church, Sporting
- ❖ “A book for all ages” Fr. Tanios Zakhary
- ❖ “Lectures delivered in a conference devoted for the Holy Bible” St. Minas Church, Fleming
- ❖ “An introductions to the Gospels and Acts” Bishop Moussa

Introduction:

The Holy Bible is the group of the holy books written by the men of God and saints inspired by the Holy Spirit and under His guidance and inspiration in different ages. The Holy Bible is to announce the will of God and emphasize His commandments and promises to teach and guide people to salvation.

- ❖ These books are different in their themes and style.
- ❖ The Holy Bible contains history, autobiography, laws, rules, philosophy, poetry and prophecies. In spite of this variety, the parts of the Holy Bible integrated in a comprehensive unity. These Books were written by various prophets, in different forms, in a period of 1500 years. Yet they are all in one complete whole in spirit and meaning. They all refer to one person, our Lord Jesus Christ. So all are been collected in one book called the Holy Bible.
- ❖ Our teacher St. Paul the Apostle gave a definition to the Holy Bible by saying: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Lesson Outlines:

XIV. How did it reach us?

This eternal word that was from the beginning is being preserved by God to reach us through the generations. It is an established word because its source is God Himself with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change, but the word of man is changeable. The word reached us through severe events and miraculous deeds.

The original copy of the old books was written by hand on papyrus, then on skins of animals. They used to stick the two ends on two Cylinders so as to wind the paper on them and it can be rolled. The Scribes copied the Old Testament in Hebrew. These formed a category of their own and their work was regarded as sacred. They were very precise and very careful in this work to guarantee, the correctness of the copy. They counted the alphabetical letters in every copy to verify its correctness, but if the numbers were different, the copy would be burned. They were strict in the rite of bodily purification before writing especially when one of the Divine names of God was mentioned.

The Old Testament was translated from Hebrew to Greek in 80 BC to carry out the order of King Ptolemy. This was called Septuagint because those who translated it were 72 of the highly learned Jews in Alexandria.

The New Testament was written in Greek during the first century. Later on the books of the two testaments were translated into Syrian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Latin and then to all the languages of the world.

XV. The Books of the Holy Bible

The Holy Bible is of two Darts:

1. The Old Testament: involves the call of the Hebrews, their history and law, and references to the Messiah.
2. The New Testament: involves the announcement of the spiritual kingdom of God, which includes the whole world, and the fulfillment of redemption by Jesus Christ.

XVI. Parts of the Old Testament

1. The Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses called Torah): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Torah is a Hebrew word that means law or Nomos but sometimes it refers to the Old Testament as a whole.
2. Historical Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees, Tobit, and Judith.
3. Poetic Books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiasts, Song of Songs, The Wisdom of Solomon, and The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach.
4. Prophetic Books: (Major and Minor Prophets)
 - a. Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.
 - b. Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Johan, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Baruch.

XVII. Parts of the New Testament

1. The Four Gospels that tell the life of Lord Christ; Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
2. The Acts of the Apostles: It tells the life of the Apostles and the establishment of the Christian Church.
3. The teaching books: They are epistles which the apostles sent to teach the churches. They are 21 epistles in total. Fourteen epistles written by St. Paul and seven by James, Peter, John and Jude.
4. The Revelation (Apocalypse): It is a prophecy of the victory of Christianity over the devil and its hosts.

These books were written in the language of the writers who wrote them. The inspired writer wrote according to his style under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Some of them were brought up in the palaces of kings (Moses, Isaiah, etc.), some were Shepherds (David), reapers of figs (Amos), philosophers (Paul), those of fine feelings such as Jeremiah and John, the fisherman, the poet, the physician ...but First of all you must understand this that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Peter 1:20,21).

XVIII. Apocrypha: the Second Canonical Books

“Apocrypha” means “secret” or “hidden”. They are among the books of the Old Testament that were written after Ezra. They were written in the Jewish Synagogues. They were regarded of the Holy Books according to the Church tradition and the decisions of the Councils. Some chapters of them are read in the Church especially in Lent and the Holy week. These are Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Jesus the Son of Sirach, and First and Second Maccabees. Then some passages were added to the books such as: The song of the three young men, the prayer of Manassas, and the prophecies of Daniel.

XIX. Perversion of the Holy Book is Impossible

1. It is difficult to pervert the Old Testament:
 - a. Because the people kept it and preserved it. There were certain people appointed to write it (the Scribes). They wrote it in great care and preciseness and very strict laws. Why do they agree with us to pervert them although they killed Christ?
 - b. There is no copy of the Old Testament that differs from the Old copies preserved in the museums of the world (The copy of the Vatican, the Alexandrian copy and the copy of Sinai).
 - c. There are more than 300 prophecies about the details of the life of Lord Christ whom they refuse up till now, written in the Old Testament. If it had been perverted, they would have perverted these events, which contradict their beliefs and also the weaknesses of their prophets.
 - d. There is an agreement among the prophets in their prophecies in spite of the long period (1500 years) bearing in mind the variation of their culture and jobs. The infallible spirit is one.
 - e. The testimony of Christ Himself. He said “you search the Scriptures ...it is they that bear witness to me” (John 5:39).
2. It is difficult to pervert the New Testament:
 - a. Because the disciples lived with Christ three years and they saw everything including the events of crucifixion, resurrection and ascent, then they toured the world preaching these facts in spite of all the obstacles they faced. It was impossible for them to endure all these hardships for wrong things.
 - b. There was no benefit for the disciples as they suffered a lot and endured death for the sake of the gospel. They were preaching Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23).
 - c. Moreover, the Holy Bible is known all over the world and it has been translated into 1500 language and dialect.
 - d. It has a great and powerful effect in reproaching the evildoers and sinners and renewing them.
 - e. Modern sciences bear witness to them (Archaeology, geology, geography, law,

astronomy, biology, anatomy, etc.).

f. There are very ancient copies some of them were written in the fourth century.

XX. Verses that prove the correctness of the Bible and the impossibilities of perversion

- ❖ “I am watching over my word to perform it” (Jeremiah 1:12).
- ❖ “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Matthew 14:35).

Conclusion:

- ❖ The Bible is free from perversion. We believe that all of it was guided and dictated by the Holy Spirit to the writers of these books.

Applications:

- ❖ Study the Books of the Old Testament and New Testament and their symbols.
- ❖ Write a research about the Holy Bible and put it in the library for the benefit of others.
- ❖ Keep away from argument and foolish discussion and dispute concerning the text.

7 - St. Philip

Objective:

- ❖ Christianity preaching: Come and see

Memory Verse:

“And we are His witnesses of these things, and the Holy Spirit also, which God has given to those that obey him” (Acts 5:32)

References:

- ❖ John chapters 1, 6
- ❖ The Book of Acts
- ❖ The Internet

Introduction:

- ❖ There are seventy disciples to our Lord that preached to the whole world. And little we know about most of them. Even some of the twelve disciples are not known to most of us. St. Philip is not a common name in Coptic Church.
- ❖ Among the well known of the seventy disciples are St. Mark and St. Luke, because they wrote the Gospels.
- ❖ St. Philip is known mainly in Europe where he is patron to many churches, where he preached and died.

Lesson Outlines:

St. Philip has very little verses in the Gospel of John 1, 4, and in the book of Acts after massive prosecution of Christians. St. Philip was among those who were scattered in Europe. He is a native of **Bethsaida, on Lake Genesareth** “the city of Andrew and Peter”. St. Philip is mentioned among the twelve disciples: He was **number 5** in the list of disciples:

“And he appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them to preach...And he gave to Simon the surname of Peter; and James the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, and he gave them the surname of Boanerges, that is, Sons of thunder; and Andrew, and ***Philip***, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariote, who also delivered him up” (Mark 3:14-19).

St. Philip was watching for the Messiah and as soon as he found Jesus Christ he went to Nathaniel to share with him the good news. He did not argue with Nathaniel, but invited him in his humble preaching: “Come and see.” Like other disciples, he had immediate response to the Lord’s invitation:

- ❖ John 2: When Jesus went to Galilee and found St. Philip, He said to him: “Follow me”. St. Philip immediately followed his master and became a new disciple
- ❖ He showed total obedience, because he was one of John the Baptist disciples: We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.
- ❖ The Lord tested his behavior when he asked him about feeding the multitude: John 6: 5” When

Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He said unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.”

- ❖ He seems to have held a prominent place among the apostle: John 14:8, 9 “Philip says to him, Lord, show us the Father and it suffices us. Jesus says to him, Am I so long a time with you, and thou hast not known me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father; and how you say, Show us the Father?”
- ❖ The Book of Acts mentions how the Holy Spirit guided St. Philip to preach the Ethiopian eunuch Acts 8:26. He was also one of those who were “scattered abroad” by the persecution that arose on the death of Stephen. He went first to Samaria, where he labored as an evangelist with much success. While he was there he received a divine command to proceed toward the south, along the road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. These towns were connected by two roads. The one Philip was directed to take was that which led through Hebron, and thence through a district little inhabited, and hence called “desert.” As he traveled along this road he was overtaken by a chariot in which sat a man of Ethiopia, the eunuch or chief officer of Queen Candace, who was at that moment reading a portion of the prophecies of Isaiah, Philip entered into conversation with him, and expounded these verses, preaching to him the glad tidings of the Savior. The eunuch received the message and believed, and was forthwith baptized, and then “went on his way rejoicing.” Philip was instantly caught away by the Spirit after the baptism, and the eunuch saw him no more (St. Philip like some other disciples, was married and has three daughters as stated by Bishop Polycrates). The remains of St. Philip who was found in Hieropolis (city in Phrygia Asia “Turkey”) were later relocated to Constantinople and thence to the church of the Dodici Apostoli in Rome. The feast of the Apostle is celebrated in the Roman Church on May 1st (together with that of James the Younger), and in the Greek Church on 14th of May.
- ❖ The Coptic Synaxarium shows that the Coptic Church celebrates his departure on November 27 (Hathor 18).

In the year 80 A.D., St. Philip the Apostle, one of the Twelve Disciples, was martyred. He was to go to Africa and the surrounding regions. He went and preached there in the name of the Lord Jesus. There, he performed many miracles and wonders which astounded the people. After he led the people to the knowledge of God, confirming them in the faith, he went to Hieropolis where he also led the people to the knowledge of God.

In the *sixth century A.D.*, his body was transferred to **Rome**. The Lord showed many great signs and wonders through the Saint's body.

XXI. Review Questions:

- ❖ St. Mark and St. Luke were among the 12 or seventy disciples? (70)
- ❖ Did St. Paul team with St. Philip in any of his preaching journeys? No
- ❖ What is the unique way of St. Philip of preaching? Come and see, and obey the guidance of the Holy Spirit
- ❖ Was St. Philip a Jew or a Gentile? Was a Jew, he was borne in Bethsaida
- ❖ How many epistles did St. Philip write? None

Conclusion:

- ❖ Let us remember St. Philip, and have his love to our Lord, and invite our friends, neighbors,

and acquainted to the church (Come and See). We are more privileged than St. Philip, we are borne Christians we have the Holy Spirit, and we partake weekly meal of the Holy Communion. So, do we share and show Jesus Christ to others.

Applications:

- ❖ Talk this week to a friend who does not know the Lord about Jesus Christ and the Christian faith that is in you.

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER

(Starting with the Coptic New Year)

Week 2- Martyrs in the Cause of Chastity

Week 3- The Holy Cross

Week 4- The Ten Commandments

First: You shall have no other gods before me

Week 2 - Martyrs in the Cause of Chastity

Objective:

- ❖ Developing the tendency towards promoting love for purity, holiness and chastity “Be faithful unto death”.

Memory Verse:

“Keep yourself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22)

References:

- ❖ “Martyrdom in Christianity” Bishop Youannis
- ❖ “The Paradise of the Purity” Fr. Anistasi El Samoueli

Introduction:

- ❖ Was the personality of our forefathers, the martyrs only characterized by boldness and courage? What is the difference between martyrs of the church and the martyrs in other domains? (For the motherland -for science -for a humane principle).

Our forefathers, the martyrs, died for one and only one person whom they loved with all their hearts. They gave themselves completely to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why they felt that any sin would be considered unfaithfulness. They wanted to keep themselves and their bodies pure till the day on which they would meet Him. That is why they were not only characterized by boldness and bravery but they were also characterized by complete faithfulness unto death of the heart and inner life. That is also why pagans did their utmost to make them fall especially in the sin of lust, but our forefathers kept their life pure through chastity and purity till death. Let's listen to a historian who witnessed the struggle of our grandfathers, then let's make an imaginary tour among a group of those martyrs and listen to their eternal stories and life history.

Eusabius the historian, said: “Women were not less bold in defending the teachings of the Divine church than men. They shared men in their struggle and attained, with them, an equal number of crowns for chastity, and when they drew them for defiled purposes they preferred death to defiling their bodies”.

Lesson Outlines:

XXII. The young man who cut off his tongue to keep a bad woman away from him

Decans, the governor in the 249- 251 AD period wanted to defile a Christian young man by force. They tied his hands and feet and brought him a girl to tempt him. The young man couldn't bear the fierce fight. He could not keep himself away from her so he had to push her away and there was no way to do so. He cut his tongue with his teeth and spat it with the blood at the girl's face. The girl was astonished and filled with fear and left him. Thus the young man preferred the loss of his tongue to the loss of his chastity.

XXIII. Chasteness unto death

St. Butamine was a young girl who received tortures that the strongest of men could not bear. The governor ordered his soldier to burn her in a boiling tar. All she wanted was that no one should see her naked body. She said to the governor, “I ask you, by the head of the emperor whom you fear, not to make them strip me of my clothes. I’ll get into the tar little by little so that you may see the power of endurance given to me by Christ whom you do not know”.

XXIV. She shunned sin not death

Theodora, who was seventeen years old, lived in Alexandria in the reign of King Diocletian. She lived in virginity and devoted her life to her heavenly Bridegroom. The governor sent her to a bad place as he intended to compel her to commit the sin. Dedimus, a Christian young man decided to save her. He disguised himself in the clothes of a soldier and met her. He advised her to change into the soldier’s clothes and escape and he would remain in her place. She agreed to his plan and was able to escape. Next morning the matter was discovered so Dedimus was led to death. There from among the crowds came a sharp voice of a young girl crying, “I do not agree to your having my place in martyrdom. I only agreed to your plan so that my chastity might not be defiled”. That was Theodore who preferred to attain the crown of martyrdom with Dedimus.

XXV. Death is better than this

This story took place in 749 AD when the soldiers attacked a nunnery near Akhmim. After looting the nunnery, they got hold of a young nun called Verona and decided to take her away with them. She understood that they would defile her chastity so she entered her cell and prayed to Christ. She went out carrying some oil, which, as she said, would protect anyone who used it from being struck by a sword. She said that she would give it to them if they left her. To prove that what she said was true she anointed her neck with the oil and asked them to strike her neck with the sword. One of them struck her neck and her head was quickly cut off. They understood that she preferred death to going with them. They were greatly surprised. They left what they looted and left the nunnery quickly.

Conclusion:

- ❖ To die with pure and clean heart, body and mind is better than living a life of shame, guilt and humility. The Lord Jesus has bought us with His precious blood and we ought to maintain our freedom from sin even if it would cost us to shed our own blood.

Applications:

- ❖ Keep on praying, reading the Bible and receiving the Communion so that you may enter into a relationship with the Lord. The Lord will purge you with hyssop and you will be clean. Your life will be whiter than snow.
- ❖ Keep reading the stories of the saints specially those who were martyred in the cause of chastity. This will give you power in your spiritual life and motivate you to insist on being chaste.
- ❖ Make a wall sheet and write about those who were martyred in the cause of chastity.
- ❖ Make use of means of Illustration Center and show your children the various films about the pure martyrs in the church hall especially on the Nayrouz Day (Coptic New Year Day) to celebrate those saints.
- ❖ Let the students collect the stories of those martyrs from the Synaxrium and the church books

put them in an album and keep them in the Library for the benefit of all.

Week 3 - The Holy Cross

Objectives:

- ❖ To know why the cross is considered the emblem of Christianity.
- ❖ The effectiveness of the cross in our life.

Memory verse:

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

References:

- ❖ “Why the Cross” Bishop Gregory
- ❖ “The Life of the Orthodox Prayer” The Monastery of St. Macarius
- ❖ “The Mystery of the Cross” Fr. Youhanna Hunein
- ❖ “The Cross in our Life” Fr. Samaan Al Saurian
- ❖ “The Golgotha Cross” Dr. Abdu Hunein

Introduction:

The cross was the most horrible device of execution known in history among the Romans. It was used for degrading, despising and torturing criminals to death. Suddenly the cross became a symbol of dignity and pride. It was raised high over our churches, placed on the top of the church tower, the domes and on the veil of the temple. The cross is held in front of church processions. In general, the cross has become the sign, the emblem and the symbol of Christianity and Christians everywhere. What is the secret behind this change? And why does the church insist on lifting the cross up in the time before her children?

Lesson Outlines:

XXVI. The Holy Cross with reference to history

How wonderful this story is! Its heroine was not a young girl or an ordinary woman among the people, but she was an old woman above eighty years old. When she wanted to comfort herself after her son had been killed, she went to the place of the Holy Tomb enduring the troubles of travel to Jerusalem. She went to the Holy Land, motivated by a vision (a dream). She felt sad when she found out that the place had fallen into ruin as it was covered with a huge hill of garbage and dust on which pagan temple was built for the goddess Venus. Queen Helen ordered her servants to demolish (pull down) the temple and to remove the dust. She found three crosses among which was the Lord's cross. She saw the notice written by Pontius Pilate on that cross. Then she also found the place of the tomb. She also found the nails with which the Lord's hands were nailed to the cross. She sent these nails to her son Constantine who fixed one of them to his royal helmet, which he used in battles. It became a custom later on for Kings to put a piece of iron in the shape of a nail on their crowns. Queen Helen sent a piece of the Cross to the Emperor's Palace in Constantinople and the remainder was put in a silver box inside the Resurrection Church.

Queen Helen built a big church over the Holy Tomb and called it the New Jerusalem. She also built another church on the Cave of Nativity in Bethlehem, the modest place in which Christ was born and this church was as beautiful as the first one.

XXVII. A Cross appears in the sky

History tells us that the siGenesis of the cross appeared in the sky several times as a pillar of light. The First Time: The Cross appeared in the sky to the Emperor Constantine together with his officers and soldiers to encourage him before starting the war. Late in the afternoon, Emperor Constantine saw the radiant siGenesis of the cross above the sun in the sky. Inscribed upon it were the words, “By this siGenesis you will conquer”. That view had such a great effect on Constantine that he was converted to Christianity and waged a campaiGenesis against the tyrant Maxentius.

The cross appeared for another time as a pillar of light to all people in the sky of Jerusalem in 351 AD. It did not disappear quickly, but it remained visible for several hours. In that time it was more radiant than the sun. All the people of the city rushed out to see that sight. They were surprised and afraid but at the same time they were happy to see such a heavenly sight.

XXVIII. The Final Appearance

This will happen by the end of times when the siGenesis of the cross covers the whole sky, east, west, north and south. At that time all the kingdoms of the earth will submit themselves to the Lord Christ.

XXIX. The Cross with reference to the Christian Dogma

The Cross embodies the greatest and most important Christian creeds. The Lord Christ tasted death on it. This proves that He has true flesh, the same as that of all people. In other words, the Cross is a proof of the Incarnation Creed. Christ fulfilled Redemption with his propitiatory death on the Cross. So the Cross emphasized the second great Christian Creed; i.e. the Redemption Creed. When the faithful make the siGenesis of the Cross, they state and confess their faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the One God. They declare their belief in the Creed of Trinity and One God, three hypostases and one essence (substance). Thus we see in the Cross the most important creeds of our holy faith.

- ❖ The reconciliation between God and man was fulfilled through the Cross. For this reason Christ was hung between the sky and the earth to be the way for man to come back to God. He stretched out his blessed hands to receive all those under the sky. He descended into Hades through the Cross to bring Adam and his children back to Paradise.
- ❖ We have also been justified through the Cross. We have become innocent of the charges directed to man (as a blasphemer and evildoer). These are the same charges that were directed to the Lord and he was innocent of them all (We are now justified with his blood).
- ❖ Through the Cross all our previous debts have been paid. The Law could not payoff these debts but it emphasized them instead: “And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this He set aside, nailing it to the Cross” (Colossians 2:13, 14).

XXX. The Holy Cross with reference to its rite

1. In Baptism: The water is sanctified with the siGenesis of the Cross in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. St. John Chrysostom says, “Thus baptism is not only called a

cross but the Cross also is called baptism” because the Cross is the baptism of blood and in baptism we die with Christ.

2. In Chrism: All our organs are circumcised with the siGenesis of the Cross 36 times (for all parts of the body).
3. In the Sacrament of Confession (Penance): The Cross is placed on the Confessor’s head as a siGenesis that his sins are forgiven with the blood of the Cross.
4. In the Sacrament of the Holy Communion: This is the blood of the Cross and the Holy Body broken for us is incarnate before our eyes.
5. In the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick: Here the oil is first sanctified by crossing it with the Cross seven times during reading the seven appropriate texts from the Gospels and by lighting seven wicks.
6. In the Sacrament of the Holy Orders: When the Cross is put on the head of the person chosen to receive the Holy Order, the person receives, through prayer and the power of the Cross, the ability to carry the Cross and to exercise the other sacraments. You may notice that the priest wears a cross and holds a cross in his hand. He puts a cross on the front of his clothes (his own cross) and a cross on the back of his clothes (the people cross).
7. In the Sacrament of Marriage (Matrimony): The married life is a series of sacrifices starting from the moment when the Cross is put on the heads of the bride and the bridegroom and ending with the Crown of Victory and the glories of resurrection.

XXXI. The Cross in our Life

- ❖ The siGenesis of the Cross drives away demons as it reminds them of the Devil’s defeat at Golgotha.
- ❖ It is a cure for defiled lust and a power that quenches the flames of fire and the authority of sin.
- ❖ When we stretch our hands in the shape of the cross and cross our foreheads and chests, we become free from the authority of death, and we go deep into the depth of the soul through prayer like a bird stretching its wings and flying high in the sky.
- ❖ The Cross is also a means of triumph over temptation and a siGenesis of Salvation. The martyrs used to cross the cup offered to them with the siGenesis of the Cross.
- ❖ The Cross was and will remain a pride, a beauty, a crown, a weapon and declaration of faith and the irresistible power of God.

Conclusion:

- ❖ “Through the Cross man can drive away all the deceits of the demons”(Athanasius the Apostolic).
- ❖ “The martyr did not drink the cup before furrowing it with the siGenesis of the Cross which is the siGenesis of salvation” (Theodore the Historian).
- ❖ “Our salvation is confirmed when we partake in the sacraments and their symbols. One of these symbols is the siGenesis of the Cross” (St. Gregory of Nyssa).

Applications:

- ❖ Make the siGenesis of the cross before doing anything. This should be done with accuracy and repentance and lifting the heart to God.
- ❖ Write about symbols of the Cross in the Old Testament. Express this idea by drawing a picture of several scenes or write an essay about this topic in wall Chart.

Week 4 - The Ten Commandments: First: You shall have no other gods before Me

Objective:

- ❖ Emphasizing the Worship of God alone and rejecting the idols of the present age.

Memory Verse:

“You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex 20:3)

References

- ❖ “The Ten Commandments” Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ Sermons and Lectures of Pope Shenouda III and his articles in “Kiraza” Magazine
- ❖ “The First Commandment” Bishop Gregory

Introduction:

The Lord commanded Moses to go up to the mountain to receive the Law of God. He said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Take heed that you do not go up into the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death... And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai... and the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up and God spoke all these words” (Exodus 20).

We notice that these Ten Commandments, which were written with the finger of God, were a covenant with God, which is why the two tablets were called, “The Tables of the Covenant”. God made this covenant with us with great power so that we can feel the great value of the Covenant. The commandments are so important that God Himself wrote them. When Moses handed them over to the people, he took the blood of the offerings and sprinkled it on the people so that they might be worthy to receive the commandments.

Lesson Outlines:

The First Commandment

“I am the Lord your God which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage... You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:2,3).

The Lord Reveals Himself

- ❖ The Lord calls Himself “The God of Abraham, and God of Isaac and God of Jacob”. He is

a God not of the dead, but of the living.

- ❖ When Moses asked the Lord about His name so that He might reveal the Divine name to Pharaoh, the Lord said, “Jehovah” [I Am That I Am].
- ❖ The Lord revealed Himself and His name in various ways. He appeared to Abraham in the shape of three men and to Moses in the flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and to the three young men in the shape of a person walking about with them in the blazing fire of the furnace.
- ❖ “But God who, at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1,2).
- ❖ Thus the Lord Jesus revealed the Heavenly Father in a very clear way: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father...I am in the Father and the Father is in Me” (John 14:9,10).
- ❖ Christ’s revelation of the Father is characterized by attributes in the New Testament. These attributes are different from those in the Old Testament.
 - In the New Testament, Christ reveals to us the secrets of God and the secret of the Holy Trinity is an example.
 - In the New Testament, God did not reveal Himself as a mighty God giving Law on a mountain covered with smoke and fire, but He revealed Himself as a God who is loving, gentle and lowly in heart and who washes the feet of His disciples.
 - In the New Testament God came with us, in us and not far away from us “I in them and You in Me” (John 17:23), “And the word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). He became man, took our human nature and became like us in everything except sin.

Who brought you out of the Land of Egypt?

- ❖ God mentions His steadfast love and blessings to man. He does not mention His glory and greatness but He mentions His mercy and the works of His love.
- ❖ In the New testament God brought us out of darkness to light, and out of death to life. He gave us the gift to be born again with water and spirit. Crossing the Red Sea was a symbol of baptism, which we received through adoption (1 Corinthians 10).
- ❖ Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ always delivers us from all evil, for He who touches us touches the pupil of His eye “Behold, I have graven you on the palms of My hands”.

You shall have no other gods before me

- ❖ It is true that we worship One God; the Holy Trinity, but true worship is not the mere confession of one God, but it also involves practical behavior.
- ❖ Let us take heed to ourselves lest pride be a god to us...Many people are enslaved to themselves and to their selfishness and they see everything through themselves “He who loves his life loses it”.
- ❖ The World is another god and the apostle advises us by saying, “Do not love the world or the things in the world” (1 John 1:15). St. James the apostle says, “Friendship with the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4). St. Paul the apostle said that Demas was faithless to the message “Demas, in love with this present world; has deserted me” (2 Timothy 4:10).
- ❖ There is another god called The Flesh. Many young people are enslaved to their instincts,

“Their god is the belly, and they glory in their shame” (Philippians 3:19). We have Esau as an example. He despised his birthright and sold it for a single meal of lentils.

- ❖ “Money” can also be a god. The Lord says, “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). It is the idol of misers and lovers of silver. The apostle says, “For the love of money is the root of all evils” (2 Timothy 6:10). He also says, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). This does not mean that we hate money, but it means that we must use money as a means of glorifying God. We have to be careful not to let money be our Master. We should spend it wisely and with spiritual guidance.
- ❖ Also there is another god among the people called “Gossip”, so Many young people like to listen to people when they praise or curse one another. They like to know people’s opinions and to listen to what they say. The apostle says, “How can you believe, who receive glory from one another, and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?”

Who is the Atheist?

The atheist is the person who denies the existence of God and refuses to carry out the commandments of the Gospel as he considers them impractical.

- ❖ What are the differences between God’s revelation of Himself in the Old Testament and in the New Testament?
- ❖ When God reveals Himself, Salvation and Love accompany His revelation. Explain and give evidence.
- ❖ What are the idols of the modern age?
- ❖ What are your attitudes, as a young person, towards these idols? How can you reject being enslaved to them?
- ❖ In this age of ours, atheism is not only denying the existence of God, but there is something else. What is it? How can you resist modern atheism?

Conclusion:

So long as we believe in God, we have to perform our duty to Him. The Scripture refers to this duty by saying, “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve” (Matthew 4:10). Let’s worship the Lord in spirit and truth, in faithfulness and fear all the days of our life.

Applications:

- ❖ Examine yourself to identify others gods that you worship and develop means with the help of your father of confession to get rid of them.
- ❖ “I keep the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved”. The following prayer may help you in your struggle against other gods:
- ❖ Prayer for the remainder of the week: “O Lord Jesus, you will be my companion in my life. You will help me in everything I do. I will submit to your commandments, because you are

my Lord, my God and my Savior. Because You love me, You will help me in carrying out your commandments”.

- ❖ Give one of the students a task to search and prepare a presentation about the second commandment for the next week

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER

Week 1- Second: You Shall not Make for Yourself Any Carved Image

Week 2- Third: You Shall Not Take the Name of The Lord Your God in
Vain

Week 3- Fourth: Remember That You Keep Holy the Sabbath Day

Week 4- Fifth: Honor Your Father and Your Mother

Week 1 – The Ten Commandments Second: You Shall not Make for Yourself Any Carved Image

Objective:

- ❖ Emphasizing the Worship of God alone and rejecting the idols of the present age
- ❖ Show that the icon in the church is not to be worshipped.

Memory Verse:

“For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:5)

References:

- ❖ “The Ten Commandments” Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ Sermons and Lectures of Pope Shenouda III and his articles in “Kiraza” Magazine

Introduction:

“You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me” (Exodus 20:4-6).

Lesson Outlines:

The Aim Of This Commandment

- ❖ Putting an end to the heathen worship and refraining from pagan beliefs and worshipping pictures or idols.
- ❖ This commandment does not mean that we should destroy pictures and statues because the Lord Himself commanded Moses to make two cherubim of gold. Solomon’s Temple was decorated with carved figures of winged creatures, palm trees and flowers.

The Church honors icons: veneration of icon

- ❖ An icon is a memorial to the history of important spiritual events. So when we honor an icon we honor those whom it represents.
- ❖ The icon stands for a person. When we venerate an icon, we venerate the person it stands for.

When we look at the icon of the Lord Christ we feel that we are standing in the presence of God. Through the icon, we see the person it represents.

- ❖ Since the early ages, the Church has venerated and honored the icons. Icons were painted on the Sanctuary Veil and on many places. The Lord Jesus agreed to this veneration as He made many icons perform miraculous deeds. Icons of the churches have become a blessed domain for the presence of saints and the faith of the people.

