

Mahragan El Keraza 2022



English Edition

Grades 7-8



“ Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

2 Corinthians 13:11



live in peace

Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect (Matt 24:43)



H.H. Pope Tawadros II

Pope of Alexandria &
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Introduction:

By the grace of God, this is the slogan of St. Mark's Mahragan el Keraza for the year 2022! The St. Mark's Evangelism Festival Committee, which is composed of bishops, priests, and servants, met to choose the slogan of this year's festival, which will be: "Live in Peace" (2 Corinthians 13:11). This year's slogan is fitting in light of the fierce attack of an invisible enemy on humanity, the Coronavirus pandemic, and the great losses it caused to human health, the global economy, and all human activity. It ultimately led people to lose inner peace and reassurance.

High School Academic Core Subject - All participants must take the core subject test online according to the announced schedule (which is mandatory for participants in all competitions).

Part 1: Intro to Christian Peace

The meaning of "peace" lies in an artist's rendition of a painting of a group of intertwined mountains. They lack an intrinsic beauty in all their formations, a gloomy and cloudy overcast sky, winds, storms, and unsettled weather. On one side of the mountains lies a waterfall, the force of the water rushes and falls from the mountain with great power. But one should note that the artist also illustrated a small branch of a wild bush



growing along the side of the mountain. Above this wild branch, a bird is depicted nesting with its chicks, living in calmness despite the tumult of the rushing waters and the intensity of their strength. "Peace" does not refer to a place devoid of worries, problems, or troubles. True peace is that which is found amidst storms, with stillness and tranquility. Just like the bird in the painting, this is "the perfect peace of God, which transcends all understanding." The Bible says: **"live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you."** (2 Corinthians 13:11).



I. Peace is a greeting that people exchange every day

1. The Virgin Mary began her words with "peace" when she visited Saint Elizabeth. "And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." (Luke 1:41). Can you see the great power such peace yields?!

2. Jesus Christ is the One Who said to His holy disciples: "My Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27). It is evident that this is a special gift. It is His "peace", His personal peace, which He gave us, thus Christ referred to this blessing as "My peace." Our Lord Jesus Christ made it clear that His peace is different from that of the world, as He said, "not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27).





3. Our Lord Jesus Christ even instructs His disciples saying, “But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’” (Luke 10:5).

4. Another important factor regarding peace is that it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...” (Galatians 5:22).

II. Christian Peace is different

1. Undoubtedly, the Christian peace differs from the “peace” granted and given by other human beings and the world. This is because Christian peace:

i. Rises above difficulties because Christian peace defies difficulties that may arise because of Satan, events, diseases, trials, sorrows and problems.

ii. Is unlimited because it stems from the infinite Lord Jesus. It is an endless peace which surpasses all understanding.

iii. Can be multiplied and spread to those around us because it is God **“Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Corinthians 1:4)**

iv. Is steadfast for it is a peace that is firmly rooted in the depths of the heart, from which no one can take away. The Lord said to

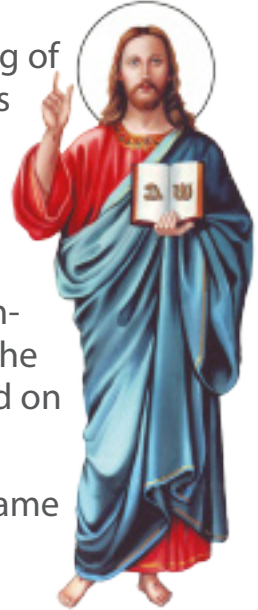
Mary, Lazarus’ sister, **“But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:42)**



Part 2: Understanding Christian Peace

1. Christ is the Prince of Peace

He is the **Prince of Peace**, the God of Peace, and the King of Peace. In the prophecy of Isaiah, it is written: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). This prophecy gave Him several titles, including: The Prince of Peace. Remember the chant that the angels proclaimed on the day of the birth of the Lord Christ? “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Luke 2:14).



a. He is called the **Prince of Peace** because He came to earth in peace and preached His message in a peaceful way. As He commanded His disciples, “And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.” (Matthew 10:12–13).

b. As a result, **Christianity also spread across the world in a peaceful way**, through the preaching of the Word. “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.” (Matthew 16:10). This signifies the pain, sufferings, and persecutions which our fathers the Apostles and Disciples would bear for the sake of Christ—whether it be from the Jews, Pagans or others. And as St. Augustine said: “The wolves ate the lambs, so the wolves turned into lambs!”

c. If the Lord Christ is blessing those who bestow peace saying, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matthew 9:5), how awesome is the peace He capable of giving us since He is the Ultimate Peacemaker?

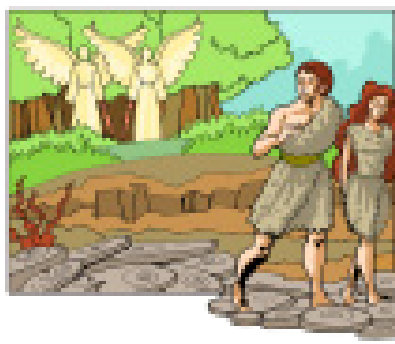
d. The Holy Bible says of Him: “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both



one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." (Ephesians 2:14–18).

2. Peace on a personal and individual level

Inner peace is contingent upon God's work within man, for He is "to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79), so that man may live in everlasting peace no matter what disturbances may occur around him. Man enjoys a threefold peace:



a. Peace with God: Peace had been

cut off from the earth since the fall of our father Adam and our mother Eve where humans inherited the original sin. From there, division became manifest, and brothers arose against one another. Ultimately, Cain killed Abel and peace departed, confusion and animosity arose, and anguish was

rampant. Enmity took root due to man's fall into sin and deviation from the Divine commandment. Man lived under the sentence of death. Job the Righteous cried bitterly saying, "Nor is there any mediator between us, Who may lay his hand on us both." (Job 9:33). How can reconciliation take place where God the Holy, the Creator, and the Eternal is in heaven and man is on earth sinful, created, and carnal?!

i. With the coming of the Lord Christ, it was the real beginning of reconciliation and true peace. A true, steadfast, and sure peace. A peace that satisfied! For the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ is a birth of peace and through it, peace has come upon the whole Earth.

ii. Peace with God is achieved through obedience to His com-



mandments and walking in the way of virtue and righteousness. This is because the person who chooses to live in sin and depart from worship, prayer, fasting, and charity proves by his/her behavior that he/she is in conflict with God, and with all the inhabitants of heaven.

iii. To salvage his/her situation and be at true peace with God, he/she must return to God with repentance and purity of heart, as “there is no peace,” says the Lord, “for the wicked.” (Isaiah 48:22).

b. Peace with the soul: We must have the inner peace of the heart. The person who desires peace between the soul and body turns away from all causes of disturbance, anxiety, and fear. This is made possible through the assurance that our life and future are in His Hands.

i. As the Apostle Paul says, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” (Galatians 5:17). “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16).

ii. Note the word “in”, in the phrase, “Walk in the Spirit” and its relationship with the statement “you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh,” Why is this so? Because the natural result of spiritual behavior is gaining control over the body! Christianity is a positive and edifying religion that does not attempt to suppress the body in a negative and harmful way. Rather it suppresses the desires in the body in order to develop the soul. The body is then disciplined with little effort, as the person strives with fasting and proper asceticism to preserve his senses from which sin enters! Thus, both body and soul walk on one path to holiness, joy, and peace.

iii. The body accompanies the soul in vigils, fasting, prayers and prostrations, with great joy, as a sacrifice of love to God. As the soul subjugates the body, the body obeys the soul, striving with it in pursuit of the Kingdom.

iv. To gain peace with the soul one must turn away from fear, anxiety and things that cause disturbance, trusting that we are in His hands. It is said, “do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind.” (Luke 12:29). Anxiety can be a sign of giving precedence to dangers rather than faith in the power of the Creator, the Infinite, the Unlimited, and All-Loving. He can defeat all these dangers or fears we may have. As it is written in Psalm 34:13, “depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.”



c. Peace with others: We frequently hear the Priest saying: "Peace be with you all." He says it at the beginning of every liturgical prayer and at the beginning of the litanies, repeating it many times in every liturgy, praying that peace be in the hearts of all. This is because if the people lose their peace, they lose an essential element of their life and their dealings with others.



i. If there is no peace in the soul, the smooth, joyful life enjoyed amongst a community will be disrupted and family/social relationships will inevitably be affected. Therefore, there must be inner peace which consumes the soul, so that the outer peace manifests itself in our relationships with others. The Holy Bible commands: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:20–21).

ii. "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23–24).

iii. "Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." (Matthew 18:15).

iv. St. John commands us also to make peace with one another, "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." (1 John 2:9–11). Christianity is a religion of peace. It calls on humanity to, "live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." (2 Corinthians 13:11).

v. Confucius, a famous Chinese philosopher in the fifth century B.C. taught his students saying, "Whatever you do not want another to do to



you, do not do to them.”

But

vii. The Lord commands us to love in a much different, positive manner saying, “therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:12).

viii.

Peace with people is twofold: passive, and positive, which

is to say, active. From a passive perspective, a person seeks to avoid conflict, clashes or quarrels with other people, and does not carry in his heart envy or hostility against anyone. As for the positive or active element, it is by cooperation, with love, providing goodness and service to all, being sensitive towards the feelings of everyone. St. Paul says, “but through love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13).



3. Peace at the level of the church, the community of believers

“God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved” (Psalm 46:5). This is God’s promise since the days of King David for those before him and those to come after him.

a. Because the Lord is in the “midst” of the church, He revives and protects her. Therefore, the Church, the body of Christ, will not be shaken, because the gates of Hell will not prevail against her, and the Lord is her guardian all her days, no matter the storms, hurricanes and pestilences.

b. During the Litany for the Peace of the Church, the Priest prays: “Remember, O Lord, the peace of your one only, holy, catholic, and apostolic Orthodox Church.” We pray it at the beginning of the short litanies, in the introduction to the long litanies, in the raising of evening and matins incense, and in every procession by the priest around the altar, offering incense and praying the litanies.



c. In the beginning of the liturgy, during the offering of The Lamb, the Priest prays: "Peace and the edification to the one, only, holy catholic and apostolic church of God, Amen."

d. We also remember the peace of the Church in the Litany for the Leaders. saying: "Speak in his heart of the peace of your one, only, holy, catholic and apostolic Church"

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Part 3: Christian Peace Comes in different forms

We've spoken about what peace is... but what does peace look like? How do we obtain peace?



I. The Peace of the Church

The peace of the Church was one of the most important goals of our fathers, the apostles, and the saints. The Church represents the kingdom of God on earth, which will extend into the heavenly kingdom. It is the home of faith where God dwells with people.

a. The peace and safety of the Church are the object of every one's prayer, it takes precedence over one's own needs. It is the center of our meditations in the Lord's Prayer, in which one prays, "Hallowed be Your Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done."

b. The prayer for the peace of the Church is a prayer which has survived many generations of believers, shepherds, parishes, clergy, and people. We pray for the peace of the Church even during the rite of ordination for the monks, who are cut off from the world.



c. It was wonderfully thoughtful of St. Paul, the greatest of the monks and anchorites, to ask St. Anthony about the peace of the Church. It is a prayer that we pray from the depths of our hearts. Not merely as a ritual, but with lively, ardent emotion.

d. The Church gives us peace and asks for our peace: "Oh, King of peace, grant us Your peace, establish for us Your peace for us and forgive us our sins." It is peace that we receive from Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The priest declares "Ereni Paci" (which means "peace be with all") while holding the cross because this peace, provided by the Church to her children, is a blessing from God.

II. Receiving Peace Also Comes in Different Forms

There are multiple ways to receive Christian Peace.

a. We receive peace during Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity. Baptism is the Sacrament in which one dies and is buried with Christ.



“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4).

b. We also receive peace during the rites of all the Holy Sacraments and the working of all good things for “faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20).

c. Peace can also be found when we have faith in Christ, our God and Savior. Faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Who was incarnate for our salvation brings tranquility and safety. He is the chief cornerstone, the Holy Bible tells us that “he who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16). “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1).



III. Peace in the World

Peace is an important element for people’s lives. Without peace a society cannot be stable, grow, nor progress, and no one could be calm. Peace is the desire of nations and peoples to work quietly. Without it, the world would be a jungle.

a. It is God’s desire that we have peace, “for thus says the LORD: “Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river.” (Isaiah 66:12). We also know this because God has granted us his peace saying, “My peace I leave with you My peace I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled.” (John 14:27).

b. It is important to note that The Lord Himself is the One Who spoke this verse, He Who is Almighty, Who can do all things and Who is full of compassion. Peace is a gift from God, the Creator, the most Loving, of Whom it was said, “He is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14).



c. Christian peace is above all circumstances, it is found even in tribulations & wars because our confidence is in our Redeemer, the High Tower to whom the righteous run for refuge and are safe. (Proverbs 18:10). It is a peace that is 'despite of'(situations), not one 'because of'(circumstances)!!!

d. Peace is the desire and the need of the whole world. The modern man, while rich, is still disturbed about daily problems and afraid for the future — in both those things that are apparent to him and those that are not. Fear also results from war and rumors of war. To top it all off, the whole world today is in fear because of the pandemic. But we are confident that despite what happened in the past, happens in the present, or will happen in the future, we have a mighty, loving, and wise God.

e. The importance of peace is clear in many areas of our lives. The world celebrates the International Day for Tolerance on November 16th of every year. This began in 1996 by The United Nations General Assembly. The celebration of this day aims to spread the culture of tolerance, love, and peace, and to teach it to children in schools. September 21st also marks The International Day of Peace, on this day wars and attacks stop.

f. Therefore, let us build on these things. Encourage dialogue, peaceful coexistence, spread tolerance, and confront extremism and its negative effects. May this be an opportunity to stop the shedding of innocent blood, to end wars, conflicts, and cultural & moral decline.

g. How do we make peace with our brethren? By taking care of the hungry, the distressed, the neglected, and the persecuted. By extending a helping hand to the physically or mentally disabled, by seeing for the blind! We can also make peace by providing care for the sick, naked, and imprisoned. This is how we find His peace in the world.



