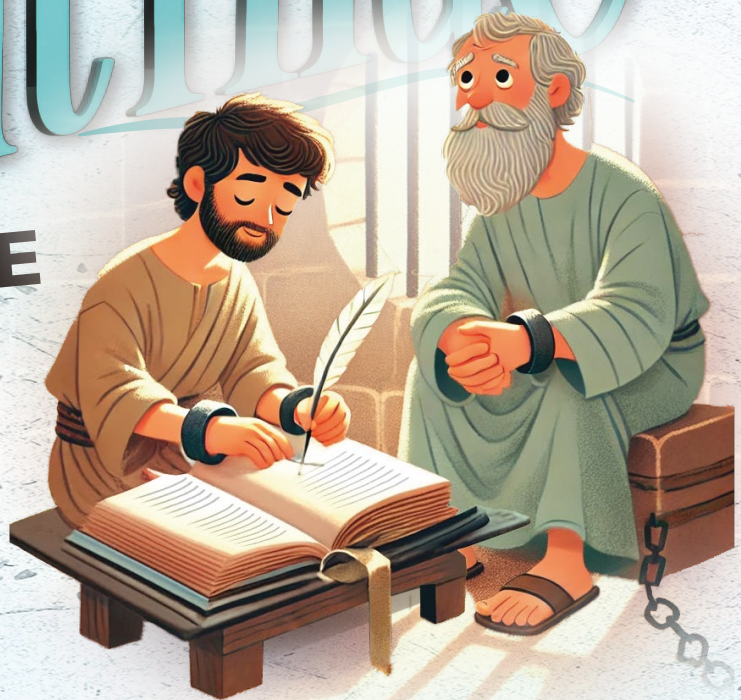


Mahragan El-Keraza
2025

Continue

IN THE
things which
you have learned
(2 Timothy 3:14)



English Edition
Grades 5-6



*Continue in the things
which you have learned* (2 Timothy 3:14)



H.H. Pope Tawadros II

Pope of Alexandria &
Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark



H.G. Bishop David

Bishop of the Diocese of New York
and New England



*Continue in the things
which you have learned* (2 Timothy 3:14)



1

**The Parables
of "Lost and
Found"**

2

**The
Seven
Sacraments**

3

**Ezra, the
Priest and the
Scribe**

5

**Saint
Macarius**

4

**The Council
of Nicaea**



3





Welcome, friends! Let me introduce myself—I'm **Abigail**, and I'm here with my brother **Tony** and our friends **Sherry** and **Peter**. We're excited to tell you about our podcast, "**Castajro**". In our podcast we'll discuss everything you want to talk about! In our podcast, we share many stories to help us strengthen our faith and build our lives on a firm foundation. We learn how to live out this verse:

"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them." (2 Timothy 3:14).



Continue in the things which you have learned (2 Timothy 3:14)



This verse is also the theme of the **2025 Mahragan El-Keraza**. We hope you will join us in this podcast as we learn and grow together!

1. The Parables of "Lost and Found" – We will learn about God's love for us and how He accepts the repentance of every sinner. This is the first anchor of our theme verse, "...**But you**" which is represented in the anchor **"I Rejoice in His Arms"**.



2. The Seven Sacraments of Our Church – We learned about how to abide in God and He in us. This leads us to the second anchor, (...**must continue**) which is **"Well Rooted and Steadfast"**.



3. Ezra the Priest and the Scribe – From Ezra, how to strengthen and preserve our faith and teach it to others, leading us to explore the third anchor (... **in the things which you have learned**) which is **"My Faith is a fortress and a Strong Wall"**



4. The Council of Nicaea. We learned how important it is to preserve the upright faith of our Orthodox Church, leading us to explore the fourth anchor, (...**been assured of**) which is **"My Faith is Life and Constitution"**



5. Saint Macarius. We learned about a hero among the founders of the monastic system, Saint Macarius, leading us to explore the fifth part, (... **knowing from whom you have learned them**) which is represented in the anchor **"I am Proud of My Forefathers"**





Our story starts with three friends who started a “Podcast” to discuss important Christian topics in our Coptic Orthodox Church.

Peter: “**Castagro**” is the name of our new podcast. It’s a podcast where we discuss anything you want to talk about.

Abigail: The idea of our podcast is in our name! Our podcast is a program that speaks about being firm..

Tony: The word “tagro” means firm—that’s our goal. We want to be a strong and steady generation.

Sherry: And in every episode, there will be a competition. We’ll wait for your answers on faith, beliefs, and doctrine.

Abigail: We will discuss things together.

Tony: We will play together.

Peter: We will talk together.

All: In “**Castagro**”!

This is the commercial for “Castagro”, the new podcast which hosted by the young youth of the media committee of the church.

Abigail: Where’s Tony? We’re supposed to record the new episode now!

Sherry: Maybe he’s getting something ready, Abigail. Let’s wait a bit.

Peter: Guys, Tony isn’t coming.

Sherry & Abigail: Huh? What? What’s going on?





Peter: Tony and I got into an argument about the way we would run our podcast. He thinks the episode should be a free talk, where we can talk about anything without limits. He believes freedom means having no restrictions. But I disagreed—we need a clear goal and a meaningful message. After we talked, he told me he would do what he believed was right. He's not joining us for the next episode. Instead, he's going live on his own page to make the episode he wants.

Abigail: He can't just leave like that! I don't get it—how can he just walk away from the program? This is a serious issue.

Sherry: You're right—Tony shouldn't be part of the program anymore. He can't continue with us.

Abigail: I agree. I'm also removing him from the group chat.

Peter: Wait, Abigail. Calm down, everyone. Just because Tony made a mistake doesn't mean we reject him and refuse to let him return. He might realize his mistake and come back to apologize.

Abigail: I don't think so!

Sherry: Even if he apologizes, how can we forgive him? He left us when he knew we needed him. He knows this is our very first episode!

Abigail: There is no way we should forgive him.

Peter: But God teaches us to forgive and accept those who treated us badly when they return. The Holy Bible has many parables that teach this lesson. We all know them. Do you know these parables?

Abigail & Sherry: Of course, we do.





Peter: I got an idea! How about we start recording our first podcast. We can share this situation with our listeners, and by the end of the episode, we'll decide what to do about Tony?

Sherry & Abigail: Sounds like a good plan to me!

Peter: Welcome to the first episode of "Castagro"! Today, we want to discuss three parables that the Lord Jesus told: **The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Prodigal Son.** (Luke 15:1–32)



Peter: In Luke chapter 15, you'll notice three parables, all about God's love for every lost person, His search for them, and the joy of their return. These parables represent three different types of people who drift away from God:

The Lord Jesus often used parables to explain spiritual lessons in a simple and relatable way. He took examples from the everyday lives of His listeners so they could understand His message.





The Lost Sheep



This represents a person who **chooses to go astray** but realizes they are lost.

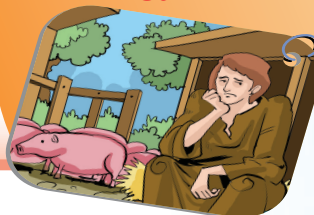
This represents someone who gets lost **because of others' actions** and does not realize they are lost.

The Lost Coin



This represents someone who walks away **because of selfish desires** and only understands their mistake later.

The Prodigal Son



At the beginning of the chapter, Jesus gives a "**call of love**" to **tax collectors and sinners**, allowing them to come near to Him. He even ate with them. But when the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "**This Man receives sinners and eats with them!**" (Luke 15:2). Jesus responded with these parables.

Peter: Let's read the first parable from **Luke 15:4-7**



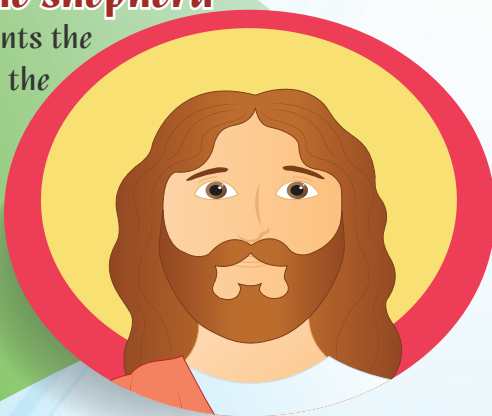


In the parable of the **Lost Sheep**, the Lord Jesus tells us about a sheep that wandered away from the flock and **got lost**. He couldn't find his way back, and **no one was there to help him**. But the loving **shepherd didn't give up**. Even though he had ninety-nine other sheep, he went searching for the one that was lost. The shepherd knew each of his sheep by name, and he loved them all. When he finally found the lost sheep, **he ran to him** and joyfully **carried him on his shoulders** and **brought him home** with the rest of the flock. Then the shepherd called his friends and neighbors to **celebrate the return of his lost sheep**.



The shepherd

represents the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and the lost sheep represents a person who has fallen into sin.



The Lost Sheep

represents the person who has fallen into sin.



The Lost Sheep symbolizes man (**Adam and Eve**) when they sinned against God.



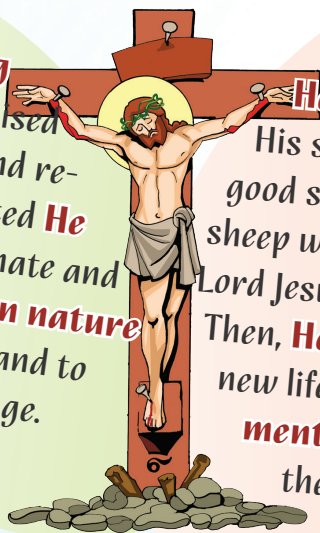
1

When Adam and Eve listened to the serpent (Satan), **disobeyed God's command**, and ate from the forbidden tree, **they sinned**. Because of their sin, all people inherited sin and its consequences. As a result, humanity became separated from God, and was cast out of the Garden of Eden.



2

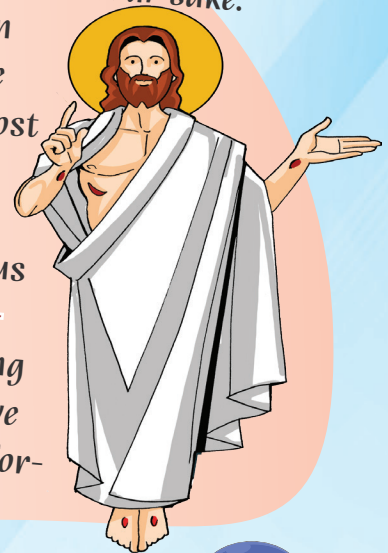
But **our merciful, loving and just shepherd** promised man salvation. And to save and redeem us from the sin we inherited **He came down from heaven** incarnate and became man; **He took our human nature** to bring us back to his embrace and to our original image.



The **Lord Jesus scarified Himself on the Cross** for our sake. **He carried our sins** on

His shoulders, just like the good shepherd carries the lost sheep when he returns. The Lord Jesus died to redeem us. Then, **He rose again**, giving us new life, **lifting the punishment of death**, and opening the gates of heaven so we could live with Him forever.

3



All of heaven rejoices when **a sinner repents and returns to God**, just as Jesus said:





Memory Verse

"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7)



Abigail: The shepherd searching for the lost sheep taught me that **God personally cares for each of us and knows us by name.**

Sherry: Even if we sin and drift away from God just like the lost sheep, He will come looking for us and bring us back into His loving arms.



Peter: The second parable from **Luke 15:8-10** talks about the lost coin.

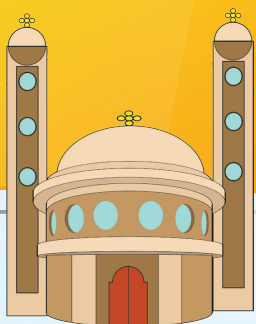


There was a woman who had **ten coins**, but one of them was lost in her house. Because it was so valuable, she **lit a lamp** and began to carefully **sweep the house** to search for the lost coin.

When she found it, she **rejoiced** and called all her friends and neighbors to **celebrate with her**.