Benefits of Icons in the Churches

1. **Ecclesiastical Aim:** The Church wants to teach us that those who departed are not absent. They still pray for us. They support us in our struggle. Thus, we are encouraged when we see their pictures. St Paul the Apostle says, “Therefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).
2. **Educational Aim:** Icons motivate us by seeing victorious saints and remind us of the eternal life. They show us the world to which we shall go after our departure. They are, then, excellent means of illustration. They satisfy our feelings, raise the soul up to heaven, and encourage the worshippers to indulge themselves in the spiritual life. Icons teach the children, the illiterate, and simple people.
3. **Spiritual Aim:** The word, whether written, uttered or illustrated in the form of pictures, affects us. It is food and life. Icons stand for deep spiritual symbols. We only need spiritual insight and spiritual maturity so that the Icons of the Church may become a source of inspiration and spiritual growth for our life. So, in the art of painting icons, the painter must have spiritual nature, to receive inspiration for this sort of work from the Lord so that with the light, which is in us, we may be able to see the light of the saints.

The Iconoclastic Movement

The Iconoclastic movement started at the beginning of the 8th Century and continued till the beginning of the 9th Century.

- ❖ That happened during the Ommayad Reign. The Byzantine Leon III and the Caliph Yazeed II Ben Abdel Malek (730 AD) destroyed the icons claiming that they were not worthy of being venerated.
- ❖ Fr. John Damascus was one of the Eastern Church men who defended the benefits of icons and was persecuted for honoring icons.
- ❖ The Seventh Council of Nicene, AD 787, declared that Icons should be used in churches. They are to be kissed and venerated.
- ❖ Those who opposed venerating icons claim that using them in the church means the inclination into the idolatrous worship. This is wrong, as we do not worship wood or copper. We worship God only that is illustrated in the icon and we honor the saint whom the icon represents.
- ❖ There is a remarkable relationship between the mystery of incarnation and the veneration of the icon. The Logos incarnated and became man and revealed to us the Heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus became the Icon through whom we can see the Heavenly Father who is One with

Him in Essence. That is why some of the fathers of the church see that incarnation is the basis of making icons. God the Spirit is everywhere and material things are not despised.

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children

In ancient times, the curse did not affect the sinner alone, but it also affected his family and children, as what happened with Canaan the Son of Ham who sinned to his father Noah, but the Lord declared in the Book of Jeremiah, “In those days they shall no longer say: The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”. But everyone shall die for his own sin; each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge” (Jeremiah 31:29,30). Although everyone dies for his own sin, yet, his sins may affect his children as when he suffers from a serious bodily or mental sickness. There is no doubt that the son who does not benefit from the experience of his father or the past event is mistaken.

Conclusion:

Thus we worship God only but we honor St. Mary and the saints. The true worship for God comes from a pure and loving heart to the Lord. The icons in the church are a reminder of the victorious path of the saints .

Applications:

- ❖ “The person who opposes the icons and denies them resists the mystery of Incarnation” Explain this statement.
- ❖ “The Lord visits the Iniquity of the fathers upon the children” Explain this statement. What does the Lord declare through Prophet Jeremiah?
- ❖ Give one of the students a task to search and prepare a presentation about the third commandment for the next week

Week 2 - The Ten Commandments Third: You Shall Not Take the Name of The Lord Your God in Vain

Objective:

- ❖ To learn not to swear at all and honor the name of the Lord.

Memory Verse:

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

References:

- ❖ “The Ten Commandments” Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ Sermons and Lectures of Pope Shenouda III and his articles in “Kiraza” Magazine

Introduction:

- ❖ Prove with examples that the Name of God was fearful and highly respected among the Jews in the Old Testament.
- ❖ What is Christ’s preaching about swearing in His sermon on the mountain?

Lesson Outlines:

The Commandment in the Old Testament

The Lord says: If a man delivers to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away, without anyone seeing it, an oath “ by the Lord shall be between them both to see whether he has not put his hand to his neighbor’s property” (Exodus 22:10,11). This means that the Lord allowed an oath by the Lord when there were no witnesses. But the Lord drew the people’s attention to the fact that it was dangerous to lie or to take the name of the Lord in vain. He allowed them to swear by his name so that they might not swear by the names of Pagan gods. In the Old Testament, the name of the Lord was fearful. When a Jew wrote the name of Jehovah, he purified “ himself and showed signs of submission.

The Commandment in the New Testament

In the Sermon on the Mountain, the Lord spoke about this commandment (Matthew 5:33 -37). It is clear that the Lord does not allow us to swear by His name at all. We should venerate and honor His

name. We should be honest with people when we speak to them and when we deal with them. Because when a Christian unites with the Lord Christ, he becomes a son of God, so he says the truth and does not need to emphasize what he says as the grace in him and the truth he lives to bear witness. The Lord says that swearing by anything means that the person owns that thing and because we own nothing not even ourselves, we have no right to swear by anything. God alone owns everything so He alone has the right to swear, "The Lord has sworn and will not relent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). Thus the Heavenly Father swore to His Son that He would be a priest forever. It is His right to swear The Lord is Truth in Truth.

The Lord's Name for the believers

- ❖ The Lord's Name is Light. This is a fact that never changes, "I am the Light of the World".
- ❖ The Lord's Name is Love. It is the flame of love that is never quenched. Anyone who touches him is kindled with his love.
- ❖ His name is a power for worship and praise.
- ❖ Have a look at the Church hymns and you will feel how the church honors the Name of the Lord, sings it and praise its sweetness "Your Name is sweet and blessed in the mouths of your saints, O My Lord Jesus Christ My good Savior".
- ❖ The Name of God is Holy, Great and Wonderful "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth: You whose glory above the heavens is chanted" (Psalm 8:1,2).
- ❖ The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe (Proverbs 18:10).
- ❖ The Name of the Lord causes terror to demons, "Even the demons are subject to us in Your Name" (Like 10:17).
- ❖ "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her and it came out that very hour"(Acts 16:18) (Review the Contemplations of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III in his Book, "The Ten Commandments").

Our duty concerning the Great Name of God

- ❖ We should honor and venerate the Name of the Lord and the Name should be uttered with great respect and veneration.
- ❖ We have to glorify the Holy Name and give it due respect and glorification.
- ❖ The Name should be sweet in our mouth stimulating love.
- ❖ We have to use the Lord's Name at the beginning of every prayer, in every meeting and in every work and also when we complete any work, as He is the Alpha and the Omega "We love Your name O Lord. We meditate on Your Name all night long" (Midnight Prayer Piece No 13 - Vigil).
- ❖ I should never swear by the Holy Name whatever the circumstances may be. Some refuse to swear at Courts of Justice when they are asked to bear witness. Some of the fathers of the Church see that the vow here is not out of the personal will, but out of submission to the laws of the State. The Gospel demands that we should obey the laws of the State.

The Prayer of Jesus

- ❖ The fathers of the church advise us to use the Holy Name in that Divine word “Jesus” since, “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). And the psalm says, “Save me, O God, by Your name” (Psalm 54:1). When we start repeating this name, we feel that our thoughts are sanctified and united with the Lord. In this way we feel that our souls are healed “If I may touch, but his clothes, I shall be whole” (Mark 5:28, 6:56). But the exercise does not end at this point...We must continue, saying with Jacob, “I will not let You go, unless You bless me” so that we may feel His presence in our life and shout with Thomas, “My Lord and my God”.
- ❖ Repeating the prayer of Jesus does not mean neglecting the other ritual prayers...but we must use this prayer when our thoughts are dispersed, when we are fought by thoughts or vexed by people, when we feel indifferent in our life or when we fall in despair.

How can I get rid of the sin of swearing?

Always venerate and honor the name of the Lord in your prayer and in your daily life. At that time I fear to swear and I refrain completely from swearing. If the Holy Spirit works in me, He will forbid me. He will prevent me from swearing. If someone asks me to swear that my words are true I keep silent for some time so that I may not swear. I pray to the Lord to inspire my friend that my words are true and I say, “Believe me”. The words “Believe me” characterize the Christian believer who refuses to swear.

- ❖ Review question: Why did the Lord allow people to swear in the Old Testament? What are the conditions of swearing?

Conclusion:

Using the Name of the Lord, then, is a blessed means of calm life dominated by the Spirit of God in the midst of worship, sanctification, joy and perpetual praise and thanksgiving “I give thanks to thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify Your name forever” (Psalm 86:12).

Applications:

- ❖ What is our duty to the Holy Name of God? – Open discussion
- ❖ How can you refrain from the habit of swearing? – The servant should follow up with the children about an exercise to stop swearing.

Week 3- The Ten Commandments Fourth: Remember That You Keep Holy the Sabbath Day

Objective:

- ❖ To teach the students the importance of observing holy Sunday and devoting it to worship and service.
- ❖ If we cannot do that we need to choose another day.

Memory Verse:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work” (Exodus 20:8-11).

References

- ❖ “The Ten Commandments” Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ Sermons and Lectures of Pope Shenouda III and his articles in “Kiraza” Magazine

Introduction

- ❖ The Lord had given this Commandment to the people before He wrote it in the Ten Commandments and the Lord Himself put it into practice before the other commandments saw light, “So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it because on it God rested from all His work which He had done in creation” (Genesis 2:3).
- ❖ The Lord emphasized the importance of this day when He said, “and He blessed it” and this shows that one calm day with the Lord is much better than all the things on earth.
- ❖ We also notice that when the Lord said, “on the Seventh day God rested from all His work”, He meant the true rest, which occurred to the heart of the Lord when the Lord redeemed man from the sin on the cross. Accordingly, the Resurrection Day is the day of the Lord’s true rest as the Lord did not feel tired when he created man but He suffered a lot in the work of salvation.
- ❖ In Hebrew the word “Sabbath” (Shabat) means “A day of rest”. Its use is not restricted to the seventh day. Sometimes it was used to mean the day of rest whether it was the seventh day or not and at other times it was used to mean the whole week.

Lesson Outlines:

The Sabbath Commandment in the Old Testament

- ❖ The Lord regarded it as a very important Commandment. Whoever did not keep it was to be put to death “You shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off”.
- ❖ You shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that, you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people...whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death” (Exodus 31:12-17).
- ❖ “Everyone who keeps the Sabbath, and does not profane it and holds fast my Covenant these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer” (Isaiah 56:7).
- ❖ In the Book of Numbers, when the people were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering firewood on the Sabbath. They took him to Moses. The Lord said to Moses, “This man must be put to death” (Numbers 15:32).
- ❖ The Sabbath day was a day of rest for all: man and animal (Deuteronomy 5:14). Even the land itself was let to rest in the seventh year (Exodus 23:10).

The Sabbath Commandment in the New Testament

- ❖ Christianity did not destroy the Sabbath and substitute it with Sunday, but Christianity fulfilled the Sabbath in its divine spiritual meaning by devoting Sunday to rest and worship since as we have just said “Sabbath” means “rest” so Sunday is the day of true spiritual rest for the Lord and for all believers.
- ❖ In the past, “Sabbath” was a sign of circumcision. It was the sign of rest and it was substituted by Sunday, the soul’s rest instead of its ancient form, i.e. the bodily rest (Exodus 31:13).
- ❖ In the Old Testament, the Passover was called a Sabbath even if it happened to occur on any other day of the week. On the 15th day of the first month the Jews celebrated the feast of unleavened bread, and the day of atonement on which they did not work was celebrated on the 10th day of the seventh month and many other feasts were celebrated, as they happened to come, on any other day and they were called Sabbath (Leviticus 23). Thus Sunday could be regarded as Sabbath as many important events and occasions happened on Sunday. We take the following as examples:
The Passover, the feast of the Tabernacles, the Day of Atonement; which is the resurrection of the Lord from the dead (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20). Christ appeared many times after His resurrection on Sundays (John 20). Christ entered Jerusalem as a king on Sunday, and the coming of the Holy Spirit was on Sunday (Acts 2). St. John saw the new heaven and the New Earth on Sunday.
- ❖ The Book of the Acts and St. Paul’s Epistles tell us that the Church made of Sunday a day of rest (Sabbath) and worship. The Acts of the Apostles says, “And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together, to break bread, Paul preached unto them...”

(Acts 20:7). In another place we read, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do you. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gathering when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

- ❖ The Didascalia (the laws of the apostles) (Law No. 65 in the first book, and law No. 21 of the first group and law No. 45 of the second book) all of these laws emphasize the necessity of devoting Sunday to rest and worship inside the church. There are many other laws issued by local councils in 364 and 365 AD and these laws emphasize that Sunday is the day of rest and worship among Christians.

How to observe Sunday?

Do not observe Sunday as the Pharisees did or according to the way the Jews practiced in observing their Sabbath as they stuck to formalities and to the letter. Remember that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. The Lord said that it is right to do good on Sabbath when He healed many people and allowed His disciples to pick ears of corn and eat the grain when they were hungry. All that happened on the Sabbath. The Lord showed them that they broke the Sabbath law to circumcise their sons. It is much better if they do works of kindness on the Sabbath day. We must observe the Lord's Day holy. We must not spend it in the cinema, theatre or playing grounds. That day should be devoted to prayers, Church education (Sunday School), serving the poor, visiting the sick and all kinds of works of mercy and worship.

Questions

1. Why has the church chosen Sunday to be the day of rest and sanctification?
2. Give evidence to show that the church creed is correct.
3. How can you honor the Lord's Day?
4. What is the evidence that shows that the Jew was strict in observing the Sabbath Day?
5. How did the Jews look at the Sabbath Law?
6. How was the Lord's opinion different from theirs concerning this topic?
7. The Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath. Explain.

Conclusion:

We spend time doing all other life activities, including studying, watching TV, talking and spending time with friends, participating in family activities...etc. Then it is even more worthy to spend time with our Lord on the seventh day, remembering that He is the source of every good thing in our life.

Applications:

- ❖ Try to spend a large proportion of the Lord's Day in worship and practicing works of mercy to please the heart of God.

- ❖ Encourage other students to devote Sunday to the Lord

Week 4 - The Ten Commandments Fifth: Honor Your Father and Your Mother

Objective:

- ❖ Honoring our parents and showing respect to them
- ❖ Rewarding them for their love to us

Memory Verse:

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you” (Exodus 20.12).

References:

- ❖ “The Ten Commandments” Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ Sermons and Lectures of Pope Shenouda III and his articles in “Kiraza” Magazine

Introduction:

- ❖ We notice that this commandment is so important that it is mentioned before important commandments such as: “You shall not kill... You shall not commit adultery”. This means that the Lord regards this commandment to be very important and of great value.
- ❖ We also notice that it is the first commandment with a promise “Honor your father and your mother which is the first commandment with promise” (Ephesians 6:2).

Lesson Outlines:

The Commandment in the Old Testament

- ❖ “Whosoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death” (Exodus 21:15-17, Leviticus 20:9).
- ❖ Solomon says, “If one curses his father or his mother his lamp will be put out in utter darkness” (Proverbs 20:20). He also says, “The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by vultures” (Proverbs 30:17).
- ❖ We read in the Old Testament about those who disobeyed their fathers and how they were punished, as they never found rest or comfort. An example of those is Absalom the Son of King David. When the Lord caused Ahithophel’s Counsel, Absalom’s Counselor, to fail (2 Samuel 16:23).

The Parent's Status

- ❖ In ancient times, the father was the priest of the family, her patron saint and mediator with God. The Lord authorized the blessing or the curse that a father gave.
- ❖ The Lord raised the rank of fatherhood when he called Himself our Father and He likened His kindness and love, to that of the mother “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Isaiah 49:15).
- ❖ Today the society celebrates the mother's day and the family day to honor the parents who sacrifice all they have to bring their children up.

How to honor our Parents

- ❖ A Christian honors his parents in a way that greatly differs from the way used by a sociable polite normal person honoring his parents, not only in appearance and behavior, but also in essence and depth.
- ❖ The true Christians honor their parents for Christ, in Christ and with Christ. This means that they see Christ as the aim of the Commandment. They take Christ as the power and the way to practice the carrying out of the Commandment. Christ cared for His mother when He was on the cross when He said to the beloved St. John, “This is your mother”.

The most important aspects of honoring our parents

- ❖ **To love them:** Our love to them stems from a pure heart. As believers we are supposed to love our enemies, how much more then should we show our love to our parents and sacrifice everything for them and always pray for them.
- ❖ **To obey them:** Obedience here is not blind obedience but obedience of truth, accompanied with awareness and complete understanding. The Lord Jesus Christ gives an excellent example of the obedience of a son to His parents according to the flesh and Isaac offers a very nice example of obedience, as he was a symbol of Christ in the Old Testament “Hear my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's teaching” (Proverbs 1:8).
- ❖ **To support them:** Lord Jesus reproached the Scribes and the Pharisees who did not perform their duty towards their parents because of offering sacrifices to the Temple. The Lord said that honoring parents and supporting them and providing them with the money they need is more important than offering money as sacrifice to the temple. Our teacher St. Paul the Apostle says to his disciple Timothy, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8). When the Lord Jesus Christ was on the cross, He did not forget His mother and asked His disciple John to care for Her.
- ❖ **To respect them:** We show respect to them during talking to them, in discussion, when we walk with them in the street, in sitting with guests, in buying what they need, in estimating their opinion and points of view so long as they are within the boundaries of truth.

When do we take precaution in obeying them?

- ❖ “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

- ❖ The Apostle says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right” (Ephesians 6: 1).
- ❖ When obedience to parents contradicts the Gospel, I prefer, with all calmness and modesty, to stick to truth rather than favoring them at the cost of pleasing the Lord Jesus. This demands firmness in attitude, strong faith, true modesty, clear self-denial, spiritual enlightenment and the advice of my father of Confession.
- ❖ Man should obey the Lord rather than his parents when he receives a call for dedication or monasticism. He finds that sources of material and spiritual provision are available for parents and that he has performed his duty towards them. The Voice of God is clear in this respect and is not tied with the earthly feelings and relationships. This, of course, necessitates spiritual and wise advice and guiding.
- ❖ One of the most beautiful examples of taking precautions in obeying parents is the life of St. Barbara, and the life of St. Dimyana and Solomon’s attitude towards his mother (1 Kings 2:19-24).
- ❖ There is, of course, the obedience that we must show to our spiritual fathers, priests and saints. This has its blessed dimensions. You can refer to the Book written by his holiness Pope Shenouda III for more information.

Review Questions

- ❖ It is the first Commandment with promise. Explain.
- ❖ Why did the Lord demand that man should honor his parents? In what way should he honor them?
- ❖ To what extent should a Christian obey his parents?
- ❖ Who else should we honor other than our fathers according to flesh and how can that be?

Conclusion:

The person who honors his/her parents is blessed by God and respected by men. You will also be rewarded on earth and in heaven for honoring your parents

Application:

- ❖ Active and conscious obedience to the fathers spiritually
- ❖ Show your obedience and care for your parents all the time

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER

Week 1- Sixth: You Shall Not Murder

Week 2- The Seventh and Tenth Commandments

Week 3- The Eighth And Ninth Commandment

Week 4- Our Bodies Are for the Lord

Week 1 - The Ten Commandments - Sixth: You Shall Not Murder

Objective:

- ❖ To introduce the students to the godliness of the heart and its purity of every hate

Memory Verse:

“You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13)

References

- ❖ “The Ten Commandments” Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ Sermons and Lectures of Pope Shenouda III and his articles in “Kiraza” Magazine

Introduction:

Why is “murder” a dangerous crime? Give the students time to answer

This sin is against God who created man in His image. The Lord says, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed for God made man in His own image” (Genesis 9:6). When man kills someone he completely destroys life, thus putting an end to a human life, which is a work that cannot be cured. Murder is a challenge to the Will of God in whose hands lies the fate of the people.

Lesson Outlines:

Kinds of Murder

1. Direct Murder

There are two types of direct murder: Individual murder or group murder. The individual murder occurs when people kill each other for one reason or another. Group murder takes place when a nation fights another nation, wages war or destroys the other nation. The most dangerous thing in war is that it despises human life. In this century, wars are very dangerous as they make use of deadly destructive weapons, which can cause the death of thousands of people in a few seconds. Although the Lord said that wars represent one of the marks and signs of the last days, Christianity draws the attention of those in charge to the dangers of wars and asks them to resort to peace, and using humane methods in solving the international problems. During war, the church must do her best to comfort people so she calls for peace and insists on achieving it, she heals the wounds, supports the families of those who died in war.

2. Indirect Murder

- ❖ Such as any means that kills the fetus (embryo) in the womb, abortion and castration.
- ❖ Killing by intention or thought. This sort of murder is regarded as a serious sin in Christianity as the Lord Jesus Christ in His Sermon on the Mountain said, “You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:21,22).
- ❖ The moral murder; that is defaming the good reputation of people (Refer to the Third Book written by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III).

3. The Murder of the Soul

- ❖ Killing the soul is more dangerous than killing the body. The Lord Jesus said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).
- ❖ Killing the soul means separating the soul from God and this is Satan’s task from the beginning, “The devil was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44).
- ❖ One of the best examples of the deeds that lead to the destruction of the soul is getting in touch with devils and magicians and the submission of the soul to them. That is why the Holy Bible warns us against dealing with them.
- ❖ There are people who believe in heresies specially those who deny the Divinity of Christ such as Jehovah’s Witnesses. All who follow their false belief will be destroyed. There are factors that cause the destruction of the soul such as when the Shepherd neglects his people and when parents neglect their children (Ezekiel 33:7-10).

4. Suicide

- ❖ His Holiness Pope Shenouda said suicide is a crime of murder, as people do not own their souls. The soul is the possession of Christ as He bought that soul by His blood. The greatest sin which man commits is despair of the mercies of the Lord and this state of despair leads to suicide as Judas, the son of perdition, did.
- ❖ There is also the slow suicide such as drinking, smoking and taking drugs. All these destroy the body and the soul, spoil the systems of the body and weaken the soul. This is called self-murder “You have a name that you live and are dead” (Revelation 3:1).
- ❖ Killing the time, which is more dangerous than true murder (Wasting time and life in vain).

When is murder allowed?

- ❖ The Lord allowed murder in olden times. Anyone who broke the Commandments was put to death. Moses ordered the people to stone the man who gathered firewood on the Sabbath day... that was an instructive lesson that could be clearly understood by the people. And about the murderer the Lord said, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed” (Genesis 9:6). And the Lord said to St. Peter, “Put up again your sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matthew 26:52). And about the governor and his authority to kill, Paul the Apostle says, “For he is the minister of God to you for good...For he bears not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil” (Romans 13:4).
- ❖ In the past, the Lord allowed the people of Israel to fight and sometimes the wars were called wars for the Lord as what happened in the days of Gideon, but the Lord forbade all

these wars and came to give peace to the world and all the earth is the Lord's and Christ's. That is why the idea of the Crusade and Religious wars was not according to the Lord's desire. Christianity does not agree to such an idea. But Christianity ensures the Christian soldier who defends his country does not kill but he obeys Caesar, and Caesar alone will be judged by the Lord for his deeds.

Conclusion:

The Lord demands that I should bear people no grudge nor should I be angry with anyone so that I may not be a murderer. O Lord, fill my heart with love for all so that I may not be the cause of destroying anyone. Let your life in me build, support and strengthen others.

Applications:

- ❖ “Murder is a challenge to the Will of God and a sign of degrading the dignity of man”. Open discussion. How serious and dangerous is this sin?
- ❖ Abstain from killing the spirit of others with your words or actions

Week 2 - The Ten Commandments - The Seventh and Tenth Commandments

Objective:

- ❖ To learn purity of the soul, the body and thought and satisfaction in life

Memory Verse:

“You shall not commit adultery” (Genesis 20:14)

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s” (Genesis 20:17)

References:

- ❖ “The Ten Commandments” Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ Sermons and Lectures of Pope Shenouda III and his articles in “Kiraza” Magazine

Lesson Outlines:

Adultery in the Old Testament

It is regarded as treachery. It is the complete practice of adultery. It is abominable to God. When the Lord spoke about the evil deeds of the Children of Israel in the Old Testament, as when he spoke about their worship of idols or keeping away from Him, He said that they played the harlot after other gods (Judges 2:17, Jeremiah 3:8). The person who contemplates the Book of Hosea the Prophet feels that the Lord hates this sin of adultery. Let us take a lesson from the life of David to know the dangerous consequences of committing adultery (2 Samuel 11-18).

Adultery in the New Testament

- ❑ It is committing adultery in mind and heart before it becomes a process of committing adultery (Matthew 5:27,28).
- ❑ It is not only dangerous for a believer to defile his thoughts but he is also forbidden to keep the company of those who commit adultery (1Corinthians 5).
- ❑ There are many commandments that draw our attention to the fact that Christianity considers adulterers and adulteresses as enemies of God (1 Corinthians 10:8, Colossians 3:5, James 4:4).

Why is adultery dangerous?

- ❖ It is breaking the commandment. The Lord says, “You shall not commit adultery”. So if I commit adultery, I break the Commandment and I shall be judged because of disobedience.
- ❖ Adultery also has another dangerous phase which St. Paul the Apostle refers to by saying, “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is without the body; but he that commits fornication sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18).
- ❖ Because we do not possess our bodies, the sin of adultery is directed to the members of Christ “Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid...For you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God” (1 Corinthians 6:15,20).
- ❖ “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy” (1 Corinthians 3:17). In this St. John the seer says, “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).
- ❖ Committing adultery deprives man of the grace of baptism... Through baptism we put on the wedding dress and wear the light of eternity. Our bodies attain a great grace but if we use it for evil purposes we put light under a bushel and defile a pure dress and for this we shall be judged.
- ❖ Adultery hinders the psychological growth. The adulterer is a selfish, self-centered person who cannot love or give...as love means maturity, responsibility and commitment but the adulterer cannot bear responsibility or commit to anything good.

Reasons for committing adultery

- ❖ Need for affection and inner dissatisfaction: When man feels that he is not satisfied, he resorts to the desire of the flesh. The main cure lies in being filled with the Lord Jesus and enjoying the sweetness of the life of fellowship with him. When Christ fills my heart and my inner life I need nothing else and I do not resort to the desire of the flesh.
- ❖ The evil nature that lies in me drives me to death so if I do not crucify and mortify this nature everyday it will appear and dominate me and enslave me. The spiritual fathers spoke about many exercises such as the chastity of the senses (especially the sight), asceticism, fasting, public prayers, fear of God, remembering the day of judgment, contrition, perpetual worship and humbling oneself before God and keeping away from any stimulation that may cause one to sin.
- ❖ One of the main causes of committing adultery is pride “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). So when man becomes humble before the Lord, he attains grace and the Lord defends and protects him. The haughty is separated from grace so he falls. The humble say, “The snare is broken, and we have escaped” (Psalm 124:7).
- ❖ There is another reason for committing adultery, that is luxury and enjoying the luxuries of life. The best example we have is the Prophet David when he deserted his ascetic life and lived in luxury and laziness. He gave freedom to his senses and the result was his great fall. So, fasting, asceticism, activity in worship and spiritual vigilance are necessary for the believer to lead the life of chastity.

Prayer

O Lord, grant me the chastity of the senses, the purity of flesh, godliness of the heart and contrition of the soul so that I may lead a pure life for you. When the spiritual wars and defiled thoughts attack me, defend me and protect me, O Lord and give me the power to spend the whole night in true worship and grant me an honest and faithful heart.

You shall not covet your neighbor's goods

“You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's” (Exodus 20.17, Deuteronomy 5.21).

Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin!

Desire is the origin of every sin. Desire of possession is the cause of theft or stealing, the desire of the flesh is the cause of committing adultery, the desire of revenge is the cause of murder “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5).

Desire goes through many stages

- ❖ Thinking -meditation -consideration -acceptance
- ❖ Longing for it and repeated thoughts
- ❖ Emotion
- ❖ Practice, conation and performance
- ❖ Repetition and enslavement

The dangerous role of the desire of the flesh in the life of a believer

- ❖ The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. Those who follow the desires of the flesh are of the flesh and those who please the Spirit of God are the Children of God.
- ❖ The desire of the flesh is never satisfied and the more we practice it, the greater our inclination to it; “The eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear filled with hearing”(Ecclesiastes 1:8).
- ❖ The desire of the flesh blinds person and does not give him a chance to think. We have three groups of people; each has its own way of dealing with the desire of the flesh:
- ❖ The spiritual person lives according to the desire of the spirit rather than the desire of the flesh.
- ❖ The person of the flesh is like an animal whose desire of the flesh overcomes his spiritual attitude.
- ❖ The regular person who is desire of the flesh and desire of the spirit are in conflict.
- ❖ Sometimes person degrades himself to a standard less than the animal level when he is completely enslaved to the desire of the flesh, as the animal practices the desire of the flesh

within the limits of the natural instincts and it cannot go beyond its confines and this desire is practiced in special seasons.

Examples to show that it is dangerous to be enslaved to the desires of the flesh

- ❖ King David, the great king (2 Samuel 11)
- ❖ King Ahab and his submission to the covetousness of his wife Jezebel (1 Kings 21).
- ❖ King Solomon who said about himself, “ And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them” (Ecclesiastes 2:10).

Covetousness is the basis of all desires

- ❖ The person who covets the material things is a covetous person and a worshipper of idols.
- ❖ The person who covets good reputation and dignity wants to achieve a social status that is higher than their potentialities so they live a life of suffering and torment all their life.
- ❖ The person who desires the spiritual gifts and religious orders of priesthood loses his spiritual peace and perishes as he leads a life of envy and hatred...and the person who desires the gifts of others becomes strange to himself.

Our attitude towards the desires of the flesh

- ❖ “So shun youthful passions” (2 Timothy 2:22). Shunning the desires of the flesh is not a sign of weakness or cowardice but it is a sign of courage. To escape in such a situation means power, victory and courage (The example of Joseph).
- ❖ Resisting desires and passions by spiritual struggle, asceticism, fasting, prayers and perpetual worships is very effective (Examples: in the life history of our fathers, the saints and the monks).
- ❖ Our heart must be filled with Christ’s love and Christ should be the desire of our hearts. In this way we love and think through Christ “But we have the mind of Christ” (11` Corinthians 2:16), “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).
- ❖ The feeling of being sojourners in this world, forsaking worldly pleasures, and that all is vanity and a striving after the wind. When we know that the world passes away, and the lust of it, all these develop in man the fear of God and hatred to the worldly pleasures.

Review Questions

- ❖ What are the stages that the desire of the flesh passes through till it becomes an abominable habit?
- ❖ “The eye is the lamp of the body”. Explain.
- ❖ What are the consequences of the adultery sin in the life of Prophet David and what were the steps that led to those consequences?
- ❖ Why is covetousness regarded as a bad habit in Christianity? How can you resist it in social and spiritual life?