IV. Peace in Our Daily Lives

To see His peace in our daily lives we must let go of our anxieties and fears. There are those who lose their peace and reassurance due to fear of disease, epidemics, microbes, viruses, air & water pollution, the possibility of infection, the unknown future, and the pressures and struggles of life.

a. In all of this, they forget God's preserving grace, which gives us peace and reassurance. Doubt exacerbates man's anxiety, therefore when one loses inner peace one cannot find rest nor have stability. Sin also makes one lose peace.

b. For us to live in His peace and contentment we must:

✦ Realize that there is a great God Who rules and manages the universe. He is the secret of life and existence. We must believe in His protection and care. He cares for us more than we care for ourselves for "the LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore." (Psalm 121:8).

✦ Understand that He is the Controller of all. The Lord is The Almighty, He can do all things, and in His power, He can save us from all our troubles, He can solve all our problems. He is more powerful than all the forces of evil that may fight against us for He is "Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." (Ephesians 3:20).



✦ Be reassured that our lives are in the hands of God, not in the hands of people. God is a lover of mankind, Who does not wish the death of a sinner but that he should return to Him and live. We must put our faith in this so that we may gain comfort and peace in our



hearts. Thus, we say with David the prophet “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid” (Psalm 27:1). “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (Psalm 118:6). “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me.” (Psalm 23:4).

c. Let us pray and resort to God Almighty, saying: “take away from the whole world: death, Inflation, pestilence, destruction, the sword of the enemies, the conspiracy of devils, the fight of evil doers, the deception of the wicked and the injustice of the ruler.”

d. We have confidence and hope that we will rejoice with Moses the prophet saying, “the plague was stopped.” (Numbers 16:48) and with St. Paul saying, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Corinthians 13:11).



The theme of the Mahragan this year is "Live in Peace"; and this is what the Bible calls us to do: "My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity" (Proverbs 3:1–2).

1) So, what exactly is the Holy Bible?

a. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the message of peace from God to every human being (Luke 2:14).

b. The entire Bible is inspired by God and is characterized by a powerful unity through which the various books, events and people are linked. The Holy Bible is not a group of human-written books about God, but rather it is the words of God Himself, written by humans, guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Its main purpose is to show us God's desire to save us.

c. It is written by approximately forty people of different cultures and backgrounds, spanning a period of over fifteen or sixteen centuries. "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1: 20–21).



d. Our Lord Jesus declared several times to the Jews that what was mentioned about God visiting His people in the Old Testament from the mouths of the prophets has been fulfilled and that He is the Savior they have been waiting for. To further highlight this point, our Lord Jesus Christ started His service talking about the Old Testament, as the New Testament is hidden in the Old. The prophecies about our Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament have been fulfilled in the New Testament!



2) Important Questions and teachings of the Church about the Bible:

a. Do the stories of the Old Testament contain myths?

i. This question has been raised several times over many centuries. The fathers of the church have spent a lot of time and effort responding to this theory. In essence, mythology is a mythical or symbolic story that is used as a vehicle to deliver a certain idea or concept to people.

ii. Some people claim that the first eleven chapters of Genesis did not actually happen and that they are just a myth; that Adam and Eve are not real people but just symbolic characters.

iii. Our response to this is that we believe that all the events and people of the Bible have truly existed in time. The presence of people in those chapters like Adam, Eve, Seth, Enoch, Noah with a sound genealogy further prove this point. Not to mention the names of places and their geographic location was proven by geology and found to have truly existed. This proves that these people truly existed, lived on earth, had their part in life and showed us how God interacts with humans. Our belief is that all this truly happened and that each one of those individuals has their own Messianic angle and a spiritual angle. Meaning, their lives pointed towards Jesus and His work to save us.



b. Some also claim that Paradise was just a symbol and never existed. How do we respond to this claim?

i. The Holy Bible describes the Paradise as being “planted.” “Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there He put the man He had formed” (Genesis 2:8). And in it, God created trees, rivers,



animals, and birds. The Scriptures and the church fathers confirm and elaborate on the fact that there is a true Paradise created by God and not just a mere symbol.

ii. St. Irenaeus from the second century, named Father of Tradition, said: "So, he (Adam) could live in joy and peace, God prepared for him the best place in the world, the most beautiful, good air, light, food, plants, fruits, and water. Adam was not left in need of any of the necessities of life. For this, the place was called Paradise. This Paradise was beautiful and good." Thus, Paradise existed and was historically true. Biblical scholars say it was likely located in present day Iraq, between the two rivers.



c. Why do some people claim that Adam and Eve are just symbolic characters?

i. Some people erroneously side with the theory of complete evolution which states that there is no such thing as the "first man." But rather, creation began as a single cell which later evolved into more complex living organisms until monkeys were created, from which the human lineage emerged and evolved.

ii. It should be noted that this theory of evolution has been rejected and refuted by many modern-day scholars as lacking foundation. We refute this theory as it implies that God did not create Adam. We believe in the Almighty God Who, out of His great love, created man in His image and likeness.

iii. Our Coptic Orthodox Church believes in three types of interpretation of the Holy Bible- all three are complementary, not contradictory.

1. Literal Interpretation: means the event or story happened as recorded and can be historically attributed.

2. Symbolic Interpretation: means the story points to our Messiah, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the various events of the story foreshadow salvation.



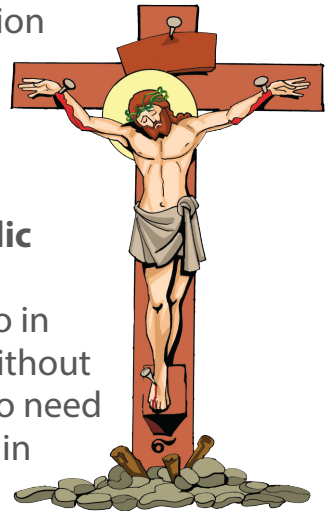
3. Spiritual Interpretation: applies to the individual Christian. What principles and values do we learn from the story and how can we apply it in our lives to better our relationship with God?

d. Throughout the Church's history, which has spanned over 2000 years, we have ad continue to believe that the Holy Bible is the Word of God inspired, written by the saints, as guided by the Holy Spirit.

i. It is the breath of God that contains the Divine ordnances. The Holy Bible tells us about the story of salvation from the beginning until the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ii. At the center of the Holy Bible is our Lord Jesus Christ.

iii. The first several chapters of the book of Genesis, which contain God's work as the Creator and the fall of man, whom God was created in His image. Thus, those who doubt in those chapters as being true essentially doubt God's promise of salvation and the premise for it. They are, in turn, doubting the Christian faith and the salvation which God has given to all of us.



e. What's the big deal if Adam was a symbolic person? So what?

i. The Holy Bible says: "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Without Adam, there is no original sin. Without sin, there is no need for salvation, and there would be no Jesus. Disbelief in these events uproots the foundation which defines our faith. Namely, that Christ came down for our salvation and to forgive us our sins.

ii. In St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans – St. Paul repeatedly identified parallels between Adam and our Lord Jesus Christ. When St. Paul writes, he refers to Adam as the first Adam. Whereas, the second Adam refers to



our Lord Jesus Christ. If Adam the first is a myth, there is no Messiah, or second Adam, and our faith is a mere delusion.

iii. In the Gospel written by St. Luke, the divine revelation of the genealogy Lord Jesus Christ identifies Christ as: "The son of Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38). If Adam is a myth, this genealogy would also be a myth.

iv. Saint Paul also writes, "Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses" (Romans 5:14). This message identifies a real person named Adam and another real person named Moses. They existed in real time.

v. When we doubt in the story of creation and claim that Adam and Eve are symbolic characters or mere myths, we destroy the Christian faith from its roots. Why would Jesus become incarnated for mythical character, a character which did not exist?

vi. Our Lord Jesus Christ mentioned some of the Old Testament characters. This means that Eden or Paradise existed; the story of the fall of man occurred and was a true event that took place. Otherwise, the incarnation and salvation would have no purpose or meaning. Far be it.

f. The Holy Bible is message of peace from God to man. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1).







The Gospel According to Saint Mark

1) About Saint Mark

a. He was born in Cyrene City in

Libya from two Jewish parents of the tribe of Levi. His father's name is Aristobulus, and his mother was a righteous woman named Mariam.

b. St. Mark had two names. His Hebrew name was John, which means "God is tender." And his Roman name was Mark which means "hammer."

c. He was the nephew of St.

Barnabas the Apostle. His father was also a relative of St. Peter's wife.

d. He was fluent in Many languages such as Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.

e. He left Kairouan City with his family and lived in Palestine. There, he met our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, his mother was one of the women who served our Lord Jesus, and she opened her home for Jesus and his disciples to have the last supper.

f. It was in the upper room of their home that Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, instituted the mystery of the Holy Communion and





the Holy Spirit descended upon on the disciples. So, her house became the first Church in the world!

g. St. Mark is one of the seventy Apostles chosen by Jesus for the service.

h. His symbol is the lion. When he was on his way to Jordan with his father, a lion and lioness attacked them. St. Mark prayed to Jesus Christ and the two beasts were split in half and died. As a result, his father believed in our Lord Jesus Christ. Also, St. Mark started the Gospel with, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Mark 1:3). He declared the power and authority of our Lord Jesus, considering Him the lion that came from the tribe of Judah. "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed" (Revelation 5:5).



i. He started his service with St. Peter

in Jerusalem, went with St. Barnabas, his uncle, and St. Paul in Antioch, and then with St. Barnabas in Cyprus.

j. He established the church of Alexan-

dria in Egypt when he entered Alexandria in year 61 A.D. Anianus the Shoemaker was the first Egyptian to believe in Jesus by the hands of St. Mark. When the Word quickly spread in Alexandria, he anointed Anianus as bishop, along with other three priests and seven deacons.

k. The city of Venice considers him as its

intercessor and symbol, as that is where his holy body is located, within a cathedral named after him. The people of the city built a statue of a lion with wings in a big square, called St. Mark Square, and the flag of the city has a lion on it, as a symbol of St. Mark. Bishop Kyrillos, the late metropolitan of Italy, built a big cathedral after St. Mark's name where a great number of Coptic Orthodox Christians pray today!



2) *The Gospel according to St. Mark:*

- a. He wrote it between the years 65 and 70 A.D.
- b. St. Mark is considered the first one who wrote and used the word "Gospel". The word "gospel" means "joyful message" or "good news"
- c. The Romans loved power and authority. For this reason, St. Mark presented Christ to them as the One Who has authority over devils, death, diseases, and nature. The One Who knows people's thoughts and declares the mysteries of future.





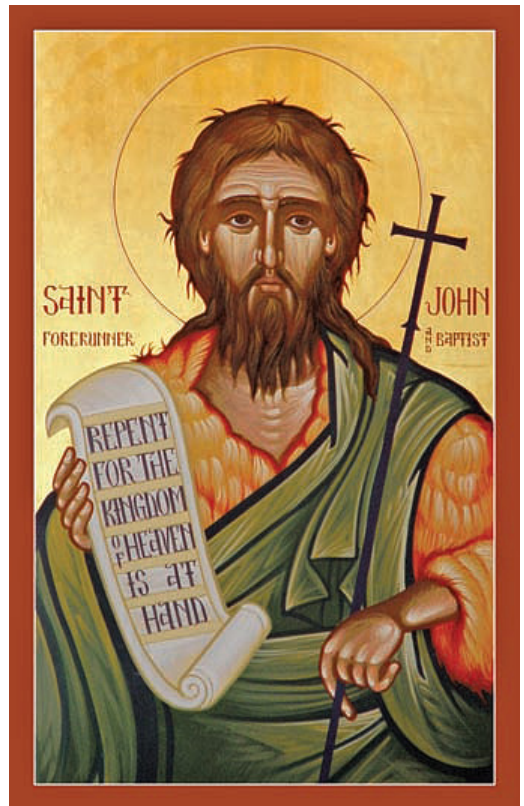
Chapter 1:

1) St. John the Baptist Prepares the Way:

a. St. John the Baptist came to prepare the way for our Jesus Christ. Isaiah the Prophet wrote concerning him, "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way. The voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him'" (Mark 1:2–3).

b. St. Mark has quoted two prophets in his gospel regarding the one who will come before Jesus. One of them was Malachi the Prophet who described John the Baptist as "the angel" (Malachi 3:1). The second prophet he quoted was Isaiah the prophet who described him as, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Isaiah 40:3).

c. St. John the Baptist baptized with a baptism of repentance to draw the people's attention and prepare their minds and thoughts to accept the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who alone forgives sins.



2) St. John Baptizes Jesus:

a. Our Lord Jesus Christ went to be baptized by St. John the Baptist, bowing His head in front of John. Although Jesus, being God, is



greater and mightier. St. John said that he is not worthy to stoop down and loose the sandal strap of Jesus.

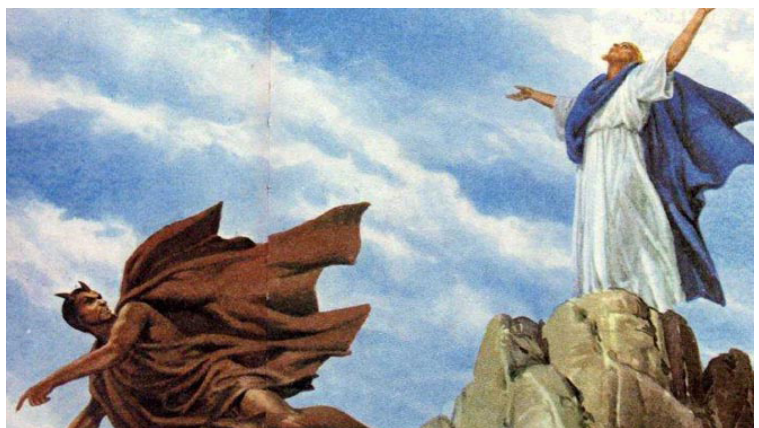
b. In the baptism of Jesus, He came out of the water. From this we learn that baptism is to be through immersion. Therefore, our church baptizes three times, in the Name Holy Trinity, putting the entire baby or person in the baptismal waters; not just sprinkling water on the baptized. Our Lord was not baptized because He is in need for repentance or in need to be baptized but rather to teach us that we, too, must be baptized "to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15).

c. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, not because He needs the dwelling of Holy Spirit, as He, the Father and the Holy Spirit are One, but to show us that the Holy Spirit will dwell on each one who is baptized. The Holy Spirit dwelt in the form of dove, which represents the purity and meekness of our Lord Jesus.

d. In the Baptism of Christ, we heard the voice of the Father! "Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11). The Son was in the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit was in the form of a dove, and the Voice of the Father sounded from Heaven. The Holy Trinity was declared; thus, we call the Baptism of our Lord, "The Feast of Divine Manifestation" or "Theophany".