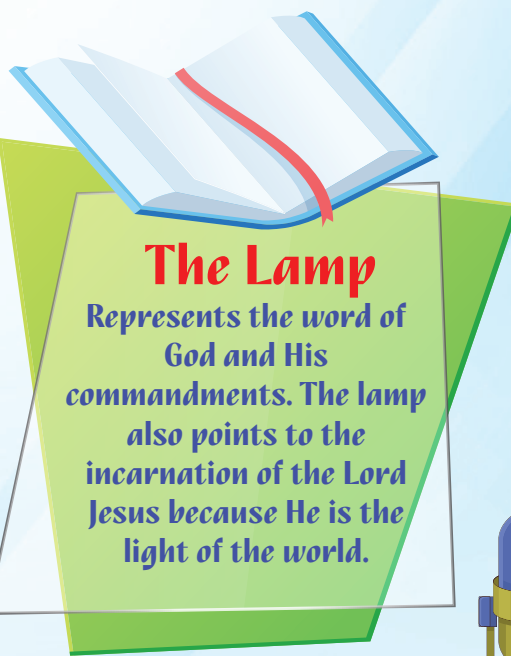


The Woman
Represents the
Church; the
Bride of Christ



The Lamp

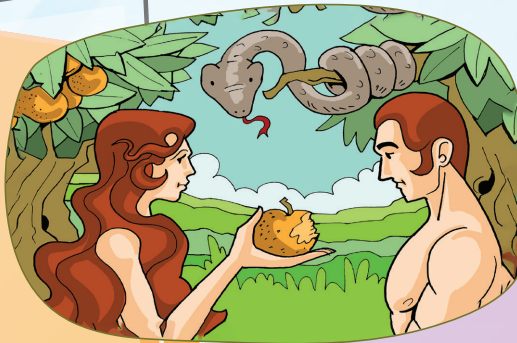
Represents the word of God and His commandments. The lamp also points to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus because He is the light of the world.





The Coin

Represents each one of us. Just as the picture of the king is printed on the coin, similarly, we were created in the image and likeness of God, our Heavenly King .



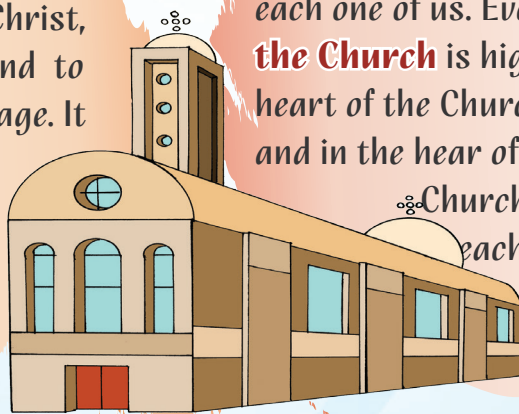
Losing the Coin

When the coin got lost, the picture of the King gets deformed just like when man sinned, the image of God was disfigured (unclear).

When the woman was looking for her lost coin, she did a couple of things to find it...



She **lit the lamp** (which represents the incarnation of Jesus Christ, to bring us back to Him and to bring us back into His image. It also reflects **the role of the Church in our lives**, using the Word of God to bring us away from sin and **lead us to a life of repentance**.)



She **swept the house diligently**, representing the Church's role to seek out each one of us. Every individual **inside the Church** is highly valued in the heart of the Church - in Abouna's heart, and in the hear of all the servants of the Church. The Church cares for each one of us, helping us reach God's light and live in His bosom.





When the woman found the coin, she greatly rejoiced and invited her neighbors to celebrate with her. In the same way, heaven rejoices when a sinner returns to God's bosom.

This parable shows us **the role of the Church in helping each of us regain the image of God in us.** The Church works hard to help us be restored to the likeness of God.



Abigail: The woman's search for the lost coin taught me that **God is always looking for each one of us, even when we may not realize that we are lost**—while still in the house (the Church). Some people focus on activities inside the Church but may neglect their spiritual lives, to practice the means of grace. **God is always searching for us to bring us back to His bosom.**

Sherry: It also taught me the role of the Church in serving each one of us. **Our beautiful Church is always striving to help us return to God's image and grow closer to Him.**

Peter: Exactly. Our goal is to be like Christ, our King, and through the Church, we can restore the image of God in us.

Let's continue with the last parable from **Luke 15:11–32.**

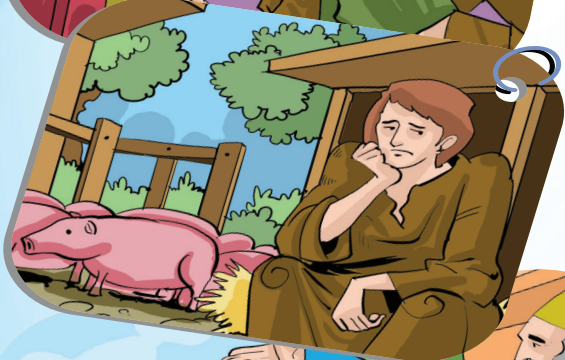


The Parable of the Prodigal Son

This parable is about a father who had two sons. He loved both of them, but the **younger son** responded

to his father's love with rebellion. One day, the younger son asked for his share of the inheritance while his father was still alive. Though this request was quite unusual, **the father** agreed and gave him his inheritance: "**He divided to them his livelihood.**" A few days later, the younger son gathered all his belongings and traveled to a **faraway country** where he **wasted all his money** on worldly pleasures. There was a famine in that country, and he found himself in need.

Desperate for work, he attached himself to a stranger who gave him the job of **feeding pigs**. He was so hungry that he wished he could eat the **pods the pigs were eating**, but no one gave him anything. One day, he came to his senses and thought about **his father's house**, how there was plenty to eat even for the servants. He realized that his life apart from his father was filled with hunger and misery. He said to himself, "**How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!**" He decided to return to his father and say,





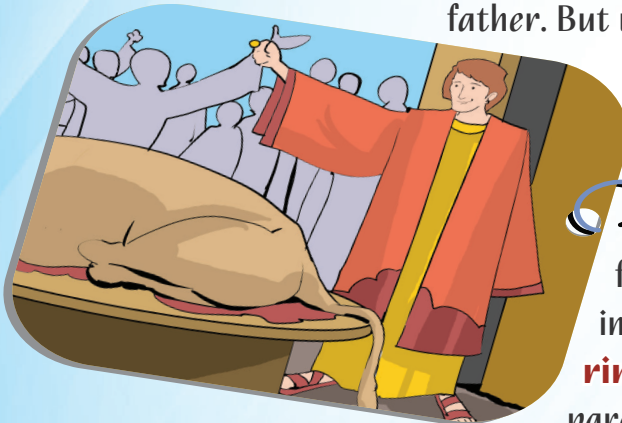
Memory Verse



"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:18)



Abigail: That's very smart! We can call him the **"wise son"** because he thought of returning to his father. But what happened when he returned?



Peter: When he returned, he found his loving and compassionate father waiting for him. As soon as the father saw him from afar, **he ran to him, hugged, and kissed him.** The prodigal son **confessed his mistakes,** but the father, filled with joy, didn't even let him finish his apology. He immediately ordered his servants **to bring the best robe, a ring for his finger, and sandals for his feet.** They also prepared a great feast and killed the fatted calf. Everyone rejoiced greatly.

Now let's take a look at the explanation of this parable:



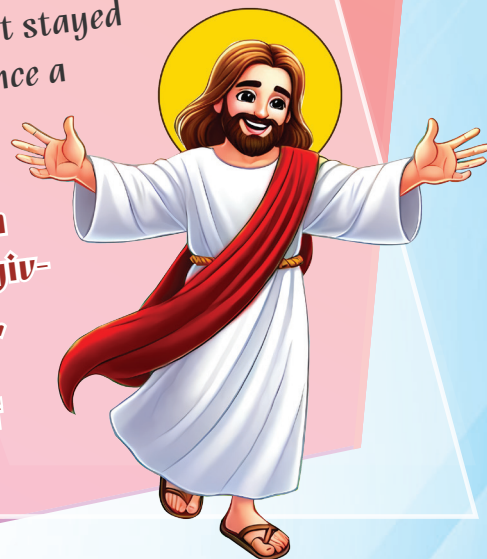
The Character of the Son

represents anyone who has left their Father (**God**) and their Father's house (**the Church**), and fell into sin, and when they realize their bad condition, they return to the Father and his Father accepts him joyfully.



The Character of the Father

The father represents **God**, and how He treats all His children with love, and waits for the return of every lost sinner that stayed astray from Him. Once a sinner returns, he will find **God receiving him with open arms, forgiving all his sins, and granting him plenty of gifts.**



Peter: Now, let's explore the symbolism of the gifts the father gave:

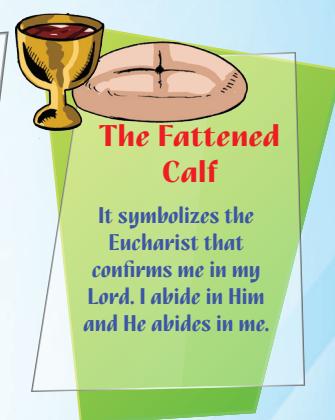
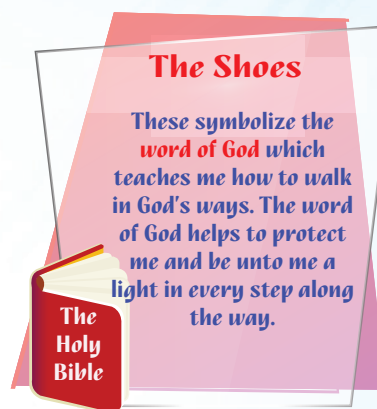
- ✦ **The best robe:** This represents our return to our original state, symbolized in **baptism**.
- ✦ **A ring on his finger:** This symbolizes the **sonship** we are given when we return to God.
- ✦ **Sandals on his feet:** These represent God's teachings and commandments: "**Your word is a lamp to my feet.**"
- ✦ **Eating from the fatted calf:** This represents the **Body and Blood of Christ** in the **sacrament of the Eucharist**.

Our beautiful Church offers us all of these gifts so that we can live joyfully in God's embrace.



Abigail: This parable taught me **how much God's love for each of us is** even when we make mistakes. **God is always waiting for us to return to Him.** As soon as we return to Him, we find Him running toward us with joy, embracing us as His children, and helping us live according to His image.

Sherry: Also, the father's joy in the return of his son and the gifts he gave him make me understand that God loves us and gives us many blessings, which we find in our Coptic Orthodox Church.



Peter: And always remember that **the decision to repent and return to God is a declaration of our love for God.** We say to Him: "Forgive us, our God." Through repentance and confessing our sins, our **Holy God immediately forgives us, takes us in His arms, and places us in His Church.**

Abigail: You are right, Peter. We should accept and forgive Tony even if he was wrong. Please allow me to tell you what happened with our friend Tony...

After Abigail shares the story with the audience...

Sherry: What do you think? Should we call him or send him a text message to check on him?

Tony: Nothing! No calls, no messages... I came to you myself.

Everyone: Tony!



Tony: Honestly, I'm here to apologize. I was wrong in my thinking, and I really made a mess. I went live and was speaking without a clear topic. It was chaos. The discussion was random and not helpful. When I heard your episode, I understood the importance of having a clear goal and message for every episode we present. I'm sorry, and I hope you'll accept my apology and forgive me.

Peter: I was sure you'd come back.

Tony: I really realized I was wrong. I've learned from my mistake. I'm sorry.

Peter: Before we finish our episode, we want you to know that Christ loves you and always waits for you to come back to Him. Goodbye for now, see you in a new episode of "**Castagro.**"



Continue in the things which you have learned (2 Timothy 3:14)



In a new episode of “**Castagro**,” we started with a strange apology. During the episode, we learned the reason for the apology.

Sherry: We apologize for the problems that happened in the last episode. We found out that the issue was with the electricity connections; they weren’t stable, so the devices turned off.

Peter: Because of that, we decided that today’s topic would be about “**How to Stay Firm**.” Just as connections need to be stable for a signal to be clear, our spiritual lives must be firm in the true source.

Abigail: And because we are God’s children, **we should love Him with all our hearts and remain firm in Him**, as the Bible tells us.



Memory Verse

“Whoever keeps His commandments remains in Him, and He in them. And by this, we know that He remains in us” (1 John 3:24).