Conclusion:

At last we say: love is the best cure of all sins, specially the sin of covetousness and adultery “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right” (1 Corinthians 13:4-6).

Applications:

- ❖ Guard against the moments of weakness. Pray for God’s help “Be pleased O God, to deliver me! O Lord, make haste to help me”.
- ❖ Keep away from leisure and control your thoughts and keep your mind pure by keeping away from evil thoughts.
- ❖ Guard yourself against despair, “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall I shall rise” (Micah 7:8) so that your body will be pure.
- ❖ Write an essay about the life history of some saints who resisted the desire of the flesh in their life.
- ❖ Make a wall Chart and write on some of the life history of some saints, mention their struggle against the desire of the flesh and refer to their sayings about this topic.

Week 3 - The Ten Commandments - The Eighth And Ninth Commandment

Objective:

- ❖ Development of the Spirit of Christian honesty and faithfulness in action, deeds and words

Memory Verse:

“You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15, Deuteronomy 5:19)

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16)

References

- ❖ “The Ten Commandments” Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ Sermons and Lectures of Pope Shenouda III and his articles in “Kiraza” Magazine

Introduction:

Stealing in the Old Testament

“If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep” (Exodus 22:1). It is clear that God hates those who steal and demanded that thieves would be put to death (Exodus 21:16, Deuteronomy 24:7).

Stealing in the New Testament

It is one of the greatest sins like fornication, murder, and adultery. The Lord Jesus says, “For out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man” (Matthew 15:19,20).

Lesson Outlines:

Why do people steal?

- ❖ Because they do greed and wanting to take what is not theirs: “and covetousness which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:15).
- ❖ Because of not wanting to toil as the Lord demands, “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread”. They want to eat in an easy comfortable way, “Stolen water is sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant” (Proverbs 9:17).
- ❖ Because of a person may not fearing God...If one feels the presence of God and that the

- Lord's eyes penetrate darkness, how can one steal?
- ❖ One of the prominent examples of the corruption of those who steal is the Character of Judas Iscariot who carried the moneybag and would help himself from it. He was a thief and dishonest (John 12:6).

Why does the Gospel demand that we should not steal?

- ❖ St. Paul the Apostle explains the true motive that makes a believer refrain from stealing by saying: "For we are members one of another...Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need" (Ephesians 4:28). Love that gathers the believers makes them refrain from stealing; on the contrary, they labor to give those in need.
- ❖ Within the frame of brotherhood and family ties, we find that any Christian thief causes shame to all Christians; as if all the church had stolen "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God" (1 Peter 4:15-16).
- ❖ Tertilianus the lawyer and the Christian defender said to the Emperor, "If you found a Christian who killed, stole, committed adultery or was an evildoer, take us all and cut us into pieces". This true Christian feeling filled the church in the apostolic age. For this reason, when Simon the magician wanted to attain the gifts of the Spirit by giving bribes, St. Peter cursed him (Acts 8: 18-20).
- ❖ Sometimes children steal because of deprivation so they resort to stealing which, in this case, is regarded as an illness that needs psychological and social cure. As for the church, if her members live for the heavenly things, you will not find a thief among them because grace protects the believer from theft.

Types of unnoticed stealing

Let us guard against thefts that go unnoticed and that may not move our conscience such as:

- ❖ Getting into a bus or a tram without paying the price of a ticket.
- ❖ Using other's things in their absence without permission.
- ❖ Our attempt to know the secrets of others in their absence.
- ❖ Taking advantage of the time devoted for something else such as an official doing his private work in the government office.
- ❖ Cheating with tax claims
- ❖ Calling sick at work or school when we are not sick

Let us be honest in our work. Let us respect the time devoted for work. Let us keep our conscience awake so that we may be without blame before God in love.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Exodus 20:16, Deuteronomy 5:20)

The importance of this commandment:

- ❖ This commandment treats an important social and spiritual topic. Telling lies is known to all and is practiced all over the world so false witnesses always appear before opponents. When person bears false witness, he may cause the death of an innocent person.
- ❖ One of the most prominent evidences of bearing false witness in the Old Testament is the following: “If a malicious witness rises against any person to accuse him of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days; the judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother; so you shall purge the evil from the midst of you” (Deuteronomy 19:16-19).

The danger of bearing false witness

- ❖ It is a sin of telling a lie. It is also a slander, “You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand forth against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord” (Leviticus 19:16). It may cause injustice to an innocent person. The sin of telling lies denotes the darkness of the heart. That is why writers call the devil a liar and the father of the lies (John 8:44).
- ❖ It is a sign of cowardice and weak personality and the inability to shoulder responsibility.
- ❖ In the Old Testament, telling lies was regarded as denying the right of God and His authority over His people. Solomon the Wise says, “There are six things which the Lord hates...haughty eyes, a lying tongue...false witness who breathes out lies” (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Factors that drive person to bear false witness

- ❖ “Debates, envying, wrath, strife, back biting, whisperings, swellings, tumults” (2 Corinthians 12:20).
- ❖ Bribe: “And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right” (Exodus 23:8).
- ❖ Carelessness in all domains and listening to slanders, lies and rumors.
- ❖ Treachery and evil desire to hurt others.
- ❖ Flattery, partiality, hypocrisy & simulation.

Examples of false witnesses against saints

- ❖ Joseph’s brothers lied to their father (Genesis 37:31)
- ❖ Jezebel and Ahab with Naboth of Jezreel (1 Kings 21:9,10)
- ❖ False witnesses against St. Stephen the Archdeacon (Acts 6:13)

The spread of lying in our modern society

- ❖ Because of the spread of printing, the press, and different means of broadcasting, and

because of the conflict between nations, parties, institutions and individuals and advertising, the means of deception spread everywhere. Few are those who commit themselves to truth and justice.

- ❖ One of the well-known types of lying is the cunning diplomacy, hiding some facts and revealing others and exaggeration in writing and talk.
- ❖ Silence in certain situations and concealing very important information sometimes, and revealing true facts at other times to achieve evil cunning purposes.

Our duty towards this commandment

- ❖ Carefulness in speaking and listening and resorting to original sources that are worthy of trust.
- ❖ Testing ourselves, specially when we judge other's deeds or bear witness about a person or a situation, so that the heart may not be polluted with self-motivation.
- ❖ Living according to truth so that all what we think of is true.
- ❖ Not to be rash on the plea of frankness as not everything known can be said.
- ❖ Don't believe all that is said and don't judge without testing.
- ❖ Be careful in your talk and don't exaggerate matters and do not listen to false accusations.
- ❖ It is not right to rely on what many witnesses say, but these witnesses should be good and sure of what they say.

Review Questions:

- ❖ What is Christian faithfulness? What is its source? How can we keep it?
- ❖ What are the kinds of theft that man may practice other than stealing money? How can we train ourselves on complete honesty?
- ❖ This sin has many new forms in our modern society...What are these forms and how can we encounter them?
- ❖ What is our duty towards this commandment?

Conclusion:

O Lord, grant me the spirit of honesty that people may glorify you through my honesty. Teach me to care in using everything and performing every task and teach me to labor and toil so that others may be comforted, and not to enjoy rest at the cost of others.

Applications:

- ❖ Practice carefulness in giving opinion or judgment.
- ❖ Tell the truth when you talk and reject partiality and lying.

Week 4 – Our Bodies Are For the Lord

Objective:

- ❖ The Christians attitude towards the dignity of the body and the necessity of its sanctification

Memory Verse:

“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own” (1 Corinthians 6:19)

References

- ❖ “Christianity and the flesh” Bishop Bemín
- ❖ “Christian Chastity” Bishop Bemín
- ❖ “My Purity” Archdeacon Remsis Nagib
- ❖ “The Body” Deacon Nagib Girgis

Introduction:

Why did the Lord create the flesh? Let the students attempt to answer

The Lord created a body for man so as to make of him a unique creature that is different from angels and animals. Angels are spirits and the animals are flesh but man combines the two elements, the soul and the body. That is why the fathers said that man was a small universe (Microcosms). The body reacts with the soul and the soul reacts with the body and each of them feels the other and is affected by it. We observe that in practical life the spiritual life affects the body to a great extent.

Lesson Outlines:

The man who prays and fasts is different from the man who commits adultery. The saint's face differs from the face of the evil man. Each of them reflects an inner world, which is completely different. If we keep our inner life pure, the body will be pure and if we keep the body and its organs in a state of chastity, the inner life increases in purity and depth. The Sound body helps its owner to fast, worship and spend the night in prayer. The opposite is the case of the weak body.

The body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit

The body plays a very important role in the life of a Christian man. Since the Lord Jesus incarnated and became man, the human nature has become one with Christ. The man who has been marked with the Holy Spirit through the mystery of Confirmation (Chrism) has become bearer of Christ (Christophorus). Although the baptized and anointed with Chrism keeps the appearance and

shape of his body without change yet in the inner depth of his body dwell the Divine light and the new life. Therefore the Bible regards the body as the temple of God “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). In another place the Holy Bible says, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never” (1 Corinthians 6:15).

When St. Paul the apostle says that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, he means the real meaning of the words and does not use the words in a symbolic way. The fact that the Holy Bible emphasizes is that “We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Ephesians 5:30) and that He is the true vine and we are the branches and the branches are parts of the vine and not outside parts.

The dignity of the body (The Christians outlook on the body)

The sound Christian attitude is that all the parts of the body are honored because they all share in building up the temple of the Holy Spirit. There are no pure organs and defiled members in Christianity. It is impossible to imagine that God would create a temple with a defiled part. St. Paul the apostle explained the honor of the members of the body in detail, in his first epistle to the Corinthians and concentrated specially on what is called the inferior parts: “On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our un-presentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Corinthians 12:22-25). St. Clement of Alexandria says, “We must not be ashamed of the members which God created”.

The Body as a tool for achieving the Lord’s purpose

The apostle says to the Romans, “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:1,2). This means that the flesh was not granted for enjoyment and selfishness but it is granted to be given and consumed for others. The person who refuses to use his body in deeds that glorify God is like the person who took the talent and buried it in the sand and when its owner came, he did not offer the benefits with the talent.

One of the saints says, “O Jesus I offer myself to you as a sacrifice. I sacrifice myself without asking anything for myself”. The domains of sacrifice are wide before man. Through the works of his body he can give kindness, friendship, sacrifice, services and blessed works that glorify the Holy great name of God. The saints felt that they were in the world as the arms, hands and the legs, which carry out the blessed purposes of the Lord in the world. Each one of them seized the chance of his

existence in the flesh to play the part appointed to him...waiting for the Divine Voice, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:21).

Do not be conformed to this world

The Christian who perceives the honor of the body is always careful to renew the mind to test the complete perfect good will of God. Renewing the mind is achieved through repentance, true confession and by examining the soul. Spending a period in a solitary place every now and then to find out if anything of the works of darkness has penetrated into the inner part of the soul. The renewal of mind enlightens it and increases its sensitivity and brightness and transparency and enables knowledge of the purpose of God, and His good will in every work performed.

That is why the apostle’s voice calls us nowadays: Are we conformed to this world in their aims and methods and the way they live or have we become a new creation inside and outside? The Christians who do not honor their bodies expose them to ill treatment and insults when they put on inappropriate clothes. They adorn themselves in a way that does not conform to the honor of the temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

As the Lord entered the temple and drove out those who sold and bought and did not care for the holiness of the temple, the same will happen in His second coming when He drives out all those who did not honor their bodies and exposed their flesh to corruption and the work of the devil because it is written, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

Questions

1. Why did the Logos (the Word) become flesh?
2. What is the mutual relationship between the body and the soul in the spiritual life?
3. “The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.” Explain.
4. How does a Christian regard his members, especially those that people consider of a low degree?
5. “Do not be conformed to this world in your life.” Explain.

Conclusion:

We attempt to keep our bodies clean and suitable residence for the Holy Spirit in us. We keep our bodies from ungodly practices and from the lust of the world.

Applications:

- ❖ Performing spiritual and social services, making use of our bodies to achieve the Lord's purposes towards love.
- ❖ Holding a debate about the body and invite a spiritual doctor and a physician to attend the debate.
- ❖ Offering services to comfort bodily sufferings of some people such as patients.
- ❖ Perpetual prayer: "Keep my body to be a temple for your Spirit". We have to go to our father of confession when we feel that our mind or our members have been corrupted by any lust.

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

Week 1- Different Kinds of Soil

Week 2- St. Luke the Apostle

Week 3- The Hymns of Kiahk

Week 4- How to Begin a New Year

Week 1 - Different Kinds of Soil

Objective:

- ❖ To recognize hindrances to spiritual development

Memory Verse:

“He who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understand it, who indeed bear fruit and produces” (Matthew 13:23)

References

- ❖ “A Sower went out to sow” Fr. Bishoy Abdel Messih
- ❖ “The parables of Lord Christ” Dr. Maurice Tawadros
- ❖ The Parables of Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:3-22)

Introduction:

A Sower went out to Sow

Great crowds gathered about the Lord Jesus on the Beach of Galilee Sea. The Lord told them many things in parables. One of these parables is the parable of the Sower. A Sower went out to sow and as he sowed some seeds fell along the path, on the rocky ground and upon thorns and on the good soil which brought forth grain, some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. Then His disciples came and said to Him “why do you speak to them in parables?” and He answered them “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given”.

We wonder why was this preference. Was it because the disciples were more prepared to receive the word? Or because they were more ready to receive, comprehend and understand? Or because they were chosen? The Lord Jesus blessed their eyes because they saw and their ears because they heard and He said to them “Many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it and to hear what you hear and did not hear it” (Notice that these verses are repeated and prayed by the Church in the Intercession of the Gospel to show us our status before God when we listen to the Holy Gospel and obey His word that He grants us.

Lesson Outlines:

Types of Soil

The Lord Jesus explained to His disciples the four types of soil. You can read the Gospel in Matthew (3:3-23) to study these types. It is of our benefit if we observe, measure and examine ourselves in the light of what the wisdom of God has given us in this parable (Read the text with the children and discuss every type with them). The Lord Jesus showed that the sown seeds are the words of God that never vanish (1 Peter 1:23). The sower is the Lord Jesus Christ, either in person or through His ministers. The people are the work of God and the ministers are working with God (1 Corinthians 3:9). Preaching the multitude is sowing seeds and the soil in which the seeds are sown is the hearts of men which vary according to their type.

The Path

1. Why did the Lord Jesus call this soil the path?
2. Why is this type of soil dangerous?
3. When can our hearts be like the soil of the path?
4. How can we cure our life if this type of soil appears?

These questions are for you to answer in your contemplation and prayers during your study of this type of soil and remember that those who listen to the word of God without understanding or they listen but neglect it, the word gets out of the other ear without leaving any effect and become an easy prey for the devil who seizes every message thrown on this soil.

Exercise

Did you notice that absent mindedness and the inability to concentrate and indifference deprives the word of God in the heart of due care and guard? If it is so, let us bow in worship and offer repentance and raise prayer out of the heart praying the Lord Jesus to surround the heart with a strong fence, strengthen the will, deepens care, concentrate, thinking so that we may say with David, "I have laid up Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11).

The Rocky Places

How can the hearts of flesh be like stones? When the materialistic spirit fills the heart and replaces mercy and kindness with cruelty and roughness and judgment of others. Here listening to the word does not lead us to heaven, even if we receive it with care and joy. It is not enough for the heart to be affected with the word at the moment but it is important that the heart dissolves with it. Starting the way is not the main goal. It is very important to continue, persist and bear patience as it is written, "But he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). Let us ask ourselves:

- ❖ Do I have firm principles, strong determination, and ready will?
- ❖ If an affliction takes place, do I refrain from worship, desert the spiritual atmosphere and complain against God?

- ❖ If I discover that the soil of my heart is of the stony type; let me have and practice these exercises:
 - Crush the stones and destroy pride through repentance, contrition, thanksgiving and endurance.
 - Pouring tears of repentance to soften the cruel heart.
 - Carefulness in all types of behavior through perpetual prayers and reading the Bible.
 - Abstaining from listening to evil words, useless talk, seeing evil sights, perpetual confession so that the heart may be kept pure, alive and sensitive.

The Thorny Ground

Thorns grew up...this means that it was not in sight the time the grains were sown. It is thorns that choke the seeds. What are the choking thorns?

- ❖ Worries of life, increasing concerns, care and bitterness of heart, the conceit of the rich (Danger does not live in the wealth itself but it lies in the conceit of the wealthy man and dependence on the wealth and being deceived by it), desires for all things...
- ❖ If the Lord reveals to me that many thorns are there in the soil of my heart: Let me practice this exercise: Purify the heart and examine it, confess to the father of confession, confess every care, anxiety, concern, conceit, dependence on property or talents...

The Good soil

What distinguishes this ground from the others? Contemplate the Lord's saying, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples". Notice that this good ground was not free from stones or thorns. The same case is with the saints who are not free from the remains of sin, but they are only free of the domination and authority of sin. Let us ask ourselves:

- ❖ Do we hear the word and understand it?
- ❖ Do we obey the word in the spirit of modesty?
- ❖ Does the word bear fruit in our life for the glory of God and the extension of his kingdom?
- ❖ If saints differ in the extent of bearing fruit, let us aim at the maximum so that we may bring forth grain a hundredfold as the Scripture says, "bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10).

Conclusion:

We should always try to be fruitful in our life from every spiritual word we hear. We also ask God that He provides and blesses the fruits because he is the source and provider of every good in our life.

Applications:

- ❖ Read your Bible this week and bring to class questions about things that you did not understand next week
- ❖ Evaluate yourself whenever you hear a sermon, how did you
- ❖ Try to study hymns and melodies about devoting and dedicating your life to the Lord.
- ❖ Show films about the parables of the Lord Christ.

Week 2 - St. Luke the Apostle

Objective:

- ❖ To learn about the life of St. Luke
- ❖ To choose one of his virtues as an example to our lives

Memory Verse:

“It seems good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all the things from the very first, to write to you” (Luke 1:3)

References:

- ❖ Coptic Synaxarium –Vol. 1- 22nd day of the month of Tobah
- ❖ Introduction to the Gospel of St. Luke and Acts- The New Open Study Bible
- ❖ The explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke by Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty
- ❖ The applied explanation of the Bible

Introduction:

St. Luke is one of the seventy apostles who wrote the Gospel of St. Luke and the book of Acts. He was a Greek physician and thus was the only gentile who contributed to the New Testament. His name appears only three times in the New Testament in Colossian 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11 and in Philemon 24.

Lesson Outlines:

St. Luke wrote the Gospel of St. Luke with the compassion and warmth of a family physician. He also cared about the details of the stories. He cared about showing the perfect humanity of the son of Man, Jesus Christ. St Luke documented the chronology of Jesus Christ's ancestry, birth and earthly life before moving carefully and chronologically through His earthly ministry. Six of the miracles of Jesus Christ were mentioned only in the gospel of St. Luke. These include, catching great fish and calling of the first disciples (Luke 5:1-11), raising the widow's son (Luke 7:11-16), healing of a crippled woman (Luke 13:10-17), healing of the man who had dropsy (Luke 14:1-6), cleansing of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19), and healing the ear of the servant of the high priest (Luke 22:49-51). The gospel of St. Luke was probably written around 60 AD

Similarly the book of Acts is also written with much details to cover the last recorded words of Jesus Christ “ the Great Commission” to the men and women who took that commission seriously and began to spread the news of the risen Savior to the rest of the world. St. Luke was a close and faithful follower of St. Paul in many of his trips. So, he was an actual eyewitness for chapters 13-28 of the book of Acts. It is also likely that he had opportunities to interview key witnesses in Jerusalem as St. Peter and St. John regarding the events recorded in Acts 1-12. The book of Acts is written sometime between 62 AD and the middle of the second century.

Both the Gospel of St. Luke and the book of Acts were written to a friend of St. Luke named Theophilus who was a gentile. Acts 1:1 refers Theophilus to the former account, which is the Gospel of St. Luke.

After the martyrdom of St. Peter and St Paul, St. Luke went through Rome preaching the word of God. Gradually, the people who worshipped idols and some of the non-believer Jew rose against him and went and told Nero, the Emperor of Rome about his teaching. Before being captured St. Luke gave his books to a fisherman and told him that these will lead him to God’s way. Nero captured him and placed him in the prison and ordered that his hand that wrote the books be severed from his body. However, St. Luke miraculously was able to cleave his hand back to him and then separate it again. This made the head of the cabinet of the Emperor and his wife as well as two hundred and seventy six others to believe in Jesus Christ. Finally Nero the emperor ordered that they all be beheaded including St. Luke. Thus, he received the crown of Martyrdom on the 22nd of Babah. St. Luke remained unmarried all his life and was dedicated to the service.

Finally, his body was placed in a sack and was cast in the sea. The waves lead it to an island where a believer found it and buried him with great honor.

Conclusion:

St. Luke had used his talents and skills as a physician to investigate and document the details of the life of Jesus Christ. He also was the only one to write about the history of the first church and the early spread of Christianity in the Book of Acts. Thus his impact on Christianity was great through these two books.

Application:

- ❖ Learn from St. Luke the detailed reading of the Bible with full understanding of its events and stories.
- ❖ Use our talents to impact Christianity in one way or another, even on a small scale.
- ❖ Investigate through the Internet what more information you can find about St. Luke or his books.

Week 3 - The Hymns of Kiahk

Objective:

- ❖ Understand the rites of the church
- ❖ Sharing in the church hymns.

Memory Verse:

“I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psalm 34:1)

References

- ❖ “The Spirituality of the Hymn” Part 7, Bishop Matteous
- ❖ “The Psalmody of Kiahk: Seven and Four” St. George Church Sporting

Introduction

The Coptic Orthodox Church is characterized by three important qualities in the Month of Kiahk:

1. The melodies of Kiahk or what is called “Seven and Four”.
2. Special texts that are read on Sunday Eves.
3. The Gospels of the Four Sundays.

Lesson Outlines:

I will turn aside and see this great sight

In the month of Kiahk, the whole church lives in a state of preparedness so that she may receive the Incarnate Son of God. The most prominent signs of the Divine Incarnation in the Old Testament, was that splendid appearance of the Lord to Moses the chief prophet on the Mountain of God Horeb. The Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in the middle of a bush. He looked and lo, the bush was burning; yet it was not consumed. Moses said, “I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt” (Exodus 3:2,3).

Moses fasted forty days and he received the two tablets of the Testimony written by the finger of God. That is why we fast the same period of time to receive the Incarnate Word of God. We have to stay up the nights in worship, raising praises to the Lord, giving thanks, glorifying God and in a state of joy. The church, guided by the Holy Spirit, expresses the spiritual feelings of the human soul when she lives in the heaven of God, frees herself from the ties of the language, and unites with the Lord.

The top of these melodies is what the end of the third melody “Praise the Lord” utters. Let our souls wait for the coming of Lord Jesus Christ.

My mouth is filled with the praise and with your glory all the day

When David the Prophet said, “Seven times a day I praise You for Your righteous ordinances” (Psalm 119:164), he clarified that seven is a complete number. In the same way, the church organized the Canonical hours or the Seven-hour prayers to be prayed all the daylong. The rite that characterizes the Coptic month of Kiahk emphasizes this fact. This rite is known as Seven and Four. It means seven hymns glorifying the Mother of God, Theotokos. They are sung on the Seven days of the week to remind us of the perpetual worship and four hymns.

The meaning of some words used in the Melody

“Theotokeya” (Theotokos): to glorify the Virgin St. Mary

It is a Greek word that means “The Mother of God”. It includes a group of Christian dogmas, which are written in Coptic poetic language, followed by Glorification of the Heavenly Father, then the Lady Virgin.

Hoas:

A Coptic word meaning, “Praise” and the four hoas of praise are quoted from the Books of the Old Testament.

The First Hoas of Praise:

This is the Song of Moses the Prophet and the Children of Israel. The Church sings this song to imitate them and to glorify and thank God because He saved us from the land of bondage and granted us the freedom of the Children of God.

The Second Hoas (Psalm 136):

Give thanks to the Lord: To recognize His greatness and mercy, the church sings it to remember the mercies of God hoping for the Kingdom of God.

The Third Hoas:

The Three young men Hymn (Apocrypha)

The Fourth Hoas:

A group of psalms 148,149,150.

We thank the Lord for His mercies and express our delight for the inheritance and salvation.

Lobsh: Interpretation or explanation and it follow the hymn of praise or the Tathakya.

Epsalia: A hymn in the form of a poem, which is alphabetically written.

The basic system of annual holy melody necessitates singing the first three hymns of praise with their interpretations (lobshes) then the three young-men melody, the commemoration and the doxologies, then the fourth hymn of praise then the Epsali and Theotokos' hymn of Sunday.

But the rite of singing melodies in the blessed month of Kiahk is most enriching, abundant and enjoyable to anyone who practices singing its hymns.

The following is a rapid presentation of its basic system and the added melodies, songs, readings, and methods. All is included in the Book of the Holy Psalmody of the Coptic Month of Kiahk.

There is a large group of hymns organized to accompany each Tathakya. They are divided into two main groups "Adam" and "Watis Psalia" (the bush) according to the beginning of two famous hymns:

The first is: Adam the first who is created, You brought him back, O Mother of Jesus, from the land of labor and toil O Mary, Virgin Mary.

The second is: The burning bush seen by Moses in the desert. And the fire burning inside it but never hurting or harming it.

The first type has a special tone and is devoted for Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. The second type is characterized by its long tone and is sung on the other days of the week.

There are several hymns that are sung according to these two techniques. These are hymns, which are arranged to be sung with the four hymns of praise, to explain their meaning and repeat the same ideas some of them are sung in the Vespers or in the Matins.

Praise the Lord (Hoas Erof)

The Coptic month of Kiahk is the month of hymns. During this month the church offers us a large number of hymns. They are all nice, attractive and enjoyable. The fourth hymn of praise is characterized by an added passage to be said after each part of Psalm 150. This passage is: "Glory and praise befit our Lord. Praise the Lord our God. Singing psalms is good".

In the Holy Mass, some intercessions, special melodies for the passage of Acts, and certain hymns for the Gospel, are sung. Also we listen to a certain tone that characterizes the Psalm of the Gospel

and the same is with the last psalm of distribution. The church calls us and invites us to test the life of singing hymns when we say, “Holy, Holy, Holy, your glory fills the whole earth”.

Anthologies (Church readings) in the Month of Kiahk

Sunday Eves: The Gospel should be about a woman who performed a good deed to stand for Virgin Mary who received Salvation.

The Eve of the first Sunday: The woman who broke the jar of perfume and poured the perfume on Jesus’ head (Mark 14).

The Eve of the Second Sunday: The woman who lived a sinful life. When she heard that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster jar full of perfume and stood behind Jesus, by His feet crying and wetting His feet with her tears, then she dried His feet with her hair, kissed them, and poured the perfume on them (Luke 7).

The Eve of the Third Sunday: Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law (Luke 4).

The Eve of the Fourth Sunday: The woman who helped Jesus and His disciples with their belongings (Luke 8). How wonderful is the story that we listen to through what the church reads.

In the Gospels of Sundays

The church reads the first chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke. She divides the chapter into four parts:

The first Sunday: The angel of the Lord informs Zechariah of the good news (Luke 1:1-25).

The second Sunday: The birth of Jesus Announced. The Angel of the Lord carries good news to the virgin (Luke 1:26- 38).

The third Sunday: St. Mary visits St. Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56).

The fourth Sunday: The birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:57-80).

The Ember day: The Shepherds and the Angels (Luke 2:1-20).

The Eve of the Feast: Wise men from the East visit Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12).

Conclusion:

Kiahk praises brings great joy to the spirit and soul during the nativity fasting period so that we reach the feast of Nativity with abundance of joy and open hearts to receive the Babe and the king Jesus Christ.

Applications:

- ❖ Always attend the holy mass and study the hymns of the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospels. Repeat them in the church.
- ❖ Hymns sung to the Theotokos, the Mother of God, are full of symbols and similes about Virgin Mary. Collect them and make a wall Chart.

Week 4 - How to Begin a New Year

Objective:

- ❖ To prepare the students to receive the new year in a spiritual manner

Memory Verse:

“But You are the same and Your years will not fail” (Hebrews 1:12)

References

- ❖ “The life of repentance and cleanliness” Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ “How to begin a New Year” Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ “Words of Spiritual Benefits” Part 1,2,3, Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ “How to begin” Bishop Bemin
- ❖ “Turn me my Lord and I shall be turned” Fr. Youssef Assaad

Introduction:

Is the beginning from God or from man? God is the beginning and the end.

He is the beginning and the end. He loved you before your birth. You were in His mind. Then He uttered and you were formed. His love to you made Him do that.

Lesson Outlines:

Remember the situations in which the Lord showed His love to man

- ❖ Read the story of the Lord and Jerusalem (Ezekiel 16:1-14), which indicates God’s covenant with the human soul.
- ❖ The word of God was dear in those days. In the days of Samuel, the Lord chose a little child. And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord (1 Samuel 3:21).
- ❖ In Isaiah the Lord says, “Come now, let us reason together; says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

After the Exile the Lord began His work with the people

- ❖ “Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel. My way is hid from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God? He gives power to the faint and to him who has no might he increases strength” (Isaiah 40:27-31).
- ❖ “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save” {Isaiah 59:1}.
- ❖ St. Paul the Apostle summarizes the whole topic in his Epistle to the Hebrews: “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

God then makes a Peace Initiative

The most important part of it is that it is a Peace Initiative with the enemies: that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

God also makes a peace Initiative for the Salvation of the Nations

- ❖ “For through your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return” (Isaiah 10:22, Romans 9:27).
- ❖ The Lord made the incarnation initiative and the initiative of the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ The Lord comes to you and wants you to go with Him. He is the beginning and the end.

Your own attitude

- ❖ You may be wasting your time at the well with the Samaritan woman keeping away from the Salvation of yourself.
- ❖ You may be running away, living in the tombs and the burial caves of the Gerasenes with men.
- ❖ You may be walking in the way you think is right but the course may deviate with you as what happened to Saul.
- ❖ You may not see Christ, who is calling as you are completely indulged in your worries, grieves and tears like Mary Magdalene on the day of resurrection.
- ❖ But the Lord has methods to deal with all the souls. Christ is still searching for you.

A sure start

There is no doubt that baptism is a chance for you to sow a spiritual seed in your heart. Your conscience may have not awaken you, you may have not understood the meaning of this initiative but be sure that you have already begun, but what you have to do is to go back to the covenant of baptism and test how the Lord deals with you.