3) Satan Tempts Jesus:

a. After the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, He stayed in the wilderness for forty days to pray and fast before He began His service; the devil tested Him during these forty days. There is so much we can learn





from the temptation on the Mount after the baptism of Our Lord:

i. After Baptism, and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Christians, the devil will try to make them fall into sin so that the spiritual power granted to them in the waters of the baptism would leave them and no longer protect them. So, after baptism marks the beginning of spiritual warfare for a believer.

ii. The temptation lasted for forty days, and it reminds us of the forty days the Jews spent in the wilderness where they were unable to



enter the Promised Land. But our Lord, after forty days, defeated the devil as He is the only One Who could destroy evil with the mere Breath of His Mouth.

iii. The forty days represent the life of man on earth, as we are in a continuous struggle with the devil. This gives us hope that we can defeat Satan, by the grace of Jesus, so we could enjoy heaven with Christ and His saints.

iv. We also learn that before starting any service, we must be prepared by praying, fasting, and asking for the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.



4) Four Fishermen Called as Disciples

a. In this chapter, Jesus called simple fishermen to follow Him.

b. Among them where: Simon Peter, Andrew, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. Jesus selected them to be humble members of society, so no one would think that the reason for their success is their status or eloquence but rather the work of Holy Spirit in them.

5) Jesus Casts out an Unclean Spirit:

a. On the Sabbath, Jesus cast out a demon to teach them the correct interpretation of sanctifying the Lord's Day, which is to do good to people.

b. The unclean spirit recognized Jesus and declared that He is, "the Holy One of God." This confession is a type of faith, but it is a faith without works, a faith without love or good deeds. The devils believe in God and tremble but have no good deeds.

c. Seeing this, the people were all amazed and captivated by our Lord, they had never seen anyone like Him. He:



- i. Was teaching with power and authority that touched their hearts
- ii. Has power and authority over the unclean spirits
- iii. Healed many of them with compassion and tenderness.
- iv. Jesus is teaching us to serve with all love, tenderness, and humbleness. He kindheartedly healed the man with leprosy.



Chapter 2:

1) Jesus Forgives and Heals the Paralytic:

a. The ceiling of the houses in Palestine were made of wooden planks laid next to one another. So, it was relatively easy for the friends of the paralyzed man to move the wooden planks and use a ladder to access the roof from the outside in order to lower their paralyzed friend into the home.

b. When Jesus saw the love and faith of these genuine friends who put in lots of effort for Jesus to heal their friend, He said to the paralyzed, "Your sins are forgiven." (Mark 2:5).

c. The faith of those men was the reason Jesus healed him. This story is a good example of intercession. At this gathering, some of the teachers of the law accused Jesus of blaspheming, saying that no one can forgive sins but God. Jesus wanted to declare to them that He is capable of forgiving sins and is also capable of healing diseases.

Thus, He ordered the paralyzed man to carry his bed and walk, so the paralyzed man was healed and carried his bed in front of all. They had never seen anything like this before.

d. Our Lord Jesus Christ proved that:

i. He knows our thoughts. "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test





the mind.” (Jeremiah 17:10).

ii. He has the authority to forgive sins

iii. He has the authority over disease- regardless of type or severity

e. In this miracle, our Lord called Himself the Son of Man to declare and confirm His incarnation with a true and full human body. He is like us in everything except sin and we see His authority manifested in His ability to forgive sin and heal diseases, which are both attributes of God. So, in this miracle we clearly see God—Who is manifested in the flesh.

2) Matthew the Tax Collector:

a. Jesus was accused of eating with sinners and tax collectors, but He compassionately responded saying that it is not the healthy who need a physician, but the sick. It is the tax collectors and sinners He must tend to as the Great Physician. At that time, tax collectors were usually Jews who had the authority to collect taxes to pay to the Romans.

b. They were hated by the rest of the Jews as they were considered traitors to their religion and to their country.

c. Our Lord Jesus Christ with His love attracted sinners and tax collectors to repent. St. Matthew, the tax collector, left his greed and love of money to follow the Lord, become one of His disciples, and one of the writers of the Gospel.

3) Jesus is questioned about fasting:

a. The teachers of the law accused the disciples of the Lord of not fasting. Our Lord Jesus Christ wanted to draw their attention to the true and deep meaning of fasting and worship, which is enjoying the presence of the heavenly Bridegroom Himself.

b. Jesus is the true Bridegroom of every soul, so if He is with them, they should be enjoying His presence and there is no need to fast. But there will come a time, when He is no longer with them and ascends to the Father in Heaven where they should fast. Thus, the Apostles fasted

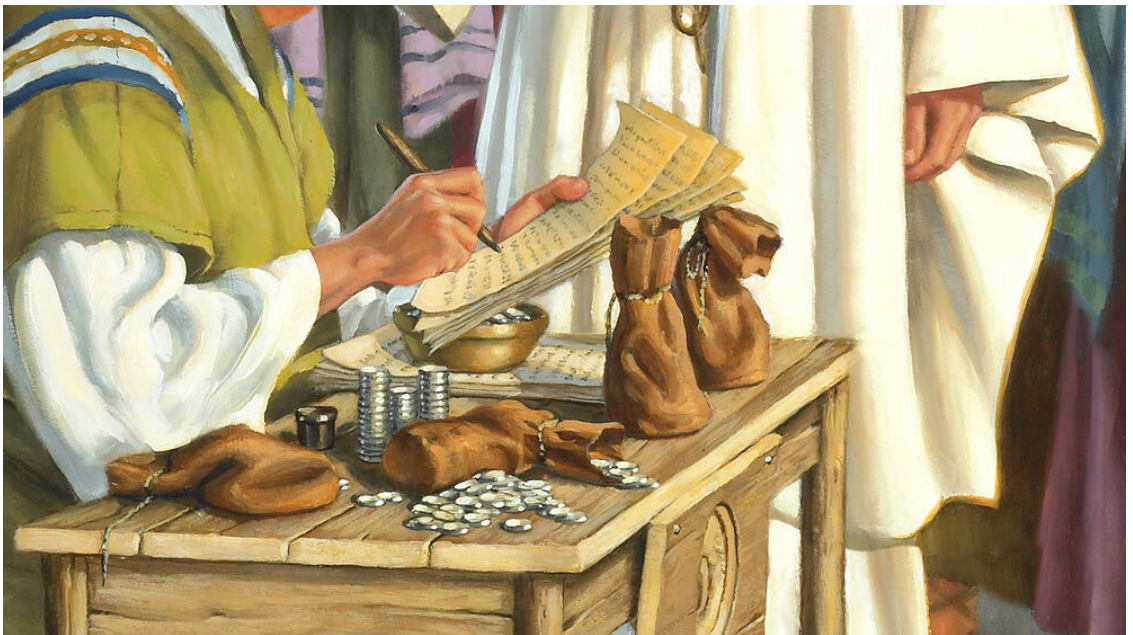


when their Master ascended to heaven, and we do too!

4) Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath:

a. Then, they accused the Disciples of breaking the commandment of sanctifying the Sabbath when they were picking ears of wheat. Please note that the objection here was not targeted towards the fact that the disciples picked wheat that did not belong to them but rather the physical act of picking the ears of wheat on the Sabbath! (See Deuteronomy 23:25).

b. The Disciples were busy with Jesus and consumed by His presence, therefore they did not have time to prepare food, so they just simply picked the ears to eat.





Chapter 3:

1) Healing on the Sabbath:

a. The Lord entered the Synagogue again on the Sabbath and there was a man who had a withered hand. The Jews in the Synagogue were watching intently to see what Jesus would do. Was He really going to heal him, on the Sabbath?

b. The Jewish law forbade doing any work on the Sabbath to give them a chance to rest and focus on worship. Unfortunately, the Jews focused on the literal meaning of the commandment and did not understand the Divine purpose of it.

c. They even refused to do good deeds on the Sabbath in the name of keeping this commandment. When our Lord asked them whether we do good deeds on the Sabbath, they did not answer Him and kept silent.

d. In their heart of hearts, the Jews did not agree with the idea of doing good deeds on the Sabbath. Our Lord Jesus Christ was saddened for their hearts which had become like stone, and He brought the man and healed his withered hand. Truly, "For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:6).

e. The withered hand represents the man who cannot do good spiritual works. Ones who neglect his/her prayers, who does not serve his/her own family, friends,

and neighbors, who does not keep himself/herself busy with good and edifying hobbies and does not do good deeds.

f. Their hearts were supposed to be touched when this man was healed, and they were supposed to rejoice for this miracle. But instead, they immediately plotted with the Herodians against Jesus to destroy





Him.

2) A Great Multitude Follows Jesus:

a. Jesus healed several sick people and cast out demons with His Divine power. He left a great impact in the hearts of the people through His love, kindness, and tenderness—to the extent that the crowds around Him became so large He took a small boat to teach people from! This boat represents the Church of the New Testament from which Jesus enlightens us with His heavenly teachings.

3) The Twelve Disciples:

a. He chose His 12 Disciples and gave them the authority to heal diseases and cast out demons. This authority is given to the Church of the New Testament. It is important to learn the names of the 12 Disciples of Our Lord so that we may ask for their intercession!

4) A House Divided Cannot Stand:

a. Several accused Jesus of being crazy, even the well-educated teachers of the law. They said that He performs miracles with the power of the devil. Jesus explained to them the concept that any kingdom divided against itself will be destroyed and cannot stand. Brethren, if divided, their houses will be destroyed. Any group of people divided will become weak and split. As the Bible teaches us: “A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

5) The Unpardonable Sin:

a. Here our Lord Jesus Christ says: “Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.” (Mark 3: 28–29).

b. Jesus forgives those who make false accusations against Him, but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven. Why?



To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit means to reject the work of the Holy Spirit inside one's hearts—which is the willingness to repent. The Jews both blasphemed against the Holy Spirit and denied His work. The Holy Spirit leads us to the repentance. So, how can one repent if he blasphemes against the Holy Spirit? For this, there is no forgiveness. We know that there is all sin is forgiven if repented but if one refuses repentance, how then shall he be forgiven?

6) Jesus' Brothers and Mother Send For Him:

a. The "brothers of Jesus" are His cousins! As per the Jewish law, the cousins are considered brothers and the terms are used synonymously in that culture.

b. But He tells us that the true relatives of Jesus are those who believe in Him and live according to His will.

Chapter 4:

1) The Parable of the Sower:

a. A sower went to sow and some seeds fell by the wayside. The Sower is Jesus and went refers to His incarnation. The seeds are the word of God. The wayside is hard land that does not allow the seed to take root in it and grow.

b. Now, the first question we come to is: why would God sow seeds in a land that He knows will not give fruit?

i. God gives fair chances to all people! He gives His word to all people freely so no one can claim that God did not give him a fair chance to produce fruit.





c. This wayside represents the people with stubborn minds. They are not impacted or influenced by the word of God, so the devil comes and takes it away from them.

d. The other seeds fell on stony ground. These seeds may grow, but only superficially without the development of deeper roots. So, when the sun comes up, the little plant is scorched. Those who are superficial in their spiritual lives retreat when he/she faces troubles or hardships.

e. Some seeds fell among thorns. In this type of land, the plant starts to grow but is quickly choked by the thorns. The thorns represent greed, selfishness, and the seeking of worldly pleasure. One example of such is exposure to inappropriate social media/websites.

f. Other seeds fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up and increased. Some produced thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundredfold! The variation in how much fruit is produced represents the diversity amongst believers who have different talents.



2) Light Under a Basket:

a. Jesus also said to them, "Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand?" (Mark 4:21). The lamp represents the work of God, which the devil cannot hide, and it also represents the good deeds of the believers which spreads amongst all people by discipline and good example. The believers do not seek to show it, but with discipline and seriousness, God will reveal it within them.



3) The Parable of the Mustard Seed:

a. Why did Jesus liken His kingdom to a mustard seed? Because in the Jewish tradition, the mustard seed is the smallest amongst all seeds. Likewise, the Church began small but grew until it became a large tree, this tree represents the cross. With the cross, God attracted the souls of humanity and the Church spread everywhere. Evangelism started small and kept growing until it reached the whole world.

4) Wind and Wave Obey Jesus:

a. The disciples were afraid when a great windstorm arose while they were at sea. Although they were well-trained fishermen, they were still scared and frantically awoke Jesus telling Him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38). Jesus was testing their faith! At the end of this chapter, we see how they became exceedingly fearful when they saw the wind and the sea obey Him with one word from His mouth. In awe, they began asking themselves, "Who can this be?" (Mark 4:41). From this moment, the disciples knew that they were not following any normal leader. But rather, they realized that they were in front of the Almighty God, the One Whom the sea and wind obey.





Chapter 5:

1) The Demon-Possessed Man Healed:

a. This chapter begins with the story of a man with an unclean spirit living in the tombs. This man represents the life of sin and carelessness. He lives in the tombs, where the dead are, because he is spiritually dead.

b. The devil finds his place and rest in the heart of the corrupt man, we see this when the demon in the man asks our Lord Jesus Christ not to torment them or cast them out from their resting place.

c. He was not possessed by one devil but by a “legion.” The word “legion” means a military group, and in the Roman context, refers to a group of 6,000 soldiers.

d. The demons asked Jesus to send them into a large herd of swine, as they knew that Jesus would never send them into another man.

e. This shows us that devils cannot possess another person after being cast out without the permission of our Lord Jesus Christ. The devils knew very well that Jesus is God.

2) A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed:

a. The woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years was healed once she touched Jesus’ clothes. She believed that touching His garment was more than enough to heal her. This woman represents the Gentiles who believed in Jesus, while His own people, the Jews, did not believe in Him. “He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.” (John 1:11).

b. While He was still speaking, people came from the ruler of Synagogue’s house telling him: “Your daughter is dead, why trouble the Teacher any further?” The people thought that the power and authority of Jesus was only to heal sick people and cast out demons, they did not think that He had authority to raise the dead.

c. Jesus told them that she did not die but was asleep. This represents our death being like a period of sleep, until the Second Coming of Jesus, where we will be raised to eternal life.