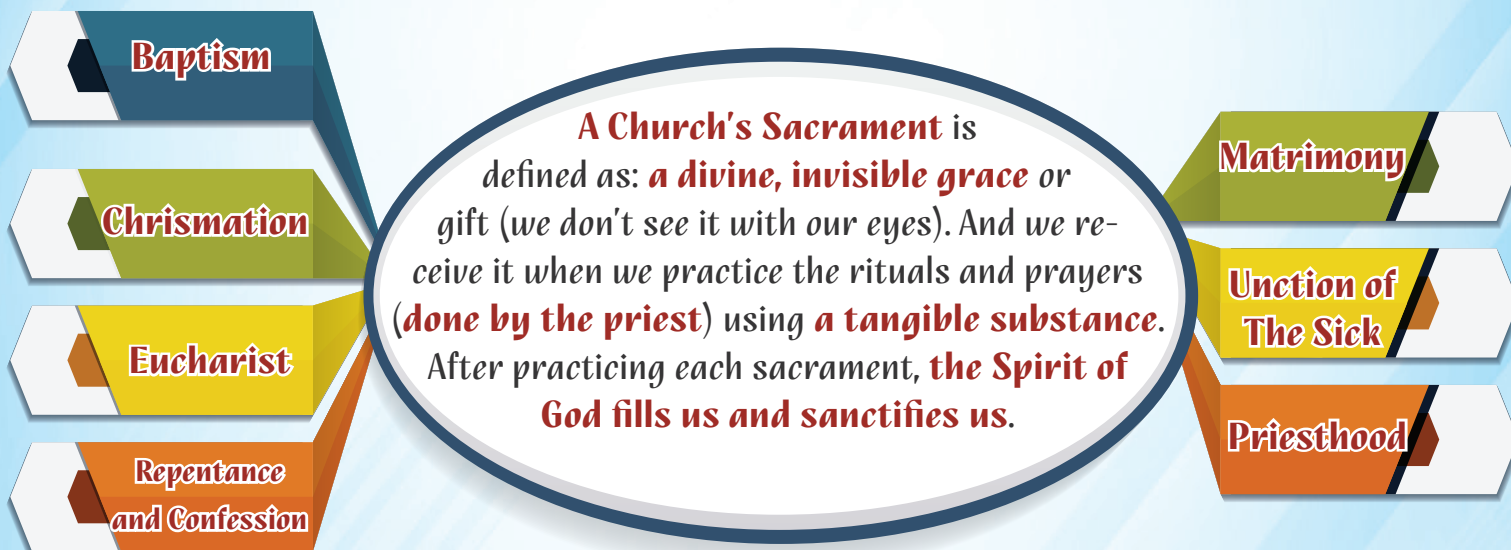
This means we abide in God, and He abides in us through:

1. Keeping the commandments: **"If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love" (John 15:10)**

2. The work of the Holy Spirit in us through participating in the church's sacraments



Sherry: For sure, we all know the sacraments of our church. There are seven sacraments, and they are:



Peter: And that's what today's episode is about. We'll talk to you about each sacrament of our church and how the Spirit of God gives us many blessings when we practice each one.





The Sacrament of Baptism

... is a holy and sacred. Through baptism, we are born again by being baptized in water three times in the name of the Holy Trinity. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted this sacrament when He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. And the Lord Jesus told His disciples to practice this sacrament after His resurrection, saying:



Memory Verse

**"Go therefore and make disciples of
all the nations, baptizing them in the
name of the Father and of the Son and
of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).**



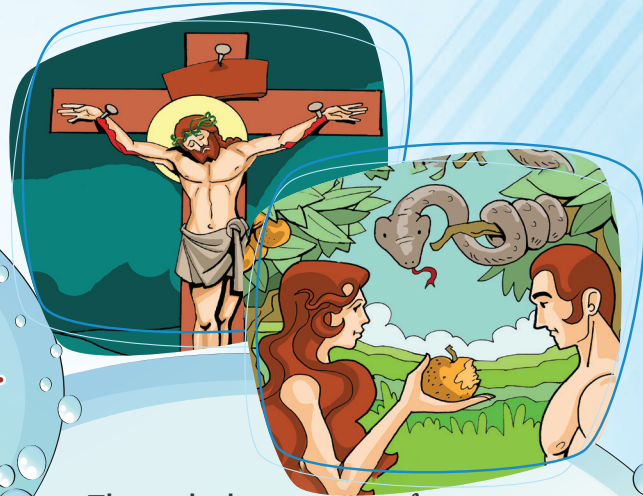
The Sacrament of Baptism is the **door** through which the believer enters the church, and without it, one cannot practice the other sacraments. It is one of the **essential sacraments for salvation**.

Abigail: Through baptism, the Holy Spirit grants us many blessings:



1. Salvation

We receive salvation from the sin which we inherited from Adam and Eve's disobedience. They sinned by listening to the serpent and eating from the tree, **which caused all of us to fall into sin, and all of humanity fell with them.** We were all in Adam (the head of creation) when he sinned, and the punishment of sin affected all people born from Adam. **All of humanity inherited the sin and the punishment and consequences of sin.**



Through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus on the cross, He took away our sin. **Through baptism, we declare that we accept His redemption of our sins and our inherited original sin** is forgiven. The sentence of death (which was given to Adam and Eve and all their descendants) **is lifted from us, and our nature, which was corrupted by the sin which we inherited, is renewed.**

2. Sonship

Through baptism, we become **children of God**. When a child is born, he is a child of Adam. But when they are baptized, **he becomes a child of God**. That's why our teacher, the Apostle Paul, said: **"For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27).** To "clothe yourselves with Christ" means that we become **like God, in His image, and Christ lives in us**



3. Members in the Body of Christ

Through baptism, we become **members of the Body of Christ**, which is the Church, and Christ is the head of this body. Therefore, it is the right of everyone who has been baptized **to partake of the Body and Blood of our Lord and to practice the other sacraments.**

4. The Way to Heaven

Through baptism, the **path to the Kingdom of Heaven is opened for us**, and we become members of Christ's Body. As our Lord told us: **"Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, they cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5).**



(Myron) oil 36 times.

Through the Sacrament of Chrismation, we get so many blessings...



2. Enlightenment

When the Holy Spirit dwells in us, He enlightens us. **He teaches us everything. “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things” (1 John 2:20).**

When we are anointed with the Holy Chrismation Oil on our body, **our senses, our emotions, our inner soul, our actions, and our behavior are sanctified (made holy)**. Just as altar vessels are dedicated to the altar (they cannot be used for anything else) by anointing them with Holy Chrismation Oil, those who are baptized are also anointed with Chrismation Oil to be set apart and devoted to God. **“For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1 Corinthians 3:17).**

That is a good question and helpful for all our audience. Our beautiful church gave us the solution through the **Sacrament of Repentance and Confession.**





The Sacrament of Repentance and Confession

This is a **holy sacrament** that the Lord Jesus Himself **established** when He told His disciples, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). After His resurrection, He also said, "**If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained**" (John 20:23). In this sacrament, God

forgives the sins we have committed if we truly repent and confess them to Him in the presence of Abouna, the priest. Abouna then gives us **absolution**, saying, "The Lord forgives you." This means that the priest is announcing God's forgiveness for our sins, using the authority that the Lord Jesus gave to the priest. The priest places the cross over the person's head while reading the absolution because The Lord Jesus is the one who carries our sins and removes them with His blood that was shed on the cross.



Having said that, we can conclude...



True Repentance



Confession and receiving
absolution (from the priest)



Forgiveness of
sins



Continue in the things which you have learned (2 Timothy 3:14)



When we practice the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession, we get many blessings...



1. We return back to God's Bosom

We all know that every sin happens because of a person's choice and it separates us from God.

If we continue in our sins, we can face eternal death.

But once we offer repentance, and practice the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession,

We return back to God's open Bosom for us all the times.

2. He calls each one of us saying "And the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37).

Repentance means turning back to God, changing direction,

and instead of walking in the wrong path, I walk in the right path as the verse says;

"Return to Me, and I will return to you" (Malachi 3:7) Just like the story of the Prodigal Son, when he returned to his father,

his father welcomed him with joy, saying: "For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24). True repentance brings us back to God's love



3. Forgiveness of Sin

The Holy Spirit takes away our sins and places them on the Lord Jesus,

, the Lamb of God who carries the sins of the world.

Through His precious Blood, which was shed on the cross, we receive forgiveness.





Memory Verse

**"If we confess our sins, He is faithful
and just to forgive us our sins and to
cleans us from all unrighteousness"**
(1 John 1:9)



This is why the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession is **essential for our salvation**.

Peter: The fourth sacrament is the **Sacrament of the Eucharist**, and it is called "**the sacrament of sacraments**." It is also called the "**Sacrament of Thanksgiving**" or "**the Sacrament of Communion**."

The Sacrament of the Eucharist

In this sacrament, we **abide in our lord Jesus** when we partake of **His Holy Body and His Precious Blood**.

The Lord Jesus Himself instituted this sacrament on **Holy Thursday** when He was with His disciples **in the Upper Room** in Saint Mary's house; the mother of Saint Mark.



Before the Lord Jesus instituted the Eucharist, **He washed His disciples' feet** to teach them that before receiving the Eucharist, **they must offer repentance**.



Continue in the things which you have learned (2 Timothy 3:14)



Then He took the **bread**, blessed it, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples to eat, saying, **"Take, eat, this is My Body"** (Matthew 26:26). That is why we call it the **"Sacrament of Thanksgiving"**. After that, He took **the cup with wine mixed with water**, gave thanks, gave it to the disciples to drink, and said, **"Drink from it, all of you, for this is My Blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"** (Matthew 26:27-28).

In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, **the Holy Spirit** comes during the Divine Liturgy to...

1. Transform the bread and wine (grape juice) into the **Body and Blood** of the Lord.

2. **Sanctify** the believers who are attending in the church, and **prepare them for Holy Communion**.



When we partake of the Holy Eucharist, we obtain many blessings:

1. Forgiveness of Our Sins

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

Memory Verse

2. Abiding in Christ

"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56).



3. Oneness of Heart between the Believers

"For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

The Pledge of Eternal Life

"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54).

Through the Holy Eucharist, our sins are forgiven, we abide and unite with Christ, we grow closer as believers, and we receive the promise of eternal life. That is why **the Sacrament of the Eucharist is essential for salvation**.





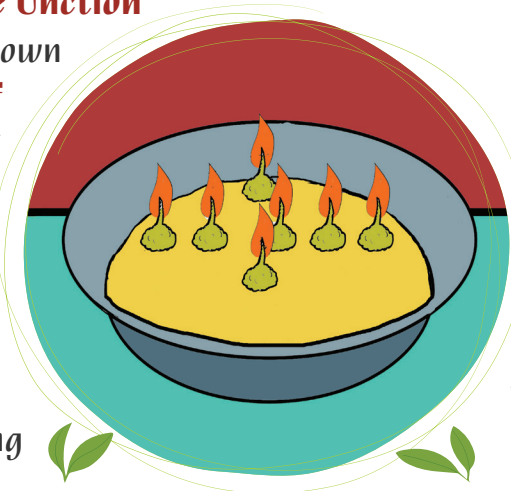
Abigail: The fifth sacrament of our Church's seven sacraments is the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick.

The Sacrament of Unction of the Sick

Quandeel (the Lantern). This was the name of this sacrament in the early days of Christianity when they filled the lantern with oil that had **7 wicks**. They would light one wick at the beginning of each prayer they prayed. Then the lantern was replaced with a bowl of oil that had 7 cotton wicks. One wick is lit at the beginning of each prayer of the



The Sacrament of **the Unction of the Sick** is also known as the **Sacrament of**



seven prayers of the Unction of the sick. These 7 wicks are placed in the bowl on the shape of the Cross. At the end of the seven prayers, the Holy Spirit comes upon the oil and sanctifies it to become **a healer of the sicknesses of our souls, bodies and spirits**, not only the bodily sicknesses. In order to get the benefits of the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick, **the sick person should confess his sins before getting the sacrament followed by the partaking of Holy Eucharist.**

Sherry: And of course this does not mean that we practice the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick and ignore seeking medical help.

Continue in the things which you have learned (2 Timothy 3:14)

There is absolutely **no problem with calling the doctor**. The doctor treats the sickness and prescribes the medicine, but **the Lord is the One who heals**. God might allow healing through practicing the Sacrament and might not. However, if God did not grant healing, He will give the sick person an ability to endure the pain with His many blessings. However, more important than the bodily healing, is that **God grants comfort, joy and peace** through the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick. (healing for the soul, body, and spirit)

The Lord Jesus Himself instituted the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick. He sent His disciples to serve in this way when He commanded them saying: **"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers" (Matthew 10:8)**. The disciples did exactly as the Lord Jesus commanded them and practiced the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick. The Holy Bible tells us

"... they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them." (Mark 6:13).

Our Teacher, Saint James commanded us saying: **"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." (James 5:14,15)**



Tony: The sixth sacrament of our Church is **the Holy Sacrament of Marriage** (also called **the Sacrament of Crowning**).



The Sacrament of the Holy Matrimony

Through the Sacrament of the Matrimony, **a man and a woman** are united

in holy unity through the **Holy Spirit by the hand of the priest.**

During the Sacrament of Matrimony, the Holy Spirit unites the bride and groom into one body; they are no longer two. Christian marriage is a relationship between 3; **God, the groom, and the bride**

The descent of the Holy Spirit on the bride and the groom happens at the time when Abouna places the crowns on them. That is why we call this sacrament "**The Sacrament of Crowning**". Meanwhile, Abouna does **the Sign of the Cross** and says,

1. **"Crown them with glory and honor, O Father. Amen."**
2. **"Bless them, O Only Begotten Son. Amen."**
3. **"Sanctify them, O Holy Spirit. Amen."**

At that moment, the Holy Spirit descends on the bride and the groom and blesses their marriage and their unity in one body and one heart. The Holy Spirit makes their home a holy church for God.