Stand by the roads

Thus say's the Lord, "Stand by the roads, and look and ask for the ancient paths where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). Repentance is a private talk with oneself and counting the expenses. Mar Ephraim the Syrian says:

- ❖ "Those who spend a lot and have no income soon ruin themselves".
- ❖ "Days quickly go by and our life today is not the same of our life yesterday. So repent now as death may come suddenly tonight".
- ❖ "If you are prepared to do anything begin it now at this moment".
- ❖ "If a good idea occurs to you, do not sleep. Do your work immediately?"
- ❖ "We should grieve as our life is worn out everyday. Days pass quickly to drive us out of the world and we do not hurry to do good or to give alms and this causes grief. Days go by and our sins increase".
- ❖ St. Anthony says, "Labor and toil when you are young so that you may have rest when you are old. Let us toil for a short time and then we shall have comfort forever".

Look and ask

This collection of the fathers' sayings urging us to go back to the roads of our fathers and to examine ourselves and seek the salvation of our souls: Renaissance, sometimes, means going back to the old principles and ways of living. It does not always mean running after what is new and modern "If you do not know, O fairest among women follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your kids beside the shepherds' tents" (The Song of Solomon 1: 8). Explain the meaning of the tracks of the flock.

Signs of the sound start

- ❖ Love of God
- ❖ Hate of evil deeds
- ❖ Love of people
- ❖ Deep peace of the heart

Conclusion:

The Lord made the initiation for me through your only begotten Son. Let me respond today and have a sound beginning. Help me to know the way and keep me firm in it so that I may not deviate to the left or to the right till I come to you. You are the Beginning and the End. You are the True Way leading to Life".

Applications:

- ❖ A guide for examining oneself is to be distributed among young people
- ❖ You can examine yourself by several ways:
 - First: Examine the sins of thought, saying and work (action).

- Second: Examine the sins of the souls (pride), and the heart (hatred, sinful passions) and the body (eye -tongue -feeling).
- Third: Faith (is it practical or theoretical, in time of trouble or in time of joy).
- Hope: Does it last for the whole life long? Are there despair, negligence and perversion?
- Love: to God and is clear in prayers and spiritual longing towards your relatives and is shown in giving, service and forgiving those who insult you.

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY

Week 1- Glory to God in the Highest

Week 2- Proverbs

Week 3- The Wedding at Cana

Week 4- Trinitarianism and Monotheism

Week 1 - Glory to God in the Highest

Objective:

- ❖ To evaluate the effectiveness of Nativity in our spiritual life

Memory Verse:

“For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples”
(Luke 2:30-31)

References

- ❖ “The effectiveness of Nativity” H. H. Pope Shenauda III
- ❖ “Contemplations on Nativity” H. H. Pope Shenauda III
- ❖ “Glory, peace and joy” Bishop Bemin

Introduction:

Glory, Peace and Joy

This angelic song is very powerful. It is a splendid declaration of what happened the moment Jesus was born. It is very brief but expenses great joy. Thousands of heavenly angels sing this song on behalf of heaven and earth. For the first time in, their eternal history, the angels proclaimed and announced a new revolution in the universe on the Day of Nativity. They could keep silent inspire of the people’s state of unconsciousness and they started out singing a pleasant, sweet wonderful song, giving glory to God in the Highest, preached peace and announced pleasure for the people.

Lesson Outlines:

Glory to God in the Highest

- ❖ Great is the glory of God. It appeared in the Creation and in Mount Sinai and later in the Transfiguration and in the resurrection.
- ❖ But today we are face to face with the glory of lowliness. It is the hidden glory and the top of emptiness. The son is the bright glory of the Father and the image of His essence. We liken Him to the glorified way that comes out of the sun to shine on the people, but the Lord appeared in the image of man and shared the nature of men (except sin).
- ❖ When the Lord incarnated and came to live among us made the angles and all the peoples of the world after that to worship the Lord and give Him glory and praise Him in the Highest:

Holy, Holy, Holy the Lord of Host, His glory fills all the earth (Isaiah 6:3).

- ❖ When we come near to Bethlehem and see the Son, we feel a great love for Him so we give glory to the Father who gave us His Son. The Son is the Divine Wisdom. He is the incarnate Logos.
- ❖ That is why Christianity regards the weakness of the Lord as meekness and lowliness. The cross is glory (The Lord reigns on the Cross) and the manger is glory...but it is the glory of meekness.

Peace on earth

Why did the earth lose its peace? That was because of the sin which:

- ❖ Sin separated man from God.
- ❖ Deformed man's spiritual beauty and made him live in conflict with himself.
- ❖ Corrupted the family system, man ruled over woman and the woman's desire would be for her husband.
- ❖ Made people cruel e.g. Cain killed Abel.
- ❖ This lost peace could not be restored except through the incarnate Christ.
- ❖ Christ is the Mediator between God and man. He removes the barrier between them so that man can see God the Father in Christ, and the Father can see in Him the image of the righteous man whom He created and wanted. Thus peace between God and man will be restored. He will also be a mediator between the heavenly and the earthly beings, He will establish peace between the hosts of angels and among the simple shepherds and among all who surround the manager in one song the first half of which is in Heaven (glory) and the second half is on earth (peace).
- ❖ He makes peace between man and his brother. Peace here is different from the political concept of peace. It is peace within the frame of love and truth together. In this way Christ mends what sin corrupted inside the heart of man, and restores love and calmness to him and destroys the desires of the flesh inside him as "There is no peace, says the Lord for the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22, 57:21).

Good will towards men

It is a spiritual good will:

- ❖ In performing His will.
- ❖ In sacrificing for Him because He emptied Himself of His glory for the will of His Father, in praising His name with warm worship. God was pleased with the apostles who preached His name. He was pleased with the martyrs who endured the torments thankfully. He was pleased with the ascetics who sold everything and lived in asceticism and simplicity.
- ❖ Yes it is the spiritual concept of good will...true good will for which virgin Mary is still praying so that we may attain and she is standing in the middle of our world carrying her son in her hands, in great delight while the angels are shouting "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men".

Conclusion:

Let us celebrate the nativity feast in a spiritual manner to receive our king into our hearts with reverence and honor.

Applications:

- ❖ Practice confession, receiving communion, and reconciliation with God.
- ❖ Reconcile between two friends who are not on good terms with each other so that the peace of the baby of Bethlehem may fill their hearts.
- ❖ Send gifts to the poor to please them. Pray with them in their houses.
- ❖ Study the delightful Nativity melodies.

Week 2 - Proverbs

Objective:

- ❖ To learn about the book of Proverbs, its aim and content
- ❖ To guide the students to wisdom in their life even at a young age

Memory Verse:

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7)

References:

- ❖ The New King James- New open Bible
- ❖ Proverbs by Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Introduction:

Wisdom writings frequently condemn laziness, praise honestly and promise a fuller and a nicer life to those who heed the wisdom words. These words sometimes wrap themselves in dramatic stories, such as the saga of job. More often, they appear as short descriptive sayings that make them, easy to remember. For example “ It’s better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with the contentious wife” Proverbs 25:24, or “Go to the ant, you lazybones, consider its ways and be wise” (Proverbs 6:6) where a model for hard work can be found in one of the tiniest of earth creatures. Stories and saying such as these are compiled in books that become known as wisdom literature, which is represented, by the books of job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

King Solomon composed proverbs and Ecclesiastes as 1 king 4:32 confirm that he wrote 3000 proverbs. However, some are attributed to some unknown people are Agur

“ Proverbs 30:1” and King Lemuel “ Proverbs 31:1.”

Lesson Outlines:

The cornerstones of wisdom are outlines in the book of Proverbs .

The simple, the ignorant and the young are especially in need of learning the ways of wisdom. Those who are already wise can increase their wisdom by contemplating “The words of the wise and their riddles” (Proverbs 1:6). Only the fools, who scorn and refuse, wise instructions.

“The fear of the lord is the beginning of knowledge” Proverbs 1:7 “and reverence to God is essential to all wisdom” “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce” (Proverbs 3:5,9). Second is to listen to parents or elders “my child, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments” (Proverbs 3:1). Adherence to this advice will result in a long fruitful life, and once acquired, it will be an inoculation against evil and sinful ways.

Self-discipline is a major part of wisdom teaching. “A wise child loves discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke” (Proverbs 13:1). “Fools are not tempered and quick to reveal feelings, the wise are calm and restrained, one who is quick tempered acts foolishly, and the schemer is hated.

Be righteous, as the “human spirit is the lamp of the Lord; searching every inmost part” (Proverbs 20:27). It searches and illuminates each part of the mind to determine proper behavior. “The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn” where as “the way of the wicked is like deep darkness”

Proverbs 4:18,19. The righteous are delivered from trouble, Proverbs 11:18, where as “the wicked earn no real gain, but those who saw righteousness get a true reward.” (Proverbs 11:18)

Marital fidelity and sexual continence are important parts of wisdom teaching. “The lips of a loose woman drip honey... but in the end she is better as wormwood” (Proverbs 5:3-4), where as a true wife is as a lovely deer, a graceful doe” (Proverbs 5:18). The fool follows the adulteress “like an ox to a slaughter, a stag toward the trap” or “a bird rushing in to snare.” (Proverbs 7:22-23). Also, “A seductress is dressed provocatively, like a prostitute, ready to prey on youthful innocence. She titillates him by kissing him and describing the perfumed bed in her home. Her husband is away on a trip, she says, and so she invites him to her house (Proverbs 7).

Chapter 6 lists 6 things the lord hates, **seven that are an abomination to Him**. “Haughtily eyes, a lying tongue, hand that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil, a lying witness who testifies felony, and one who sows discord in a family” (Proverbs 6:16-19).

The wise is encouraged to look around and **learn from the small creatures**. “Four things on earth are small, yet they are exceedingly wise: The ants are a people without strength, yet they provide their food in summer, the badgers are a people without power, yet they make their homes in the rocks; the locusts have no kings, yet all of them march in rank; the lizard can be groped in the hand, yet it is found in the king’s palaces.” (Proverbs 30:24-28).

Our duties to others are outlined in Chapter 31. “Speak out for those who cannot speak; for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8-9).

Conclusion:

The book of Proverbs is a great book for the young youth to guide them in the correct path of their life. It is a great asset in the Bible for immediate counseling whenever you need it that is available to us all the time.

Applications:

- ❖ Read 2 chapters every day of this book over the coming two weeks
- ❖ Form a 10 minute review and discussion of the students' favorite verses in this book in two weeks time

Week 3 - The Wedding at Cana

Objectives:

- ❖ To understand the limits of social participation
- ❖ Wine and Christianity

Memory Verse:

“Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5: 18).

References

- ❖ St. John’s Gospel and its various explanations

Introduction:

The Symbolic Meaning

This nice story has deep meanings. There were six jars of stone standing, for the Jewish rites of purification. The Jews considered the number of seven as the complete number. So number of six indicates incompleteness. Here is an indication that Jesus completed what the Old Testament was lacking in his first miracle thus declaring the beginning of the New Testament. The beloved John gives another comment. Each stone jar held twenty or thirty gallons of water. This means that Jesus offered the guests about one hundred and eighty gallons of wine. The guests of a simple rural party whatever their number was, could not consume this. Here is an indication of the rich and abundant grace of God.

Lesson Outlines:

Christ’s Social Participation

Lord Jesus attended the wedding party at Cana in Galilee together with his disciples. He also accompanied them to Lazarus’s tomb (Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep). Christian participation is not a formal one neither is it a sort of social behavior but it is a response to a cordial call as it is participation within the frame of truth. A Christian man is not prepared to participate in the works of darkness but he reproaches them. May our hearts be gentle and decent and share all the people in their feelings, in deep love and in complete obedience to truth.

Christ obeys his mother

He knew that his hour had not come yet “O woman what have you to do with me?” (This style does not mean that Christ despised his mother because it was he who demanded that we should honor our parents, so he could not despair his mother), the word “woman” here means “Lady”... She knew that He loved her and obeyed her “Do whatever He tells you”. This reveals the importance of intercession of the Virgin Mary as she knew His will more than all other people and she was obedient to him so our prayers are acceptable when we ask for her intercession.

The Problem of Wine at Cana in Galilee

The stone jars were empty indicating that the old rites of purification did not succeed in purifying man. In fact the word of God alone purifies man and when He said, “Fill the jars with water” the water brought people back to reason, as it was the word of God that worked and had its great effect on people. The word of God gave the water in the jars an abundant power. The wine, which Jesus gave, did not deprive people of their senses. The wine of Cana in Galilee refers to Christ’s love “For your love is better than wine” (The Song of Solomon 1:2, 4:10).

The first miracle that Jesus Christ performed was turning the water into wine and the last miracle He performed was turning wine into his own blood. That marks the way of spiritual life that has now become clear...Water then wine then blood. This means that the normal natural life of the body (water) contacts with Christ in (wine) His love and this in its turn qualifies man to receive Christ’s Holy Body (and Blood). The good wine, which Christ offered, refers to Christ’s purification of the instincts of man in the mystery of marriage.

The Christian attitude towards wine

There is nothing defiled in Christianity concerning food and drinking “Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man” (Mathew 15:11). The problem lies in the sort of that thing and the way of using it. The good wine is used in the Church to be turned into the blood of Christ.

- ❖ “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5: 18). Either we are comforted by the Spirit or enjoy the wine of this world and perish. Thus the following principles restrict the Christian man’s behavior towards wine, the cinema and all social matters”.
- ❖ “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful” (1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:23).
- ❖ “All things are lawful for me but I will not be enslaved by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12).
- ❖ “All things are lawful but not all things build up” (1 Corinthians 10:23).
- ❖ “If food is a cause of my brother’s falling, I will never eat meat” (1 Corinthians 8:13).
- ❖ “For zeal for Your house has consumed me” (Psalm 69: 9). Jesus drove out all those who sold and bought twice; at the beginning of his ministry and at the end of his ministry.
- ❖ How did Jesus regard those who believed in His miraculous deeds?

- ❖ This chapter of the Gospel must be for your benefit. You should enjoy the following:
 - Cordial spiritual participation with man.
 - Enjoy the Holy wine of the Divine love
 - Holy conscious enlightened zeal for the temple of God, inside and outside (i.e. your heart and your Church).

Conclusion:

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15). Your humane participation and help to those who are depressed and those who are happy, be careful that this participation should stem out of the heart.

Applications:

- ❖ Making use of films or other media means available that illustrates this miracle.
- ❖ Make a wall Chart. Draw and explain the wedding at Calla in Galilee and the stages of this event.

Week 4 - Trinitarianism and Monotheism

Objective:

- ❖ To understand the type of the Lord's Oneness (of three Hypostases)

Memory Verse:

"I and My Father are one" (John 10:30)

References:

- ❖ "Our Holy Faith" Bishop Youannis
- ❖ "Truly we believe in One God" Fr. Moussa Wahba
- ❖ "The Message of Monotheism and Trinitarianism" Yassa Mansour
- ❖ "Monotheism and Trinitarianism" Fawzy Girgis
- ❖ "We believe in One God" St. George church, Sporting
- ❖ "God is One in Trinity" St. George church, Sporting

Introduction:

This dogma may be difficult to understand and because of this creed we are accused of atheism because they think that we worship three gods. Although it is difficult for our mind to recognize and understand the nature of God, yet the Lord, out of His love to us allowed us to contemplate His divine nature and understand Him in a way that gives comfort to the soul that enjoys faith, which simply believes every word written in the Holy Bible.

Lesson Outlines:

Our belief in One God

The problem that faces those who attack Trinitarianism is that they separate Trinitarianism from Monotheism. They think that the Christian dogma of Trinitarianism is a sort of atheism or polytheism. But we as Christians say that we believe in One God that has no partner. We do not believe in three gods. All the attacks directed to the belief of three gods have no relation with Christianity whatsoever. Christians believe in One God. The following proves this:

- ❖ "The Lord our God is One Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4).
- ❖ "You believe that God is one; you do well" (James 2:19).
- ❖ The Orthodox Creed states: "Truly we believe in one God"

- ❖ When the Lord Christ referred to the three Hypostases He said, “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). He said “In the name” not “In the names”.

Three Hypostases - The Holy Trinity

We believe that this One God has three Hypostases. “Hypostasis” is a Greek word meaning “essential private quality or characteristic”. We say private characteristic to distinguish it from the several other qualities or attributes of the Lord such as love, mercy, justice, power...that is why we can call it the characteristic:

1. The first characteristic is the existence or the essence. Can we imagine that God is without his characteristic? On the contrary it is a must that He exist, as He is the source of existence.
2. The second characteristic is the talking intellect. He created the world with, and with Him He controls the world.
3. The third characteristic is life. God must be a living being, He Himself is life. God is a living wise being, self-existent, speaking by His word and living by His spirit.

The names of Hypostases

Instead of saying: the first Hypostasis, the second Hypostasis and the third Hypostasis. We give them the names that Christ himself had given them (Matthew 28:19). Even if they are of our human language, yet they show the work of each Hypostasis to a great extent.

1. The first Hypostasis: The essence the origin is called the Father.
2. The Second Hypostasis: Because He comes out of the First Hypostasis is called the Son.
3. The Third Hypostasis: Because He is the giver of life is called the Spirit.

Because these names are our human language about the divine nature of God and His characteristics which in fact surpasses any comprehension so we have to set some precaution:

1. This does not mean that any of them is better than the other. They are distinct in the type of work and effect but they are not distinct in honor, essence and nature.
2. The relationship between the Father and the Son is not that used and referred to in the human language when we speak about human fathers and sons. The obstruct meaning of these words are used in expressions such as: The son of Egypt, the son of the Nile, we also say that fire generates heat and the mind generates ideas.
3. There is no separation between Hypostases: The son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son and the Holy Spirit is in them both. When we think our mind gives birth to a certain idea this idea may come out of your mind and goes to somebody else but this does not mean that the idea has deserted you; it is still in you i.e. in your mind.
4. The Father never precedes the Son or the Holy Spirit in time as it is impossible to imagine God without intellect or without life at anytime, the same as when you light a candle: the light and the flame come at one time; neither of them precedes the other.

Similarities

Man

- ❖ He is an inner soul and an inner existence. This soul has a private will and a certain desire but the soul cannot work without intellect and liveliness.
- ❖ The role of the intellect is clear when man thinks of the solution of a certain problem, and utters the solution by his mouth. At that time he says “I solved the problem by my mind”. This does not mean that his mind is separated from him. We cannot neglect the role of liveliness, which moved the tongue to speak. They are three elements that work together in a unity.
- ❖ “The energy and liveliness” of man has a role when man practices a sport. Here we do not forget how the desire began and how the mind thinks of the easiest way to win.

The Sun

It is a disc of fire (the Father) but it has two distinct tasks, which are to issue light (the Son) and heat (the Holy Spirit). Each of them has its own effect, when we sit in the sun to read we cannot say: I read by the heat of the sun. This is a wrong expression. Although each of them has its own task that the other can do, can you imagine the possibility of their being separated or the existence of two of them without the third?

The role of the Holy Trinity in the life of man

- ❖ Although each Hypostasis has His own work and a certain role, this does not mean that He is separated from the other two: as He cannot perform His role without the others (as in the example of man and the sun).
- ❖ The Father willed to create man. He is the spring of love who did not want man to die after his fall, but He sent His Son to redeem man. He is the fatherly bosom that controls our life, draws the plan of our salvation, accepts us and receives us after we repent our sins.
- ❖ The Son is the divine intellect in whom our image was formed before we were created, with Him we were created. He incarnated the divine love to us when He incarnated and became man so that we may unite with Him and our image which sin deformed may be mended. It is He who redeemed us and became an eternal patron.
- ❖ The Holy Spirit came down upon us (because of Christ unity with us) so He brought us to the divine fellowship with grace, the sanctifies our senses kindles our hearts with love to God and raises our human worship to the divine level. We can deduce the work of each Hypostasis from the following texts.

The work of the Father

- ❖ He chose us in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-4).
- ❖ He destined us in love to be His sons through Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29, Ephesians 1:5).
- ❖ He called us (Romans 8:30).

- ❖ He is God almighty the eternal creator.

The work of the son

- ❖ Redemption (Galatians 1:4, Galatians 3:13, Ephesians 1:7)
- ❖ Giving life (John 1:4)
- ❖ Forgiveness of sins (Matthew 9:6, Acts 10:43, Ephesians 1:7)
- ❖ He is the Son the word (the Logos) and the image of the Father.

The work of the Holy Spirit

- ❖ The New Birth (John 3:5-6)
- ❖ Sanctification (2 Thessalonica 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2)
- ❖ He reproves the world of sin (John 16:8)
- ❖ He is the Spirit that gives life, the Spirit of love the comforter, the paraclete. His shapes of forms include pigeon, the shining cloud, flames of fire, or a breathe from the mouth of the Son of Man.

Conclusion:

We believe in one God in three Hypostasis. We do not believe in three gods or multiple gods.

Applications:

- ❖ Define the hypostasis that all the prayers of the canonical hours and the Masses are directed to.
- ❖ Search for all the verses that indicate that the three Hypostases are in one and he is our Lord One God.

BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY TILL JONAH'S FAST

Use Filler Lessons (placed at the beginning of the book) until the Sunday before Jonah's fast.

LESSONS FOR JONAH'S FAST

Jonah's fast comes two weeks before the Great Fast on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. These lessons are for the Sunday before and the Sunday after Jonah's fast.

Week before Fast: The Final Judgment

Week after Fast: The Book of Habakkuk

Week before Fast - The Final Judgment

Objective:

- ❖ To learn how to behave in the midst of offenses

Memory Verse:

“Sweep me not away with sinners” (Psalm 26:9).

References:

- ❖ “Interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew” Translated by Fr. Marcos Daoud
- ❖ “The parables of Lord Christ” Dr. Maurice Tawadros
- ❖ The Parables of Jesus (Matthew 13:24-30)

Introduction:

Sometimes we ask ourselves: How was evil found and established in the world? Why do evil people exist? What is our attitude towards evil people? Must we resist them? Do we have to remove them from the world?

Lesson Outlines:

The Lord Jesus in a simple parable answered these questions when he talked about the kingdom of God and how He compared it to a field that his owner wanted to sow good seeds in it. While people were asleep His enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain then the weeds appeared also, and the servants of the householder came and said to Him, “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds? He said to them, “An enemy has done this”. The servants said to Him, “Then do you want us to go and gather them? But He said “No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into My barn”.

How was evil found in the world?

God did not create evil but he created man to live in eternal happiness. Evil is keeping away from God and resisting His will. Satan is the source of evil. Satan is the enemy of good, he is complaining against our brethren day and night. The devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. It was he who envied man and tempted him to commit the sin of rebellion in Paradise. With the fall of man, sin came into the world through the envy of the devil (as the Church prays in the Divine Mass) -the enemy sowed the weeds -and the enemy is the devil as the Lord Jesus explained. But the sower of the good seeds is the Son of man, the Lord of Harvest who went up to heaven and gave gifts. The world is the field of Christ as the Father gave everything to Him. The good seeds are the children of kingdom and they bear good fruit for the glory of God. The weeds are the children of the evil and they are good for nothing, they destroy the good seeds and they creep into the fields of wheat.

Why are the evil people found?

The Lord allowed the existence of good and evil in this world. Good and evil mingle together. So the good people can do good with their free will and refrain from evil. The evil people suffer punishment and bear judgment with free will. God created us and gave us freedom. He gave us freedom of will either wheat or weeds. God does not want us as slaves but he wants us to be free sons. He does not want to drive us as sheep but to lead us as free people aware of His good will.

What is our attitude towards the evil people?

As our duty to resist them, what is our attitude? The existence of sins and offenses causes grief to the children of God. They also arouse God's wrath. But hindrances and temptations are these: good must mingle with evil, hypocrites with the faithful in the Church domain, etc. Our duty is not to neglect the field. Let us not forget the weeds so that they may not spread. We have to spend our night working and to uproot them as St. James and St. John said, "Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them" (Luke 9:54). The Son of Man came to deliver not to destroy. He is patient with people but when He comes everything will be put right and every body will be judged (Revelation 20:12,13). Each one will be given according to his work. Angels will proceed to gather the weeds and all offenses...corrupt teachings and false worship will be burnt. All atheists, the greedy, murderers idolaters and hypocrites will be destroyed... and all those who shared them their sins will share them their shame and suffering. All those who shared the saints in godliness will be glorified with them so that we may pray with David "Sweep me not away with sinners" (Psalm 26:9).

What is Hell?

Hell is not the horrible and severe avenger from God but it is the feeling of torture and torment that fills everyone who has refused God. In hell men will weep and gnash their teeth and suffer great pains. This is the fruit of the absence of the light and glory of God when the Lord comes the evildoers will not complain or murmur against Him as they know that they chose that type of life out of their free will, and they resisted light, they loved darkness because their works were evil.

What is the kingdom of God?

The kingdom of God is the glory expected to be declared in the saints the children of God. Our teacher St. Paul the apostle said that Christ “who will change our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power which enables Him even to subject all things to Himself (Philippians 3:21). St. John the Beloved emphasizes this by saying “But we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:21).

St. Macarius the great says “On the Day of Judgment the glory of the Holy Spirit will come out from within adorning and covering the bodies of saints with the glory that was hid in their souls. The bodies of saints will radiate with light and brightness after the resurrection.

St. John Chrysostom says “The bodies of the saints that the spears of persecutors tore up and the swords cut will be raised by God and they will be given complete rest. Their heads which were cut off will wear crowns and their members which were cut off with saws will be adorned with glory and brightness, and will shine as the sun, giving light as the moon as righteousness will be like a white robe and holiness will make them bright and shiny. They will be washed with the blood of Christ in the best appearance.

- ❖ Did God create evil?
- ❖ How was evil found?
- ❖ Why does the Lord allow evildoers to remain in the world?
- ❖ What distinguishes the good from the evil here in this world?
- ❖ What is the good believers’ attitude towards the evil people?
- ❖ How does God correct everything in the end?

Conclusion:

Let us be watchful for that moment that we depart from this world so that we are ready for the judgment day. Be vigilant in your spiritual growth every day in our lives on earth so that we can inherit the kingdom of God.

Applications:

- ❖ Do a project about what did people think and imagine the judgment day.
- ❖ Be regular in your spiritual practices and evaluate your growth with your father of confession or spiritual guide.

Week after Jonah's Fast - The Book of Habakkuk

Objective:

- ❖ To learn the contents and purpose of the Book of Habbakuk
- ❖ To apply the freedom of interaction between Habakkuk and God in our lives.

Memory verse:

“The just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4)

References:

- ❖ The book of Habakkuk and its introduction- the New open Bible
- ❖ Habakkuk- By father Tadros Y. Malaty.

Introduction:

Habakkuk is a Hebrew name derived from the verb habaq “embrace”. Thus his name probably means the one who embraces or clings. This name becomes appropriate at the end of the book when Habakkuk chooses to cling firmly to God regardless of what happens to his nation. Habakkuk is the author of this book that contains only 3 chapters. Habakkuk seems to have been a priest connected with the temple worship. The book was written before the Babylonian captivity and most likely around year 607 B.C.

Outline of Habakkuk:

1. The two problems of Habakkuk and God's reply – chapters 1 and 2
2. The praise of Habakkuk – chapter 3

Lesson Outlines:

Habakkuk ministers during the “death throes” of the nation of Judah. Although repeatedly called to repentance, the nation stubbornly refuses to change her sinful ways. Habakkuk, knowing the hard heartedness of his countrymen, asks God how long this intolerable condition will continue. God replies that the Babylonians will be His chastening rod upon the nation.

Habakkuk is a free thinking prophet who is not afraid to wrestle with issues that tests his faith. He openly and honestly directs his problems to God and waits to see how He will respond to his probing questions. After two rounds of dialogue with God, Habakkuk's increased understanding of the plan,

power, and wisdom of God cause him to conclude with a strong faithful praise. The more he learns about the Planner the more he trusts His plans.

Habakkuk's first dialogue with God takes place in 1:1-4, the prophet asks God how long He will allow the wickedness of Judah to go unpunished. The people of Judah sin with impunity and perverted justice. God's answer is given in 1:5-11; He is raising up the Babylonians as His rod of judgment upon sinful Judah. This answer leads to Habakkuk's second dialogue with God (1:12 to 2:20). The prophet is more perplexed than ever and asks how the righteous God can punish Judah with a nation that is even more wicked. Will the God whose eyes to approve evil reward the Babylonians for their cruelty and idolatry?? Habakkuk waits upon a watch tower for God's second replay. The Lord answers with five woes- of greed and aggression (2:5-8), exploitation and extortion (2:9-11), violence (2:12-14), immorality (2:15-17), and idolatry (2:18-20). God is aware of the sins of the Babylonians, and they will not escape His terrible judgment. But Judah is guilty of the same offenses and stands the same condemnation. Yahweh concludes His answer with the statement of His sovereign majesty: "But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him" (2:20).

The praise of Habakkuk (3): Habakkuk begins by questioning God but he concludes with a psalm of praise for the person (3:1-3), power (3:4-12), and the plan (3:13-19) of God. He now acknowledges God's wisdom in the coming invasion of Judah, and although it terrifies him, he will trust in the Lord. God's creative and redemptive work in the past gives the prophet the confidence in the divine purpose, and hope at a time when he would otherwise despair. "Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (3:18).

Note:

The freedom of Habakkuk in talking to God about his problems and fears and his patience to get the replay from God shows the greatest interaction between man and God. May we enjoy this freedom in interaction with God in all our affairs and may He give us the patience and the faith in His replay and wisdom. "I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch what he will say to me" (Habakkuk 2:1)

Conclusion:

The book of Habakkuk builds to a triumphant climax reached in the last three verses (3:17-19). The beginning of the book and the ending stand in stark contrast: misery to certainty, questioning to affirming, and complaint to confidence. Chapter 3 is one of the most majestic of all scriptures.

Application:

- ❖ Practice the freedom in dialogue with God and await on His replay upon a watch tower as Habakkuk did.

LESSONS FOR THE GREAT FAST PERIOD

Week 0: (Preparation Week) - The Old Testament

Week 1: (Surrender to the Heavenly Father) - Church Fasts

Week 2: (Sunday of Temptation) - Sacrifices in the Old Testament (I)

Week 3: (Sunday of the Prodigal Son) - Sacrifices in the Old Testament (II)

Week 4: (Sunday of the Samaritan Woman) - The Forgiving Father

Week 5: (Sunday of The Sick of Bethesda) - Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

Week 6: (Sunday of The Born Blind) – Dedication of All

Week 7: (Palm Sunday) - No lesson

Week 8: (Resurrection Sunday) – No Lesson

Week 0 - The Old Testament

Objective:

- ❖ To have an overview of the Old Testament
- ❖ To know the books of the Old Testament

Memory Verse:

“Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life and they are they which testify of Me.” (John:5:39)

References:

- ❖ Introduction to Old Testament by “Fr Marcorious Anab Bishoy”.