Chapter 6:

1) Jesus Rejected at Nazareth:

a. Jesus did not do miracles in His own town because people had no faith in Him. For God to work in your life, you must have faith in Him and believe in His power and His ability to change you and work through you to influence others.

2) Sending Out the Twelve:

a. Our Lord sent them two by two to start their service, He gave them power to heal the sick and perform wonders through His name. He sent them two by two so they could encourage each other. Jesus wanted to teach His disciples the importance of teamwork and how their cooperation and support for each other is a key element of success in any work.

b. He commanded them to take nothing for their journey but a staff – no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts. Jesus was their food, drink, richness, and clothing. Speaking of their clothing, their sandals represent their continuous movement, as the Disciples never stop moving and traveling to serve.

3) John the Baptist Beheaded:

a. King Herod, the son of Herod the Great who killed the children of Bethlehem, heard about Jesus and His wonders. Herod thought that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead. Herod's beheading of St. John the Baptist haunted him and he





was living in fear of St. John– although he already killed him.

4) Feeding the Five Thousand:

a. Jesus felt the disciples' exhaustion as they had been out since the early morning. He was compassionate towards their need to eat something after a long day of service, so He took them to a place to rest. Jesus wanted to teach them that everything under the sun has its time. For labor and work, there is a time, and for rest, there is a time.

b. But the people searched for Him until they found Him! They

enjoyed His blessings and teaching so much so that they forgot themselves and forgot about food. For this, Jesus asked the disciples to give them something to eat, although He knew that they had no money or food.

c. There was no humanely possible way to feed this multitude and the only thing left was Divine intervention. So, Jesus blessed five loaves and two fish

and asked the disciples to give the multitudes to eat. After this great miracle, when all were fed, there were 12 remaining full baskets of food. This is the result of Jesus' blessing. He is the Messiah, our fullness!

d. When Jesus saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion for them. They were like sheep with no shepherd. No one was taking care of them or healing their sick or wiping away their tears.

5) Jesus Walks on The Sea:

a. The disciples went on a boat before Jesus to get to the other side, to Bethsaida. The wind was strong, and from the land, Jesus saw them struggling to row. So, Jesus walked on the water to them. Until that point, the disciples were not sure exactly Who their Teacher was; is He truly Jesus, the Messiah, or just another righteous teacher? Or was He





one of the prophets that had risen from dead. St. Mark said, "For they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened" (Mark 6:52). This is because despite seeing this great miracle they were still reluctant to

believe. However, when troubles face us, we see our Lord coming to us. He is certainly coming, even when we think it's too late! For example, He came to them around the fourth watch of the night, which is around 3 AM! He said: "Be of good cheer, it is I, do not be afraid" (Mark 6:50). Jesus tells each one of us: "Do not be afraid!"

Chapter 7:

1) Defilement Comes From Within:

a. The Scribes and Pharisees were only concerned with the formality of the worship and did not care whether the heart was consumed with love for God. They criticized the disciples when they saw them eating without washing their hands. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not discuss the washing itself but was against putting it as the priority and making it the main concern above the purity of the heart. He reminded them of the prophecy of Isaiah "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Isaiah 29:13).

b. The proof that their worship was a mere formality and not from heart is seen in their interpretation of the commandment "Honor your father and mother." (Mark 7:10). They taught the peoples not to support



their father and mother, giving the excuse that what one can offer, he can give to the temple directly. With this teaching, they wanted to increase the offerings to the temple, which would subsequently increase their income.

c. Then, our Lord taught them that it's not what enters man from the outside that defiles him but rather it's what comes out of him– like cursing, swearing, bad thoughts, lying, and judgement.

2) A Gentile Shows Her Faith:

a. The Jews closed the door of their hearts to God and instead, focused more on formality than spirit. On the other hand, the Gentiles who used to worship idols, opened their hearts to God. Another critical aspect that differentiated the Jews from the Gentiles is that the Gentiles felt as though they needed God's love.

b. For example, the woman from Canaan knelt before Jesus asking Him to cast out the demon from her daughter. Jesus answered her saying, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." (Matthew 15:26). Our Lord Jesus did not mean to curse her, but this was how the Jews viewed the Gentiles societally, as dogs. Our Lord knew the faith of this woman and wanted to show this to the arrogant Jews to highlight her humility and faith; to be a representation of acceptance of the Gentiles. Jesus made clear to the Jews that through humility the Gentiles would be accepted and become sons of God through Him.



3) Jesus Heals a Deaf-Mute:

a. Then, our Lord Jesus Christ healed a deaf man who had an im-



pediment in his speech. Look at all the merciful miracles Jesus did. Jesus did not seek any praise or compliment, for this reason, He took this man aside. Jesus wanted to teach us to do good deeds in private and to not be consumed with pride when we do good things nor seek compliments.

b. We also see Jesus raising His eyes to heaven in prayer. Of course, He did not need help as He is the Incarnated God, but He did this to teach us that healing and rest are from above, from heaven.

Chapter 8:

1) Feeding the Four Thousand:

a. The multitude stayed with Jesus for 3 days and He did not want to send them away hungry. So, he blessed the seven loafs and few fish and miraculously they ate and were filled. They gathered seven baskets of bread that had remained. This bread represents the Body of Jesus, Who arose from the dead after three days- so we could be filled spiritually when eat it.

b. Notice that the multitude followed Jesus for 3 days without becoming bored or being consumed with their bodily needs—like food. They did not even ask where, when or what they will eat. It was as if they were saying alongside Jesus: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

c. If you are spiritually filled Christ, you will not worry about what to drink or what to eat, as Our Lord takes care of all of this, and more! Exactly as He did with the crowds when He saw them hungry, He had compassion on them and did not want to send them away without eating so they would not grow weary on the way to their houses. Jesus asked the disciples what they had with them. So, they gave him all they had, which were seven loafs and a few fish.



d. Likewise, Jesus takes the little we have, blesses it, and makes it a great thing. Jesus was able to satiate the hunger of the crowd without the seven loafs and few fish, but He wanted them to participate in the work with Him, to be a part of this great miracle, confirming what St. Paul said: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

e. The disciples did not have more than one loaf and thought among themselves, “We have no bread.” But the Lord, Who knows the thoughts of the people, knew what they were thinking and saw their weak faith– which is why they were worried, even though they witnessed that He had fed the five thousand with 5 loaves and 2 fish.

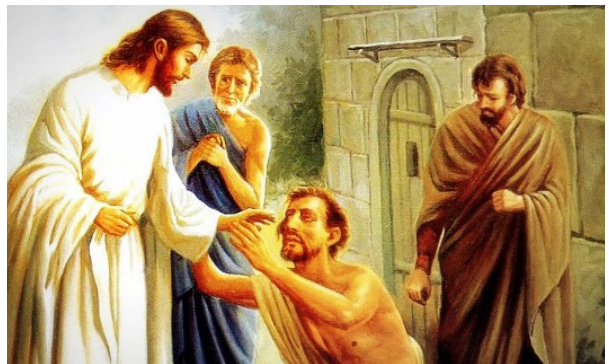
2) Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod:

a. Then, He got into the boat and told His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. He was referring to their hypocrisy, as they outwardly showed their love to Herod to keep their position and status in society, while they internally, and in truth, hated him.

b. “Leaven” in the Bible represents evil. A small amount of leaven is capable of working and transforming an entire batch of dough; similarly, one rotten apple can spoil an entire basket of good apples! Our Lord is warning us about wrong teachings and bad companionship.

3) A Blind Man Healed at Bethsaida:

a. The faith of the blind man was not strong. Thus, he saw people as trees, walking like ghosts, so he asked for help! Only when he had true faith was his sight fully restored.





4) Peter Confesses Jesus Christ:

a. When Jesus asked, “Who do men say that I am?” Peter declared to Him “You are the Christ” but when Jesus started to talk about his suffering and crucifixion, Peter rebuked Jesus saying “Never, Lord!” “This shall never happen to you!” (Matthew 16:22) Jesus strictly warned him, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” (Matthew 16:23).

5) Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection:

a. The disciples, like the rest of the people, wanted to see Jesus as a strong king Who would lead them to defeat the Romans. Thus, they did not accept His proclamations about His crucifixion. They did not want their humble Teacher crucified.

b. In fact, this very sentiment was the will of Satan, as he knew that with the crucifixion of Christ, his authority and power will be defeated, and the doors of Hades will be opened to free the souls of the righteous and return them to Paradise! For this, Jesus strictly warned Peter, as this was the devil talking and not Peter.



6) Take Up The Cross and Follow Him:

a. The true disciples of Jesus are those who carry His cross alongside Him. The crucifixion of Our Lord is the icon of true love– those who practice sacrifice and self-denial are the true followers of Christ.



Chapter 9:

1) The Transfiguration of Christ:

a. The Kingdom of God is filled with great power and majesty. We know this from the Transfiguration, which was seen by Peter, James, and John. Six days prior, Christ asked His disciples, "Who do people say, that I am?" This represents the spreading of the Gospel in the whole world, which began on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit dwelt and three thousand believed in our Lord Jesus Christ in just one day!



b. Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed only a small secret of the Kingdom of God in the Transfiguration; anymore would be beyond what the disciples could bear.

c. The Transfiguration being six days after the discussion with the disciples represents the labor of the believer on earth and the ultimate reward –enjoying heaven, of which Jesus revealed a very small portion in the Transfiguration

d. Also, Jesus revealed a part of His glory when Moses and Elijah appeared with Him. Moses represents the law and Elijah represents the prophets. Together, both represent the mystery of the Incarnation and the redemption.

e. Elijah the prophet is like John the Baptist who came to prepare the way for Jesus. He did so with the spirit and power of Elijah.

f. We celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration on 13th day of the blessed month of Mesra every year.



2) Tasteless Salt is worthless:

a. Fasting and prayers are the weapons which give us victory over Satan.

b. Jesus declared to His disciples several times that He will be betrayed into the hands of men, they will kill Him, and He will rise on the third day.

c. Greatness and power lie not in controlling others through authority, but rather, greatness comes from serving and loving others.

d. If your hand causes you to sin, or make you stumble, cut it off. The hands, eyes or feet represent bad company, social media, or really anything that we have access to that can cause us to stumble. The reality is that it's better for us not have friends than to have bad friends. The worst thing is bad companionship.

e. Our Lord Jesus used the word "salt" to illustrate for us two characteristics we should have:

a- Salt enhances the taste of food and makes it better! Likewise, the Christian must be a positive influence in spreading love and peace wherever they are placed.

b- Salt preserves food! In the same manner, the Christian must be effective in his community- be it church, home, work, school...

a. Let's meditate together! What are other characteristics of salt you can think of and how does it apply to the life of a Christian?



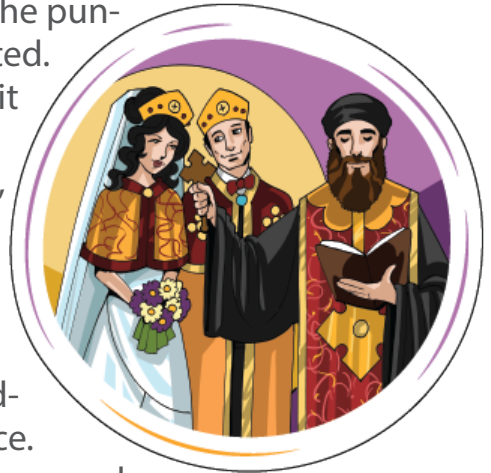


Chapter 10:

1) Marriage and Divorce:

a. Since the very beginning, God created humans– He made them male and female united in Holy Matrimony to be one body together with God. But due to sin, Adam deserved the punishment of disobedience, which we inherited. Here, Jesus talks about marriage and how it restores us back to our original image.

b. Jesus should be our priority in life, we give Him all our hearts. Through our love for Him, we love each other! Loving each other cannot be done without Him, which is why Christianity has preserved the image of family through the commandments of Christ. Jesus has forbidden divorce. In marriage, the man leaves his parents' house and moves to a new home with his wife, as they become one flesh.



2) Jesus Counsels the Rich Young Ruler:

a. The problem of the rich young man was that he loved money to the point that he became a slave to it. Because of this, he could not follow Jesus. The problem is in loving money, not in having lots of money.



Christ, in counseling this young man, tells us that we should not love parents, siblings, relatives, and/or possessions more than God.

3) Jesus a Third Time Predicts His Resurrection:

a. Again, Jesus draws the atten-



tion of the disciples to the fact that He will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles, they “will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again” (Mark 10: 34).

4) Greatness is Serving:

a. When Christ finds the disciples thinking about earthly authority and discussing amongst themselves who will be the greatest, He tells them: “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all” (Mark 10:43–44).

Chapter 11:

1) The Triumphal Entry:

a. Everything was prepared and planned by God. Jesus asked for a colt to enter Jerusalem. This fulfilled the prophecy of



Zechariah saying, “Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9).

b. The colt had never been ridden by anyone before, this shows us that this was a heavenly procession.

c. The two disciples sent by Jesus represent the Old and the New Covenants. The redemption that the Lord is planning has connected the two covenants together.

d. The people put their clothes on the colt to show that they are accepting Jesus as a King in their hearts. They lay them on the way to show

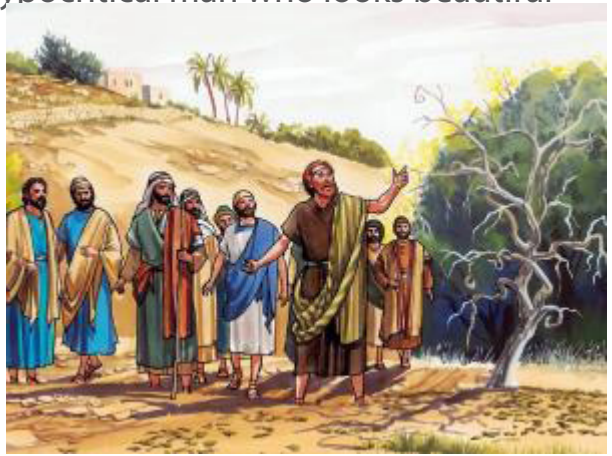


their obedience to Him. It was not a glamorous and great parade like that of earthly kings, but our Lord entered humbly, riding on colt. The greatness of a person is measured by his love and his sacrifice to others.

e. The multitude screamed “Hosanna,” which means “Save us!”