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke about this sacrament and said: **'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'**? So then, they are no longer two but **one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man**

separate." (Matthew 19:5-6). In the same way, the Lord Jesus blessed **the Wedding at Cana of Galilee** by His presence, with His Mother Saint Mary and His disciples as witnesses.



Peter: The seventh sacrament is the Sacrament of Priesthood:



The Sacrament of Priesthood

In the Sacrament of Priesthood, the **Holy Spirit** comes upon the person chosen to become a priest. This happens when **the bishop lays his hands on him during the ordination liturgy**. At that moment, he receives the grace of priesthood and its gifts, such as **the authority to bind and loosen sins**, the **gift of teaching**, and the gift of **spiritual fatherhood**. He becomes a “**Stewart of the Sacraments of God**” and is the only one who **can perform all other 6 sacraments**. And that is exactly what the Lord Jesus told His disciples when He gave them the authority to bind and loosen sins: “**Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**” (Matthew 18:18). When He gave them the gift of teaching, He said “**Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**” Amen” (Matthew 28:19–20)



The Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted the Sacrament of Priesthood when He chose His 12 disciples and called them for this service.: “**He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:**” (Luke 6:13)

Abigail: Truly, everyone who knows the many blessings we receive from the sacraments of our Church will always feel happy and blessed by our beautiful Church and will say...



"I love you, my Church because through baptism, I am saved from original sin—the sin of Adam and Eve."



"I love you, my Church because through Chrismation you strengthen me in faith when the priest anoints me 36 times with the Holy Myron."



"I love you, my Church because through Repentance and Confession you welcome me with open arms when I return to God's arms."



"I love you, my Church because through the Holy Eucharist you offer me the Body and Blood of Christ, so I can be nourished spiritually and abide in Him and Him in me."



"I love you, my Church because through the Unction of the Sick you provide healing to my sicknesses."



"I love you, my Church because through the Sacrament of Matrimony, God united my mom and dad as one, making our home a sacred church."





*"I love you, my
Church because
through the Priest-
hood you appoint a
spiritual father to
care for me, guide me,
and serve me with
love and dedication."*



Sherry: And with that, we've finished talking about the seven sacraments of our Church. Before we end our show on "How to Stay Firm," we want to send a message to all our followers: "Every Christian who practices the sacraments of our Church should be like a mirror, reflecting God's light. When people see us, we should glorify God's name, and each one of our lives should be a witness to God.. To stay strong, we must abide in Christ, and He will abide in us."

This was "the Castagro" program... Stay strong and stay connected to the source until the end!



Before the start of the next "Castagro," there's a team meeting to prepare the new episode...

Peter: Guys, there's a big problem!

Sherry: What's wrong, Peter? Why do you look upset?

Peter: All the episodes we've recorded before are gone... the hard drive has a problem.

Tony: What?! Does that mean all our work is lost?! And there's no backup?

Abigail: And there's no copy saved anywhere else? I don't know what we're going to do!

Tony: Does this mean we might have to re-record all the episodes from the beginning?!

Peter: I'm sorry... it's my fault.

Sherry: Let's think positively so we can find a solution.

Tony: Does this mean that we have to record all episodes again?

Peter: No way... that will take us so much time! We won't be able to get the same quality and details we had before.

Sherry: I am sure there are apps that can recover lost data from the hard drive... I can try them, and we might recover part of the episodes.

Abigail: And we also have the scripts (episode texts) that we can use.

Sherry: And we can collect parts of the episodes from the promo ads we made.





Then Sherry started recovering the data using some recovering apps, and Abigail brought the script she had, while Tony began collecting promos from each episode. They started gathering everything on a new hard drive that Peter bought.

Peter: This is a wonderful idea... you know, collecting all the data reminds me of a hero from our Holy Bible... there were many heroes in the Bible who stayed strong in their faith and preserved it for us.

Sherry: I wonder who that hero is?

Peter: Ezra the Priest and Scribe.

Tony: Why did you call him a hero?

Abigail: A hero for sure! What do you think about doing today's episode about him? We can talk about "**Ezra's Character**" to show how when the foundation is strong, we can rebuild no matter what the circumstances are. We can title this episode "**The Solid Foundation**".

All: Agreed!

Peter: Welcome to all our friends with a new episode of your show, "Castagro."

Abigail: Today's episode is titled "**A Solid Foundation**," and we'll talk about:



Peter: Ezra was a servant who remained true to everything he had learned. He preserved what he learned and taught it to his people **with great faithfulness**. Even when he was in a foreign land, **Ezra the Priest and Scribe** kept his dedication. But before I talk more about him, let me explain the situation of the people at that time.

A long time ago, **God's people (the Israelites)** were united as one nation, but over time, the kingdom split into **two kingdoms**



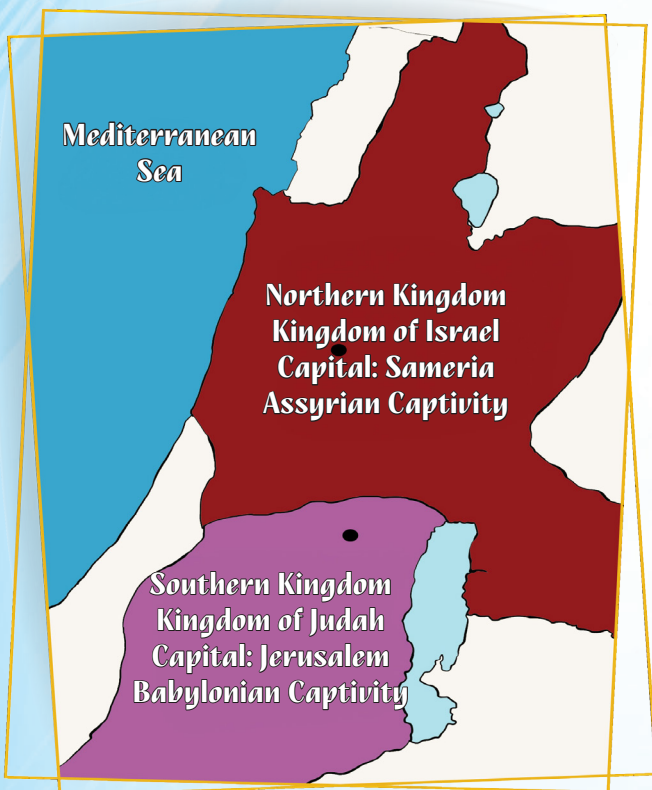


The southern kingdom was **the Kingdom of Judah**, with its capital in **Jerusalem**. It was taken captive by the Babylonians (**Babylonian exile**).

The Southern Kingdom

The Northern Kingdom

The northern kingdom was **the Kingdom of Israel**, with its capital in **Samaria**. It was taken captive by the Assyrians (**Assyrian exile**).



Sherry: What does "exile" mean?

Abigail: An **exiile**" means when a king and his army invade and take all the wealth from the land of another country and take the people of the land captive, away from therhome country to enslave them. They take the men, young people, and skilled workers to use them in the country of the enemy. God allowed His people to be taken captives to the land of exile because **they turned away from Him, broke His commandments, and sinned against Him by worshiping idols**. And indeed, both kingdoms were taken into exile. The northern kingdom; **the Kingdom of Israel, was taken first by the Assyrians to the Assyrian Exile**, and later the Babylonians took the southern kingdom, the **Kingdom of Judah to the Babylonian Exile**.



Continue in the things which you have learned (2 Timothy 3:14)

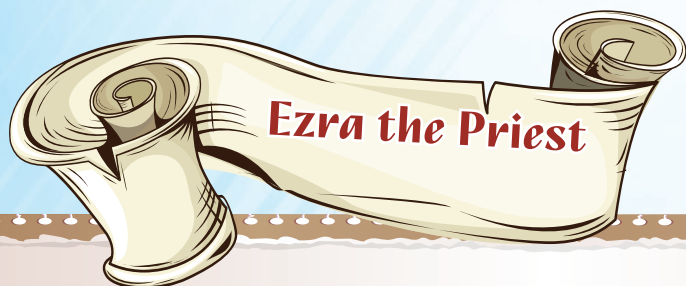


Abigail: After some time in Babylonian captivity, a stronger kingdom appeared—the **Persian Empire**. The Persian king, **Cyrus**, allowed the Israelites to return to **their homeland, Jerusalem**. And just as God had promised, they started to return home **after 70 years of captivity in three stages**.

Sherry: Abigail, can you tell us about these three stages?

Group	Leader	Time	Important Work
First	Zerubbabel	Returned after 70 years from the exile.	Focused on rebuilding the Temple of God.
Second	Ezra	Returned about 80 years after the return of the first group.	Focused on teaching and following God's laws.
Third	Nehemiah	Returned about 13 years after the return of the second group	Focused on rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Abigail: Now, let's talk about the hero of our story: Ezra the Priest, the Scribe, and the Faithful and excellent leader...



We call him **Ezra**, the **Priest** because he is from the **tribe of Levi**, the tribe of priests.

But since the Israelites were in exile, he was not able to serve as a **priest outside of Jerusalem** according to God's law.





Ezra was also called **the scribe**. In those days, **scribes copied and studied God's law**.



Ezra **copied the holy books** since there was no printing press back then. He always kept God's commandments between his eyes and was eager to live by it. He taught God's commandments to the people. The Bible said about Ezra: "**For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.**" (Ezra 7:10)

Peter: Ezra also collected and organized the books of the Old Testament with great care. He even wrote the **Book of Ezra**, which tells the story of the Israelites returning from exile.

 The **first group** to return is recorded in **Ezra 1-6**.

 The **second group** is described in **Ezra 7-10**.

Ezra **focused his attention on the Word of God**. He was very skillful, and the Bible said about him: "**he was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses**" (Ezra 7:6). This meant that Ezra was not just a reader of the Law but also understood the commandment of God. He always read and searched for it. This is the reason why we call him **Ezra the Scribe**.

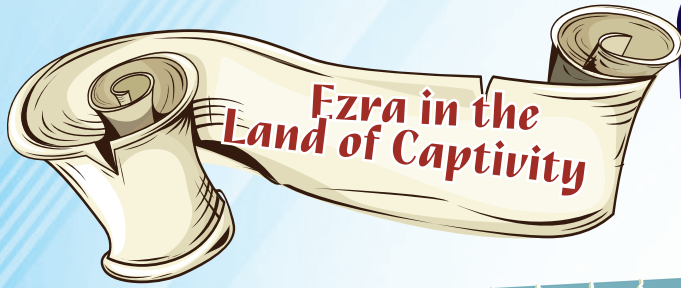


Continue in the things which you have learned (2 Timothy 3:14)






Tony: We now know why Ezra was called **a Priest and a Scribe**. But why was he also called **a faithful servant** and **an outstanding leader**?

Abigail: Ezra served and led his people at all times—**during captivity**, when **they returned home**, and even **after they settled back in Jerusalem**.



While in Babylon, **Ezra worked as an official and advisor to King Artaxerxes** the Persian king. He used his knowledge and skill to **copy and scribe God's laws**, keep them in his heart and teach them to the people. Since Ezra was faithful in the small things, God gave him even greater responsibilities. The king trusted him and showed him great kindness.



-  King Artaxerxes appointed Ezra as **the leader of all Israelites** who wanted to return to Jerusalem.
-  King Artaxerxes **gave him silver, gold, and supplies to help rebuild the temple** and continue worship there.
-  And he also gave him **full authority to manage everything** because **he trusted his wisdom**. King Artaxerxes allowed Ezra to **take whatever he needed from the king's storehouses** and even **appoint or remove leaders and judges** to help him govern the people.

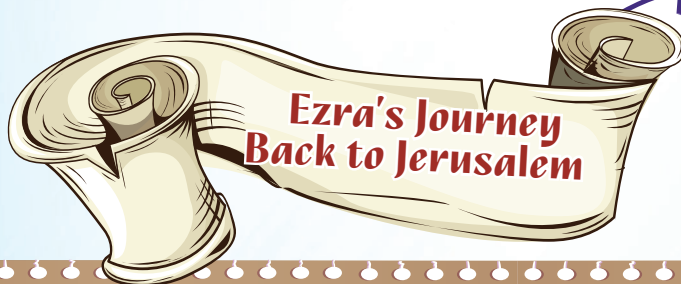


Sherry: Wow! King Artaxerxes did all that for Ezra and his people?!