Introduction:

There have been different names to the Old Testament:

- ❖ “In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” (Daniel 9:2)
- ❖ “Jesus answered and said unto them, You are mistaken, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. (Matthew 22:29)”
- ❖ “And that from a child you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2Timothy 3:15)
- ❖ The Old Testament was written in Hebrew (and some small portion in Aramaic).

Lesson Outline:

The Validity of the Bible:

There are 66 books in the Bible both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, over 40 authors and 1600 years. The 66 books of the Bible were canonized by the early fathers. There are also 7 books which were excluded at that time but are considered by our church as the 2nd canonized books (Deutro-canonical Books). These books are not accepted by the Protestant Churches, but are accepted by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches

Cannon == means rule or standard by which things are benchmarked, a model.

Collecting the Old Testament

It is not sure when was written the first scripture in the Old Testament. Religious writings go back to 4000 BC. This means that there may have been some writings in the periods of the Patriarchs that was used by the Old Testament writers through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament includes 39 books (+ 7 Deutro Canonical). However the old Jewish tradition refers to 22 books (similar to their alphabet). What happened is that the early church divided some of the original 22 books into two or more creating the 39 books we now know.

Mapping the Old Testament books as we know them to the Old traditional books of Judaism:

	<u>Current</u> <u>OT Books</u>		<u>Traditional</u> <u>OT Books</u>	
Gen. To Deut.	(5)	➔	5	(Torah)
Josh	(1)	➔	1	
Judges & Ruth	(2)	➔	2	
1Sam & 2Sam	(2)	➔	1	(Book of Samuel)
1Kings & 2Kings	(2)	➔	1	(Book of Kings)
1Chron. & 2Chron.	(2)	➔	1	
Ezra & Neh.	(2)	➔	2	
Esther	(1)	➔	1	
Job	(1)	➔	1	
Psalms - Songs.	(4)	➔	1	(Book of Hymns)
Isaiah	(1)	➔	1	
Jer. & Lam.	(2)	➔	2	
Ezekiel	(1)	➔	1	
Daniel	(1)	➔	1	
Hos. - Mal	(12)	➔	1	(Book of Prophets)
Total	(39)	➔	22	

The Prophets' Books are referred to as Major and Minor Prophets based on the length of the Book only, and not the character of the prophecy it documents.

The Original Scripture

Although there are many scriptures for the Old Testament, we do not have any of the original documents written by the original writers. Before the spring of 1947 we only had scriptures as old as 916 AD but the scriptures discovered in the valley of Kamran, were dated as the 2nd century BC

The Torah was kept beside the Ark of the Covenant. “Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you.” (Deuteronomy 31:26).

After the temple was built it was kept in the safe prepared for it. When Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon demolished the temple, he probably took it with the precious things he took with him. “As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand your truth.” (Daniel 9:13).

After the return from captivity, the Jews had the Torah with them. “And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.” (Ezra 6:18)

Famous Translations

Targum

The oldest translation that reached us is these parts from Ezra and Daniel in the Aramaic language. This was needed since all the Jews were speaking this language after the captivity.

“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.” (Nehemiah 8:8)

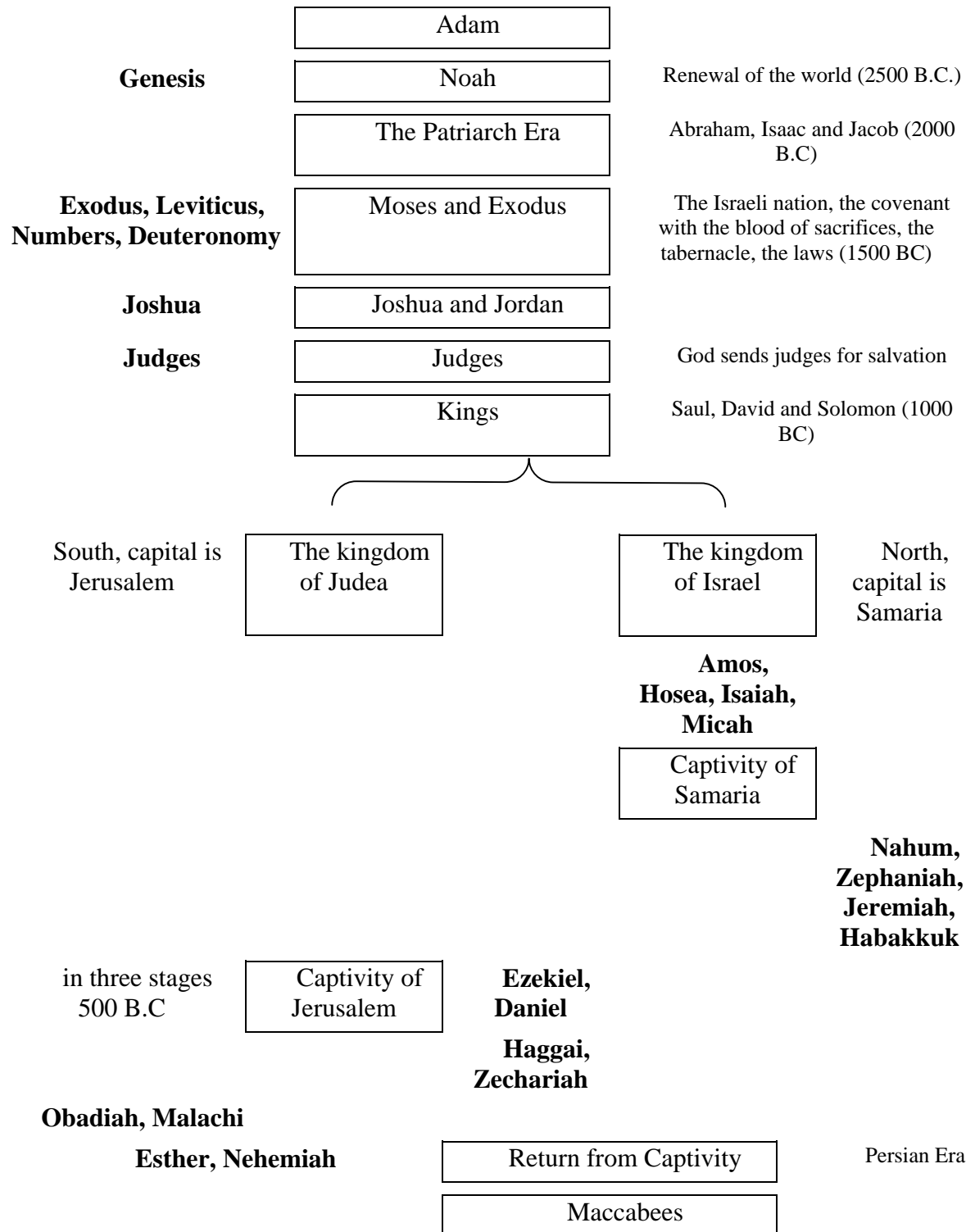
Septuagint Translation

This was a translation of the Old Testament to the Greek language to help the Jews outside Jerusalem. It started in Alexandria in the third century BC by 72 elders from Jerusalem Jew in the period of Ptolemy (285 - 246 BC) It lasted four centuries.

Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus Translations

These are other Greek translations after the Septuagint translations. Origen used these translations in his famous book Hexapla where he had these 3 translations together with the Hebrew text, the Septuagint translation and a Greek translation in 6 columns

Layout



Conclusion:

The whole Bible Old and New Testament is based upon our lord Jesus Christ and the story of salvation. The mission of the Old Testament then is to prepare the people to accept Jesus Christ as a savior through all the prophecies, the offerings and every story it contained. “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” (Gal 3:24). “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes.” (Rom 10:4)

Application:

- ❖ Talk to someone this week about the Old Testament. Share what you know and what you have learned from this lesson with a friend
- ❖ Give a student to prepare a similar overview about the New Testament.

Week 1 - Church Fasts

Objective:

Introduce the students to:

- ❖ The meaning of Fasting
- ❖ What are the Church Fasts? When? And Why?

Memory Verse:

"The days will come, when the Bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day" (Mark 2-18)

References:

- ❖ The Holy Bible: Mark 2: 16-19, Matthew 4:1-20 (Jesus fast Forty days and Forty nights)
- ❖ Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church, by Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty. Ottawa, Canada. 1987 Pages 182-186

Lesson Outlines:

INSTITUTION OF FASTING

From the Old Testament:

- ❖ Moses fasted 40 days before going up Sinai Mountain to receive God's commandment
- ❖ Elijah fasted to get God's mercy
- ❖ Jonah fast and the people of Ninevah fast, so God may spare their life
- ❖ From the beginning, God allowed Adam and Eve to eat from the fruits of all trees in the paradise except one specific tree. The people were not eating animal's meat or dairy product for centuries till the time of Noah. The way we are fasting now is similar to what God asked the first couple to eat. Which means that the Church is trying to live, during fasts, in the same pure image of man when he was in the Paradise of Eden.
- ❖ The tradition of fasting was in the Jewish tradition at the time of Jesus Christ, Who mentioned that His disciples should fast after His ascension to heaven.
- ❖ Our fathers, the apostles fast to prepare them selves for the great missionary work which they successfully did and convert the world to Christianity. By fasting and praying they casted demons and healed the sick. (Here the teacher and review with the students the Fraction Prayer of the Great Lent)

THE CHURCH FASTS:

The Church is not asking her children to fast so they may suffer, but fasting is an exercise to control the human desire and behavior. When you will be able to better control your actions and reactions, you will make much less mistakes and make you closer to the image God wants to see.

The Church Fathers organized the fasting periods, so all the Church members will be fasting at the same time, which give more strength to the fasting and to the unity of the Church members as the body of Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, if each person can fast when and how ever he/she wants, it may end up with no fasting at all.

The Church Fasting are:

[1] Weekly: every Wednesday and Friday (excluding the Fifty days following the Feast of Resurrection. Wednesday is to remember the betray of Judah, and Friday is to remember the Crucifixion.

[2] The Great Lent: total of 55 days before the Feast of Resurrection. The Fifty Five days are: The Holy week before resurrection (Pascha Week), 40 days before the Pascha week, which Jesus Christ fast in the wilderness and preparation week before these 40 days. The Great Lent makes us live -with Our Savior his passion and teachings until we celebrate His Resurrection

[3] The Nativity Fast: 43 days before The Feast of Nativity. It was 40 days only to make us ready to receive our Savior birth. The Church added three days in the Tenth century to remember the miracle of moving Mokatom mountain. The teacher can expand on this point and tell the students a brief summary of The story of moving this mountain which is in the suburb of Cairo city.

[4] The fast of the Apostles: its duration varies. It starts the day after Pentecost and end on July 12, the feast of the Apostles.

[5] The Holy Virgin Mary Fast: Starts on August 7 for 15 days till August 22 the Feast of Virgin Mary. In this feast, the Church celebrate the ascension of St. Mary's body to heaven

[5] The Fast of Jonah: For three days, when the Church remembers the time Jonah spent inside the whale's belly and how God saved him. It starts two weeks before the Great Lent.

Conclusion:

Fasting is important for us to grow spiritually. With the gradual and regular fasting the person will learn self-control and earn the inner peace.

Application:

- ❖ The teacher shall encourage the students to fast. He/she can't expect that the students will fast all these days. But it is important to make the students start gradually, even few days at a time with the ultimate goal of fasting all the Church fasting, which may take years to reach

- ❖ Fasting is not harmful for health. Let the students search the internet for the items of healthy foods and compare them to what the church allow us to eat during the fasts. The teacher can mention to the students about the medical studies, which prove that Vegetarian food is much healthier than beef and other animal products. God knows what is better for us.

Week 2 - Sacrifices in the Old Testament (I)

Objective:

- ❖ Link the Old Testament sacrifices to the 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)

References:

- ❖ Leviticus. Fr. Tadros Malaty
- ❖ The sacrifices: Fr. Marcorious Anba Bishoy.

Introduction:

Why the Blood:

- Since the first sin, man could not present himself before God because of his sins. So he had to have the blood in his hands as a passport to pass into His Holies. “*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*” (Genesis 3:21)
- The offering of sacrifices was passed from generation to generation, till God gave a precise description on how to offer the sacrifices, which in every aspect symbolizes the sacrifice of the Cross. In the fulfillment of time God sent His only begotten Son born of a virgin, to bring happiness to the whole creation through His sacrifice which saved from death and destruction, which fulfilled the law, and which showed His love.

Lesson Outline:

What is a sacrifice:

It is what one gives up as an offering to God. It is supposed to:

1. Constitute a covenant with God.
2. Maintain a covenant with God.
3. Please God.
4. Thank God.
5. Ask forgiveness from God.

Sacrifices before the law of Moses:

- ❖ “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” (Genesis 3:21) This shows God’s love. He sacrificed a sacrifice, made coats of skin for them to cover their nakedness.
- ❖ “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” (Genesis 8:20,21)
- ❖ Abraham also built an altar for God. (Genesis 12:8): and there he build an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.
- ❖ But what is even greater about Abraham is the test that he went through regarding the sacrifice of his son. That was the first time that God would ask a sacrifice which is a human. And when He requested one, He defined in details to be the most precious that a man can offer “your only son whom you love.” The son of promise. Upon him where all the hopes of the present and future. Issac was the symbol of the great sacrifice of Christ. And when Abraham passed the exam, he deserved to hear for the God this great blessing: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Genesis 22:16-18)
- ❖ Also Isaac and Jacob, they offered sacrifices to God as their fathers did. (Genesis 26:25, 28:18, 31:54, 33:20, 35:7, 46:1)

Sacrifices in Moses time:

God gave Moses instructions concerning the different sacrifices, which should be offered in the tabernacle

- ❖ Sacrifices offered as an offering burnt by fire, of a sweet aroma unto the Lord. These include burnt offering, meal offering, and peace offering.
- ❖ Sacrifices offered for sins of ignorance. These include sin offering and trespass offering.

General characteristics of these sacrifices that pointed out to the sacrifice of Christ:

1. The blood was the king’s seal, where every thing is consecrated with it.
And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. (Hebrews 9:22)

Thus we may appreciate the value of shedding the blood of our Lord as atonement for the life of the whole world.

2. The sacrifice must be an animal without logic (Thoughtless)
That is, it cannot sin or trespass and therefore it can substitute for the sinner. Being unable to sin is another symbol to Christ who is without sin.
“All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6)
“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John:1:29)
3. The sacrifices need to be offered every day.
Because of its corrupt nature, it has only a temporary effect, since it is the blood of bulls and of goats. Thus, it points out to the need of a permanent sacrifice, a sacrifice that can remain alive.
“Who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (Hebrews 7:27)
For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:13)
4. There are so many types of offerings mentioned in the book of Leviticus.
This reflects the nature of sin and its complexity, which required many sacrifices and offerings. All these point out to the sacrifice of Christ which could not be completed with only one sacrifice.
5. The continuous presence and smell of death, blood, fire in the tabernacle, exemplified to the Israelites the awfulness of sin and its consequences

Types of animal used as sacrifices:

Animals Cows, Sheep, and Goats

- ❖ **Must be clean:** i.e. of the types of animals that were allowed to be eaten -> a symbol of eating from the body of Christ. Also the sacrifice can not be given from unclean animals, such as flesh-eating animals because they feed on the death of other animals, which can not symbolize Christ who gave Himself for others.
- ❖ **Pure**→ a symbol of Christ “For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26)
- ❖ **It has to be a domestic animal**, which is not hunted, because the hunted animal runs away and is brought reluctantly to the slaughter, unlike the domestic animal that is submissive, obedient and surrendering. Thus symbolizing our good Savior. “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.” (Isaiah 53:7)
- ❖ **Without blemish**

Or else it would be rejected. The priest used to examine every part very carefully, even after it is sacrificed, he would examine its bone, meat and the inside, until he is completely sure that it is without blemish, then he lights the offering. This is similar to Christ who is without sin.

“And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts (Malachi 1:8).

Birds

- ❖ **Turtledove 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 w/o blood → **white flour and wine**.

Conclusion:

The idea of sacrificing to the Lord has been around for a very very long time. It is a sign to show love to the creator. It is also a character of the bond between man and God. Jesus Christ became our new bond between man and God.

Applications:

- ❖ Sacrifice some of your time and effort for the sake of God or others
- ❖ Search in Leviticus for the types of offerings in the Old Testament as a preparation for next weeks lesson

Week 3 - Sacrifices in the Old Testament (II)

Objective:

- ❖ Link the Old Testament sacrifices to the sacrifice of the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse:

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13)

References:

- ❖ Leviticus. Fr. Tadros Malaty
- ❖ The sacrifices: Fr. Marcorious Anba Bishoy.

Introduction:

- ❖ Review with the students the previous lesson to be able to continue the same topic
- ❖ Ask them what was their personal benefit from the previous lesson

Lesson Outlines:

Sacrifices offered in the tabernacle

Burnt offering:

This Sacrifice is the first and most important one called in Hebrew: “Olah” = Ascending, because of its vapor which ascends upwards as a sweet aroma to the Lord. Also called in Hebrew “Kalil” = Whole, because it is offered all to the Lord.

This sacrifice shows the most important aspect of the sacrifice of the cross, which is the complete obedience of the Son to God the Father.

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” (John 6:38)

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians:2:8)

St. John Chrysostom encourage us to offer our lives as a burnt offerings Martyrs have offered their souls and bodies as burnt offering, we may also be able to offer burnt offering to God, if we can't offer our bodies as burnt offering with fire, we can do that by a different type of fire such as voluntary poverty, or crucifying our lusts.

The fire shall ever be burning 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.

Rites of the burnt offering

- ❖ The person would bring the animal (a Bull, a male of lamb or a goat) to the door of the tabernacle → A symbol of Christ who came to the Jewish nation and they did not receive him.
- ❖ Put his hand over the head of the animal → A symbol that the sacrifice became a substitute for the person.
- ❖ Sacrifice the animal on the north side before God.
- ❖ The priest would collect the blood and sprinkle it around the altar → a symbol that the sacrifice of Christ is atonement for the whole world.
- ❖ The burnt offering is then skinned and cut into pieces → The examination that our Lord went through regarding his deeds and words. And that Pilate did not find any guilt in Him.
- ❖ Aaron's sons would arrange the pieces together with the head and the fat on the altar.
- ❖ Then they wash its entrails and legs (Unclean parts), and burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.
- ❖ The skin of the sacrifice was given to the priest who offered the sacrifice.

If the sacrifice is of birds

- ❖ Who can't afford to offer animal sacrifice can offer birds: (turtledove and pigeons). Turtledove, symbol of fear of sin, also to, whereas the young pigeons are symbols of gentleness and simplicity, and also to the church the beautiful dove carrying the Holy Spirit of God.
- ❖ The priest would offer it on the altar and bring off the head.
- ❖ Drain the blood out on the side of the altar.
- ❖ Remove its crop and its feathers and cast it beside the altar on the East Side, into the place for ashes.
- ❖ Then he shall split it at its wings but do not divide it completely.
- ❖ Then the priest would burn it on the altar.

Other Burnt offerings on behalf of the entire congregation

- ❖ They are offered for the sanctification and consecration of the people.
- ❖ Daily Sacrifice: A continuous sacrifice, two lambs offered daily, one in the morning and the other evening.
- ❖ Consecration of priests: Bulls, rams and lambs.
- ❖ In certain days during the year and in feasts: on Saturdays: Extra lambs are offered other than the daily ones.
- ❖ In the beginning of the month, 2bulls, a ram, and 7 lambs.
- ❖ Burnt offerings for purification: After giving birth, after healing from leprosy...etc.
- ❖ When either man or women shall separate themselves to vow a vow.

- ❖ Burnt offering, which accompanies the sin sacrifice, which offered by a poor person: young pigeon or turtledove.
- ❖ Burnt offering, which accompanies the sin sacrifice, which offered by a group which, sinned unintentionally: one bull.

Grain offering: Leviticus 2:1-10, 6:14-23

Flour offering

The person brings fine flour; pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it.

Aaron's sons the priests take this and burn it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet aroma unto the Lord.

Grain offering baked in the oven.

Unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil.

Grain offering baked in a pan.

Fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil. This is cut into pieces, and oil is poured on it.

Grain offering baked in the frying pan.

It shall be made of fine flour with oil.

The grain offering was usually offered together with sacrifices.

Symbols in this sacrifice

Salt → protects from corruption, a symbol of covenant and promise. You are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13)

No Leaven -→ (Leaven is a symbol of evil, wickedness, and hypocrisy) because He was sinless.

No Honey -→ because it is a symbol of self-indulgence and sweet talk.

Burning the Grain offering → the sufferings of Christ during His life. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3).

The Grain offering does not represent the Sacrifice of the bread and wine which we offer to our Lord on the altar, but it only symbolizes the life of Christ on earth and His service since he was baptized till prior to His crucifixion. Therefore our church, offer the sacrifice made of leaven bread because He carried our sins in His body to the Cross, and offered Himself a Sin sacrifice for us.

Peace Sacrifice (also known as offering of completion)

This is offered to God as an expression of Thanksgiving. It is the most sacrifice associated with joy and gladness, because it was allowed for the person and the priests to eat of it in presence of God → of peace and reconciliation with God.

The peace sacrifice was offered for thanksgiving to God, and the sacrament of the communion is called the sacrament of Eucharist = thanksgiving.

Three types of peace sacrifice:

Sacrifice of thanksgiving → I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon

the name of the Lord (Ps 116:17).

Vow offering → Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee (Psalm 56:12).

Freewill offerings-→ The person would promise to give a specific sacrifice, if anything happened to the sacrifice, then the person offering it does not need to replace it.

Characteristics of the peace sacrifice:

Cow, goat, or lamb is offered. Birds are not offered, because it is a sacrifice of fellowship. So it should be large enough for every one to be satisfied-→ Spiritual satisfaction that God gave through His sacrifice.

Laying of hands on the sacrifice was mainly to confess the good deeds and give thanks to God.

Sacrificed on the door of the tabernacle, and the blood is sprinkled around the altar.

The Sin sacrifice

In these sacrifices we see the Son of God carrying our sins to pay for our debts.

The sin sacrifice is offered for the sinner person in general or unintentionally (A person has seen something and did not witness it, if a person touches any unclean thing, if a person swears and lies) while the trespass sacrifice is offered for a certain sin.

A sin sacrifice for a priest

A young bull without blemish is offered as a sin offering.

The priest brings the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, lays his hand on the bull's head, confesses his sins and kills the bull before the Lord.

Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and bring it to the tabernacle of meeting. He dips his finger in the blood and sprinkles some of the blood seven times before the Lord, in front of the veil of the sanctuary and on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord. This is a symbol of his need to the intercession of the blood in front of God since he is the intercessor for the people.

The fat is burnt on the altar, the rest is burnt outside and no body eats from it.

A sin sacrifice for the congregation

If the congregation sinned unintentionally to God, they offer this sacrifice.

It is the same as above but the elders of the congregation lay their hands on the head of the bull before the Lord.

A sin sacrifice for a ruler

An offspring of the goats, a male without blemish.

He put his hand and confesses his sins

The priest puts some of the blood of the sin offering on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pours its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering.

The priest eats the meat of the sacrifice

A sin sacrifice for anyone of the common people

An offspring of the goats or a lamb, a female without blemish. Probably this was cheaper.

If the person cannot afford this, he can offer a couple of turtledove or pigeons.

Same like the ruler

The trespass sacrifice

Sin against holy things of the Lord

When a person forgets or does not know to give one of the offerings (first fruits, tithes...)

A ram without blemish from the flocks.

He gives the value of what he was supposed to give before plus one-fifth more to it.

Sin against the neighbor

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, and swears.

He restores what he has stolen, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found, full value, add one-fifth more to it,

A ram without blemish from the flock.

Conclusion:

God cared for our salvation from the first moment after Adam sinned to you. God has sacrificed himself for us as the ultimate expression of love.

Application:

- ❖ Give-up 15 minutes of your TV time to spend with God reading the Bible throughout this week. Remember our Lord Jesus Christ gave up his blood and died for you.
- ❖ Give-up eating one thing you love for the coming week.
- ❖ Give something you like of your belongings to a brother, sister or a friend.

Week 4 - The Forgiving Father

Objective:

- ❖ To compare God's love with human love.

Memory Verse:

"In the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul will follow close behind you"
(Psalm 63:7-8)

References

- ❖ "Guide to Confession" Bishop Bemin
- ❖ "Help me O Lord to repent" Fr. Youssef Assad
- ❖ Luke 15:11-33

Introduction:

Review with the students the Gospels of the lent.

Read the parable of the prodigal son and open the door for the students to give their impressions from the story

Lesson Outlines:

The Bosoms of Love

The Lord Jesus told us a parable in which He explained the Bosoms of the Divine love. This is known as the Parable of the Lost Son. A young son deceived by the world attractions and the desires of young age. He saw happiness in being free from the traditions and strict rules of his family and saw enjoyment in satisfying the desires of the flesh. He asked his father to give him his heritage to spend it as he wished. We wonder as we see his father answering his demand and giving him freedom to do, as he liked with his lot.

- ❖ Why is the behavior of this son wrong?
- ❖ Why is the father's attitude regarded as an expression of extreme love and release of freedom?
- ❖ The younger son gathered everything and traveled to a far away place and there he became extravagant and spent all his money. Here we ask ourselves:
- ❖ What is true freedom?
- ❖ What is true happiness?
- ❖ Is freedom the liberation from authority and control?
- ❖ Does happiness lie in satisfying one's lust and the desires of the flesh?

- ❖ Why is the sin of keeping away from the Divine fatherhood regarded as serious sin?
- ❖ Can we see the relation between Adam's sin in Paradise and the sin of the lost son when he deserted his father's house and rebelled against his family?
- ❖ What are the dangerous consequences of rebellion in our spiritual life?
- ❖ How important is obedience in the life of Christian virtue?

How miserable is the man who lives far away from his father's house? He deprives himself of the bosom of fatherhood with all its riches, love and sacrifice. How miserable is man when he becomes self-centered and selfish! Is this case different from hell? to be far away from God, captured within myself. Aren't heaven and eternal happiness the freedom of the glory of the children of God and enjoying sonship with all its dimensions?

Living in a far country

This young man thought that he could live a life of satisfaction and enjoy himself but now he began to see the bitter fact, which he could not see on that day. He became poor needy and unable to follow that life so he went and lived with one of the inhabitants of that country but the man sent him into his fields to feed swine. Feeding swine refers to the lowest degree of life which man lives when he keeps away from God. That country did not have any other work to give to the rebels who were attracted by the deceptive luxury of the world. Such people deserved that defiled humiliating work.

The son could not endure the bitterness and cruelty of life. He came from a rich family. He remembered the blessings of his father's house. He said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare but I perish here with hunger?" Can the son forget the blessings of his father's house? The dew of grace falls upon the complaining heart to water it, soften it and refresh it and lead it to repentance. The grace of God does not desert the complaining heart. It will always seek to attract it with the ties of love. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He moves the stubborn heart and drives it to regret and repentance and confession.

Are we to ask ourselves?

Where are we? In our Father's house, in the membership of the Church that grants blessings and the gifts of the Spirit and the riches of sacraments and the goodness of grace, or have we deserted these bosoms and followed the Counsel of ourselves and our friends who are evil and deserted the spirit of obedience and resorted to rebellion, and false complaining.

The Good Return

Repentance is not only regret; neither is it bowing under the heaviness of guilt. It does not mean a sense of guilt in bitter grief and heart agony; it means a new vision of the bosoms of fatherhood and a firm stand in directing oneself towards these bosoms. It is a hearty response to the movement of love. It is the response of the heart to the call of the Spirit working in us. The clever son rose, decided to return, he resisted all the difficult circumstances that surrounded him; he rose, left everything and went back to his father.

Contemplate this type of repentance. Contemplate the repentance of Zacchaeus, Levi the tax Collector, Moses the Black, and Mary the sinful. Repentance is a change of form renewal of mind and heart, a change in the direction of life. Have I tested, in my life, that test that made me give my back to the world going forward to my beloved Jesus who is my way and my life? If I had not tested that life let me bow at the feet of the Lord and pray, praying for the test of true repentance with the Prodigal Son, with the sinful woman, with all those who gave true repentance without return or hesitation.

The Father's Rejoicing

He was waiting for a long time the return of his Son and his heart was filled with hope (Jesus was nailed to the cross to give us confidence. He is waiting our return and his heart will never be closed before us). When he saw his son, the man hurried to meet him. How deep your love is O Lord. You are all mercy and kindness. You hurry to us, you always come to me but I did not even think of coming to you. O Lords grant me the grace that I feel your great love. He did not blame him...he did not reproach him. The son wanted to be a servant but the Father refused to listen. He only listened to the pulses of his heart which was full of joy. He kissed him. O Lord, how great your love is to all who come to you. What did his father do then? The best robe, the fatted calf, and the ring...what do all these symbols stand for?

The Envious brother

The brother should have rejoiced for the return of his brother. But the brother was angry and did not want to share the happiness of his father. In so doing he was like a stranger in his father's house...the place of the man who lives with the spirit of the servant instead of the spirit of the loving son. That is why he feels the heaviness of service, he feels the need for the justification of his work and boasting over himself, "Lo these many years I have served you and I never disobeyed your command". How dangerous self-righteousness is and how fatal false religiousness is we should have shared the heavenly beings their rejoicing for the return of that who was away.

Do we welcome the return of the sinful young man or do we reject him when he enters the Church? Do we feel happy when we find that the young sinful man has received care from our teacher or the priest of the Church... or do we become angry?

Review Questions

- ❖ Show how the prodigal son did not understand the meaning of freedom.
- ❖ What is meant by the concept of true repentance?
- ❖ What do you think of the behavior of the elder brother? Why?

Conclusion:

Every day in our life is a new day and a new chance to go back to our Father's house if we ever stray away. Straying away does not have to be physically away from the church but could also be spiritual detachment from God even when we are in the church. Let us examine ourselves and ensure that we are abiding in the Father's and the church's bosom and enjoying the reaches of the Father's house.

Applications:

- ❖ Invite the young people who are keeping away from the Church so that they may come back to the Church and heaven receive them with joy.
- ❖ Hold a prayer meeting with your brethren to bring the sinners back from far countries to the bosom of the father.
- ❖ Contemplate Luke 15:18,19

Week 5 - Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

Objective:

- ❖ Christ forgives us our sins and gives us a new life, regardless of the magnitude or the type of our sins.