2) The Fig Tree Withered:

a. The fig tree represents the hypocritical man who looks beautiful outwardly, being adorned with lots of leaves, but in truth has no virtues because he has not produced any fruits. At the time in which our Lord cursed the fig tree, it was not the season for fig trees to produce fruit! But the presence of leaves on the tree means that it is about to bring forth fruit. Thus, Jesus cursed it as it was deceiving! It looked like it was going to produce fruit since it had leaves on it, but in fact it was not the season for fruits—an illustration of hypocrisy.



3) Jesus Cleanses the Temple:

a. Jesus cleared the temple from the sellers and money exchangers. They had set up shop in the temple to exchange their currency with a special currency that was used only to buy the sacrifices to be offered in the feast.

b. This is not appropriate as the temple is the house of God, which should be holy and kept sanctified. With His power, Jesus expelled the sellers, zealous for His holy house. God wants us to worship Him from our hearts, not with the formality of our presence in the church.



Chapter 12:

1) The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers:

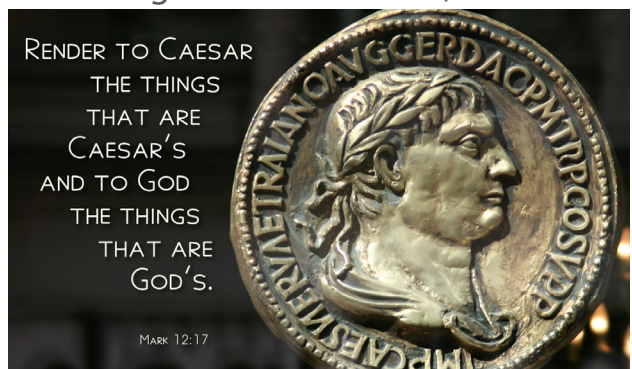
a. In this parable, the man is the God the Father, and the vineyard is the Church of the Old Testament.

b. The vinedressers are the priests, the scribes and the Pharisees, and the servants of the man who planted the vineyard are the prophets whom the man sent to serve the vineyard.

c. But the bad vinedressers killed and whipped them. So, the man sent His only beloved son, our Lord Jesus Christ, but they killed him. Finally, the owner came and gave the vineyard to other vinedressers, which is the church of the New Testament. The new vinedressers are the disciples of Jesus and their successors: the popes, bishops, priests, and deacons.

2) The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar?

a. The Pharisees wanted to embarrass Him and catch Him in His words, so they asked Him if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus answered them: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17). From this we learn that Christians live in obedience to the earthly authority and live loving God. Caesar represents our bodies, by this Christ tells us to give our bodies what it needs and to give the spirit its food.



3) The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection?

a. The Sadducees were a group among the Jewish society which were characterized by being rich and having high positions. They only believed in the 5 books of Moses—they did not believe in angels or the



resurrection.

b. They wanted to confuse Him with a question, so they asked Jesus the following scenario: A man got married to a woman and they did not have kids. Then the man died, and the woman married his second brother. Then, the second man died, so she married his third brother. This continued until she married all seven brothers. So, in heaven, whose wife would she be? Jesus explained to them that in heaven after resurrection, they neither get married nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven.

4) The Scribes: Which Is the First Commandment of All?

a. Jesus summarized the two tablets of the 10 Commandments in two great commandments: To love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all you mind and with all your strength and, the second one, to love your neighbor as yourself. This is the core of Christianity!

5) Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord?

a. Jesus publicly spoke about Himself as the Messiah, the Son of David. While at the same time, emphasizing that He is the God of David.

6) The Widow's Two Mites

a. Jesus praised the poor widowed woman and considered her donation to the treasury to be of higher value than the donations of all others. As, out of her poverty, she put all that she had with her entire heart, while others who gave, gave out of abundance.





Chapter 13:

1) Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple:

a. Jesus talked about the destruction of the temple. The temples were great and took years to build, but Jesus told his disciples: “Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Mark 13:2). And truly the temple was destroyed completely in the 70 A.D by the hands of Titus, the Roman commander.

b. To this day, it has still not been rebuilt! The Jews can no longer offer sacrifices in the same manner that they used to, as they have no temple. However, we believe that there is no need for animal sacrifices as Jesus offered Himself on



our behalf as the True Sacrifice. The animal sacrifices were just a symbol pointing to the true sacrifice of Christ that pleased God the Father.

2) The Signs of the Time and the End of Age:

a. One of the signs of the end of days are lying prophets. These are people who claim that they are messiahs with the sole intention of deceiving people to lead them to eternal death.

b. In this chapter, Jesus talked about the destruction of the temple. Christ told us that famines, wars, and troubles will come before the it's destruction—and this happened! Also, before end of the days, they will be



lots of wars, famines, and tribulation.

c. Jesus informed His disciples that they will be persecuted because of Him. But with this, He strengthened them to not be afraid, as the Holy Spirit will talk on their tongues.

d. Likewise, the believers will be persecuted and will have great hardships and very difficult times. But God will shorten those days for them and will grant them victory.

e. Jesus will come to take His faithful believers to His kingdom at an hour no one knows of. Because of this, He commanded us to stay awake in prayers and fasting. So, when He comes, He finds us ready.

Chapter 14:

1) The Plot to Kill Jesus:

a. Envy and jealousy were two major things plaguing the High Priests. Although the Feasts of the Passover and Unleavened Bread have many preparations, they were busy preparing a plot to kill Christ. They did not understand that the sacrifices and feasts were all pointing towards Him as the Messiah!

2) The Anointing at Bethany:

a. In Bethany, which means the house of suffering and pain, Jesus spent His night in the house of Simon the Leper, a man who Jesus previously healed from leprosy. Leprosy here represented sin.

b. In the house of Simon, a woman who truly loved Jesus came and broke a bottle of very expensive perfume and anointed the feet of our Lord Jesus. The bottle of perfume represents each soul who truly loves Jesus. Breaking it represents labor for the sake of Christ and once broken, a beautiful fragrance spreads and fills the place.

c. This is exactly like the saints and martyrs who, for their great love for Christ, suffered and the smell of their love spread everywhere.



d. Anointing the feet of Jesus with the perfume represents anointing His body for burial, after being killed because of the envious Jews. Therefore, this is another sign He gave pointing to His death, which was approaching.

3) Judas Agrees to Betray

Jesus:

a. Judas Iscariot, and how he treated His Master, teaches us the danger of praising God with our tongues only, while our work and deeds are away from Him. The love of money was the main reason that led Judas to the awful act of betraying His Lord.



4) Jesus celebrates the Passover with His Disciples:

a. Jesus sent two disciples to prepare the Passover. They met a man carrying a pitcher of water, this person is St. Mark! And the upper room where they celebrated Passover was the house of St. Mark's mother, Mary, as we previously mentioned! Her home became the first church in the world. In this same place, Jesus established the Sacrament of Holy Communion. In the upper room, Jesus also appeared to His disciples after the Resurrection. It was also the place where the Holy Spirit came and dwelt on them!

b. During Passover, Jesus declared that among them was the betrayer who would deliver Him to the Jews, but He did not say who it was to not expose or embarrass him. His thoughts were uncov-





ered to the Lord of Lords, but Christ did not say who it was to give him a chance to repent!

c. Jesus ate with His disciples the Passover and established the Sacrament of Holy Communion, offering to them His Holy Body and His Precious Blood.

5) Betrayal and Arrest in Gethsemane:

a. Then He took them to a place called Gethsemane and started to talk about His suffering, death, and resurrection. After which, He will be heading to Galilee to meet them.

b. What Jesus said to Peter about denying Him was fulfilled, so when the rooster crowed, Peter remembered Jesus words and wept, repenting for what he had done. The rooster that crowed represents the Holy Spirit. When it crowed, Peter remembered what Jesus told him. Likewise, the Holy spirit reminds us of our sins so that we can offer repentance.

c. Our Lord Jesus Christ truly suffered. His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground, which is sign of great pain. Jesus suffered great pain for our sake, so that we wouldn't have to. We were the ones who were supposed to suffer as result of our sins and disobedience.

d. Jesus prayed before the suffering was to begin and before the guards came. From this He teaches us to: "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38).

e. It is very painful for someone to be betrayed, but especially by friends or loved ones. The kiss is a sign of love but was used as a sign of betrayal.



f. Jesus was with the Jews all the time, walking freely amongst them in society, but they could not put hands on Him. It was only when



the time came, according to the plan He prepared, that the prophecies would be fulfilled.

g. When the high priest asked Jesus: “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (Mark 14:61). Jesus answered him: “I am” (Mark 14:62).

h. The High Priest tore his clothes—this was a sign of the end of the Levitical priesthood and the start of the priesthood of the New Testament.

Chapter 15:

1) Jesus Faces Pilate:

a. In the morning, the chief priests held a trial with the elders and scribes and sent Jesus to Pilate. Pilate knew that they delivered Him to condemnation out of their envy, so Pilate gave the people an option.

b. He asked them who he should set free: Jesus, the King of the Jews, or Barabbas? They selected Barabbas, a murderer and menace to society, to set free. Then, he asked them again what he should do with the so-called King of Jews, so that they might rethink their decision—but they shouted even louder to crucify Jesus.



2) The Soldiers Mock Jesus:

a. The soldiers clothed Him in purple and twisted a crown of thorns to put on His Holy Head, instead of a real crown; they were not aware



that He is the True King. They started to mock Him by bowing down before Him.

b. Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus carry the wooden Cross represents the Church as she shares in the suffering and pain of her Bridegroom.

c. Jesus refused to drink the wine mingled with myrrh offered to Him so that His pain would not be dampened or made numb, that He may feel the pain in its entirety.

d. They mocked Jesus saying to Him: "Aha, you who destroy the temple and build it in three days" (Mark 15:29). They did not know that Christ was referring to His resurrection after three days of His death.

e. Then, we see Jesus lifted on the Cross around the sixth hour, which is about noon or 12 pm, and there was darkness on the whole earth until the ninth hour, or 3 pm.

f. The pain and exhaustion that Our Lord felt while hanging on the Cross is more than our minds could ever begin to understand. Yet, despite this, He cried aloud, to declare that He was not crucified out of weakness.

g. His cry tore the veil of the temple in two from top to bottom and the tombs opened. The veil of the temple being torn was a sign that the way to the heaven has been opened, as it was previously firmly sealed as result of Adam's sin.

h. Jesus cried out with loud voice and then breathed His last, which was the reason that the Centurion believed in Jesus and said: "Truly, this Man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39).

i. The women who followed Him were there while His disciples in fear, escaped, except St. John the Beloved. Through this, the Holy Bible restored dignity to women which had been lost during this time period.

j. His death was confirmed by all, and Pilate sealed the tomb.

k. The death of our Lord Jesus was unique and not like other hu-





mans at the time, for this He was not buried with others. He was buried alone in a new tomb, so that His resurrection would be revealed with no shadow of a doubt.

Chapter 16:

1) He Is Risen:

a. St. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices after the Sabbath had passed, as no work is permitted on the Sabbath.

b. But the problem was with the big stone, who will roll it away so that they can anoint the body of our Lord? They did not realize that Jesus can rise, even with the large stone at the door of the tomb.

c. People used to consider tombs as impure places– places for dead, lepers, or demon possessed. Contrary to this, the tomb of Jesus was filled with angels as it was blessed by the Body of Christ and became a place where all believers across the world visit!

d. The angel appeared like a young man, wearing white clothes– which is sign of joy. The angel told them to tell Peter and the disciples that He will meet them in Galilee. Here he mentioned Peter by name, although Peter had denied Jesus, he is still one of the disciples. He mentioned him by name to remind St. Peter that He still loves him and that He forgave his denial.

e. Although Jesus declared to them several times that He will rise from dead, the idea of resurrection was very foreign, and their minds





could not comprehend it. They didn't believe Mary Magdalene when she told them that He rose from dead! They also did not believe the two disciples of Emmaus. But when Jesus appeared to them, their faith was confirmed, and He commanded them to go to the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature!

f. Jesus explained and confirmed the authority and power of the Apostles—they will take up serpents, like St. Barsoum El Arian, and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them. They will lay hands on the sick and heal them!

g. Our Lord Jesus Christ ascended to the heavens and His disciples went to preach the Gospel to the whole world, teaching them about His crucifixion, His death on our behalf, and His glorious and victorious resurrection for us.



The Book of Haggai

1) Facts:

- a. Haggai is a Hebrew name which means “my feast” or “joyful/delightful”
- b. He was born in Babylon, the land of captivity and he returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel. Specifically, Haggai returned with the first group in year 536 BC.
- c. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are considered post-captivity prophets.
- d. He began his prophecy year 520 B.C, in the second year of the reign of King Darius.
- e. He began two months before Zechariah the Prophet. In fact, they were friends! Their prophecies carry the similar concepts.
- f. The Book of Haggai is one of the Old Testament Books.
- g. He is considered one of the minor prophets.



2) The Prophecies of the Book of

Haggai:

- a. The Book of Haggai consists of 2 chapters with 4 prophecies
- b. The First Prophecy: (Haggai 1): In the first chapter, the prophet rebukes the Jews as they abandon the work in building the temple. This results in a new excitement and zeal amongst the people to finish the temple.
- c. The Second Prophecy: (Haggai 2:1–9): He encourages the builders to continue building and not to get upset as they remembered the glory of the old temple, declaring that the new temple will be greater in glory



d. The Third Prophecy: (Haggai 2:10–19): He confirms to them that neglecting God and putting other priorities ahead of God resulted in a loss of blessings. He encouraged them to persevere in their spiritual lives.

e. The Fourth Prophecy: (Haggai 2:20–23): He confirms to the people that God will destroy all the evil nations and will prove Zerubbabel as ring in His hand.