Abigail: Yes! Ezra was always faithful in teaching God's ways to the people as well as in his job in the palace. However, Ezra never gave himself credit for his success. **He knew it was God's help that gave him prosperity**, not just his own efforts. So, **he prayed, thanked, and praised God for everything** (Ezra 7:27–28).

Sherry: So, you're saying Ezra left his high-ranking job and his position of honor in Persia just to return to Jerusalem? I believe Jerusalem was in ruins, surrounded by enemies at that time. **Why would he give up everything and risk his life like that?!**

Peter: Good question, Sherry. **Ezra was willing to give up anything to save his people and bring them back to their homeland.** He didn't care about danger. His only goal was to help his people return home. And his actions prove this!



Ezra led about **8,000 people** back to Jerusalem. Since he knew the difficulties they would face, he spent three days thinking and observing his people. **Ezra noticed that none of the Levites (temple workers) joined the group**, so he invited them to go back to Jerusalem, and **God moved their hearts to join him.**

Ezra also asked the people **to pray and fast before the journey**, so God would protect them. They were traveling through dangerous desert lands where robbers and thieves could attack them. But Ezra didn't ask the king for guards—he fully trusted that God would protect them. And indeed, the people fasted and prayed and **the Lord answered their prayers** as the Bible Says:





Memory Verse

"So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer." (Ezra 8:23)



Ezra faithfully led his people for about **four months** in the desert, and God kept them safe until they finally **reached Jerusalem.**

Just as Ezra **started the journey with fasting and prayer**, as soon as he and his people arrived in Jerusalem, **they offered God sacrifices of thanksgiving** for three days for protecting them during the journey. They also **offered sacrifices to ask for God's mercy and forgiveness** of their sins (Ezra 8:35). After that, Ezra completed his service and delivered the king's messages to the leaders in Jerusalem to help them.

Sherry: The journey back from exile was really difficult! Now I understand why you say **Ezra was a faithful servant and leader** for his people during the captivity.

Abigail: Yes, and not just during the exile, but **even after they returned back home to Jerusalem.**





Months later and after settling in Jerusalem, the leaders of the people came to Ezra with a serious problem. They told him that many Israelites had **married women from foreign nations who worshiped idols**. They did not follow God's way since this was against God's command, and He had warned them not to do this. Since Ezra was a faithful servant and leader, **he cared deeply about his people following God's commandments**. Even though he had not committed this mistake himself, he considered himself one of the sinners. Ezra prayed, saying: "And I said: **'O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens.'**" (Ezra 9:6)



Ezra continued in fasting and praying before God, and soon, all the people gathered around him. **He urged them to confess their sins, repent, and separate from the foreign women they had married**. The people listened to Ezra and said: "Yes! As you have said, so we must do" (Ezra 10:12). Because of Ezra's prayers, fasting, tears, and love for his people, the people repented and returned to God. Ezra stayed in Jerusalem, and during that time, he worked hard to **gather and organize the books of the Old Testament**. Later, Nehemiah arrived with the third group of people that came back from the exile and began rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The people then came to Ezra asking him to read the Book of the Law to them. **Ezra stood before the people and read the Book of God's laws**.

And that is the story of Ezra, the great servant and leader.

Continue in the things which you have learned (2 Timothy 3:14)



Sherry: Honestly, talking about Ezra and everything he did, like collecting the Books of the Law and reading them to the people, made me thank God for the blessing of having copies of the Holy Bible at our fingertips.

Abigail: You're right, Sherry. We often don't realize the great blessing we have—that we can read the Bible anytime and interpret its verses as we wish.

Tony: Be careful, Abigail, you can't just interpret the Bible's verses freely however you like.

Sherry: Why not, Tony? Everyone should be able to interpret the Bible's verses however they understand them.

Peter: No, Sherry, that's not right. We have great fathers in our Church who interpreted the Bible correctly. We should always refer back to them. However, freedom in interpretation can cause serious problems and can lead to heresy.

Abigail: That is overreacting! Not to that extent, Peter!

Tony: Peter is right, Abigail. And this has happened before. Do you remember Arius and the wrong interpretation he made of certain Bible verses?

Sherry: Guys, this would make a great topic for a new episode. Don't you think? Let's start recording the episode.

Tony: Dear friends, welcome to another episode of our podcast "Castagro." Today's episode is about...





The Council of Nicaea (325 AD)

Our Coptic Church has stood out from the early Christian centuries because of her strong commitment to the upright faith and her defense of the true doctrine and teachings passed down from the holy fathers. To preserve the upright faith until today, the fathers gave up their lives. The Church has followed the example of the apostles by **holding councils** whenever a strange teaching appeared, as it did with the **heresy of Arius**. The **first ecumenical council** in history was held to discuss and respond to this heresy.



Sherry: But what does “Ecumenical Council” mean? And what are its rules?

Tony: It means a meeting of church leaders and teachers from all over the world to discuss an issue concerning the Christian faith. **There are conditions for the ecumenical councils:**

- 1** The reason must be to discuss strange teachings that can cause divisions in the Church worldwide.
- 2** Must be called by the emperor
- 3** Representatives from all the churches in the world must be given a chance to attend the council.
- 4** The Ecumenical Council will have to decide on important issues that were never discussed before.



Let's get to know the first ecumenical council and what was discussed.

The first ecumenical council was "**The Council of Nicaea.**" It was convened to discuss the teachings of Arius, which went **against the Church's sound faith.**

But who was Arius? And what were his strange teachings?

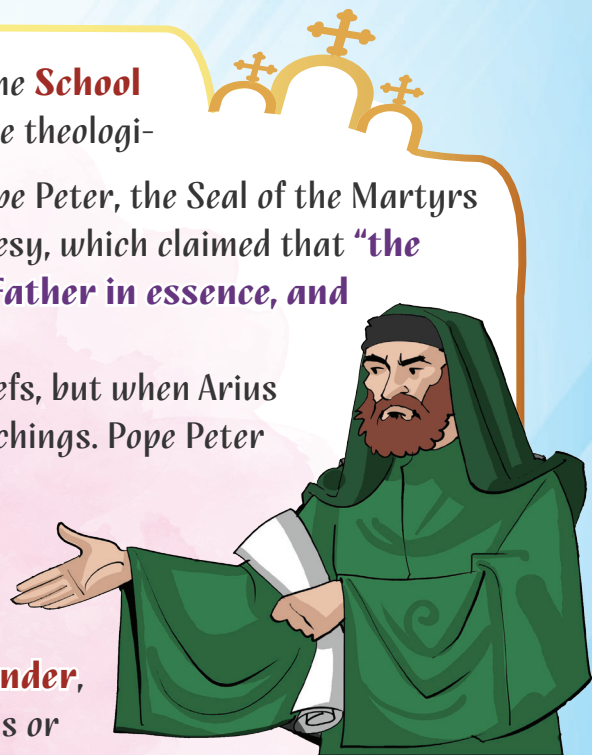
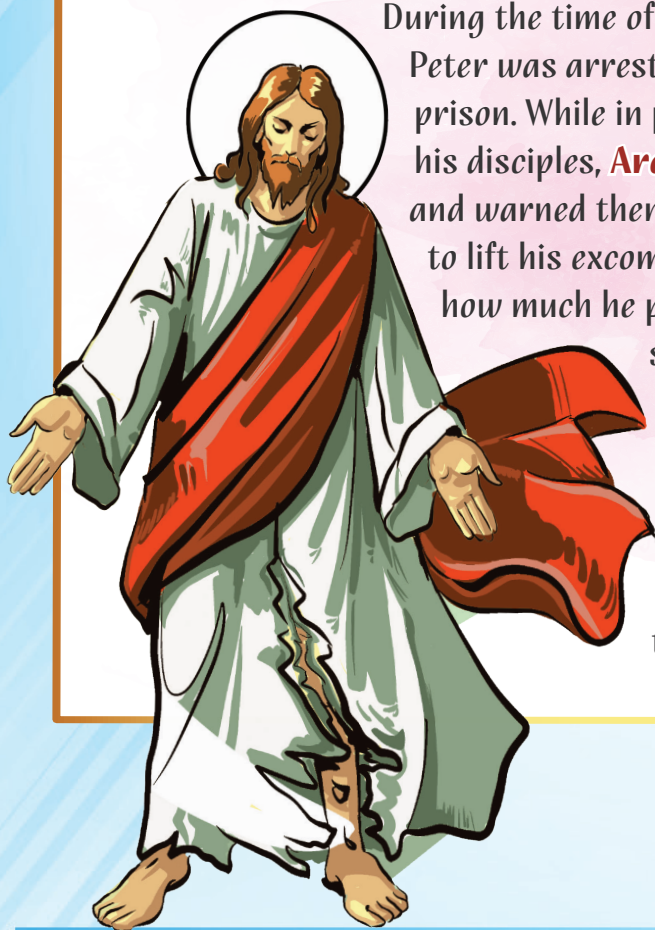
Arius was born in **Libya**. He studied many sciences at the **School of Antioch**. He then traveled to Alexandria and joined the theological school there, where he was ordained as a deacon by Pope Peter, the Seal of the Martyrs (the 17th pope of Alexandria). Arius began teaching his heresy, which claimed that "**the Lord Jesus Christ was created, and not equal to the Father in essence, and not eternal.**"

Pope Peter tried to convince Arius to correct his false beliefs, but when Arius refused, the Pope excommunicated him and banned his teachings. Pope Peter prevented him from practicing deaconship and teaching.

During the time of persecution, Pope Peter was arrested and put in prison. While in prison, he called his disciples, **Archelaus and Alexander**, and warned them not to accept Arius or to lift his excommunication, no matter

how much he pretended to repent. He told them that he had a vision while in prison, in which he saw the **Lord Jesus Christ standing in a torn garment**. The Pope asked, "Who tore Your garment, my Lord?" Christ answered, "**Arius.**"

After **Pope Peter was martyred**, his disciple **Archelaus** became the 18th Pope of Alexandria in the year 312 AD.





Arius pretended that he had changed his false beliefs, and **Pope Achillas believed him**. So, he forgave Arius and made him a priest, even though Pope Peter had previously excommunicated him. Six months later, Pope Achillas passed away, and his friend **Alexander became the 19th** Pope of Alexandria. Pope Alexander strongly opposed Arius and his false teachings.

Sherry: Can you tell me what Pope Alexander did to stop Arius' false teachings?

Peter: Pope Alexander was **one of the greatest theologians in our church's history**. He completely rejected Arius' strange beliefs.

For several years, Pope Alexander tried to explain the true faith to the people. He also tried to convince Arius in a firm, yet gentle way through discussions and letters, showing how his ideas were wrong.

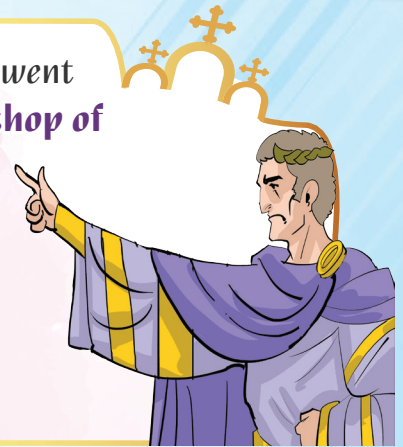
Unfortunately, Arius and his followers refused to change their beliefs. Pope Alexander called for a **local church council in Alexandria** in the year 321AD. The Pope met with bishops from **Egypt, Libya**, to resolve the problem and make sure Arius stopped his wrong teachings. The council, led by Pope Alexander, decided to **remove Arius from his position as a priest**. They also banned all of his followers from teaching the people his false teachings.

Sherry: Pope Alexander was truly a great saint! I really admire his strong stand in defending the true faith and fighting against false teachings with all his strength.





Peter: Let's continue. After being excommunicated, Arius left Egypt and went to Palestine and Asia Minor. There, he asked his friend, **Eusebius the bishop of Nicomedia** to help him spread his false teachings to the people of these countries. Eventually, a word came to **Emperor Constantine the Great**. Emperor Constantine was concerned that the tension caused by Arius would divide the empire and cause war. The Emperor called for an Ecumenical Council in the City of **Nicaea** to resolve the problem and address some other issues.



In **325 AD**, **318 bishops** from around the world met in Nicaea to attend the council. The Council lasted for **three months**. **Pope Alexander** attended with his deacon, **Athanasius**, who was his personal secretary. Arius and his followers, including **Eusebius of Nicomedia**, along with some philosophers, were also present. The emperor gave a speech, and then the discussions started.



Arius stood up to explain his heresy and also sang some of his "**Thalia**" which were songs he used to teach his heresy. He had taught his followers to sing, making his teachings easy to remember. Everyone attending the Council became very angry because of Arius's wrong beliefs.