Memory Verse:

“The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him” (John 4:23)

References

- ❖ St. John's Gospel and its various explanations
- ❖ “Studies and Contemplation in the Great Feasts” Part 1, Bishop Bemin
- ❖ “How Christ dealt with the sinners” Part 1, Archdeacon Remises Nagib
- ❖ “The Treasures of grace” Part 4, Archdeacon Banoub Abdu

Introduction:

- ❖ Read the story of the Samaritan woman...then ask the students what are their impressions about this story. What is their impression about the woman and about Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Ask them what would they have done if they have met such a woman?

Lesson Outlines:

Let us contemplate Jesus when he sat down by the well

- ❖ He was tired out, and it was He who gave comfort to those who were tired.
- ❖ He asked for water, and it was He who quenched the thirst of all the thirsty and out of Him wells of living water.
- ❖ He needed the other and it was He who satisfied the needs of the whole world.
- ❖ He lived as a sojourner and it is He who created all and is the King of Heaven and Earth.
- ❖ He was hungry, and it is He who gives eternal life to anyone who eats Him.

Contemplate the living water that the Lord gives

- ❖ A well that never dries and it flows and will flow forever.
- ❖ He is dwelling your heart so do not seek Him outside your heart.
- ❖ Eternal... begins in time but goes into eternity.

- ❖ Gives water... you need nothing in the world but Him, you become satisfied, your heart is delighted, you need nothing and you rise over everything.
- ❖ The current is hindered and corrupted by pride, worries, and weak faith and resorting to cracked wells (sins and desires of the flesh).
- ❖ Its water increases and flows through repentance, perpetual thirst for forgiveness, sitting with oneself alone in a solitary place to contemplate the sweetness of the Savior, preaching and sacrifice and estimating anything you give to others.

Let us contemplate how the Lord treated and dealt with the Samaritan's problem

- ❖ She was complaining of humiliation. He raised her humanity and destroyed the obstacles of sex, fanaticism, reputation, people's talk and he spoke with her.
- ❖ She was enslaved to the desire of the flesh and He gave her the living water.
- ❖ She was complaining of formal religiousness so He spoke to her about salvation and worship in Spirit and truth. He did not discuss with her the things she would not easily understand.
- ❖ In His service to the Samaritan woman, Jesus was a priest and a prophet... a priest praying for her and standing by her in her weakness, and a prophet revealing the darkness which is inside so that she might be free from enslavement.
- ❖ Jesus' service to the Samaritan Woman is a good example that should be followed in serving the souls that thirst for Salvation.

Let us contemplate the Savior's talk about true worship

- ❖ The place does not sanctify worship but it is the Spirit that sanctifies.
- ❖ The acceptable worship offered by the Pharisees hypocrites.
- ❖ True worship stems from within by the work of the Holy Spirit, in complete submission and love, we worship the Lord when we feel that we are weak before the glory of God (Isaiah 6) and when our souls see the Divine revelations (John 9:38)... and when we thank the Lord for a miraculous deed he performed to us (Luke 17:17).

The Samaritan Woman's Confession

- ❖ She had to confess so that her sins would be forgiven (The importance of Confession before the Lord and before the priest).
- ❖ She abandoned sin when her heart was filled with Christ (She left her jar and went away as Levi who left the place of sin).

Christ's Food and our food

- ❖ What is Christ's true food? Why didn't the disciples understand the Lord's words when He said, "I have food to eat of which you do not know"?
- ❖ What does the Lord ask us to do to satisfy his heart and please him?

Jesus heals an official's son

- ❖ Notice that the people of Galilee accepted the Lord, that was not the case with his natives "A

prophet is not respected in his own country”.

- ❖ Notice the official’s strong faith, he insisted that Christ would heal his son and believed the word that Jesus said; “He himself believed and all his household” (John 4:53). This effective faith relies on the Lord’s promises. It does not depend on the circumstances of man and his feelings but on believing the word and that he, who is patient enough to wait, will attain power, victory and forgiveness.

Conclusion:

The greatest action of the Samaritan woman is that she hurried to call others to come to Christ (Let him who hears say, “Come”). ”It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the World” (John 4:42) [Christ’s private Test]. We also who had met with Christ in our life have a duty to go and tell others about Him.

Applications:

- ❖ Have a meeting with Lord Jesus; talk with him as the Samaritan woman did. Reveal to him the secrets of your heart and confess all your sins to him and take living water from him.
- ❖ Let your faith be as strong as that of the King’s servant who believed the work and the miracle affected his son and the child was healed. May the Lord perform miraculous deeds with you so that you may overcome your sins, sadness and problems.

Week 6 - Dedication of All

Objective:

- ❖ Submitting our whole life to God (body, mind and feelings)

Memory Verse:

“For where your treasure is there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34)

References:

- ❖ “The Hidden Treasure” Fr. Bishoy Abdel Messih
- ❖ “The Parables of Lord Christ “ Dr. Maurice Tawadros
- ❖ The Parables of Jesus (Matthew 13:44-46)

Introduction:

We all seek happiness

Each young man seeks happiness, seeks pleasure and seeks joy. Life should be successful. The Lord gave us two parables in this respect. He said: “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field”. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:44-46). People imagine happiness in material matters... what are these things that the people seek and run after? (Money- health -status jobs -reputation)... All these things, as the Bible shows us are means not an end.

Lesson Outlines:

We can deduce from the above mentioned parables that:

Christ is the treasure and He is the precious pearl

The gospel says about Him, “In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). He is the true happiness...anyone who possesses Him receives the true peace “Since we are justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

If the Lord Jesus is the treasure, what does the field in which the treasure is hidden refers to?

Do you think that it indicates the Bible with its two testaments Old and New? Do you see that all those who search for the Savior through this Book unite with Him and get His complete and perfect peace? Or do you see that it refers to the Church, which is the vessel of faith and all members are those who enter it and join its lively membership and will soon discover her bridegroom and Savior in whom we find all fullness...

If the case is thus, are we living members?

Do we have this essential discovery in our spiritual life tests or are we still living in the superficial life far away from true fullness? The most precious treasures lie in the depth of the earth. So we cannot attain the treasure of grace, which is hid for us in Christ unless we go deep into life without applying the superficial look and reached the depth of prayer, the depth of the Church the depth of the Holy Bible, and there we will meet Him and there we shall sell every thing for Him.

Necessary commitments

- ❖ The parable of the treasure says: "In his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field". The parable of the pearl says "On finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it". Those who see the treasure in the field and those who see the valuable pearl must get them. This holy zeal is the fruit of spiritual discovery as David the prophet says, "Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice" (Psalm 105:3). Since every process of buying must be accompanied by some commitments, the same is true to spiritual life, which necessitates true complete dedication and complete commitment to the greatest goals.
- ❖ The principle that says "A time for your heart and a time for your Lord" is dangerous. Why? If the Lord Christ is our true bridegroom, his bride must be completely dedicated to him. If the Lord gave up Himself for us we must love Him as He loves us. As the Scripture says, "That those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Corinthians 5:15).
- ❖ We must get rid of our sexual and bodily desires.
- ❖ We must get rid of our defects, and weaknesses.
- ❖ We must get rid of our pride in our dignity and the pride of our thoughts, the haughtiness of our hearts and souls.
- ❖ We must get rid of our worries and cares, which are without number so that we may devote all our time to the Lord as Mary did and choose the good share.

Domains of True Dedication

Through prayers and offering your whole life to God you can recognize the following:

- ❖ Dedication of the body: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2). What must we do concerning instincts and bodily motives?
- ❖ Dedication of feelings: "Love one another earnestly from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22). What must we do concerning our feelings? How can our feelings be sanctified? Remember that St. Paul the apostle suffered this wonderful test "For I decided to know nothing among you except

Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (I Corinthians 2:2). He who sees Christ in all the people, how can’t he love them? The body needs desire and anger but grace needs love without price.

- ❖ Dedication of the Mind: “But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). How can we think through Christ? How can we overcome evil thoughts? Do we train ourselves on praying Jesus’ prayer? Do we submit our will? Do we control our thoughts, senses and concentrate on what is pure? There is also the dedication of the will, time, future, and destiny. You can contemplate how can you offer all these to God.

Review Questions

- ❖ What is true happiness?
- ❖ Why can’t pleasure satisfy man?
- ❖ “He went and sold everything” Explain.
- ❖ Give examples from the Holy Bible and the History of the Church of people who sold everything and spent their life dedicated to God.
- ❖ Is it necessary to desert the world without having the desires of the world in our hearts?

Conclusion:

The real happiness is when we give it to the Lord. When we love the Lord from all our soul, mind and might. He is the source of all these things to us and we dedicate them all back to Him willingly.

Applications:

- ❖ Raise a prayer and pray the Lord to grant you to be dedicated to the Lord and devote all that you have to God.
- ❖ Apply the previous Exercises and investigate them. Discuss these topics with your Confessor and guide.
- ❖ Study the life of a monk or a preacher or a minister who dedicated all his life to the Lord and show the points of power in his life.

LESSONS FOR THE PENTECOST PERIOD
(Fifty days after Resurrection)

Week 1: The Power of Resurrection

Week 2: David's Sins, Results and Repentance

Week 3: The Value of Time

Week 4: Translations of the Old Testament

Week 5: Translations of the New Testament

Week 6: Closing the Generations Gap?

Week 7: How to Deal With My Brothers and Sisters?

Week 1 - The Power of Resurrection

Objective:

- ❖ To understand the power of resurrection as a revelation of the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse:

“He is not here, but is risen” (Luke 24:6)

References:

- ❖ “Glory be to You in Your resurrection” Samir Kamil
- ❖ “Proofs of the Resurrection” Bishop Moussa

Introduction:

Christ’s resurrection differs from any other resurrection. He is called “The first fruits of them that slept”. So we notice that:

1. The Lord is only one who rose from the dead and his resurrection is followed by no death. He is living forever, and death did not and will not dominate Him.
2. Christ is the Lord who rose from the dead by His own power without any prayer from His disciples or the intercessions of anyone... such as the case with Lazarus or the widow’s son whom Elijah brought back to life.
3. The Lord said, “I am the Resurrection and life”. The power of resurrection was within Him and not outside Him... so the verse “God raised Him from the dead” does not mean that He rose by Himself with His own power, as He and the Father are one. The Father raised Him because He is His only begotten beloved Son and He did not leave Him in the Hades. He rose with His power and by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Three Hypostases are one essence as we said before “and designated. Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). This means that the Holy Spirit performed the Resurrection, as He is the Spirit of Resurrection.

Lesson Outlines:

His Divinity and His Humanity: Never Parted

Godhead is the Divine Nature and manhood is our human nature that the Lord took from Virgin Mary. The Lord died on the cross and the human soul parted the flesh. Yet his Divinity and his Humanity never parted and he himself never parted his body or his soul.

- ❖ The body that was in the tomb was the body of the Son of God. The body did not decompose or suffer corruption although it remained in the tomb for three days. He rose with great power and an active body and healed wounds after the body had attained a new bright nature.
- ❖ When His soul went down into the Hades the devil did not arrest her. On the contrary, the Lord went down into the Hades, broke its iron gates and copper trenches... and raised Adam, his children and the prophets and brought them back to Paradise.
- ❖ The Lord was powerful even when He was in the grave. Death could not have power over Christ's human soul that united with the Logos (the Word). Death could not enslave that soul neither corruption could humiliate him. Although death separated the human soul from the body yet corruption dares not approach any of both.

The flesh of Resurrection

- ❖ When the Lord rose, He was not weak. He did not need anyone to untie Him of His clothes as the case was with Lazarus, or eat to have power as the case was with Jairus' daughter.
- ❖ But He rose and the stone put where it was the clothes were and the guards were standing. The Lord who entered the room while the doors were closed, can go out while the stone blocked the grave.
- ❖ The Lord rose with the same body He took from the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit but there was a difference...that body glorified after passing through death. So the body became a spiritual body that had powers and transparency the same as that which the believers will put on after death. So it was not a dim material body but it was a spiritual body radiating with light. Mary Magdalene could not touch that body as she used to do. In spite of this it was a real true body and it was not an image or a spirit. "For a spirit have not flesh and bones as you see that I have... He took it and ate before them" (Luke 24:39-43).

Christ abolished death

- ❖ The Lord Christ had to suffer all what the ordinary man suffers so He suffered death. Death was the natural destiny of man as Adam parted from the Lord. God was Adam's life so when sin separated Adam from God, Adam had to die.
- ❖ What does the word "death" mean? It means anti-life, life means that man enjoys his unity with God (As the television set that functions well as it connects with an electric source). Death means that man keeps himself away from the light of God with all what that light radiates in him, warmth because of his existence in the presence of God. Death is the state of affliction, worry, suffering and distress. This is what the sinner has chosen for himself when he wanted to part from God "I took to myself the issues of death" (The Gregory Mass).
- ❖ What did the Lord do? The Logos united with manhood that is our human nature and He gave

it what it had previously lost. He had to suffer death to redeem us from the consequence of sin “Through death He abolished death” and He granted those who were in the tombs the eternal life.

How to prove resurrection as a historical event

- ❖ The gospel gives us the story of resurrection, the appearance of Christ. The gospel always tells the truth.
- ❖ Resurrection was the core of Peter’s sermon immediately after the coming of the Holy Spirit; his listeners witnessed that event. If the resurrection had not taken place many would have opposed the apostle but the opposite was what happened when they heard they asked St. Peter “what must we do?” (Acts 2:37).
- ❖ He left the shroud that stuck to His body because of the blood that came out of the wounds. He left the shroud arranged as it was in the tomb.
- ❖ This shroud is kept up till now in the Church of St. John the Baptist in Tormentum in Italy. Scientists examined it and found the marks of the nails and wounds printed on the cloth (Refer to the Book “The Shroud” Al Minya Diocese).
- ❖ It had been a legend or a superstition, the disciples and the apostles would not have believed it and lost their life to prove it.

Conclusion:

Resurrection is rising up against sin and overcoming it “Awake O Sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light” (Ephesians 5:14). Lord, allow me to live with You in the victory of resurrection and give me the power to submit my desire and sin under your feet.

Applications:

- ❖ Give proofs of the power of resurrection for unbelievers and quote some verses to support your proofs.
- ❖ Remember the power of resurrection in moments of weakness; despair, intellectual fights, fear, anxiety...
- ❖ Show films about the Shroud of Jesus Christ.

Week 2 - David's sins, results and repentance

Objective:

- ❖ To contemplate on the causes and results of sinning and the acceptable repentance towards God.

References:

- ❖ Holy Bible
- ❖ "The life of David" by Frederick Brotherton Meyer, translated into Arabic by Fr. Marcous Dawoud.
- ❖ "The Dynamics of the cross in our Life" by the departed Fr. Bishoy Kamel.
- ❖ "Fighting temptation" A Sermon by H.G. Bishop Youssef to the Youth.

Memory Verse:

“Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done [this] evil in Your sight” (Psalm. 51:4).

Introduction:

- ❖ Reading: 2 Samuel: 11
- ❖ David was chosen by God from among many brothers "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart" Acts 13:22.

Lesson Outlines:

1- Causes of sinning to God:

Oh, how did you fall, you, the tall structure?

David before becoming a king	David after becoming a king, prior to sinning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He was escaping from Saul. No place to rest and completely dependent on God. He was brave and courageous, based on his strong faith in God and always was in the front line fighting against the enemies of God. E.g. against Goliath, "Today the Lord will deliver you into my hands..." (1Sam 17:46). He was content with the little he had and thanking God in every thing. God was the source of his joy and happiness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He had established a kingdom and started to depend on his strength and power. He started to worry about himself and stayed in his home while his people are fighting for him. He simply had nothing to do, he slept as much as he could and rested his body. He had many wives, which was against the law of Moses. He started to indulge himself and seek temporary earthly pleasures.

2- Sinning to God

Bad desire (Thought) → Evil act (Adultery) → Murder!

- ❖ If David were during this time, living the life of continuous repentance and confession, examining every thought, then he would not have sinned. Yet, since he was relaxing too much, his spirituality started to deteriorate and he fell in the bigger sin, which started off by a thought or a bad desire.
- ❖ David stayed for a whole year not wanting to repent his sin. Instead he tried his best to cover it, which led him to commit a more dreadful sin.
- ❖ The nobleness of Uriah the Hittite, refusing even to go to his home to rest and be with his wife, Bathsheba, while the people of God are fighting. Instead of admiring his noble act, David made him carry a letter to Joab to simply get Uria killed in the battle and Bathsheba to be his wife. This is what sinning can do to us, it make us blind and self-centered.

3- Repentance

Read 2 Sam. 12

God revealed his sin. → The parable that Nathan the prophet told to David.

You are the man! Thus says the Lord... Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord?

- ❖ David's confession "I have sinned against God" And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die". That shows how merciful God is to the repentant soul. Even though God hates sin so much, but he is also so compassionate and loving. Nothing can stop the fountain of His love for the repentant soul. As soon as David confessed

his sin, God granted him forgiveness, just as a loving father awaiting the return of His prodigal son.

- ❖ David wept bitterly, and wrote “Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done [this] evil in Your sight...” (Psalm 51). David lived the rest of his life repenting his sins with a contrite heart, and left us a treasure of Psalms for the church and the whole world to benefit from. Perhaps the end of his life was stronger than the beginning.
- ❖ Oh, repentance, you have made a virgin out of an adulterous.

4-Consequence of sin:

The sin was forgiven, but the consequence of sinning must follow:

- 1- The sword will not depart your home (Absalom’s treason)
- 2- The son that is born to you will die
- 3- God will take your wives and given them to others
- 4- Evil will arise from your home

Yet, God’s mercy to His repentant soul converts the results of sinning into a purifying fire. He would allow tribulations and sufferings so that the soul would be decorated and beautiful to be wed to her heavenly groom. Behold, you [are] fair, my love! (Song of Songs 4:1)

Conclusion:

If we feed our mind with Christ → the output would be good deeds, where as, if we feed our minds with the evil worldly desires → the output is bad deeds.

Applications:

- ❖ To be aware of our free time, and to try to occupy our selves and our mind with useful spiritual work (Any service to the church...). A vacant mind is a factory for the devil.
- ❖ To live the life of scrutiny. To examine every thought on a daily base and be very cautious about what hear or see. We should train our eyes to see the images of Christ on the Cross, as the good shepherd...etc., so that we would not allow our selves to see images of this world. Any thing evil that we get to see or hear gets stored in our mind and becomes copy righted to the devil. Thus, in any time of weakness or slumbers the devil replays those images to us, with modifications, so that we may fall in sin. Yet, if our minds are occupied with the images of Christ on the Cross-and his life giving words, there will be no room for any worldly image or thought.
- ❖ To struggle against sin till bloodshed as St. Paul says, and not to feel sorry or find excuses to our selves. e.g. the martyr who was tied on a bed and an evil women was brought to him in order to try to make him fall in sin. Yet, he did not find anything to do except to cut off his

tongue and to spit it on her face. For those saints, it was better to sacrifice their blood than to offend God.

- ❖ To live the live of continuous repentance
- ❖ Nothing could stop the love of God to mankind. The only thing that could hurt the human soul is to keep the sin inside and not to confess them. The saints knew that repentance is what bring them close to God, so they lived their life repenting every sin, so that they enjoy the warmth of being in the bosom of the Father and taste the kingdom of heaven while still here on earth.

Week 3 – The Value of Time

Objective:

- ❖ To appreciate the value of time and the need to use it wisely
- ❖ To realize the importance of dedicating time to God daily.
- ❖ To realize that our life on earth is but for short time and will end soon, so we need to prepare for the after life

Memory Verse:

“Redeeming the time because the days are evil”

(Ephesians 5:16)

References:

- ❖ Ephesians 5:16-20
- ❖ Malachi 3:7-10
- ❖ “How can I find the time?” By Sally MacLong
- ❖ “Consecration of the present” by a monk from Baramos monastery.

Introduction:

Time is the best expression of equality between all humans since we all get the same share of time. All humans get 24 hours per day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. Humans can vary in the amount of fortune, intelligence, happiness, beauty or even health but they are all equal in the amount of time they get. We also cannot save time; rather we can do more for the same time.

Lesson Outlines:

Ask the students how do they spend their day? And how many hours they allocate for each activity?

Time is a gift from God, but it is up to us to open that gift and use it, abuse it or even unused it. We all need to learn how to manage our time wisely and make the best of every minute in our life because every minute counts. The organized person controls his time instead of time controlling him. So, how can we manage our time???

1. Specify your goals according to God's will

Everyone needs to specify daily, weekly, monthly, yearly and even life long goals. Otherwise the days pass by aimlessly and wastefully. When specifying goals in our life we need to consult with God to show us His will in our life and the goals He has for us (Ephesians 5:15-20). Thus, we clearly need to spend time with God every day to consult with Him regarding our goals. We also ask Him to bless our time and our productivity.

2. Specify the time to meet your goals

We have to put a schedule for ourselves to meet our goals. King Solomon says that to everything under the sun there is a time (Ecclesiastics 3:1-8). The most important thing is to be realistic in your time schedules. Thus, you do not get discouraged when you do not meet the schedule. But it is better to put time frame for your daily activities-even if you could not meet them- than having no time limits or time frame at all.

When specifying time for each of your daily activities, we have to remember that God has asked us to give the Tithes from everything to get His blessing (Malachi 3:7-10). If we calculate the tithes of our day (24 hours), it comes to almost 2.5 hours. So, are we giving God the tithes from our time??.

3. Prioritize your goals according to God's will

We also need to give priorities to our daily tasks and activities. It is common that we do all our daily tasks and activities but at the end of the day we are very tired to pray or to read the Bible. Although the retreat time and the time out with God should have a priority in our daily schedule, we usually run out of time when it comes to God. A spiritual person would know to give the best of his time to God and know that he needs God not that God needs him. Thus, God becomes a priority in his daily schedule.

4. Make sure you meet your goals

There is nothing as satisfying as the feeling that you achieved your goals and completed your tasks for the day, the week or the month. So always keep focused on the goal until you achieve it. Do not get distracted and lose the time because you cannot retrieve the lost time. Make sure you do not look for excuses not to complete your tasks, rather work hard to fulfill them. The Lord said, "Do you not say there are still four months and then comes the harvest? Behold I say to you left up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest..." (John 4:34-36)

The Blessing of giving the tithes from our time:

God has promised “ I will open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it ” (Malachi 3:10-12). Thus God will bless the nine tenth much more than we can do in all the day alone without His blessing. Remember that after all He is the one who gave you the 24 hours every day and He can take it from you any minute. So, let us use our time wisely to prepare to enter His Kingdom because time is our only treasure on this earth.

Conclusion:

May we be conscious of the value of time and the fact that every moment that passes it cannot be replaced. We have to always concentrate on the present time because that is the only time that is under our control.

Application:

- ❖ So.....When....Where...How...and for How long do you want to meet with the Lord??
- These are all questions you need to answer for yourself and act on it today. Because today is the only thing you own and tomorrow is not yours yet.

Week 4 - Translations of The Old Testament

Objective:

- ❖ 1. To know the history of the Bible and the different translations of the Old Testament
- ❖ 2. To know the acceptable translations in the Orthodox Church.

Memory Verse:

“These words are faithful and true” (Revelation 22:6)

References:

- ❖ Internet

Introduction:

It is difficult to talk about the different translations of the Bible and determining its faithfulness without identifying the contents of the "True Bible" as identified in our orthodox church. This issue has been hotly debated since ancient times, before the birth of Christianity, and has continued to our current age, where we have different segments of Christianity recognizing different portions of the Bible.

Lesson Outlines:

Old Testament Canon

The word "canon" was originally from a Hebrew word "qaneh" meaning "reed" and from the Greek word "kanon" meaning "rod." The reed or rods were used to measure things. It came to mean "anything that serves to determine or regulate things." The word was applied to the authentication of the Scriptural books. A canon then is "the body of writing which go to make up the inspired ruler of faith and practice." The books that were chosen to be in the old Testament did not represent all the religious works and Scriptures that were available, but rather the books that were known to be dictated by the word of God. These scriptures were recognized as authoritative at their inception, and were immediately accepted as such by the Jewish people. The Jews accepted all of the 22 books of the Old Testament, the same number of alphabet in the Hebrew language, as inspired. The Old Testament canon, as recognized by the Christian church, is the 39 books of the Old Testament in addition to the Apocrypha. These are known as the Septuagint, and will be defined later. The earliest

extant Christian list of Old Testament books was recorded by Melito, bishop of Sardis, in A.D. This list does not mention Lamentations (which was usually understood to be part of the book of Jeremiah), or Nehemiah, which was normally appended to Ezra. The only other omission was the book of Esther.

(The difference in number between in the 22 Hebrew books and the 39 books approved by the Christian church comes from the fact the palestinian Hebrews considered the book of Ruth as part of Judges, and Malachi as part of Jeremiah, Nehemiah with Azra, and the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles were each made one book, and all the minor prophets were grouped into one book).

Language of The Old Testament:

The Old Testament was written over a thousand years and most of it was written in the Hebrew language. This language was at its peak in the period between Moses and David and until the king Ezekiel, after which it started being corrupted with other languages and eventually disappeared during the captivity. After the return from the Babylonian Captivity, the Jews, no longer familiar with the old Hebrew, required that their Scriptures should be translated for them into the Chaldaic or Aramaic language (in Old Testament called Syrian Tongue) and interpreted (As seen with Ezra the Wruter in his book). These translations and paraphrases were at first oral (spoken), but they were afterwards placed in writing, and thus targums, (i.e., "versions" or "translations") have come down to us. The Hebrew language did not disappear completely, however, but instead remained used within the priests in the Temple. However, the Hebrew letters were converted from the Old cuniform letters used before the captivity, to the new square-from letters similar to the Aramaic alphabet. It is in this new alphabet that the ancient scriptures in Hebrew were transcribed to our day.

The original scriptures as written by their writers have completely disappeared. Only translations and rewritten version are available. The accuracy of the present-day Hebrew version of the Old Testament "The Masoretic Text" is a result of the fastidious care with which the Sopherim and the Masorettes transmitted it. The Sopherim copied manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures from about 300 B.C. until A.D. 500. According to the Talmud, they came to be called "Sopherim" because, in their endeavor to preserve the text from alteration or addition, they counted the number of words in each section of Scripture, as well as the number of verses and paragraphs. During this time, there were two general classes of manuscript copies, the synagogue rolls and private copies. Even the private copies, or "common copies" of the Old Testament text, which were not used in public meetings, were preserved with great care. For the synagogue rolls, however, there was a very elaborate set of rules for the copyists. The manuscript had to be prepared by a Jew, written on the skins of clean animals and fastened together with strings taken from clean animals. Every skin was to contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the codex. The length of each column was to be no less than 48 and no more than 60 lines. The breadth was to be 30 letters. The ink was to be prepared according to a definite special recipe. An authentic copy was to be used from which to copy, and the transcriber was not to deviate from it in the least. No word or letter, not even a word, was to be written from memory. The scribe was to examine carefully the codex to be copied. Between all of the consonants

of the new copy, a space of at least the thickness of a hair or thread had to intervene. Between every parashah, or section, there was to be a breadth of nine consonants. Between every book, there was to be three lines. During the period 500-900 A.D, the text of the Hebrew Bible was standardized by the Masoretes, who were also very careful in the transmission of the text. They counted every letter and marked the middle letter and middle word of each book, of the Pentateuch and of the whole Hebrew Bible, and counted all parashas (sections), verses, and words for every book. These procedures were a manifestation of the great respect they had for the sacred Scriptures, and secured their minute attention to the precise transmission of the text. The Masoretes also introduced a complete system of vowel pointings and punctuation for the text. Because of their high regard for faithfulness to the text in transmission, wherever they felt that corrections or improvements should be made, they placed them in the margin. They retained certain marks of the earlier scribes relating to doubtful words and offered various possibilities as to what they were. Among the many lists they drew up was one containing all the words that occur only twice in the Old Testament.

These were the oldest copies of the Old Testament known until the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947 to 1956. Many critics of the Bible cast doubt on the accuracy of the Scriptures, stating that we only had recent copies of the Old Testament. Further, they said that because of supposed copy errors we could not be sure the Old Testament was correct. However, the Dead Sea Scrolls, pushed the date of the manuscripts back a thousand years. The Dead Sea scrolls were a library of a previously unknown first-century Jewish sect. They were stored in caves near the community of Qumran for safekeeping in the face of advancing Roman troops in about A.D. 70. The community was completely destroyed, no one returned, and the caves and scrolls were forgotten until they were discovered by accident in 1948. They contain the text of most of the Old Testament and the rules and regulations of the community at Qumran. When the Scrolls were compared with the Masoretic Text, they compared in 95 per cent of the text word for word. The 5 per cent variations between the two texts were ALL misspelled words, or obvious slips of the pen. Modern critics of the Scriptures were proven wrong again. God's Word was shown to be accurately preserved down through the ages.

Famous translations of the Old Testament

1-Arameic -Targum:

This was the Aramaic translation of the Old Testament as necessitated by the language conversion after the Captivity. The Targum scriptures that remain to us today are from Palestinian origin whose oldest and most reliable is the "Onkelos Targum" for The first five books of Moses. The translation is considered very accurate and has been reproduced in the past in a number of locations.

2-Greek-the most famous of which was The septuagint:

There were two versions of the Old Testament in use in Judaism before the Church came into existence. The Hebrew version, which was used in Palestine, contained all the books that you find in the Old Testament of a Protestant Bible. The list of books in the Hebrew Bible is called Palestinian Canon. Centuries before the Christian era began, the Jewish community in Alexandria (Egypt) translated the Old Testament into Greek and added a few books. Their list of books is called the

Alexandrian Canon and the translation is called the Septuagint,(pronounced "sept-to-a-gent") usually quoted as the LXX, which is the Roman numerical for seventy. The origin of this the most important of all the versions of the Old Testament is involved in much obscurity. It derives its name from the popular notion that seventy-two elders from Jerusalem from all the 12 tribes of Israel were employed at the direction of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, to translate the Torah, which was accomplished in about seventy days, for the use of the Jews residing in that country. The term eventually encompassed all the books of the Old Testament which were completed in the second century A.D.