3) Introduction and Summary of the Book:

a. The calling to build the house of God is a divine calling and it is directed to all of us so we may enjoy being with God. This means to rejoice with God and declare that our hearts are the temples of God.

b. In the meantime, there is admonition from God to the soul negligent in accepting His Kingdom because it busies itself with worldly matters.

c. The name of the Prophet echoes the message of this book as Haggai is calling us to a joyful life with God. He is calling us to be in continuous feast through the rebuilding of the temple of God. He is not merely referencing a building of stone that should be rebuilt but is also talking about building



the house of God in our hearts through His Holy Spirit. As St. Paul says, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

d. The true feast is when God lives amid His people and dwells in their hearts.

e. To ensure that God dwells in our hearts, Prophet stressed the importance of repentance and living a life of righteousness. Through it, God will dwell in us, we will feel His peace, and He will bless anything we do.



4) Historical Background:

a. In the year 586 B.C. during the reign of King Zedekiah, the last king of David's sons, Jerusalem, the palace, and the temple were destroyed, and many people were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar.

b. The Babylonian Kingdom fell by the hands of Cyrus the Persian in the year 536 B.C, who raised the kingdom of the Medes and Persians.

c. A call to the Jews to return from their captivity was ordered by Cyrus year 536 B.C (Ezra 2:1). So, they returned and started building the temple in the year 535 B.C (Ezra 3:8–13). They soon began fighting their enemies (Ezra 4:5) and Cyrus passed away in the year 529 B.C.

d. Wicked people convinced King Artaxerxes, the son of Cyrus to order them to stop building the temple and the city during the period of his reign (Ezra 4:7–24). He passed away in the year 522 B.C.

e. After him came King Darius in the year 521 B.C. His during his reign, Haggai and Zechariah started their prophecy and were encouraging the Jewish people continue building the temple (Ezra 5:1), coupled with the king's orders to rebuild (Ezra 5–6), The Temple was built and opened in the year 515 B.C.

5) Major Characters in this Prophecy:

a. Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel:

i. Meaning of his name is, "the one who was born in Babel." He has another Babylonian name, which is Shishbasar.

ii. Zerubbabel is a symbol of Jesus Christ as:

1. Zerubbabel was born in the land of captivity





as our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the land of slavery.

2. Zerubbabel is descendant of King and so is our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Zerubbabel ruled over God's people after being released from captivity and so our Lord Jesus Christ became our King after he saved liberated us from the bondage of the devil.

iii. Cyrus the Persian appointed him as governor of Judah

b. Joshua the son of Jehozadek: The Great Priest

i. The meaning of Joshua is, "Jehovah saves," (the same name as Jesus).

ii. The meaning of Jehozadek is, "Jehovah is righteous". And our Lord Jesus Christ is our righteousness.

iii. By this, Joshua is symbol of Jesus Christ our High Priest, Who through His own will and pleasure of His Father, offered Himself as an offering to save us from the death of sin.

6) The Prophet Haggai's advice to us:

a. Ensure that God is first and most important thing in our lives.

b. Give up our ego and establish the house of God in our hearts.

c. Set Jesus as King in our heart, as He is King in His sacred temple.

d. Remember, if the glory of the temple is the presence of God in midst of His people, so the purpose of the temple is to sanctify the heart.

7) Haggai Chapter 1 Highlights:

a. In (Haggai 1:1), the Prophet declares the start of his prophecy, and in (Haggai 2:2) he declares the end of it.

b. The word 'hand' means power. God gave prophecy to the prophets as a spiritual sword to destroy evil. Thus, they declare their prophecies in power, without fear or hesitation.

c. Haggai delivered the prophecy to Zerubbabel and Joshua so they would build the temple. Both are symbols of Jesus Christ, who established the temple of His body, which is the church.



d. The Jews neglected building the temple and started building their own houses. Their excuse for not building the temple was that the time has not come, God thus declares His displeasure with His people. God then sends Haggai to alarm them about the seriousness of their neglect and the consequences of which so they would complete the building and God could be glorified in their midst.

e. God refers to them as “this people” (Haggai 1:2, 2:14), and not “my people” because they sinned against Him, those who sin against God (without repentance), God does not attribute them to Him.

f. Three practical steps to correct the situation:

i. Haggai (1:5): Consider your ways. The heart reflects the thoughts and mind, God calls us to meditate deeply in our inner life and check our ways (the life of repentance).

1. Why we are negligent and careless? Is it really the excuses that we say or the fact that we are busy with the world pleasures away from God?

ii. Haggai (1:8): Go up to the mountains. The mountain refers to the Mountain of Lebanon, to get the wood needed to build the house (the temple). Spiritually, we are called to not just the repent but grow in our spiritual life.

iii. Haggai (1:8): Build the temple that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified. God is calling them to build. God does not establish His house in us without our will and without us. God is confirming that He respects the free will of humanity by calling us to build His house. He will only enter our hearts when we open the door. Not only this, but He refers to us as the builders although God is the True Builder of the house.

8) The prophecy of the Prophet was joyfully fruitful

a. Because of the prophecies of Haggai, the governor, priests, and peoples, started the work:

i. The governor to subject his will

ii. The priest to humble his heart

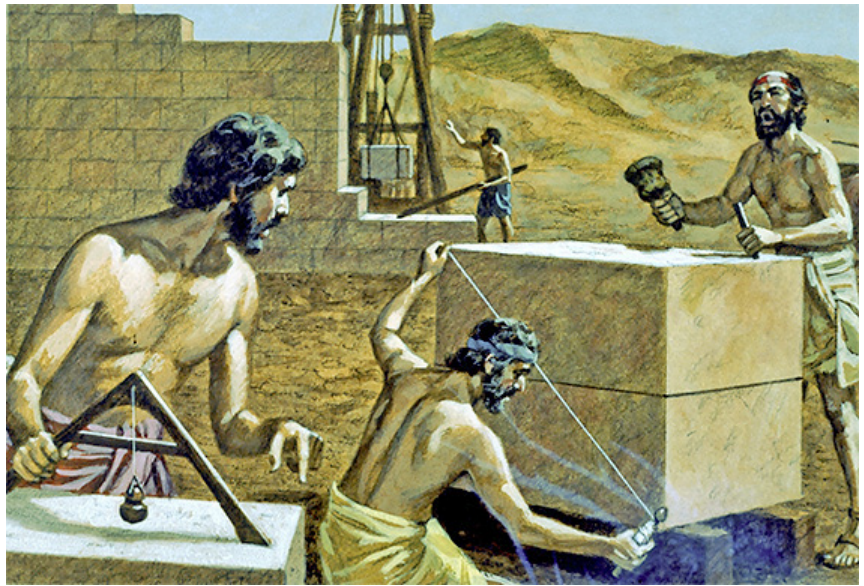


- iii. The people to respond and work with all their energy and might
- b. A man who hears God's Word and voice will be filled with the Divine fear of God and work powerfully, joyfully, and in internal harmony to fulfil God's will.

9) Haggai Chapter 2 Highlights:

a. The second chapter starts with the second prophecy (1–9) which is a message of encouragement for the builders who started building the house of God one month ago to continue.

b. The prophecy was said in the 21st of the seventh month, the seventh day of the feast of Tabernacles (this feast is seven days from the 15th – 21st of the seventh month). This feast was characterized as the most joyful of the feasts, as if God is telling them to be full of joy not because of the feast but because you started building the house of God.



c. During the work, the elders who saw the first temple (Built by Solomon and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar) were crying because this new temple was, in their opinion, not as great as the first, so they propagated the spirit of despair among the builders and nearly turned the joy to sadness. The devil, once he sees us building the house of God in our heart, starts to implant the spirit of despair in us.

d. "I'm with you" (2:4) these were the words God said to encourage



them. How do we despair when we hear those words from God? God then commended them to work because when God is in our midst we labor in joy and without despair.

e. "I will shake heaven and earth" (2:6) In the Old Testament, this has occurred on several occasions, as well accompanied the crucifixion in the new testimony and is accompanying each person when Jesus comes to him to establish His kingdom in his/her heart.

f. "They shall come to the desire of all nations" (2:7) Our Lord Jesus Christ is the desire of all nations and the richness of all the earth tribes. In this verse, the Prophet saw with the spirit Jesus Christ establish his body (the Church).

g. "The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former" (2:9) comparing the two temples, the first one built by Solomon and the second one built by Zerubbabel, of course the first is greater from a building perspective. However, Zerubbabel's temple, the second one, is symbol of Jesus' Body which is the church, also Jesus Himself taught in it during His service on earth and through His Body reconciliation between Father and the humanity took place by shedding His blood on the Cross (Colossians 1: 20).

h. Secondly, in the third prophecy (10-19) he is asking them to purify their heart, as the ultimate purpose of the temple is sanctification of the heart to God. We cannot establish the temple with unclean hearts, and here he is asking them to:

i. Apply the commandment: ask the priests concerning the law (Haggai 2:11)

ii. Stay away from impurity

i. Third: the fourth prophecy (20-23) – here he is talking to Zerubbabel – the governor who is descendant of King David, announcing that he is blessing him and will destroy the nations that will resist him, and





this is symbol that through our Lord Jesus Christ we will have the victory not on nations, but we will have victory over sin and devil.

i. Through baptism, we overcome the old man and his bad deeds exactly as the paganism nations feel under the feet of Zerubbabel and then we deserve and enjoy the sacrament of chrismation 'set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm (song of Solomon 8:6).

ii. Zerubbabel represents our Lord Jesus Christ: in him we enjoy the victory over the evil dark forces.

Haggai 2:9 KJV

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.





The Story of the Coptic Orthodox Church

1) How it began:

The Church of the New Testament was established during the Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit dwelt on the Disciples. We remember

how Christianity started by group of fishermen and simple people, when Jesus Christ told them to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Without weapons or money, only with faith that could overcome mountains, the Disciples did just that and in a very short time much of the entire world



was Christian, captivated by the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who put Himself up to death for our sakes.

The 12 Disciples along with the 70 Apostles evangelized in the entire world colonized at that time. This included North Africa, Asia Minor, Europe, India, etc. Their voices went to the ends of the earth the Apostolic sees were established in several of the major cities of the world.



2) The Apostolic Sees in Early Christianity

Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria were the first apostolic sees that were established by the hands of the Apostles. These cities were well known as centers of culture and education at the time due to their great influence and ideal geographic locations. These cities also served as spiritual centers- from there, the service spread to the surrounding areas in which the Apostles would evangelize and return to the city once more.

a. Church of Jerusalem:

i. The Church was established in Jerusalem on Pentecost in the Upper Room of the house of St. Mark. It served as the center of evangelism for all the Apostles. The first Bishop of Jerusalem was St. James the Apostle, who headed the Council of Jerusalem.

ii. Jerusalem was blessed by the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in it- His teachings, steps, and miracles occurred there. Jerusalem was sanctified with His Holy blood, which was shed in it. It was from this city that the Gospel spread



across the world. Jerusalem was blessed with the preaching of the Apostles and the miracles they performed in the Name of the Lord Christ. It was blessed with the blood of St. Stephen, the first martyr, as well as the two apostles- St. James the son of Zebedee and St. James, the brother of the Lord.

iii. At this time, it was considered the mother church but this eventually changed due to the destruction of Jerusalem in year 70 AD.



b. Church of Antioch (Syria):

i. It is the closest church to Jerusalem and it was the commercial capital of the Roman Empire; it links Asia and Europe. The first person to preach the Gospel in Antioch was St. Barnabas.

ii. The Church of Antioch is considered to be the first church established in a Gentile country. The disciples were first called “Christians” in Antioch. St. Peter reached the Church of Antioch after the Council of Jerusalem (Gal. 2:11).

iii. Antioch served as a center for the missionary trips of St. Paul (Acts 11:33-36).

c. Church of Alexandria:

i. At the time the Apostles were evangelizing, Alexandria was considered to be the political capital of the Roman Empire, second to the city of Rome. It was also a world leader in culture, science and philosophy because it was home to the world-famous School of Alexandria from which many great philosophers and scientists emerged. It contained the biggest library in the world which, filled of books and manuscripts.

ii. The city of Alexandria was an international city, filled with all kinds of peoples: Romans, Greeks, Jews, and Egyptians, etc. The Church of Alexandria was established by St. Mark the Apostle, who wrote the Gospel According to St. Mark.

Then, two other churches were established and considered Apostolic sees: The Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople. So, there were a total of five Apostolic sees!



3) St. Mark and establishment of Church of Alexandria (Egypt):

a. St. Mark preached the word of God in Egypt during the reign of Emperor Nero in the first century AD, around 20 years after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

b. The Patriarch of Alexandria is enthroned on the See of St. Mark

c. All the churches in the world remained as one faith until the year 451 AD, when the Council of Chalcedon was held during which the nature of Our Lord Jesus Christ was discussed. From there, the churches were split into two groups: one group believed that our Lord Jesus took flesh from St. Mary and made it one with His Divinity: without mingling, without confusion and without alteration. They believed that Christ has one nature (miaphysite), the Incarnate Nature, and that His Divinity united with His humanity- this was the faith of the Eastern churches, led by our Coptic Orthodox Church, the Church of Alexandria. The other churches, like the Church of Rome, believed that our Lord Jesus has two natures (diaphysite)- this is what Council of Chalcedon believed in which became the faith of the western churches led by the Roman Church. So, what used to be one church with one faith divided into the Chalcedonian Churches, led by the Roman Church and Non-Chalcedonian Churches, led by Church of Alexandria

d. In the 11th century, the Chalcedonian churches split. Some followed the Church of Rome and were called the Catholic Church and others followed the Church of Constantinople and were called the Eastern Orthodox Church.

e. Then in the 16th century, a man named Martin Luther led a revolution





called the “Reformation” against the Catholic Church. It began in Germany where he stood against some wrong teachings of the Roman Church and his followers were called the Protestors, which is where the name “Protestant” came from. Within the Protestant Church, there were several splits and from this church a lot of different sects emerged and continue to emerge to this day.

f. The Non-Chalcedon Churches, which just means the churches that do not agree with the outcome of the Council of Chalcedon, did not change the faith that delivered by our Lord Jesus to His disciples. In all of these years, the Church of Alexandria and her sister churches, the Oriental Orthodox Churches (which are the churches of: India (Malankara), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Armenia, and the Syriac Orthodox).

g. Various denominations started to infiltrate Egypt. The Catholic church entered with the Crusades led by Louis the 9th in 1248 AD and was established by an official order from

h. The Protestant Church was established officially in year 1860 AD, meaning it has been in Egypt for only a century and half.