When **Arius** tried to defend his heresy, wrongly explaining some verses from the Holy Bible, **Athanasius** faced him and proved him wrong. **Athanasius gave strong evidence from the Bible that proved Arius wrong**. Everyone was proud of him because Athanasius was a smart and skilled speaker.



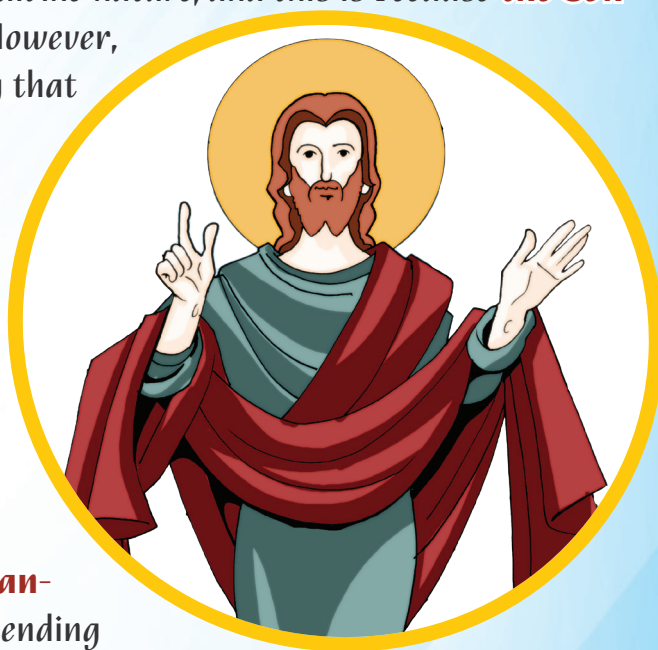
Sherry: Can you give an example of what **Arius** used to say? And how did **the hero Athanasius** respond?



Tony: For example, “**For My Father is greater than I**” (John 14:28). Arius used this verse to support his idea. Arius thought this verse meant that the Father was greater in nature than the Son. Arius used this verse to support his false teaching.

Sherry: But that is a wrong explanation of this verse!

PETER: However, this is an erroneous (wrong) interpretation of the verse, because this verse refers to the comparison between the state of the incarnation and the state of what is before the incarnation. Christ the Lord was speaking here **not** about his divine nature, and this is because **the Son is equal to the Father in essence** (the divine nature). However, He was speaking about His incarnation with the meaning that **God the Word descended from His glory and was incarnate and became man to fulfill our salvation** “He emptied himself, and took the form of a servant” (Phil 2:7). That means, **He took human flesh and became a human, but without the ancestral original sin** (the sin of Adam and Eve), since He is the Holy One Who does not know sin).



Tony: You are right! Arius was interpreting the verses incorrectly. But **Athanasius explained the correct meaning of these verses** to him and to everyone who was attending the council. In addition, **Athanasius used other Bible verses** to clarify the truth and prove the upright faith. Let me explain. Athanasius used these verses to confirm that...

... “... We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not created, of one essence with the Father...”



Memory
Verse



"He who has seen Me
has seen the Father;
so how can you say,
'Show us the Father'?
(John 14:9)



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



These verses confirm the Son is equal to the
Father in essence.

Memory
Verse



This verse con-
firms that the Son
is eternal with the
Father and that the
Son is begotten of
the Father and not
a created being.

"In the beginning was
the Word, and the Word
was with God, and the
Word was God." (John 1:1)



Additionally, Saint Athanasius used examples to help explain the true doctrine and the upright faith. *(Please note that the following example will help us understand the Holy Trinity. However, this example does not accurately represent the nature of God.)*



The Sun



The **sun** is one, but has a **disk, light, and heat**. All three are different but belong to the same sun.

☞ The **disk**: is the **source** and out of it comes light and heat.

☞ The **light**: shines **from the disk** and brightens the world.

☞ The **heat**: comes **from the disk** and gives warmth.

Therefore, the **disk of the sun is one** and out of it proceed light and heat. The disk of the sun, its light and heat are all one sun. This shows that **God is one God with three hypostases**.

It had **never happened** that the sun existed without its light or its heat. The disk of the sun, its light, and its heat always existed together and were never separated.

This means that the **Father never existed without the Son or the Holy Spirit**. All three hypostasis existed together.

The **disk of the sun is different** than the light and the heat. But they all are one sun.

This helps us understand that the **Father is distinct** than the Son and the Holy Spirit, but they all are **One God**.



That was how **Saint Athanasius** was able to prove that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in essence. However, each hypostasis has a unique characteristic that distinguish Him from the other two hypostases. For example, the Father is the source, and the Son is begotten from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father.

Abigail: Saint Athanasius was a hero in defending the faith.

Tony: “Yes! Saint Athanasius did two important things:

1. He **kept the upright faith** and **protected it** with all his heart.
2. He was **a strong debater** that supported his argument with **strong evidence** to the point that when Arius and his followers were not able to answer Athanasius or prove him wrong, they said that **Athanasius was not supposed to attend the council since he was only a deacon**. However, **Emperor Constantine** did not listen to them. And the Emperor not only ordered that **Athanasius stay in the council**, he named him “**The Hero of the Church of God**.” Saint Athanasius was truly a hero in defending the upright faith.

At the end of the Council of Nicaea, the fathers wrote the Nicaean Creed. Saint Athanasius contributed to writing the Creed and insisted on adding the phrase “...of one essence with the Father” to confirm that the Father and the Son are equal in essence. The Son is God appeared in the flesh “the incarnate God.” However, Arius and his followers along with 17 others refused to add this phrase to the creed but most of the bishops agreed on Athanasius’ suggestion and 300 bishops signed the Nicaean Creed.

The Council of Nicaea issued some important decisions: The **Nicaean Creed** starting from “Truly, We believe in one God...” untill “Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit.”

The Nicaean Creed works as the **constitution of our Christian faith**. The Nicaean Creed is so important that the Church insisted on **including it in almost all the liturgical prayers**. The Council also decided to excommunicate Arius and his followers. Emperor Constantine **exiled Arius** and ordered to **burn all his books**.

The Council of Nicaea also made 20 decisions on other issues. The Council of Nicaea ended on **August 25th 325AD**.





Excommunicating Arius, stripping him from his priestly rank, sending him to exile and burning his books.

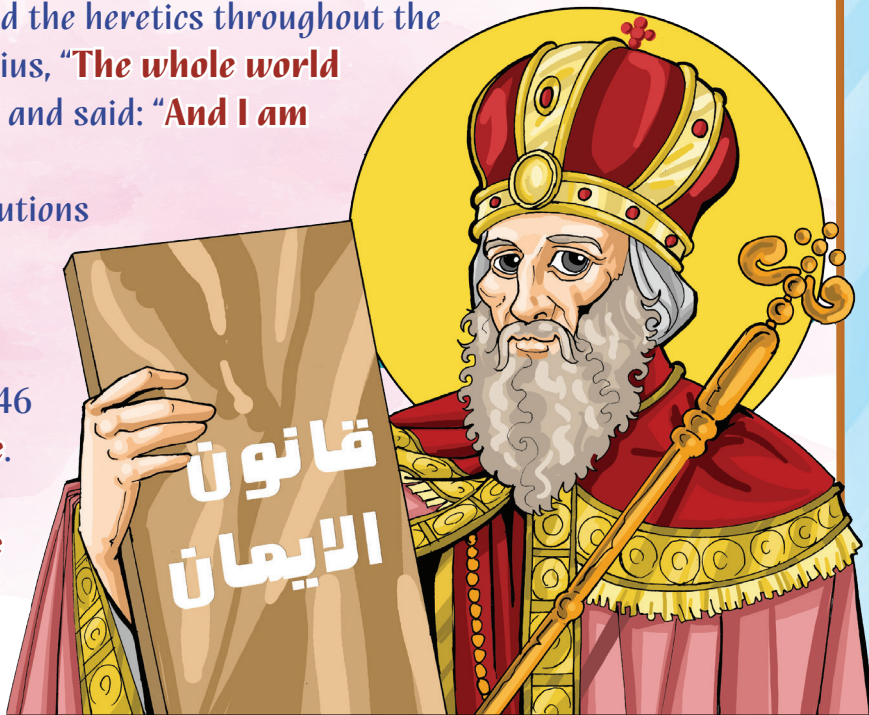
Writing the Creed "... Yes we believe in the Holy Spirit."

The decision about the date of the Resurrection Feast: All Christians in the world will celebrate the Resurrection Feast on the same day (on the Sunday that follows the Jewish Passover.) It was also decided that the Pope of Alexandria is the one that will figure out that date and announce it to all the bishops in the world.

The council also decided not to re-baptize those who followed Arius and wanted to repent and come back to the upright faith. However, if they were baptized by a priest that followed Arius, they should be baptized again.

After the departure of Pope Alexandros in the year 328AD, **Athanasius became the 20th Pope of Alexandria and the Sea of Saint Mark**. Pope Athanasius was named "**The Apostolic**". It was said that Pope Athanasius was "**against the world**" because almost the whole world followed the false teachings of Arius. Saint Athanasius defended the faith and faced the heretics throughout the whole world. People told Saint Athanasius, "**The whole world against you, Athanasius.**" He replied and said: "**And I am against the world.**"

Pope Athanasius endured many persecutions and tribulations because of his strong defend to the upright faith. He was the Pope for **46 years** and was **exiled 5 times**. He spent **17 years** out of these 46 years **away from Alexandria in exile**. Pope Athanasius wrote many books to explain the Orthodox faith like "**On the Incarnation of the Word**" and many letters **against Arianism**.



Abigail: You were right, Peter, when you said that freedom of interpretation can lead us to heresies.

Sherry: Now this brings us to the end of our episode. See you next time, friends.





Peter: Guys, we really need to decide who our team leader is. We aren't organized, and everyone is just sharing their opinions randomly!

Tony: A leader? We always work together as a team. Why do we need a leader?

Sherry: Having a leader can be a good idea, but that doesn't mean that only one person should be in control.

Abigail: Well, we will never be able to accomplish anything. Every time we disagree, we argue and create more problems!

Peter: So, what do you all think if I take charge?

Tony: Sure, if you think you can handle it.

Sherry: I don't like what's happening, guys. We used to work well together. How did we get to this point?

Abigail: Probably because we forgot that we're a team. Now, everyone just wants to prove that their idea is the best. Everyone wants to be the leader.

Sherry: It reminds me of a story I heard about Saint Macarius the Great. When he started his life as a monk, he didn't expect to be a lead-





er. However, people gathered around him because he was like a true father to them.

Abigail: Exactly! Saint Macarius lived a humble life, and that is what attracted many monks to him.

Sherry: I think we should return to the kind of leadership the saints taught us—that a true leader is someone who serves the team, not someone who controls the group.

Peter: You're all right. I'm sorry, everyone. I got carried away and said I deserve to be the leader.

Tony: And I'm sorry, too. I shouldn't have answered that way. We need to work together.

Abigail: I have an idea. Instead of doing our episode on the topic we had planned, let's make this one about Saint Macarius, who is a great example of the true leadership we need to model.

Sherry: Great! We can start with how Saint Macarius started his life as a monk. He began with a simple life, full of humility and love, and many monks gathered around him.



Sherry: Welcome to a new episode of your show, "Castagro."

Our Church has taught us that what we have received, we must preserve and pass on faithfully to those who come after us. This is a command from the Lord Jesus Himself. Just like what this verse said:



Memory Verse



**"And the things that you have heard
from me among many witnesses,
commit these to faithful men who
will be able to teach others also."
(II Timothy 2:2)**



This is the secret of the strength of our Church. Our Church has strong and deep roots. One of its most important roots is the heroes who delivered to us the faith with utmost integrity. For example:

Our Fathers the Apostles

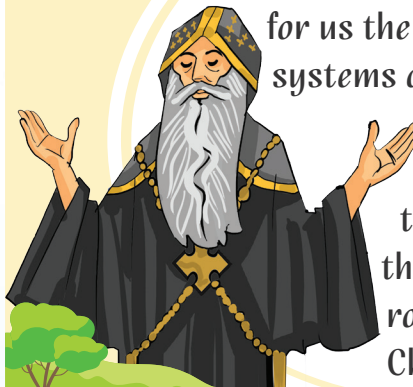
who received the faith from our Lord Jesus Christ and delivered it to their disciples and their disciples delivered it to us generation after generation.



Our Fathers the Monks

who
established
for us the
systems of monasticism.

Many holy fathers
were trained under
their guidance, and
they held important
roles in the
Church.



Tony: Our fathers the monks that live in the desert?! How did they have a role in our Church?!

Sherry: I will explain what I mean and talk to you about one of the founders of monasticism so that you can be sure of what I'm saying.