Because the Church grew from Greek-speaking synagogues, early Christians, who also spoke Greek, used the Septuagint, which was at that time the official Jewish translation of the Bible used by Greek-speaking Jews in the synagogue. When the New Testament quotes the Old Testament, it uses the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew Bible. All modern Christian Bibles give the Old Testament books their Septuagint names and place them in the order they appear in the Septuagint. Also in our Bibles, the Old Testament books appear in Septuagint order-Law, History, Writings, and Prophecy. The New Testament books are arranged in the same way-Gospels, Acts, Letters, and Revelation.

The Septuagint became the Old Testament of the church, but its contents varied in differing regions, and it includes several books that were not recognized by Jews in Palestine. These extra books that appear in the Septuagint but not in the Palestinian canon are collectively called the Apocrypha. Today, the Orthodox and The Roman Catholic Churches considers the Apocrypha to be deuterocanonical, which means secondarily canonical. This term refers to the order of acceptance and not to the degree of authority. (These 14 or 15 books are I & II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, The Rest of Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah, The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasseh, I & II Book of the Maccabees. These books were composed during the last two centuries before Christ and in the first Century afterwards. The Apocrypha gives much information on the political and religious developments during the period between the Old and New Testament (400 years from Malachi to John the Baptist). The beginnings of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the synagogues are recorded in these books.)

3-A Syrian version of the Old Testament, containing all the canonical books, along with some apocryphal books (called the Peshitto, i.e. simple translation, and not a paraphrase), was made early in the second century, and is therefore the first Christian translation of the Old Testament. It was made directly from the original, and not from the LXX. Version. The New Testament was also translated from Greek into Syriac about the same time. It is noticeable that this version does not contain the Second and Third Epistles of John, 2 Peter, Jude, and the Apocalypse. These were, however, translated subsequently and placed in the version.

4-Translations to other languages including Coptic, and others.

Conclusion:

The Coptic Orthodox church believe in the Old Testament being made of 27 books and the additional second canonical books that are available in the Orthodox or Catholic translations but not in the Protestant Translations of the Bible.

Applications:

- ❖ Memorize the books of the Old Testament in the order they appear in the Bible.
- ❖ The teacher should hold a competition the following week for this task.

Week 5 - Translations of the New Testament

Objectives:

- ❖ To know the history of the Bible and the different translations of the New Testament
- ❖ To know the acceptable translations in the Orthodox Church.

Memory Verse:

“Heaven and earth will pass away but My words by no means will pass away” (Matthew 24:35)

References:

- ❖ Internet

Introduction:

New Testament Canon

The determination of the Canon of the New Testament was not the result of any pronouncement, either by an official of the Church or by an ecclesiastical body. Rather, the Canon was determined by the use of these books throughout all of the Churches during the first and second centuries. The establishment of the Canon was the process by which formal recognition was given to the writings of Scripture already recognized as authoritative. An early list of the books of the New Testament (A.D. 170) appears in the Muratorian fragment, found by L. A. Muratori in manuscript form and published in 1740. Although the fragment is mutilated, it attests to the widespread use as Scripture of all books of the New Testament except Hebrews, James, I and II Peter.

In A.D. 230, Origen (A.D.185-254) stated that all Christians acknowledged as Scripture the four Gospels, Acts, the thirteen epistles of St. Paul, I Peter, I John, and Revelation. He added that the following were disputed by some people: Hebrews, II Peter, II John, III John, James, Jude, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Didache, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews. By A.D. 300, all the New Testament books we presently use were generally accepted in the churches, and by A.D. 367, Pope Athanasius listed all the 27 books as canonical in his Easter Letter, which form the New Testament as we have it today. In some areas, Revelation remained still under dispute as conducive to the heresies defeated at Nicea.

Some canons are smaller than the Protestant Bible; others are larger: The smallest Bible is claimed by the Samaritans, who recognize only the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch). The largest Bible is that of the Ethiopian orthodox church which has 81 books includes the same 27 books in its

"narrower" canon but adds 8 books to its "broader" canon: "four sections of church order from a compilation called Sinodos, two sections from the Ethiopic Books of Covenant, Ethiopic Clement, and Ethiopic Didascalia."

New Testament

The original language in which the New Testament was written was Greek, since it was the most widely used language in the roman world. It was a language rich in vocabulary and specificity of its adjectives, and thus was the language of choice in communicating the word of God to the world. And thus reference to the Old Testament was from the Greek translation.

The New Testament manuscripts fall into two divisions:

Uncials, (written in Greek capitals letters), with no distinction at all between the different words and very little even between the different lines.

Cursives, (written in small Greek letters) and with divisions of words and lines. The change between the two kinds of Greek writing took place about the tenth century. Only five manuscripts of the New Testament approaching to completeness are more ancient than this dividing date.

1. The first, numbered A, is the Alexandrian manuscript or Codex (A.D. 450). In AD 1078 it was given to Patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt after whom it was named. In 1621 AD it was taken to Constantinople by Cyril Lucar, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who gave it to the British Ambassador to Turkey, Sir Thomas Roe. In 1624. it was brought to this England to be presented to James I. However, the king died and it was given to Charles I in 1627 too late to be used in the translation of the King James Bible. It is kept in the National Library of the British Museum. It is believed that it was written, not in that capital, but in Alexandria; whence its title. It is now dated in the fifth century A.D. (A "Codex" is a book in manuscript form with sheets bound together in book form rather than a scroll which is rolled) It contains the whole Old Testament, and most of the New especially the revelations. The text is "Western" or "Byzantine" means being geographically associated with Europe.

2. The second, known as B, is the Vatican manuscript. "Vaticanus Codex" (A.D. 325-350) It is said to be the oldest manuscript called "vellum". (A fine qualify writing material usually made from calf or antelope skins) It and the Codex Sinaiticus are the two oldest uncial manuscripts. They were probably written in the fourth century. The Vaticanus was placed in the Vatican Library at Rome by Pope Nicolas V. in 1448 its previous history being unknown. It originally consisted in all probability of a complete copy of the Septuagint and of the New Testament. It is now imperfect, and consists of 759 thin, delicate leaves, of which the New Testament fills 142. It is referred to by critics as Codex B. No one has been allowed to see the original manuscript since A.D.1475. Photocopies were made in 1889-90 and 1904 (New Testament only). It is identified as the "Eastern Text" and an example of Alexandrian type text, being associated with Egypt.

3. **The Third, C, or the Ephraem manuscript or Codex**, was so called because it was written over by the writings of Ephraem the Syrian, a practice very common in the days when writing materials were scarce and dear. It is believed that it belongs to the fifth century, and perhaps a slightly earlier period of it than the manuscript A. (This type of manuscript is called a "palimpsest" meaning "rubbed again." The parchment was originally written on, but later erased and rewritten upon). Also an example of Alexandrian type text.

4. **The fourth, D, or the Beza Codex**, was so called because it belonged to the reformer Beza, who found it in the monastery of St. Irenaeus at Lyons in A.D.1562 . It is imperfect, and is dated in the fifth century. In two languages, Latin and Greek. Presumed to be a western version based on the order of books and the language used.

5. The fifth (called Aleph) is the Sinaitic manuscript. "Sinaiticus Codex."

Usually designated by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, is referred to as one of the most valuable of ancient MSS. of the Greek New Testament. On the occasion of a third visit to the convent of St. Catherine, on Mount Sinai, in 1859 it was discovered by Dr. Tischendorf. He had on a previous visit in 1844 obtained forty-three parchment leaves of the LXX., which he deposited in the university library of Leipsic, under the title of the Codex Frederico-Augustanus, after his royal patron the king of Saxony. In the year referred to (1859) the emperor of Russia sent him to prosecute his search for MSS., which he was convinced were still to be found in the Sinai convent. The story of his finding the manuscript of the New Testament has all the interest of a romance. He reached the convent on the 31st January; but his inquiries appeared to be fruitless. On the 4th February he had resolved to return home without having gained his object. "On that day, when walking with the provisor the convent, he spoke with much regret of his ill-success. Returning from their promenade, Tischendorf accompanied the monk to his room, and there had displayed to him what his companion called a copy of the LXX., which he, the ghostly brother, owned. The manuscript was wrapped up in a piece of cloth, and on its being unrolled, to the surprise and delight of the critic the very document presented itself which he had given up all hope of seeing. His object had been to complete the fragmentary LXX. of 1844 which he had declared to be the most ancient of all Greek codices on vellum that are extant; but he found not only that, but a copy of the Greek New Testament attached, of the same age, and perfectly complete, not wanting a single page or paragraph." This precious fragment, after some negotiations, he obtained possession of, and conveyed it to the Emperor Alexander, who fully appreciated its importance, and caused it to be published as nearly as possible in facsimile, so as to exhibit correctly the ancient handwriting. The entire codex consists of 346 1/2 folios. Of these 199 belong to the Old Testament and 147 1/2 to the New, along with two ancient documents called the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas. The books of the New Testament stand thus: the four Gospels, the epistles of Paul, the Acts of the Apostles, the Catholic Epistles, the Apocalypse of John. It is shown by Tischendorf that this codex was written in the fourth century, and is thus of about the same age as the Vatican codex; but while the latter wants the greater part of Matthew and sundry leaves here and there besides, the Sinaiticus is the only copy of the New Testament in uncial characters which is complete. Thus it is the oldest extant MSS. copy of the New Testament. Both the Vatican and the Sinai codices were probably written in Egypt.

6. The Syrian (Aramaic) Versions

In 2 Kings 18:26, Ezra 4:7, Daniel 2:4" the translation of the Scriptures into "Syrian tongue" more correctly rendered "Aramaic," which includes both the Syriac and the Chaldee languages. In the New Testament there are several Syriac words, such as:

1. "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" "Mark 15:34, Matthew 27:46" gives the Hebrew form, "Eli, Eli"
2. "Raca" "Matthew. 5:22"
3. "Ephphatha" "Mark 7:34"
4. "Maran-atha" "1 Corinthian 16:22"

7. The Latin Versions.

A Latin version of the Scriptures, called the "Old Latin," which originated in North Africa, was in common use in the time of Tertullian (A.D. 150) Of this there appears to have been various copies or recessions made. That made in Italy, and called the Itala, was reckoned the most accurate. This translation of the Old Testament seems to have been made not from the original Hebrew, but from the LXX. This version became greatly corrupted by repeated transcription, and to remedy the evil, Jerome (A.D. 329) was requested by Damasus, the bishop of Rome, to undertake a complete revision of it. It met with opposition at first, but was at length, in the seventh century, recognized as the "Vulgate" version. The word "vulgate" is Latin for "common or "usual." It meant is was the normal text or usual Latin text used. It appeared in a printed form about A.D. 1455 the first book that ever issued from the press. The Council of Trent (1546) declared it "authentic." It subsequently underwent various revisions, but that which was executed (1592) under the sanction of Pope Clement VIII. was adopted as the basis of all subsequent editions. It is regarded as the sacred original in the Roman Catholic Church. All modern European versions have been more or less influenced by the Vulgate. This version reads incorrectly reads "ipsa" (feminine ending) instead of "ipse" (masculine ending) in "She shall bruise thy head." Correct translation is "He shall bruise thy head."

8. There are **several other ancient versions** which are of importance for Biblical critics, but which we need not mention particularly, such as:

- a. The Ethiopic, in the fourth century, from the LXX.;
 - b. Two Egyptian versions, about the fourth century,
 - ❖ The Memphitic, circulated in Lower Egypt
 - ❖ The Thebaic, designed for Upper Egypt, both from the Greek;
 - c. The Gothic, written in the German language, but with the Greek alphabet, by Ulphilas (died. 388 A.D) of which only fragments of the Old Testament remain;
 - d. The Armenian, about A.D. 400
 - e. The Slavonic, in the ninth century, for ancient Moravia.
- Other ancient versions, as the Arabic, the Persian, and the Anglo-Saxon, may be mentioned.

9. The English Versions.

- a. To Wycliffe the honor belongs of having first rendered the whole Bible into English (A.D.1380) This version was made from the Vulgate, and incorrectly renders "Genesis 3:15" after that Version, "She shall trede thy head."

- b. The pioneer of the English Bible is William Tyndale who published the New Testament (1525-1531) It is interesting to note that about 90 percent of Tyndale's original translation made it into the King James Version that we know today
- c. Miles Coverdale's (1535-1553)
- d. Thomas Matthew's (1537) really, however, the work of John Rogers. This was properly the first Authorized Version, Henry VIII. having ordered a copy of it to be got for every church. This took place in less than a year after Tyndale was martyred for the crime of translating the Scriptures.
- e. In 1539 Richard Taverner published a revised edition of Matthew's Bible.
- f. The Great Bible, so called from its great size, called also Cranmer's Bible, was published in 1539 and 1568 In the strict sense, the "Great Bible" is "the only authorized version; for the Bishops' Bible and the present Bible [the A.V.] never had the formal sanction of royal authority."
- g. Next in order was the Geneva version (1557-1560)
- h. The Bishops' Bible (1568)
- i. The Rheims and Douai versions, under Roman Catholic auspices (1582, 1609)
- j. The Authorized Version (King James Version 1611)
- k. The Revised Version of the New Testament in 1880 and of the Old Testament in 1884

Modern Versions:

- 1901 American Standard Version
- 1902 Weymouth NT
- 1924 Centenary NT
- 1924 Moffatt Bible
- 1927 Smith-Goodspeed Bible
- 1946 Revised Standard Version NT
- 1952 Revised Standard Bible
- 1960-70 New American Standard
- 1973 New International Version of Bible
- 1982 New King James Version

Conclusion:

The Coptic Church approves of the old and the new King James versions of translations as the acceptable Bible Translations.

Applications:

- ❖ Memorize the books of the New Testament in the order they appear in the Bible.
- ❖ The teacher should hold a competition the following week for this task. Make it enjoyable and fun for the students

Week 6 - Closing the Generations Gab

Objective:

- ❖ How to treat your parents

Memory Verse:

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."
(Exodus 20:12)

References:

- ❖ The Holy Bible – New King James Version.
- ❖ <http://www.divorcereform.org/all.html>
- ❖ <http://www.calvarychapel.com/library/Reference/Social/DivorceStatistics.htm>
- ❖ <http://www.christians.org/command/com05.html>
- ❖ <http://www.scborromeo.org/cc/p3s2c2a4.htm>

Introduction:

In Exodus 19 we see the children of Israel and Moses summoned at the foot of Mount Sinai to see God and to receive His law. God descends on the mountain in a thunderous storm with trumpets sounding and smoke and lightening covering the trembling mountain. God then speaks and delivers His commandments, the principle foundations for the Israelite's new way of life. Ten in all God delivers to Moses in the presence and in the hearing of the people of Israel. Only one of them carries a promise and an earthly reward. That is the commandment to honor your father and mother.

Lesson Outlines:

1. Who are parents?

Why would God dedicate a whole commandment out of 10 to these "beings"? Why would he stress it enough that He even promises us with a reward for doing it?

- a. Parents are a gift from God.

- i. No one can choose his parents. One is born with them. It is a hand dealt by God according to His wisdom.
 - ii. If God is in control and His providence encompasses us then parents cannot be anything but God's gift to us.
They are two people out of billions who are hand picked by God to be my parents.
- b. Parents love their children.
- i. In the animal kingdom breeding is a biologic chemical reflex to insure the survival of the species (ex. Female dog going into heat every cycle and male dog driven to impregnate her). There is multiple offspring to guarantee survival of a few. It is a chemical biological action void of any emotions or rational thinking.
 - ii. In human procreation is a rational decision made consciously driven by love to produce one unique child to care for. That love instilled by God is the same love that drove God to create human beings and love them despite their rebellion and their hard-heartedness.
That love is what keeps the parents awake all night to change the child's diaper, to work extra to guarantee a good life for the child, stay up late worried sick about the child when he is late, and it is the same love that makes parents wish their child turns up to be better than them (a quality can not be found in any other human being).
 - iii. If it was not true that parents always love their children then maybe one of the commandments should have been "Parents love your children". It seems it was not necessary for God to even mention such an obvious and spontaneous thing.

2. What is the value of parents?

- a. "When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!". Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own [home]."(John 19:26)
 - i. Jesus Christ knowing the importance of physical parents, while on the cross, instructed St. Mary to take care of St. John and vice versa. Jesus could the least have sent angels to cater for St. Mary and St. John till they both pass away but He knew no matter how many angels come to serve them they ultimately need a physical mother and a physical son.

b. What is the value of “un-parents”?

i. Statistics show that parents are very important in raising a child:

"Children living with a single parent or adult report a higher prevalence of activity limitation and higher rates of disability. They are also more likely to be in fair or poor health and more likely to have been hospitalized (National Center for Health Statistics, 1997)."

<http://www.divorcereform.org/all.html>

ii. Look at God’s love; even if a family is not complete, God’s grace never leaves a child wanting love, He will fly to him and surround him with his loving arms.

"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (John 14:18)

3. How to treat your parents?

a. Virtues needed for the commandment:

i. Respect: To parents who even if are imperfect are still God’s gift to me and are people who love me immensely.

1. “Respect for parents derives from gratitude toward those who, by the gift of life, their love and their work, have brought their children into the world and enabled them to grow in stature, wisdom, and grace.”

<http://www.scborromeo.org>

"With all your heart honor your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that through your parents you were born; what can you give back to them that equals their gift to you?"¹⁹ ([Sirach 7:27-28](#)).

ii. Respect is shown by obedience.

"My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. . . . When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you." ([Proverbs 13:1](#))

"A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke." ([Proverbs 6:20-22](#))

"For the Lord honored the father above the children, and he confirmed the right of the mother over her sons. Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and whoever glorifies his mother is like one who lays up treasure. Whoever honors his father will be gladdened by his own children, and when he prays he will be heard. Whoever glorifies his

father will have long life, and whoever obeys the Lord will refresh his mother.”^(Sirach 3:2-6)

O son, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives; even if he is lacking in understanding, show forbearance; in all your strength do not despise him. . . . Whoever forsakes his father is like a blasphemer, and whoever angers his mother is cursed by the Lord.²⁵
(Sirach 3:12-13, 16)

- iii. Humility: To admit own limitations/ignorance, naïve-ness/inexperience, and even prejudices and narrow-mindedness.
- iv. Love: That drives one to open his heart to his parents and be frank with them in everything; love that drives one to contribute at home with the chores and the responsibilities; love that allows one to come close to them and close the gap between them and himself.

Conclusion:

Definition of “honor your father and mother”:

“To a small child, honor means *obedience*. To an adolescent, it means *respect*. To an adult child, it means *kindness*, thoughtfulness, and care of parents.”
<http://www.christians.org>

This commandment then does not end. Its application changes from obedience of a child to taking care of one’s elderly parents as an adult. No other creature takes care of its elderly besides human beings; it is a characteristic that sets us apart from animals.

This commandment is not as easy as it sounds and that is why God gave it as a commandment and will reward whoever applies it. Parents can be overprotective, overbearing, forever treating their sons/daughters as children, not communicating with their kids, and most importantly viewing life from a century old point of view.

But it is easy to point the finger at others and stay idle ourselves. Children also dictate a big part of the relationship they have with their parents. Parents are people assigned to us by God to love us, guide us and guard us.

Applications:

- ❖ What will you do on your part to make your relationship with your parents complete?
- ❖ Counsel children who are having difficulties in getting along with their parents. Help them to develop better understanding and relationships with their parents.

Week 7 - How to Deal With My Brothers and Sisters?

Objective:

- ❖ Develop a loving and caring attitude between the students and his brothers and sisters

Memory Verse:

“We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death” (I John 3:14)

Reference:

- ❖ The Bible

Introduction:

Ask the students: what did you get for your brother or sister birthday gift? When were their birthdays?

Let the student try to remember and actually answer this question

The Love to brothers and sisters and caring for them is an important component of our life and is a great source of joy and happiness to us and to our brothers and sisters. The bible mentions multiple stories about brothers and sisters and gives multiple examples of the good and bad relationships between brothers and sisters.

Can you remember any of these stories?

The brotherly love or the love of the brethren can be categorized into three categories:

1. The family love i.e. loving your brothers and sisters
2. The church family love i.e. loving the members of the church
3. The wider human family love i.e. loving all humans because they were all created in the image of God like me so we are all brothers and sisters. Our father is God in heaven and our father in the flesh is Adam. Our Lord Jesus Christ sanctified the human family and the brotherly love when we all became members of one body the body of Jesus Christ (Romans 12:4-5)

Jesus Christ also called the disciples His brothers when He told Mary Magdalene to give the good news of the resurrection to them (John 20:17).

Lesson Outlines:

Today we will concentrate mainly on the family love, which is the love between the brothers and sisters at home.

What do we do to our brothers and sisters to show them our love?

The love between brothers and sisters should have the following components:

1. *Care:*

Showing your love in action by caring for them and showing them tenderness. Good examples in the bible is when Joseph cared for his brothers and went to give them food to eat when they were out taking care of the sheep (Genesis 37:13-17). David similarly cared for his brothers and carried food to them when they were in the army against Goliath (2Samuel 17:17-18).

Similarly Mary and Martha had sent to find and bring Jesus Christ to heal their brother Lazarus when he was sick (John 11:3)

2. *Support:*

Supporting our brothers and sisters in their school, duties or other important events for them is a Christian attitude that we all should show in the family. We certainly need to support them in the good actions and deeds but not in bad actions.

Aaron was a great support to Moses in his service and mission from God (Genesis 4:15-16). They were both serving God side by side and Miriam their sister, who was a prophetess, was helping both of them. Also Maximos and Domadios as well as Kozman and Demyan were brothers that supported each other to excel in their spiritual life.

3. *Effort:*

It also takes effort to show love to our brothers and sisters. We cannot say we love them by word without actions to show this love. This effort may be physical, mental, financial, or time.

Miriam the sister of Moses run after his basket when his mother placed in the Nile river till she saw who picked it up. She then asked Pharaoh's daughter if she needs someone to feed the baby and she ran back again to her home to bring her mother.

4. *Forgiveness:*

There might be sometimes disagreements or fights between the brothers and sisters but amazingly they resolve very quickly and soon forgotten. This is the essences of the brotherly love is forgiveness. There is no family that is devoid of some turbulence every now and then, however if we do not forgive each other the family ties will break very quickly.

Joseph forgave his brothers of the great mistake they did with him when he saw them again in Egypt (Genesis 45:44). He actually brought them and his father into Egypt and provided them with all their needs during the time of starvation and famine

5. *Salvation:*

The most important sign of the Christian brotherly love is to bring my brothers and sisters closer to Christ as I do with myself. This is what Andrew did with his brother Simon Peter to the Lord Jesus Christ and he told him that we found the Messiah (John 1:41). There are also brothers that were disciples to the Lord Jesus as were James and John the sons of Zebedee and James and Judas the sons of Colopas (Matthew 10:2-3). These brothers lead each other to Christ and served him of the rest of their lives.

Another good example is St. Macarina who was the spiritual guide to her brother St. Basil the great.

6. *Communication:*

Finally all the virtues of the love in the family are tied up together through good communication. We need to communicate effectively and politely with our brothers and sister (Matthew 18:15). We also need to know enough about each other so we can say that we are living in the same house and his or her room is next to my room. Remember also the way we communicate with our brothers and sisters reflects if we are true Christians or not (Psalm 34:13). When Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because he married an Ethiopian and rebelled against him, God punished Miriam with leprosy. However, Moses prayer to God to heal her so God listened to Moses (Numbers 12).

Conclusion:

My duty towards my brothers and sisters are:

- ❖ To grow together in Christ (Ephesians 4:1-6)
- ❖ To encourage and support with a positive attitude (Mark 14:3-9)
- ❖ To correct his mistakes in the spirit of humbleness (Galatians 6:1-5)
- ❖ Tolerance without judgment (Matthew 18:21-35)
- ❖ Finally God is above every human love and is the source of every love between the brothers and sisters in the family (Matthew 12:46-50)

Applications:

- ❖ Treat your brothers and sisters at home kindly
- ❖ Be a beloved brother or sister into the greater family in the church by showing love, care and tenderness to every one in the church
- ❖ Assign a student to find out about the story of St. Macarina for next class

THE APOSTLES' FAST PERIOD

Use Filler lessons (at the beginning of the book) between the feast of Pentecost and the second week of July.

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF JULY

Week 2: Church Vessels

Week 3: Pentecost and the Birth of the Church

Week 4: Ananias and Sapphira

Week 2 - Church Vessels

Objective:

- ❖ To learn about the church vessels and their use and symbols

Memory Verse:

“Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling” (Psalm 2:11)

References:

- ❖ “Al Kharida Al Nafeesa fe Sharh tokoos Al Kaneesah” Fr Youhanna
- ❖ “Manarah Al Akdas”. Fr. Mankorious
- ❖ “AL Kaneesah beet Allah” Fr Tadros Malaty

Introduction:

The Coptic Orthodox Church carries many symbols in its prayers and rituals. Each instrument used in the church has a meaning and is intended to help us to come closer to God during our prayers. The church attempts to make prayer and worship a meaningful reminder of things that happened in the Bible and an atmosphere mimicking the worship in heaven in front of the throne of God.

Lesson Outline:

The Throne (Ark)

- ❖ A wooden square box, where the chalice sits, on top of the Altar
- ❖ It is called the Throne because the Blood of Christ "sits" in it
- ❖ It is called the Ark because the Blood which gives life to who ever drinks from it, is represented by the pot of Manna which was in the Ark of covenant and was a symbol of the true Body of Christ

The Chalice

- ❖ Carries the Blood of Christ
- ❖ Christ used a chalice when He instituted the Eucharist (Matthew 26:26-27)
- ❖ The Apostles used a chalice likewise (1 Corinthians 10:16,21)

The Paten

- ❖ Christ probably did not use a paten, but the church used it to protect against losing any particles from the Body of Christ
- ❖ The Body of Christ is placed in it so it represents:
 - The womb of St. Mary
 - The Manger
 - The tomb

The Dome (Star)

- ❖ Made of two arches that cross together and form the shape of a cross
- ❖ There is usually a small cross on top of it
- ❖ Represents the star that appeared to the wise men and stopped above the house where Jesus lay

The Spoon (Myster)

- ❖ To administer the Blood to the believers

The Gospel

- ❖ A metal case, wherein a copy of the 4 gospels are placed.
- ❖ An icon of St. Mary is usually on one side, and an icon of Cross on the other

The Treasure Box

- ❖ A box where the sacraments are placed to be taken to someone who couldn't come to the church to take communion

The Incense box

- ❖ A box where the incense is placed to be used during the liturgy
- ❖ It is placed on the Altar

The Censor

- ❖ Represents St. Mary
- ❖ The upper dome represents heaven
- ❖ The lower dome represents the womb of St. Mary
- ❖ The coal represents Christ's Humanity
- ❖ The fire represents Christ's Divinity
- ❖ The incense on top of the coal is the aroma that we received when he represented Himself as a true Sacrifice, and we smelled him, as did His Good Father
- ❖ The three chains represent the Trinity, and are united by one chain in the Middle (the unity of the Trinity)

The Fans

- ❖ Round head with a long handle
- ❖ The head is shaped like the halo around a saint's head and a Seraphim is drawn inside it
- ❖ Represents the Seraphim
- ❖ Used by two deacons during the Praise of the Seraphim (The Cherubim worship You...)
- ❖ Used to be used to keep insects away from the sacrifice, but that is not its proper use.

Other Vessels

- ❖ The Oblation basket
- ❖ The symbols and triangle
- ❖ The water basin
- ❖ The cruets for water and wine
- ❖ The Holy Myron container

Conclusion:

As a member in the Coptic Orthodox church we should fully understand the meaning of the rites and rituals of the church. We should be aware of all the symbolic meanings of different things in our church. This will help us enjoy prayers in our church and be able to preach and invite others to our church.

Application:

- ❖ Search the Old Testament for what vessels were used in the tabernacle of meeting.

Week 3 - Pentecost and the Birth of the Church

Objective:

- ❖ The work of the Holy Spirit in the Church

Memory Verse:

“And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them” (Acts 2:2-4).

References

- ❖ The essays of H. H. Pope Shenouda III and his sermons on the Holy Spirit
- ❖ “The Church in the days of the Apostles” Bishop Youannis
- ❖ “Studies and contemplation on the great feasts” Part 2, Bishop Bemin
- ❖ “The Father’s Promise” Virgin Mary’s Church, Fagala

Introduction

The disciples lived with Jesus and the great hopes filled their mind. They were waiting for the day when Jesus would reign over the earth and establish an earthly kingdom. When they saw the multitude surrounding Him, they believed that their hopes would soon be achieved. The Palm Sunday witnessed the summit of their joy but soon their dreams faded when Jesus was taken from them to be judged, crucified, and to die on the cross. They were obliged, because of this, to escape and hide and when they wanted to meet, they met in secret in an upper room and in their grief and distress they forgot what Jesus used to say to them that he would leave the world but this did not mean the end of His work among the people. On the contrary it means the beginning of completing this work on sound basis, and that his going does not mean defeat but the beginning of victory for the kingdom of God in this world. They forgot that He had said, “And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, but the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:16,26).

Lesson Outlines:

The glorious Resurrection then Ascension

Then came the glorious resurrection, and Jesus appeared to them many times but He appeared in the glorified flesh of resurrection. The form and image is exactly the same but he entered their room and the doors were closed. He entered suddenly and disappeared suddenly. Later on they knew that their teacher was the Eternal Son of God. Their old feeling which was full of love and respect mingled with reverence, awe and worship. After forty days the disciples witnessed the departure of their beloved calmly. We expected a great grief and sadness, but after his ascension to heaven, they went back to Jerusalem in great happiness. They knew that although he went up to heaven, yet he would be with them forever.

The Day of the Pentecost

The Pentecost was near. It was a great feast in Israel. It came after fifty days from the Passover. It was also a harvest feast, which was celebrated with joy. Jerusalem was crowded with pilgrims coming from all parts of the world to share the joys of the feast. In the middle of these celebrations, there was a small group of men and women gathering in the upper room speaking of their memories and what happened in the near past and they were waiting for the promise of Jesus. They were praying all the time. The day of the Pentecost came and the small group was still in the upper room, and suddenly something splendid took place “And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them” (Acts 2:2-4).

The pilgrims gathered before the temple asking about the cause of the sound they heard. Among those people stood the disciples speaking to them about Jesus and giving proofs that he was the Messiah whom their fathers were waiting for. It was strange that each of them heard the disciple speaking his own language all the people wondered and said to one another, “What does this mean? But others mocking said: They are filled with the new wine” (Acts 2:12,13).