4) The Coptic Orthodox Church Spreads Throughout the Entire World:

a. Thanks to His Holiness Pope Cyril the Sixth (the 116th Pope), the Coptic Church began to spread outside of Egypt.

i. During his papacy, the first churches in Australia, Canada, USA, Kuwait, and Lebanon as well as other countries were established. His Holiness also took great care of the church’s presence in Ethiopia and anointed a metropolitan in the area as requested.

b. His Holiness Pope Shenouda the Third (the 117th Pope) continued this practice. This was particularly crucial as more Coptic people immigrated from the country and needed the service and spiritual care the church provides.

i. His Holiness sent priests to the new churches and was actively



involved in ensuring the continued growth and spread of the faith.

ii. In 1989, His Holiness accompanied by nine bishops made his first visit. This trip extended for 100 days and was widely talked about. These visits became yearly, His Holiness would open new churches, anoint them, and hold meetings with the priests of the area he was visiting to make sure everything is taken care of.

iii. In addition, annually, the priests would visit Egypt and meet with His Holiness to ask for guidance in the issues related to the service.

c. During the time of Pope Shenouda, the Third, and now Pope Tawadros the Second (the



118th Pope) there has been plentiful growth in the churches outside of Egypt, may God bless their service.

5) “How lovely is Your tabernacle...” Psalm 84:1

a. “Remember, O Lord, the peace of your one, only, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church”

b. It is more powerful than any other building. Powerful in His unity, house of love, house of peace. A house open for all!

c. Her foundation is strong, established hundreds of years ago on the blood of our faithful Savior. Despite years of storms, the fortress of His children stands strong, a rock in front of all the hardships, dedicated for all believers.

d. The devils run from it because in the Church, we are returned our state before fall, back to the love and presence of God, back to the hand of God!



6) The Design of the Church:

In Greek, the word for “church” is “ekklesia”. It means a meeting place of gathering and joy. A church building is sanctified and consecrated to be the House of God; it is heaven on Earth. Noah’s Ark saved him and his entire family from the great flood, just like the church saves us from the tribulations of this life. St. Cyprian said, “There is no salvation for man if he’s outside the church.”

a. The Church:

- i. Is a place where every man can come and learn the word of God, no matter his mental or language abilities.
- ii. Is a place to practice collective and special worship with our brethren and the saints.
- iii. Is God’s blessing to us to guide us on how to have a relationship with Him.
- iv. Is where we, the believers, stand among the angels. We join in their praises, prayers, and liturgies. This is the secret of the house of God.

b. The Church of the Old Testament

i. From the Garden of Eden to the Church as we know it today, the building of the church evolved as man’s understanding and accepting of spiritual things increased. The image of the church first began with Paradise, followed by the altar, Bethel, Tabernacle, the Temple, and then, the Church of the New Testament.





c. The Garden of Eden: (Genesis 2:8, 3:34)

i. Is considered the first church. Adam and Eve were created there and were in constant communication with God. They saw God in the Garden and were satisfied by hearing His voice. They lived praising and glorifying all while tending to the Garden.

ii. However, after the fall of man, they were separated from God and left the Garden of Eden.

d. The Altar: (Genesis 2:8, 3:34)

i. The altar then served as the place where God dwelt among man. Through the altar, God established the concept of redemption. This is illustrated when he dressed Adam and Eve in tunics of skin from an animal sacrifice, offered on behalf of Adam's sin.

ii. Since then, altar played a crucial role in the relationship between God and mankind.

e. Bethel (Genesis 28:10–22):

i. Jacob wanted to feel the presence of God with him amidst his hardship while fleeing from his brother Esau, who was seeking to kill him.

ii. Jacob dreamt about a ladder to the heaven with angels going up and down this ladder. "And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of Heaven'" (Gen. 28:17).

iii. Through the dream Jacob saw, this house was established and granted Jacob the inner peace.



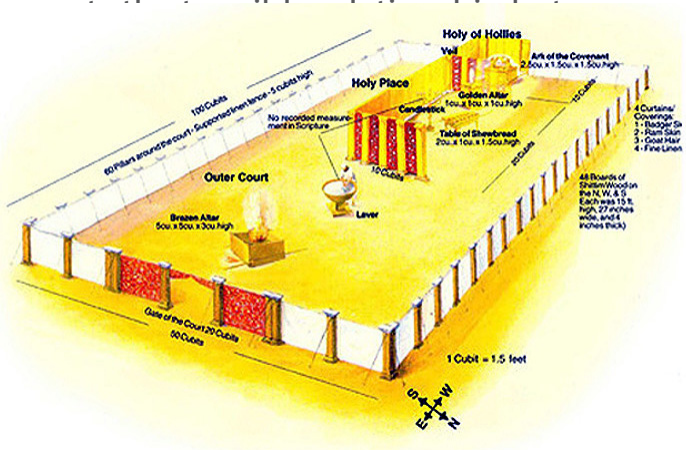


f. Tabernacle of Meeting: Exodus (25, 26, 27)

i. The Tabernacle was not a tent designed by man but was designed by God Himself. It was made to be the dwelling of God amongst His people, according to the measurements God gave to Moses on the mountain after he fasted for 40 days and 40 nights.

ii. The mere presence of this tent, in the midst of His people, served as a source for peace, love, and unity amongst the peoples.

iii. The Tabernacle represented God and man. Through the human soul with blood, purified with water, and anointing with the peoples are reminded of God's love. This is similar to us, the Church of the New Testament, do today. However, today it is not a symbol as it was in the Old Testament, but a reality through the work of the Holy Spirit.



we are sanctified through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, purified with the water of baptism and are consecrated with the Holy Myron.

iv. St. Paul explains to us that the Tabernacle of Meeting was, "The copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5). Because it represents the presence of God, and God is the King of Peace, God is the source and giver of all goodness, peace, and blessing (Rom. 15:33).

v. The Tabernacle was given various names, it was called:

a. The Dwelling Place: named in Hebrew, "tabernacle". It is the place where God dwelt with His people. God desires that we open our hearts for Him, that our hearts and bodies may become a "tabernacle" for His dwelling.

b. The Tabernacle of Testimony: This is where the Ark of Covenant was. In it was placed the two tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them by the finger of God, as a covenant between Him and His people.

c. The Tabernacle of Meeting: It was the place of God's meeting



with His people. It was where God would reveal and declare Himself in tangible ways for the people. "Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34).

vi. The Tabernacle traveled with the people as they journeyed through the wilderness, serving as their guide. When the people were traveling, the cloud hovering over the Tabernacle was also moving. And when the stopped, the cloud also stopped. This teaches us that the house of God, the Church, leads us, by the Holy Spirit, through the wilderness of this life into the heavenly Jerusalem.



g. The Temple (1 Kings 6):

i. The word "temple" in Hebrew means "the great house". It was a word used to describe a royal palace. Similarly, the house of God is a temple, or royal palace, where God, our

King, dwells in the hearts of His people.

ii. The Temple was established once the people settled down in Jerusalem, Solomon build the Temple according to the example shown to his father King David. This means that the Temple was designed by God, just like how the Tabernacle was, and was seen as a continuation of it.

iii. Temple was built in the days of King Solomon, the son of King David. Similarly, the church was established by Our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Peace, who is the true Solomon.

iv. King Solomon built the Temple in year 955 B.C. and then was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar year 586 B.C. It was then was rebuilt by Zerubbabel in the year 530 B.C.

v. The Temple was completely destroyed, as our Lord prophesied, in the year 70 AD by the Roman Commander Titus.

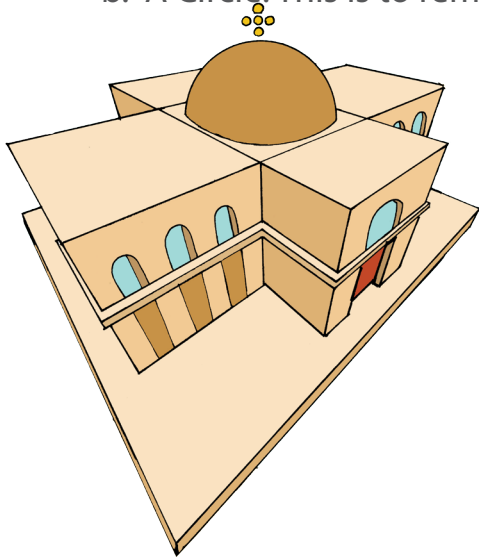
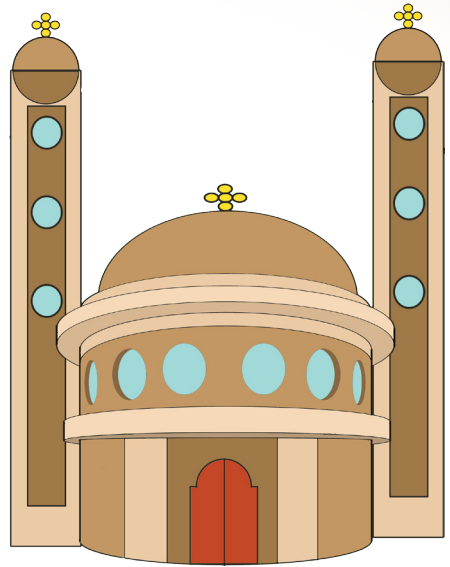


h. The Church of the New Testament:

i. Shapes of the Church:

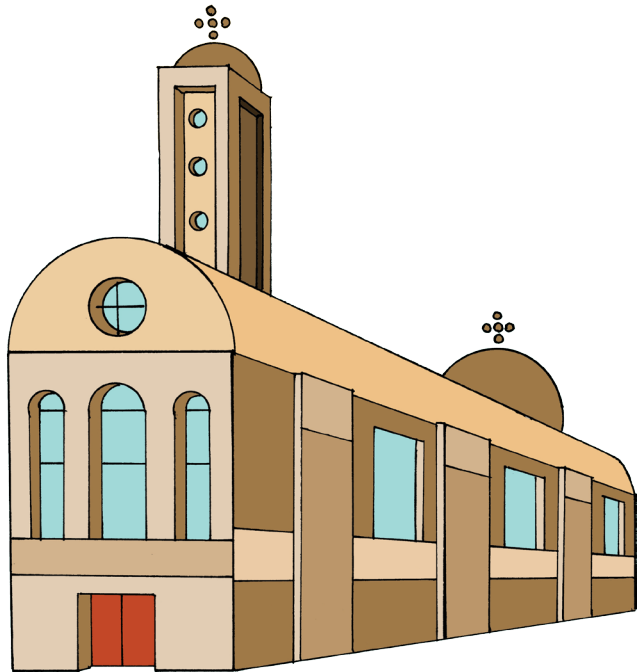
a. A Cross: Through the Cross, we were redeemed and saved from the death of sin. Likewise, by the Cross, we are protected and kept safe from sin and evil.

b. A Circle: This is to remind us of the eternal nature of the church—she has no beginning or end, just like Our Lord. The church is present on earth but we live inside it in the



heaven.

c. A Ship or Ark: The church is a lifeboat, inside it we are protected from evil and the dangers of the sea of this world.





i. One Direction of Worship: Facing the East

The Tabernacle and the Temple in the Old Testament were directed to the West.

1-The Holy of Holies was in the far West. The high priest was allowed to enter it once a year with the blood of the sacrifice on behalf of his sins and the sins of the people.

2- When the High Priest exits the Holy of Holies, he is facing toward the East. In doing so, he is pointing towards the direction in which the true High Priest, our lord Jesus Christ, will redeem us.

3- Upon the opening of Temple of Solomon, Solomon stood towards the west and said: "The Lord said He will dwell in the dark cloud" (1 Kings 8:12). This means that they cannot see God due to their sins

4- God commanded Moses in the Tabernacle of Meeting which was directed to the West and so was the Temple built by Solomon. The Garden of Eden was in the east (Gen 2:8). Whereas, the Tabernacle and the Temple were towards the west. This signifies Christ being the only One Who can open the Paradise which closed due to the fall of man.

In the New Testament, we look towards the East.

1- East is the place and direction of the first paradise. For this, we pray towards the east, asking for God to return us to our first and former life in paradise.

2- When we look toward the east, we declare that Jesus is our goal as Jesus was called, "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" (Malachi 4:2).





3- Jesus Christ will come in the second coming from the East, "For as the lightening comes from the east and flashes to the west so also will the coming of Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:27).

4- St Athanasius said that Jesus was crucified facing the west, so when we look towards the east, we are looking at the Crucified One.

5- St. Clement said that praying toward the east reminds us of the new life we began after baptism

7. Understanding the Rites of the Church

Building:

a. The Sanctuary:

i. The Sanctuary is elevated from the chorus of the deacons and from the rest of the nave by several steps. It is the holiest place in the Church.

ii. For this St. Paul advise in his apostle to the Romans said: "Therefore, let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (Romans 14:19)

iii. Inside the Sanctuary is the altar which holds the Throne (with the chalice in it) and the paten, as well as the altar linens and incense. The altar is located in the center, behind the iconostasis. In front of the altar, towards the east, is the Bosom of the Father- which is an icon of Jesus Christ seating on the throne.

iii. The Sanctuary represents heaven. The presence of the altar is what makes the Sanctuary heavenly. It is the place where





Our Lord Jesus Christ offers Himself to the believers-uniting the heavenly with the earthly.

iv. The Sanctuary in our Coptic Orthodox Church is feared and respected as the Sanctuary in our church is the Holy of Holies. For this, the church put specific roles for the believers when it comes to entering and using the Sanctuary- whether it be during a liturgy or at any time. An example of such rules is that the Sanctuary should be entered only by the bishop, priest and deacons only; laymen and women are not allowed to enter.