A Monk

is a person who loves God very
much and chooses to live with
Him all the time. He dedicates his
whole life and time completely to
prayer and worship of God.

Monasticism
also has a big
role in Church
life. Let me
explain.

Prayers

for the peace of the
world and the peace of the
Church. The first mission of
the monk is Prayer.

Keeping the Faith

Our fathers the monks
Defended the faith and the doctrine
with strength and courage with the
fathers of the church.

Teachings

Our fathers the
monks have many teachings
and sayings which are
beneficial to our lives.

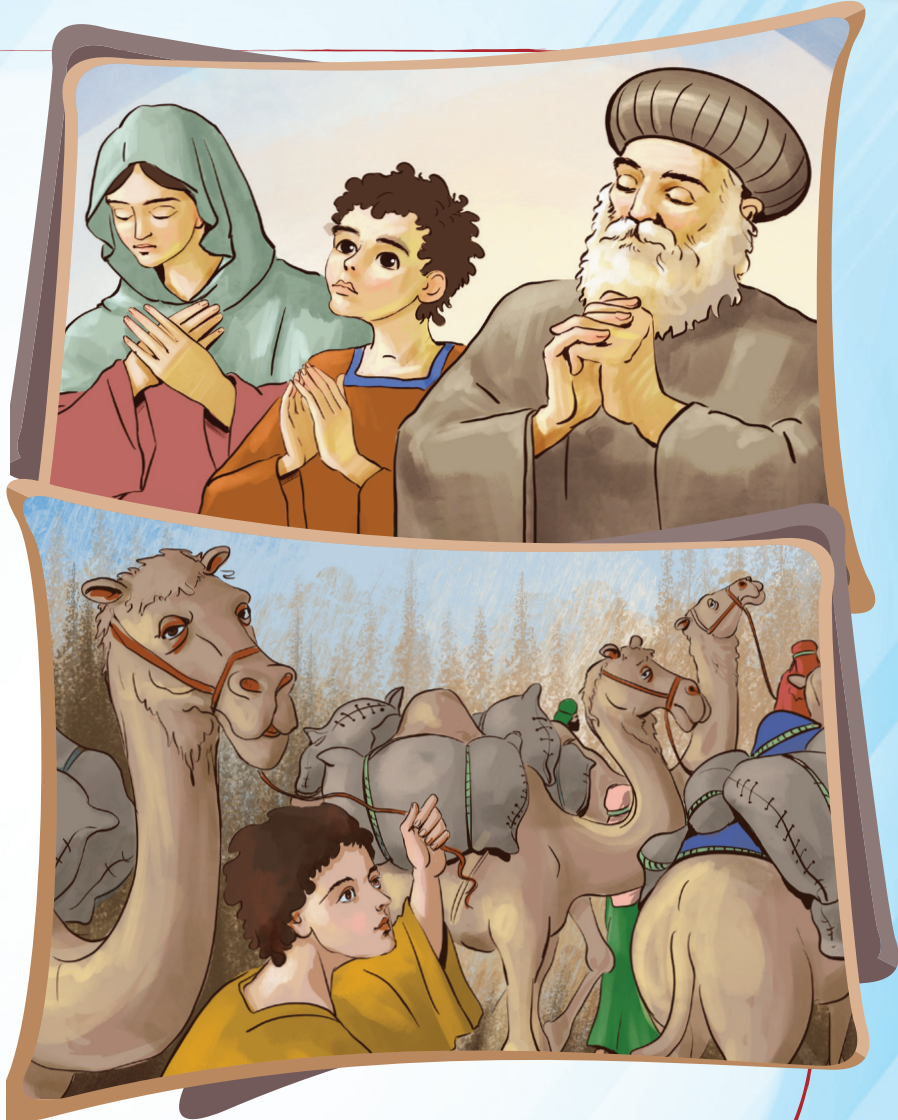
One of the monks who played a significant role in establishing monasticism after **St. Antony** is **St. Macarius the Great**. He is one of three saints named Macarius (St. Macarius the Great, St. Macarius of Alexandria, and St. Macarius, Bishop of the city of Edku). I will talk to you about **Saint Macarius the Great**.





Abba Macarius was born in the fourth century in the village of Menouf (one of the villages in the Ashmoun district of the Menoufia Governorate) to pious Christian parents. He did not have any siblings. One day, his father had a vision in which God promised him a son who would be blessed and whose name would be **Macarius**, a Greek name meaning "**The Blessed.**"

His heart would be filled with the love of God and virtues, and his name would be remembered everywhere. He would gather many people to serve God, just like the angels. He will be a spiritual father to many. And indeed, a while later, God blessed them with a son, and they named him **Macara**, as the angel told them. **Macara** was obedient to his parents, grew in grace, and was known in the village for his humility and peacefulness. He helped his father with the fields and farming.



Abigail: **Macara** desired to live a life all by himself in the wilderness as a monk. He loved to take his father's camels and visit **El-Natrun Mountain**. He would often take the Natron (a kind of salt) and bring it back to Misr. One day, after a long and tiring journey, Macara fell asleep and had a vision: **The angel of the Lord** (a Cherub with wings) spoke to him, saying, "**God has given you this mountain as a place for you and your children, the monks after you.**"



After a while, **Macara's parents passed away**. He then gave all his money to the poor and lived in a small hut outside the village. He wanted to dedicate his life to God. Day after day, he grew in virtue. Everyone in the village knew his virtues and humbleness. The people asked the bishop to ordain him as a priest, and indeed, he **was ordained a priest**.



One day, God allowed a trial which was: a girl committed sin with a young man. She claimed that Saint Macarius is the one that committed this evil with her. The girl's family became so angry and **beat the Siant and obligated him to take care of the child and his mother**. When it was time for the woman to deliver the child, she was in a deep pain for four days and wasn't able to deliver till she confessed that Saint Macarius was not the child's father. The girl's family returned back to the Saint to offer him apology However, Saint Macarius knew they were coming to apologize, so he left his place because he was so humble and did not want people to praise him. At that time, he was about **30 years old**.

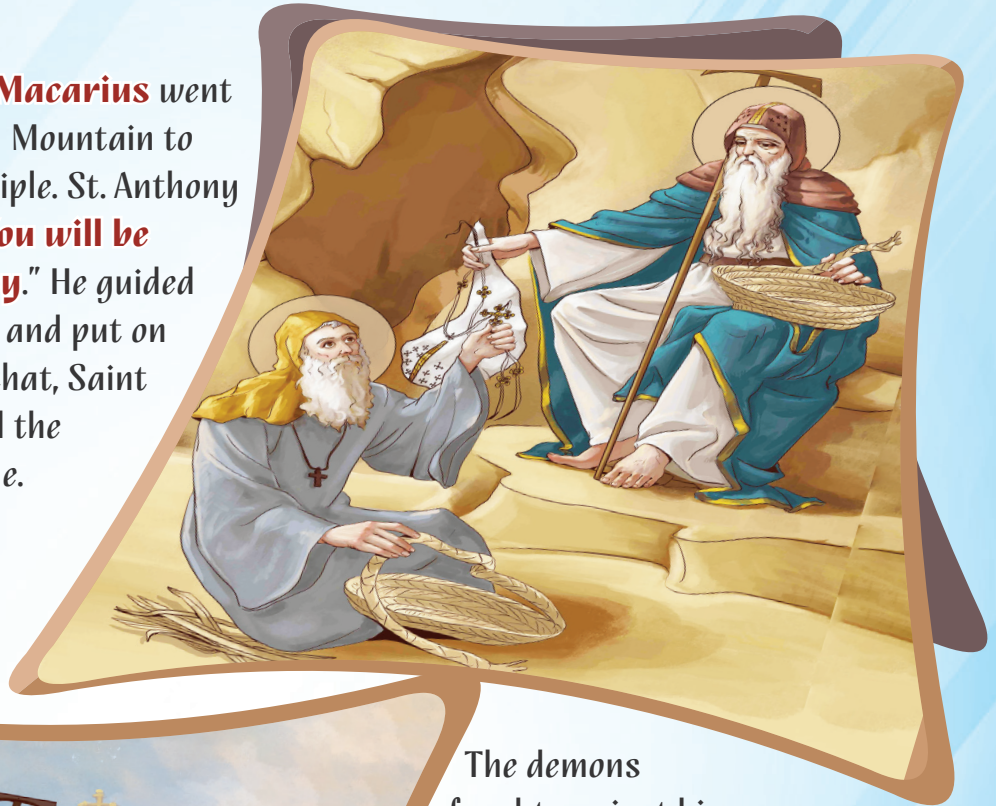


While he was walking, **a cherub** appeared to him and stayed with him for a while until he reached the Natrun Mountain. Saint Macarius asked the cherub where he should settle, and the cherub replied: "**Live wherever you want.**" The cherub told him that he would be with him whenever he needed him. After that, **the cherub** disappeared.

St. Macarius continued until he reached **Wadi El-Natrun**. He dug himself a cave in the rock next to a water pool. He moved from one place to another to live in solitude and peace with God. He spent his time weaving palm leaves and giving them to the villagers to sell and he buy for him his basic needs, like dry bread.



Sherry: Three years later, **Abba Macarius** went to visit **St. Anthony** at the Eastern Mountain to learn from him and become his disciple. St. Anthony welcomed him with joy and said: "**You will be blessed in your monastic journey.**" He guided him on how to live the monastic life and put on him the **monastic uniform**. After that, Saint Macarius returned to his place, and the cherub visited him from time to time.

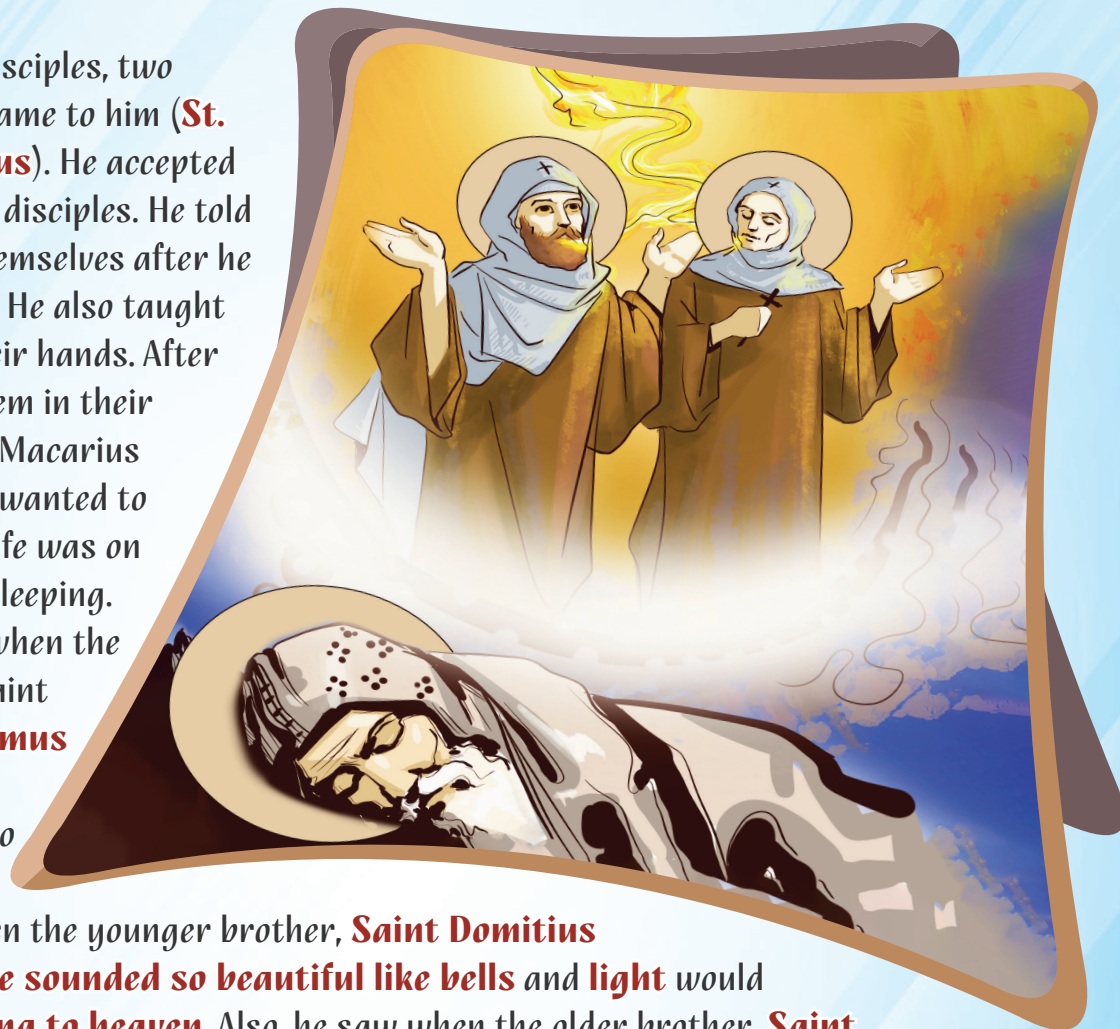


The demons fought against him severely, but he always fought back and asked for God's help, and God supported him. **St. Macarius** grew, even more, in virtues and grace. As he grew older, many young men came to him to learn how to become monks and learn from him and his virtues. He would welcome them with joy and teach them how to make things with their hands and how to dig caves in the mountain. He had many disciples.