Three thousand believed

Here St. Peter stood up among the people. He was filled with courage and zeal (Acts 2:14-36). St. Peter who denied Christ seven weeks before and said to the maid “I do not know Him” stood now without fear before thousands of people announcing his faith in Christ and calling them to believe in him. This was the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that gave courage to him and it was he that gave the disciples the gift of speaking several languages without knowing them before. It is not St. Peter that spoke neither were the disciples. It was the Holy Spirit that spoke in them. That is why the speech was effective. The Scripture says, “They were cut to the heart and said what shall we do? And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” They received His word with joy and they were baptized and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:37-39).

The fruits of the Holy Spirit

The day of Pentecost was a glorious day in the history of humanity. On that day the Holy Spirit rested on the disciples their eyes opened and they were filled with heavenly power that was not in them before. They no longer worked but the Spirit of God worked in them and with them.

1. **The Holy Spirit gave them courage:** On the day when Lord Jesus was crucified, they were frightened, each one of them ran away and hid himself in a certain place. They met in secret far away from people but now they speak in public and face the multitude with courage and they held the people responsible for crucifying Christ. Was that a result of incidental courage? No, but God was there in them. The Holy Spirit worked in them and gave them the words they spoke to people, chiefs and kings. Wasn't this what Jesus said to them? "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8).
2. **The Holy Spirit filled their hearts with love:** Another change occurred to all believers. Love filled their hearts towards one another. Selfishness disappeared and they became one heart "Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 4:32). That was strange people of all classes joined the Church; rich and poor, educated and ignorant but all those were filled with love and became one thing. The Holy Spirit filled their hearts so they loved one another. That who had gave that who had not. No one thought of himself; each one thought of the others, "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and laid at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made to each as any had need" (Acts 4:34,35).
3. **The Holy Spirit filled their life with joy:** They were happy to have that new life of fellowship in the Holy Spirit who united them in one group "And day by day, attending the temple together, and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:46,47). In fact, the day of Pentecost a glorious day in the history of the Church. It was its birthday indeed. The spirit worked, taught, established and supported "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). The Holy Spirit inspired them with the Spirit of testimony, and preaching in the whole world. They bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead and called for repentance and preparing the hearts to receive the kingdom of God and waiting the second glorious coming of Christ.

Review Questions:

- ❖ Why do we call the day of Pentecost the Church birthday?
- ❖ Why did the Holy Spirit, rest on the disciples fifty days after the resurrection?
- ❖ Why didn't the day of Pentecost events take place every year up till our present day?
- ❖ Why didn't people restore the one language all over the world as the case was before building the Tower of Babylon so that each one can understand the other in his language? **Answer:** Because the language of understanding between people is now the language of love, Love is the language spoken by all and understood by all.
- ❖ Jesus had told His disciples about the heavenly power...the Holy Spirit that would rest on

them and would teach them and strengthen them. Quote the following verses then put the word Jesus in one side and evidences on the other side: Acts 3:6-8, Acts 2:3,4, Acts 2:33, John 14:16,17, John 14:12,13, John 15:26. Just arrange the texts opposite to each other.

Conclusion:

The spirit gave the disciples power in their service, warmth in preaching and effectiveness of preaching and that we are now in great need of the effectiveness of the Spirit.. How can we attain this effectiveness? Through prayers, unity, obedience of the commandment, holiness, practicing the sacraments with the spirit of godliness...

Applications:

- ❖ Arrange for a spiritual retreat for your class where they can be together in one spirit similar to the disciples in the upper room
- ❖ Pick up the following verses and write the proofs that were in St. Peter's sermon in Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles: Joel 2:28-32, Psalm 16:18-11, Psalm 132:11, Psalm 110:1.
- ❖ Try to choose verses, situations and evidence to show the following attributes of the Church of the Apostles that was established on the day of Pentecost.
 - i. It is a Church of prayer, fasting and worship.
 - ii. It is a Church of fellowship, brotherhood and oneness of the heart.
 - iii. It is a Church of rejoicing and peace.
 - iv. It is a Church of Truth and righteousness.
 - v. It is a Church of suffering and persecutions.

Week 4 - Ananias and Sapphira

Objective

- ❖ To learn to tell the Truth in all circumstances.

Memory Verse:

“You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:4)

References

- ❖ Acts 5
- ❖ “Acts” explanation by Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Introduction:

Ask the students the following questions:

- ❖ What are the most important characteristics of the early church?
- ❖ To what extent were the apostles concerned with money?
- ❖ How did each believer get his needs?

The servant draws the students attention to the foundations of the Christian life... love, sacrifice, and order...and refers to the method followed in collecting and distributing gifts and alms in the days of the apostles (Acts 12:44,45).

Lesson Outlines:

Read the story of Ananias and Sapphira from Acts 5

1. The servants will clarify the following facts from:
 - a. There was no rich man or poor man as everything was in common.
 - b. All Christians ate together with delight and they praised the Lord.
 - c. The rich men were not compelled to give their offerings but they willingly did that (Refer to the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:4).
 - d. The apostles themselves supervised the financial matters and distributed the gifts among the poor, each according to his need.
 - e. When the scope of service increased, the apostles laid their hands on seven deacons known to be filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom and put them in charge of financial matters. They got their authority from the apostles.
 - f. The apostles did not store up money although it came to them in great amounts. Notice what Peter said to the lame man: I have neither silver nor gold...

The servant tells the students the story of Ananias and Sapphira, which indicates that offerings were given willingly. The Servant refers to the verse: You have not lied to... and repeat it with the students when he refers to Peter's words to Ananias then asks these review questions:

- ❖ What did Ananias do so that he might share the believers their good works?
- ❖ What is the sin that the devil caused Ananias to fall in?
- ❖ How did Peter know Ananias' sin?
- ❖ To whom did Ananias lie?
- ❖ What was the consequence of the sin of telling lies and the desire for money?

Three hours later Sapphira came in. The Servant mentions her conversation with Peter the apostle.

Discuss with the students the following issues:

1. What is truth, in its widest meaning?.
2. Do we feel true love towards all people?
3. Is our repentance a true one?
4. Is true love for the Lord the basis of our religion?
5. Do I lie to others even for fun?
6. Telling the truth does not contradict being polite

Conclusion:

Lying has a severe punishment even if we are not receiving it in the immediate time when we lie. However, we will surely receive the punishment on the day of judgment. The Bible has clearly excluded liars from entering the heavenly kingdom (Revelation 21: 8)

Application:

- ❖ Always say the truth and do not swear to emphasize that what you say is true whatever happens.

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST

Week 1: Freedom and Discipline

Week 2: The Titles of St. Mary

Week 3: The Gospel of St. John

Week 4: A Cloud of Witness

Week 1 - Freedom and Discipline

Objective:

- ❖ How to use my freedom not as an end in itself but as a means to glorify God?

References

- ❖ “Social and Youthful issues” Bishop Bemini
- ❖ “The Problem of Freedom” Dr. Zakarya Ibrahim

Memory Verse:

“If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36)

Introduction:

Freedom and Control

The word freedom has been misused. People often do wrong in the name of freedom, and people often confuse between freedom and impudence. St. Paul the apostle set to us the limits and dimensions of Christian freedom. In his epistle to the Galatians he says, “For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; you shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another” (Galatians 5:13-15).

Lesson Outlines:

This text calls for the life of freedom to the Christian. This freedom is one of the signs of God’s image in people. In His life on earth, the Lord Jesus showed us how He respected the freedom, which He created in man but the Lord Jesus incarnated and united with our nature and gave us the right to unite with Him. Hence we could attain the power of true liberty, the inner freedom as freedom from sin and its authority, through our unity with Him “If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

A Christian carries in himself two conflicting natures: the first nature is the law of enslavement to lust and flesh or what the Scripture calls “The old corrupted man” and the second nature is the law of freedom, the law of the Spirit or what the Scripture calls “The new nature” (Galatians 5:17- 23). The top of freedom in the life of man is that the second nature completely overcomes the first nature. Paul expresses this when he said; “The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14). St.

Augustine explained this fact in one of his wise sayings: “I reached the top of the world (Complete freedom) when I feared nothing and desired nothing”. This means that Augustine believes that fear and desire are the enemies of true freedom. Let us apply this to the relationship between a young man and a young woman.

The danger of fear and suspicion

It is not good for a young man to be afraid of a young woman or a young woman to be afraid of a young man. Doubt and suspicion makes the image of the other sex a cause of falling. The true Christian has a pure eye and through this purity sees all persons as pure and righteousness.

The danger of lust and Don Juanism

This group is imitating Don Juan who was a deviationist and also the deviation and this represents the opposite of the previous deviation (Fear and suspicion) this group is running after the satisfaction of instinct and the other sex and indulgence in sexual matters and enslavement to the desires of the flesh. Don Juanism is the desire to have a relationship with the other sex on a physical level and we know that the bodily passions do not satisfy man. The intercourse between two people without spiritual unity (in the mystery of marriage) causes separation, great hatred and enmity. The Holy Bible gives us a model of such a relationship: Ammon loved Tamar, Absalom’s sister but after “he forced her and lay with her, he hated her with very great hatred, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her” (2 Samuel 13:15).

This explains the difference between the married person and the one who commits adultery. The adulterer and the adulteress meet on the flesh level only but the married people, as husband and wife are living in the unity of deep love, loyalty and truth, commitment, responsibility and keeping the covenant.

The Dimensions of the Relationship between a young man and a young woman

The other is a human being and not a thing: Within the limits of this outlook we heartily respect the other sex and we do not regard them as tools for amusement or satisfying the desire of the flesh.

We must not cause the fall of the other: The Holy Bible shows that temptation to sins cause perils and woe to the one who causes temptation. The Christian love that fills the heart of the Christian makes him love the other and makes him try his best to keep him away from temptation. He never vexes him in any way. Here the virtue of chastity in Christianity combines with love and forms the basis of all Christian virtues.

Christian Control, Sublimation and Reverence (Galatians 5:16-25): The true Christian lives according to the spirit and not according to the flesh. A Christian believes that the instincts of the flesh are out of control because of the inherited sin, and that the ancient man lies inside him. That is why he is keen to leave his instincts in Christ’s possession and to let the Holy Spirit work in his heart and kindle it with love to the Lord as Christ alone is the cornerstone in the chastity life, He alone instructs the body, calms

the nerves, kindle the spirit of giving and sacrifice and helps us to endure. Without the new nature man falls and degrades himself by being indulged in sexual affairs.

The Christian youth, in his struggle to control his instinct, follows the advice of Paul the apostle to his disciple Timothy, “So shun youthful passions and aim at righteousness, faith, love and peace along with those who call upon the Lord from pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).

In this way he perceives the excellent expression about spiritual struggle seeking the control of the instinct and sublimating it “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24,25).

Questions

1. What is the difference between freedom and impudence?
2. What is the Christian concept of freedom?
3. What hinders the Christian’s true freedom?
4. Show that it is necessary to resist the desires of the flesh within the limits of the spiritual struggle to enjoy true freedom.
5. How dangerous is suspicion and repression in sexual life?
6. How dangerous is Don Juanism (lust) in sexual life?
7. Define the dimension of the relationships between a young man and a young woman before marriage.

Conclusion:

The true Christian freedom is the ultimate path to happiness. It is freedom from every control of evil on the human being. It elevates us in our spiritual life to grow in the likeness of God. This is the original image of Adam when God gave him the freedom in the Garden of Eden to do everything he wanted and eat from every tree. But He also gave him the discipline of not eating from only two trees in the middle of the garden.

Applications:

- ❖ Practice controlling the senses to keep the body pure
- ❖ Recitation: Galatians 5:13

Week 2 - The Titles of St. Mary

Objective:

- ❖ Developing the attitude of intercession with St Mary in our everyday life.

Memory Verse:

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” (Luke 1: 42)

References

- ❖ “The Second Heaven” Bishop Bemin
- ❖ “Mary the Virgin” Fr. Youssef Assaad
- ❖ “The Intercession of Saints” St. George Church, Sporting
- ❖ “Mary the virgin in the Orthodox Creed” Fr. Sidaros Abdel Messih

Introduction:

St. Mary has been a special friend to all humanity who cares and intercedes in front of God in our behalf. She was the right and suitable person for the Lord to fulfill the promise of salvation through. We owe her a great favor and should honor her in our prayers.

Lesson Outlines:

The Mother of God (Theotokos)

The Lord Christ, the Incarnate God was born of her (The Divinity and humanity united in one in her womb). She did not give birth to manhood only but she gave birth to God the Son who appeared in the flesh “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel which means God with us” (Matthew 1:23). Elizabeth said to her “why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me” (Luke 1:43).

Although she is His mother, she also worships Him “Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father’s house, and the king will desire your beauty, since He is your Lord, bow to Him” (Psalm 45:10,11). She said to the angel. “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

Perpetual Virgin

We believe that Virgin Mary was of perpetual virginity before, during and after the Divine Conception and also after the birth of Christ. This is the miracle of the mystery of the Divine Incarnation “The Lord Himself will give you a sign, behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). In her virginity the Father chose her to conceive and give birth to the Logos, the Son of God. In her conception, and when the Holy Spirit rested on her, she was the virgin and the mother at the same time. When she bore Jesus Christ in the flesh. The conception showed her virginity.

Ezekiel the prophet prophesied the sealed womb of Virgin Mary “Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces east, and it was shut and he said to me: This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it” (Ezekiel 44:1,2). Ezekiel the prophet cries saying that he had seen a gate, which faced the east, marked with a wonderful seal. Only the Lord of hosts entered through it. He entered and went out but the door remained marked as it is ...the door is the Virgin who bore our good Savior and she remained a Virgin even after giving birth to Him.

Our teacher St. Luke says, “And Joseph also went up from Galilee from the city of Nazareth to Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed who was with Child” (Luke 2:4,5). She was regarded as a wife to Joseph according to the angel, and she remained engaged to him and remained a Virgin all her life. That is why she wondered when she heard the angel as she intended to remain Virgin all the days of her life.

As for Jesus’ brother whom the Bible mentioned, they are his cousins, his mother’s sister’s Sons. In the east they call the relatives brothers (Refer to Matthew 27:55, Mark 15:40, John 19:25). They are the Sons of Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary’s sister who was also called Mary after the name of her sister the Virgin who went to the temple as a Nazarite.

The Saint and Pure

She is a saint as the Holy Spirit sanctified her. She is holy as she was sanctified in heart, body, mind and spirit. She dedicated her life to the Lord. She gave birth to the Holy whom the angels praise “Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord of Hosts”.

The Faithful Mediator

The Church believes that the Virgin has a special status. She is the Lord’s mother and she is our mother so she deserved to be the Faithful Mediator, as she knew our needs and his intentions. We have no excuse for our sins. Through you we ask Him who was born of you. O Mother of God, the Virgin as your intercession is powerful and acceptable (Refer to the third Hour prayer). That is why Christians put her picture in their houses, and pray for her intercession before her only son. The Bible emphasizes the fact that Jesus is our only Mediator and Advocate “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 2:1). But this intercession is for the forgiveness of sins, but the intercessions of the Virgin and the angels are requests for God’s mercies (Give examples from the

Bible). One of the most prominent evidences of the Intercessions of Mary the Virgin is the miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-5). Her intercessions are mentioned in the daily melodies of the month of Kiahk and the prayers of the liturgies.

There are many other titles for Mary which the children can pick up from the Bible and the prayers and hymns of the Church such as: The Mother of Light, The radiating unchanged flower, The Mother of Mercy and Salvation, The true Vine carrying the fruit of Life, The Fence of our Salvation, etc.

Conclusion:

Communicate effectively with St. Mary as a friend and as an intercessor. Remember she cares for you and would like to help you. This has been clear in all her apparitions in different parts of the world throughout the years.

Applications:

- ❖ Search the internet about St. Mary's apparitions in different countries.
- ❖ Quote from the New Testament the verses that emphasize the status of Virgin Mary.
- ❖ Who are the Lord's brothers? Study this subject and refer to the four Gospels.
- ❖ Write about the different types of intercessions. Give examples and quote verses.

Week 3 - The Gospel of St. John

Objective:

- ❖ To study St. John's Gospel: Chapter One "The Word became flesh".

Memory Verse:

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God"
(John 1:1)

References

- ❖ St. John's Gospel and its various explanations
- ❖ "Titles and functions of Christ" Bishop Bemin
- ❖ "The Godhead in St John's Gospel" Fr. Aanstassy Shafeek
- ❖ "Why Christ Incarnated and became man" Fr. Bishoy Sadik

Introduction:

Characteristics of the Gospel

1. The Gospel contains deep theological and spiritual interpretations. An explanation of the Incarnation of the Logos; the rebirth, the eternal life, the gift of God, the living water, Judgment, light and darkness, knowing the Truth, True worship, The relationship between the Father and the Son, etc.
2. The Gospel presents Jesus as the God of the Hebrews who saved them from the land of bondage and Jehovah who spoke to Moses and fed them with manna in the wilderness.
3. The Gospel is characterized by Christ revealing many blessed revelations about Himself: He is the Messiah (4:25) and the only Son who is in the bosoms of the Father (1:18), He is the bread of life (6:35) and the light of the world (8:12), He is the door of the sheep (10:7) and the good shepherd (10:11), He is the resurrection and the life (11:25), He is the way, and the truth and the life (14:6), and He is the true vine (15:1).
4. The Gospel draws our attention to the Heavenly Father and to the fact that Christ's life was complete obedience and submission to the will of the Father and that the Father loves us as the Son loves us. No one can go to the Son unless the Father attracts him (John 4:24, 5:19, 6: 44, 16: 27).
5. The Gospel also mentions the farewell talk to the disciples (John 13) and the prayer of intercession that the Son raised for His disciples and all the believers (John 17).

The Writer of the Gospel

- ❖ He is John the Son of Zebedee and his father was a rich man (Mark 1:20). He lived in Galilee and owned a house in Jerusalem. He was a fisherman. His mother, Salomy, was among the women who ministered to him from their own money (Matthew 27:56).
- ❖ His brother, James was a disciple of Christ and he was the first apostle who was martyred. The Lord called these two brothers Boanerges (Mark 3: 17), because of their strong zeal.
- ❖ John the son of Zebedee was a disciple of John the Baptist and when he heard his witness to Jesus, he followed the Lord and became his disciple. Jesus loved that disciple and he was known as the disciple loved by Jesus. The Lord accompanied him together with Peter and James on special occasions. He attended the Lord's judgment and stood by the cross. It was he who took Virgin Mary to his house.
- ❖ The Lord reproached him three times (Luke 9:49-50, Luke 9:54-56, Mark 10:43-44).
- ❖ After the Pentecost he stayed in Jerusalem even after the Virgin's departure (death). He preached the Gospel in Asia Minor and established many churches there (Revelation 1:2). He was exiled in the island of Patmos where he wrote the Revelation (The Apocalypse) in A.D. 95, and he wrote his Gospel in A.D. 98 then he wrote his epistle in the last days of his life. He departed in peace when he was 90 years old and his departure was in the early years of the second century.

Lesson Outlines:

The First Chapter

The "Logos" (The Word)

- ❖ We must confess that the word of God is eternal and we have to imagine the existence of Christ before His incarnation and becoming man after His birth from the womb of the Virgin.
- ❖ The word of God is eternal "In the beginning was the word" (John 1:1).
- ❖ Through and by the word of every thing was created, "All things were made through him" (John 1:3).
- ❖ The word of God is the origin of life "In Him was life" (John 1:4).
- ❖ The Lord sent His Word to the prophets.
- ❖ The Lord sent his word to Moses, and then He wrote the word on a table of stone "Written by the finger of God".
- ❖ "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. (Hebrews 1:1-2).

The word became flesh

The word of God is eternal and it has been revealed to us in the fullness of time. Let us take the example of the radio and television to help us understand. Words and images are transmitted to other through different waves. These surround us everywhere and fill our houses but we cannot see neither can we feel by our senses but when we turn the set on we find that the word immediately incarnates and the image appears and what we could not perceive began to appear and, we were able to perceive...

Although the simile is not of the standard yet it clarifies the whole thing in a way. The word of God is eternal but in the fullness of time, the word of God appeared to us in his body, which he took from the Virgin Mary.

Why Christ incarnated and became man?

- ❖ Man could not ascend to God and it was easier for the Lord to descend to man. The pride of man, his ignorance and pride in his wisdom stood as an obstacle or as a veil so he could not understand the calm lowly God. The Lord is simple. He did not come to the philosophers alone. The Lord is modest. He did not come for the people of high status above. He was poor and did not come to the rich alone.
- ❖ The Lord appeared in our flesh, the flesh of the poor and the rich, the philosopher and the simple, the black man and the white man, God loved the whole world.
- ❖ The incarnate God loved all and did not reject the sinners, so He spoke to the sinners.
- ❖ The Incarnate God was meek ...so the haughty Jews rejected him.
- ❖ The Incarnate God came to bear witness to Truth... so the heretic Jews rejected him.
- ❖ The Incarnate God loved all people and hated fanaticism, so the Jews rejected him and crucified him.

He took our flesh to deliver us and redeem us

- ❖ St. James the Sirougi says, “If you want to save a man from being drowned or to heal a sick man, it is useless to give him advice. You have to take off your clothes and put on the sea costume (which the drowned man wears) and after you jump into the sea you can drag him to the shore of safety”. So the commandments alone and in itself are not enough. On the contrary the Law revealed man’s sin and judged his evil deed.
- ❖ In the same way, God the word descended and emptied Himself (He took our flesh) and came to us, we who are sitting in darkness and the shadows of death. He descended to the Hades through the cross to save those who were imprisoned. He came to take what is ours and give us what is His. He descended to our world to take us up to Him, “and raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).
- ❖ When a king wants to save his people of their enemies who were stronger than them, this king must take off the kingly clothes and put on the clothes of his soldiers and live like them then he leads them in their fight against the enemy, he conquers the enemy and wins victory for his soldiers, they go back in triumph and the king brings his soldiers home in victory and glory. This is our Lord, “He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7,8).

He took our flesh to help those who are tempted

- ❖ “Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in every respect so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people... for because He Himself has suffered and been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:17,18).
- ❖ He was born in poverty. He was born in a manger. He became poor so that we may become rich “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

- ❖ He humbled Himself to raise us up to Him, “He exalted those of low degree” (Luke 1:52).
- ❖ He came down to our earth to raise us up to His heaven; “I will come again and will take you to Myself; that where I am you may be also” (John 14:13).
- ❖ Although He was without sin, He stood in the company of sinners to be baptized by John the Baptist as He shared those sinners in their sins but in the flesh that was bearing sin. He was the Lamb of God who bore the sin of the whole world. After being baptized He fasted for us and with us so He shared us our hunger and fill us.

Is Repentance Enough?

- ❖ The words of repentance indicate the feelings of regret. They refer to past events but they do not solve the problem of the expected fall in the future.
- ❖ The motivation for sin exists inside man so people always return to sin and always regret.
- ❖ The problem of Adam was not the mere punishment of the Lord to him for his sin as when he repented the Lord was kind enough to raise punishment and forgive him... Adam’s problem lies in the fact that he introduced a strange element in his structure so his body was spoiled and the result was death. Will his repentance change his nature and uproot corruption from his body? If a boy threw a bottle and the bottle was broken, of what use would be the boy’s sorrow? If a girl tore her clothes and she was sorry for that, of what use would be her sorrow? What is needed is that the Maker and Creator of man would recreate man.

Conclusion:

The first chapter of the gospel of St. John is very accurate in delineating the idea of the incarnation of the Logos. Any change in any word of the gospel can change the whole faith. Thus we also need to read the Bible with the concentration and understanding to extract from the depth of the words and their meaning.

Applications:

- ❖ Open your Gospel with the spirit of prayer. Read and listen to the voice of the Lord speaking to you. You must have a measure with which you can measure your life. Am I making progress in grace? Do I bear witness for Truth in my life? You cannot benefit from the Gospel of St. John unless the Spirit that wrote it works in you and guides you... through your relationship with the Lord in your prayer.

Week 4 - A Cloud of Witness

Objective:

- ❖ To introduce the feeling of the presence of saints with us in Church

Memory Verse:

“We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1).

References

- ❖ The Life of the Orthodox Prayer

Introduction

When we look around us we see that the icons of saints surround us and we have a feeling that we live moments of holy worship in a fellowship with saints and that one kingdom involves us all, which is the kingdom of God. When we look upwards, we see the sights of the domes of our Churches in the form of a sky adorned with stars and clouds and full of the angels of the Lord. The Church teaches us that heaven is near to us with all her powers and hosts and through prayers heaven is at hand and dimensions of time and place disappear. This holy fellowship gets us out of this material world to the indefinite world of spirit where the invisible hosts of angels and saints dwell.

Lesson Outlines:

The Spiritual World

We may remember Jacob's dream in which he saw a ladder on the earth and its top was in the sky and the angels of God were coming down and going up. The Lord was standing and began to say to him, “I am with you. I keep you safe wherever you go. I shall not leave you”. When Jacob got up he said, “The Lord is in this place and I did not know?” He was afraid and said, “this is the House of God and this is the gate of heaven” (Genesis 28:15-17). He built an altar and called the place Bethel i.e. the House of God. After a few years, Jacob met with God's angel on his way to Bethel and he struggled with him till dawn. He said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me” (Genesis 32:26).

One of the visions of heaven, which Daniel saw, that vision and sight which he described by saying, “Thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat. His garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool, his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him, a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him, the court sat in judgment and the books were opened” (Daniel 7:9,10).

John the Beloved wrote in the Book of the Revelation “After that I looked and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and people and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands... And all the angels stood around the throne” (Revelation 7:9-11).

A cloud of Witnesses

Thus refers St. Paul the apostle to those hosts of saints and makes us feel their presence. “Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1). We get rid of all hindrances that hinder our prayer and things that occupy our mind and disperse our thoughts to be far away from God. We shall feel the presence of all the saints with us.

Conclusion:

Prayer and worship are the two things that bring the earthly saints together with the heavenly saints. Let thus pray with reverence and respect and share the prayer and worship to God with the heavenly

Applications:

- ❖ When you pray, do you feel the presence of the saints during worship in the Church?
- ❖ Develop friendship with the saints that we are surrounded with during our prayers

Lesson of the First week of September
Before the Coptic New Year

Week 1: I am Responsible

Week 1- I am Responsible

Objective:

- ❖ Discovery of our gifts and making use of them for the glory of God

Memory Verse:

“I say to you to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him” (Luke 19:26)

References

- ❖ “Moral Responsibility” Bishop Gregory
- ❖ The Parables of Jesus (Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 19:11-26)

Introduction:

Freedom Involves Responsibility

God created Adam and gave him freedom. One of the prominent signs of freedom is responsibility, which God gave to him in keeping the commandment and working in Paradise. The more freedom man gets the more responsibility he has. The more talents he has the more commitments he has. In the parable of the five talents (Matthew 25:14-30) “The Lord shows how each one of us is responsible for what he does and what he does not do.

Lesson Outlines:

This parable shows that man is in a state of work. It explains the necessity of hard work in our service and responsibility. It urges us to give ourselves for the glory of God and the good of others. The Lord shows us that all that the people received have been received from the Lord. Of themselves they are nothing, they cannot pretend that they own anything. The purpose of our talents is that they are tools of service and sacrifice and for the glory of God “As good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10).

The Lord gave some people more talents and to the others less talents. This does not mean partiality as if He gave the owners of the little more talents, they would be a heavy burden for them and the Lord does not demand us to do more than we can do.

Work is the Law of Life

The Lord created Adam and ordered him to work, and he who does not work must not eat. Work involves happiness because he who works with joy, satisfaction and hard work gets the fruit of his work. In the life on earth “what man sows, is that he reaps”. The same is in spiritual matters...what we sow of asceticism, struggle, godliness, love and sacrifice; we get it in the form of heavenly eternal rejoicing.

The Behavior of the Three Servants

Two of the servants did well, what aroused your admiration in their behavior?

- ❖ Hard work and honesty.
- ❖ Making use of their talents and enjoying their potentials.

When we apply this attitude in our practical life of what importance is hard work and honesty in studying, worship, sports, making use of our leisure in practicing hobbies and making use of our health and serve our families and the Church?

The Reward

A great compliment “well done, good and faithful servant”, more authority, more responsibility and perpetual joy “Enter into the joy of your master”. How happy is the man who lives in perpetual happiness? Their characters were accepted, their services were accepted, and they received the eternal joy.

The Lazy Man

What annoyed you in his behavior? His laziness and negligence, his scorn of his talent, or his fear of work and the risk of trade... If we benefit from this subject in our spiritual life, why is laziness dangerous in worship, in studying, or in the Service? Despising our little talents is dangerous. Why? What is our duty toward what the Lord is given us of time, health, intelligence, knowledge... however little this is?

Settle accounts with the lazy

Follow up how the accounts were settled with the lazy servant. We notice the following:

- ❖ He gives excuses...
- ❖ His great confidence in his argument “Here you have what is yours”.
- ❖ Indifference to his sin “I hid your talent in the ground”.
- ❖ He judged his master “I knew you to be a hard man”.
- ❖ The Spirit of slavery and fear: “I was afraid”. Nothing hinders performing our duty towards God more than the Spirit of fear among servants fear is against perfect love.

When the master wanted to settle accounts with the lazy servant he accused him of two charges:

- ❖ “You wicked and lazy servant”: He who does not do good deserves severe blame. That who lives for himself does not deserve to live. Refraining from doing good is sin that leads to judgment, and laziness paves the way to evil and when man sleeps the enemy sows thorns.
- ❖ Contradicting himself (No. 26,27): “You knew that I reap where I have not sowed... Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers”.

On the Day of Judgment the evil lazy people will find no excuse...all false weak excuses will fade away and every mouth will be shut.

Judging the Lazy Servant

- ❖ The lazy servant was pronounced guilty.
- ❖ He was deprived of his talent (No. 28,29): “So take the talent from him, and give it to him who ... For everyone who has more will be given, and he will have abundance... but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away”.
- ❖ He was cast into the outer darkness, there men will weep and gnash their teeth. This verdict shows us the dangerous results of laziness in life.

Review Questions

What do “talents” mean?

What are the talents of young people of your age?

Why did the Lord give talents to man?

Why did the Lord distribute talents among people on different levels?

How were honest servants rewarded?

What was the charge against the lazy servant and why was he judged?

Conclusion:

We all have talents given to us from God to be used and multiplied and bear fruits. We need to discover our talents and start investing with them, so that we are ready to meet our Judge with the additional earning and fruit

Applications:

- ❖ Hold up a debate to study the potentials of the members of the class and the different ways of making use of there in the domain of practical service.
- ❖ Recognize all the talents and try to invest them for the glory of God.
- ❖ Recitation Matthew 25:23