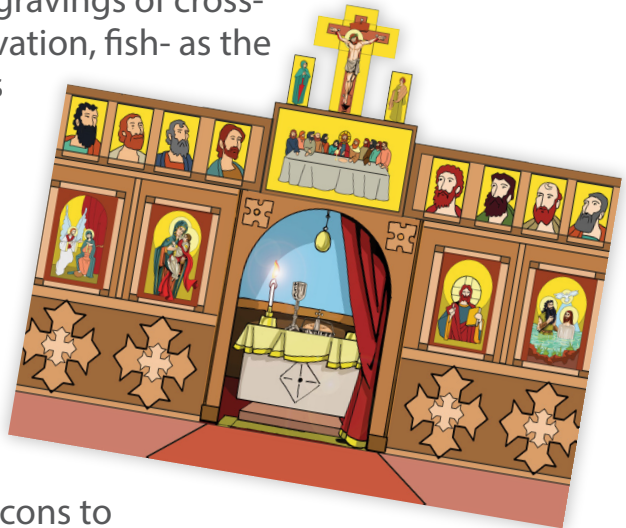
v. We kneel down and worship before the Sanctuary when we enter the church. We kneel down several times during the liturgy, declaring and confessing that we cannot enter the Holy of Holies by ourselves, but it is through the mercy of God that we approach in reverence.

Jesus Christ is the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 2:4). He is the light which shines from the east.

b. The Iconostasis

i. Separates the Sanctuary from the nave. It is usually made of wood and decorated with intricate engravings of crosses- as the cross is the sign of salvation, fish- as the sign of life, clusters of grapes- as Christ is the True Vine.

ii. In the middle of the iconostasis is the Royal Door. It is called this as it is where the priest selects the Lamb; it is the main entrance to the sanctuary. There are two other doors, one on each side of the Royal Door, for the side sanctuaries. These are used as side altars or for deacons to enter and exit the Sanctuary.





iii. The iconostasis represents the heavenly Jerusalem and declares the unity between the earthly striving church and the victorious heavenly church

iv. Jesus Christ, St. Mary, the angels and saints are looking towards the believers and not towards the east. This is because they are in heaven, looking down at the believers, welcoming them to the joy and splendor of Heaven.

v. The cross above the iconostasis represents our Lord Jesus Christ, Who opened the doors of Paradise through His cross.

vi. We light oil lamps in front of the icons except, for in front of the icon Jesus Christ, as He is the True Light who enlightens every man that comes into the world.

vii. The icon of the Last Supper, where our Lord established the mystery of the Eucharist. It is placed above the Royal Gate to represent our Lord Jesus Christ as the unseen High Priest, who offered the true sacrifice.



c. The Nave:

i. The word nave is taken from the Latin word “navies”, which means “ship”

ii. It is divided into two sides- the area closest to the altar is the “Chorus of Deacons”, whereas the left or northern side is dedicated for men and the right, southern side for women.

iii. The nave of the church to the believers represents a ship as the nave keeps us safe from the troubled sea of the world through the liturgies held in it.



iv. The nave contains the baptismal font which is the birthplace of a “new” Christian. The baptistery is built at the northwestern side of the church, so it takes those from the West to the East, where our Lord Jesus dwells.

v. The nave of the church has the church dome which represents the heavens and the floor of the church which represents what is on earth. On the dome, there is an icon of our Lord Jesus Christ above all other photos of saints so we would remember the great love of our Jesus to His church. He redeemed us through His precious blood on the cross. Jesus is both in heaven with the saints and on the earth in our midst.





Do Not Waste Your Time

We learned about how everything in our church is put in place for a specific reason and has a dogmatic meaning, what about everything else we do with our day?

Is that done with reason and meaning?

1) What is time?

a. Life is comprised of days- which are nothing but hours and minutes, have you asked yourself where does my day go?

b. Time goes by very quickly. Like a car with no breaks, it won't stop no matter how much you try!

c. Time is also the most precious thing man has; it is:

i. A limited resource

ii. It cannot be returned

iii. It passes quickly

d. Time management helps you complete your tasks at a faster pace and with less effort and will allow you to gain opportunities which wouldn't have crossed your mind.

e. Your use of time could be a gain or loss, you may win the day if you do something positive and become closer to God or lose the day and fill it with sin. People's greatness is estimated by how valuable their time is.



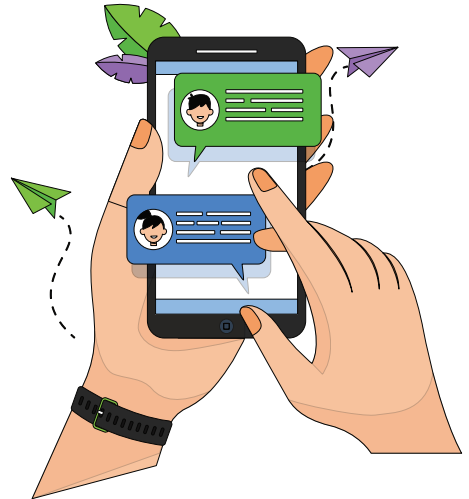


f. The days are evil, redeeming the time for good (Eph.5:16), means that time is passing by quickly and cannot be returned, so we need to make the most of it.

g. The most valuable and holiest time of the day is the time you pray and read the word of God.

2) What is the danger of not using time wisely?

- a. Destructive emotional relationships (gossip).
- b. The empty mind is the house of the devil, leading to bad thoughts.
- c. Using the internet in a bad way.
- d. Fleshly lusts
- e. An example from the Bible about the danger of too much free time:
 - i. When David the Prophet decided to break his routine and stayed in the palace while his people went to war, he used the free time he was left with to take a walk on his roof, no prayers, no psalms. This was the beginning of sin. For David the prophet, it was adultery and murder. Without such free time he would not have had the opportunity to do any of this or have been tempted.



3) What if you make a good use of your time, but the things you end up doing aren't edifying?

- a. **Social Media:**
 - i. Social media has its pros and cons
 - ii. We must ask ourselves, how many hours do we spend on the social media? We must avoid falling into addiction and spending hours and hours busy with only social media.



iii. The most dangerous aspect of social media, and the internet in general, is availability of bad websites that will destroy our soul and body.

iv. We should make use of the Christian websites for our spiritual life and learn how to build websites for our church or use the internet to help the servants by staying connected with our friends.

b. Your Friends:

i. If friends help waste each other's time, this is an indicator that they lack love for each other and don't care whether there harming one another.

ii. Friends who spend an unlimited amount of time without can be harmful. for example, your friend who spends hours talking to you on the phone is not a true friend because he does not respect your time.



1. Excessive talking will lead to sins of condemnation and mockery of others.

iii. Try to make valuable use of your time. Instead of just spending your time going out with no purpose, participate in the church activities-like El Keraza and Bible study.

iv. We love spending our time with our friends because we love them and their presence. So why don't we spend as much time with our Beloved God?

v. "The key is in not spending time but, in investing in it." - Stephen Covey

vi. "Do not be fooled by the calendar, there are only as many days in the year as you make use of. One man gets only a week's value out of



a year while another man gets a full year's value out of a week." - Charles Richards

vii. Now, let us quietly ask ourselves, what are the priorities in our life? For example, studying, helping our parents, going to church, going out with friends, social media, praying, watching TV, playing sports, etc.

c. The Time Analogy:

i. Time is a talent, we must:

1. Appreciate its value and that God trusted us with it
2. Appreciate the value of investing in it
3. Teach ourselves how to manage our time and make use of it so we could trade double the worth of the talent



ii. We do this so that we deserve to hear the voice of God telling us

"Well done good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:21).

iii. Time is a treasure:

1. Each one should appreciate its value, be keen to have it and take care of it, as well work to protect it. We should be proud of owning it and enjoy the fruits of such a treasure.



iv. Time is a sword:

1. Time is like a two-edged sword, if you use it wisely you cut down the devil and his ways deception, but if you do not use it wisely you cut down your spiritual life.

v. Time is a train:

A train is fast with definitive timing. It never waits for anyone, ev-



every second lost is one that cannot be caught or compensated

vi. Time is a vapor:

Our life is like vapor or steam, it appears for a little while and then vanishes away

vii. Contemplations and Sayings of Fathers:

1. "Lead my ship by your commandments and give me understanding so I may trade with the talents and still have time before I hear the voice say: give account for your stewardship" St. Ephrem the Syrian

2. "The day in which you do not sit one hour with yourself, do not count it in your life's meter, Love quietness because in it is life for your soul and if you continue to look to others, you will never see yourself" St. Ephrem the Syrian

3. "Praise with your heart so your heart would become a temple for God" A Spiritual father





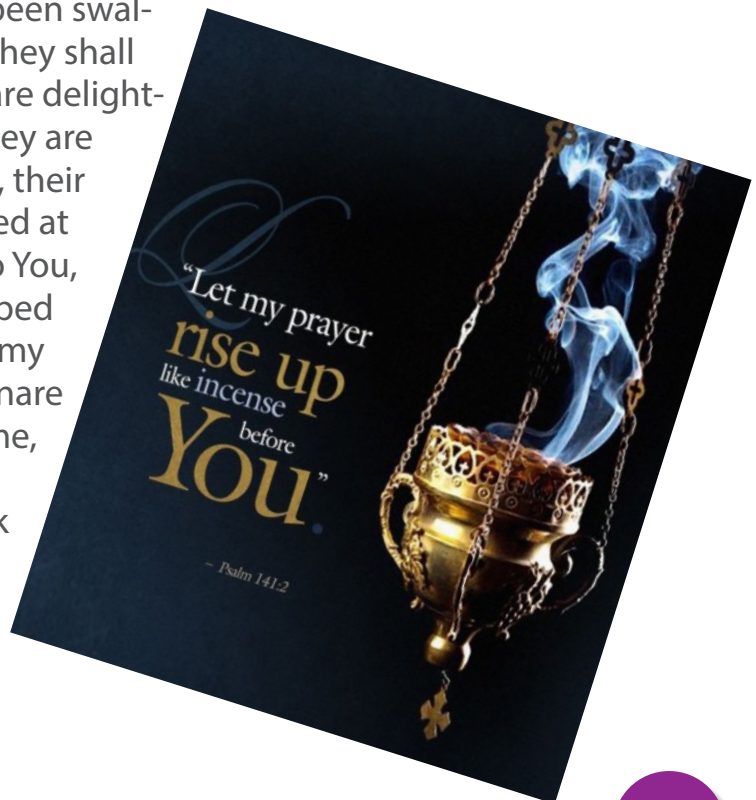
Memorization

THE COMPLINE PRAYER

Psalm 140 (Agpeya)

O Lord, I have cried to You, hear me. Attend to the voice of my supplication when I cry to You. Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice. O Lord, set a watch on my mouth and a strong door for my lips. Do not incline my heart to words of evil, to employ excuses for sins with men who work iniquity; and I shall not agree with their choices. The righteous shall chasten me with mercy, and reprove me: but do not let the oil of the sinner anoint my head: for yet my prayer also is in their pleasures.

Their mighty ones have been swallowed up near the rock: they shall hear my words, for they are delightful. As a lump of earth, they are broken upon the ground, their bones have been scattered at Hades. For my eyes are to You, O Lord: O Lord, I have hoped in You; do not take away my soul. Keep me from the snare which they have set for me, and from the stumbling blocks of those who work iniquity. Sinners shall fall by their own net: I am alone until iniquity passes by. ALLELUIA.





The Holy Gospel According To St. Luke (Ch. 2: 25-32)

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen Christ the Lord. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God, and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

Glory to God forever. Amen..





The Litanies

Behold, I am about to stand before the Just Judge terrified and trembling because of my many sins. For a life spent in pleasures deserves condemnation. But repent, O my soul, so long as you dwell on this earth, for inside the grave, dust does not praise. And among the dead, no one remembers, neither in hades, does anyone give thanks. Therefore arise from the slumber of laziness, and entreat the Savior, repenting and saying, "God, have mercy on me and save me."

ΔΟΞΑ ΠΑΤΡΙ ΚΕ ΥΙΩ ΚΕ ΑΓΙΩ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ.

(Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.)

If life were everlasting, and this world ever-existing, you would have an excuse, O my soul. But if your wicked deeds and ugly evils were exposed before the Just Judge, what answer would you give while you are lying on the bed of sins, negligent in disciplining the flesh!?

O Christ our God, before Your awesome seat of judgement I am terrified, and before Your council of judgement I submit, and from the Light of Your divine radiance I tremble, I, the wretched and defiled, who lies on my bed, negligent in my life. But I take example of the Publican, beating my chest and saying, "O God, forgive me and have mercy on me, a sinner."

ΚΕ ΝΥΝ ΚΕ ΑΙ ΚΕ ΙC ΤΟΤC ΕΩΝΑC ΤΩΝ ΕΩΝΩΝ. ΑΜΗΝ

(Both now and forever and unto the age of all ages, Amen.)

O pure Virgin, overshadow your servant with your instant help, and keep the waves of evil thoughts away from me, and raise up my ailing soul for prayer and vigil, for it has gone into a deep sleep. For you are a capable, compassionate and helpful mother, the bearer of the Fountain of Life, my King and my God, Jesus Christ, my hope

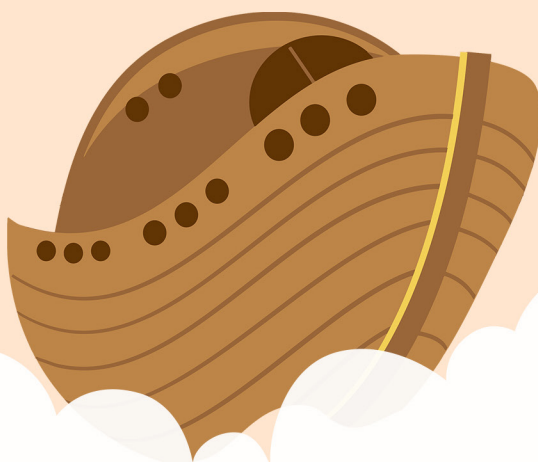


The Absolution of The Twelveth Hour

Lord, all our sins which we committed against You in this day, whether in deeds or in words or in thoughts or through all senses, please remit and forgive us, for the sake of Your holy name, as You are Good and Lover of mankind. God, grant us a peaceful night and a sleep free from all anxiety. And send us an angel of peace to protect us from every evil, and every affliction, and every temptation of the enemy; through the Grace, compassion and love of mankind of Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom is due, with You and with the Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver Who is of one essence with You, all glory, honor and dominion, now and forever and unto the ages of all ages. Amen.



Through the grace of God and under the auspices of His Grace Bishop David, Bishop of the Diocese of New York and New England and the current Papal Exarch of the Archdiocese of North America for H.H. Pope Tawadros II, this Mahragan book was translated and formatted by the blessed servants of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of New York and New England. All material was translated from the Arabic Language to the English Language.



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