St. Macarius taught the monks that each monk should live in his own cave. All the monks would get together to pray the evening and midnight praises, and in the morning, they would pray the Divine Liturgy and listen to Saint Macarius' sermons and then each monk would go back to his cell.

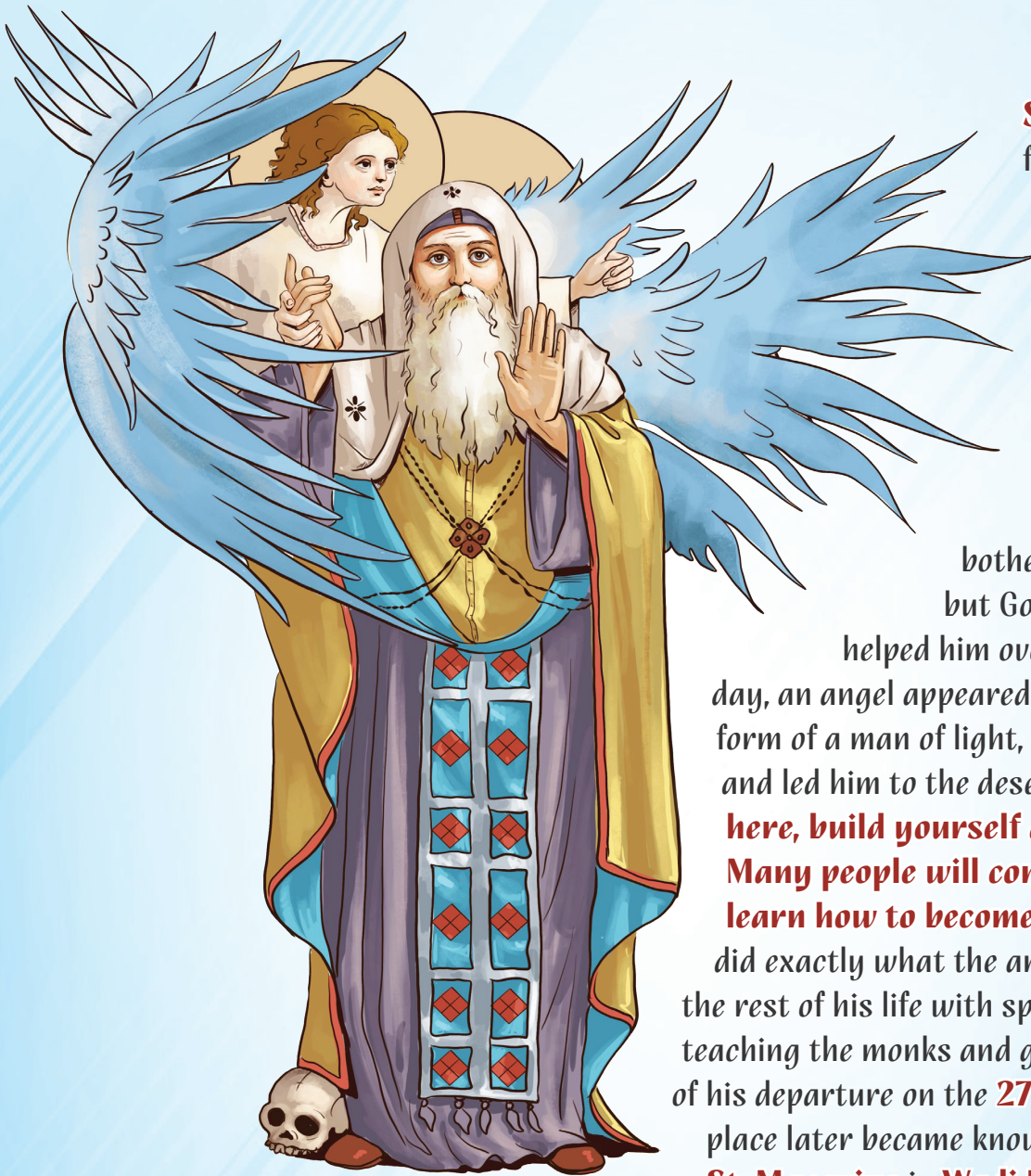


Among **Abba Macarius'** disciples, two wealthy Roman brothers came to him (**St. Maximus and St. Domitius**). He accepted them, and they became his disciples. He told them to build a cave for themselves after he showed them how to dig it. He also taught them how to work with their hands. After a while, he went to visit them in their cave. When night came, St. Macarius slept over at their cave. He wanted to make sure their spiritual life was on track. He pretended to be sleeping. In the middle of the night when the brothers got up to pray, Saint Macarius saw **Saint Maximus** waking up his younger brother, **Saint Domitius** to pray the psalms.



St. Macarius saw that when the younger brother, **Saint Domitius** prays the psalms, **his voice sounded so beautiful like bells** and **light** would come out of his mouth **rising to heaven**. Also, he saw when the older brother, **Saint Maximus**, would start singing, what looked like **a rope of fire rising to heaven**. When Saint Macarius saw that, **he knew how godly Saint Maximus and Saint Domitius were**, and he asked them to remember him in their prayers and then he left them.

A few days later, **St. Maximus departed to heaven**. Three days later, his younger brother **Saint Domitius too, departed to heaven**. After their departure, Saint Macarius told everyone that visited him the story of these **Roman brothers**. Young men who wanted to become monks came and settled in caves next to the Roman brothers' cave. This place came to be known as the **Monastery of the Romans**. Now it is called **the Monastery of Baramous**.

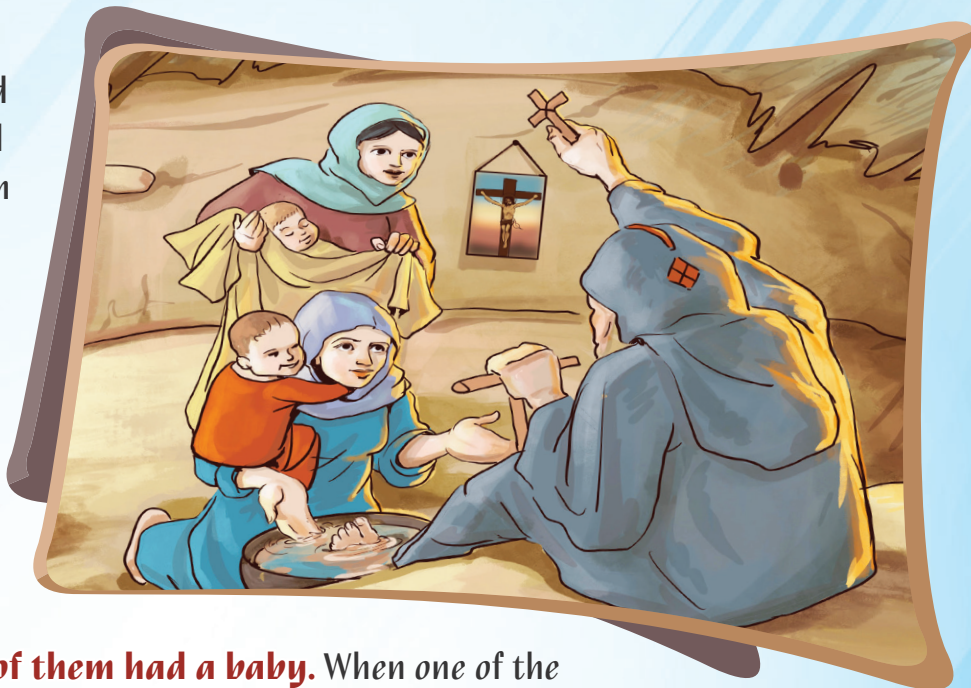


St. Macarius became famous to kings because God worked many miracles of healing through him. The saint grew in God's love day after day, and he taught many people how to live a **godly life**. However, the devil bothered Saint Macarius, but God strengthened him and helped him overcome the fights. One day, an angel appeared to Saint Macarius in the form of a man of light, took him by the hand, and led him to the desert and said to him: **"Live here, build yourself a cell and a church. Many people will come to live with you to learn how to become monks."** Saint Macarius did exactly what the angel told him and spent the rest of his life with spiritual simplicity, teaching the monks and guiding them until the day of his departure on the **27th of Baramhat**. This place later became known as the **Monastery of St. Macarius in Wadi El Natrun in Egypt**. His monastery became home to about 1500 monks.

St. Macarius had so many beautiful virtues such as obedience, love, humility, and discipleship. We learned that from many stories that had happened in his life. I can give you an example. One day, St. Macarius heard a voice from heaven saying, **"You have not reached what two women in Alexandria have reached."**



The next day, Saint Macarius traveled to **Alexandria** and asked around until he found the two women's house. When he entered their house, they welcomed him and washed his feet from the long journey. He asked them to tell him about their life, and they told him their story. They told him that they were **not related** but they were married to two shepherd brothers. They had vowed to spend their lives loving God, increasing their prayers,



fasts, and love for one another. **Each of them had a baby.** When one of the babies cries, one of them would go and feed him even if that baby was not her own. Even though **they were poor**, they were happy and thankful to God for all things, and they shared what they had with other people in need.

When **St. Macarius** heard their story, he said, "**Truly, God looks at the readiness of the heart and gives grace to all those who want to worship Him.**" After hearing their story, he bid them farewell, being deeply moved by their example of love towards others and generosity.

Tony: The story of **St. Macarius the Great** is very inspiring. Now I understand the true meaning of leadership. A good leader is not the one that control everything and enforce his ideas on other. The good leader is the one that serves those who are around him with love and humility.

Peter: We learned that true leadership starts with humility and service.

Sherry: And that is what we need to apply in our team. We can all be leaders when we serve each other.

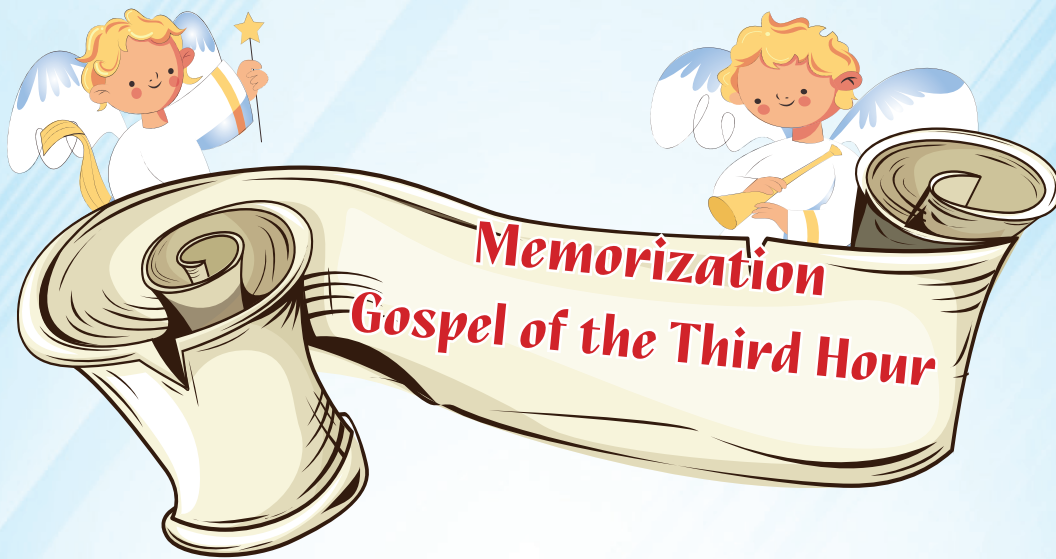
Abigail: True leadership starts with love and humility. A special thank you to the saints that showed us the way. And thank you to all of you fans that followed us in all our episodes.

Castagro became a very popular podcast and more young men and women followed it. Castagro had a great impact among those who listened to it regularly.



Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with a voice of exultation. For the Lord is most high and fearful; He is a great king over all the earth. He has subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet. He has chosen us for His inheritance, the beauty of Jacob whom He loved.

God has ascended with a shout, and the Lord with a sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to our God, sing praises: sing praises to our King, sing praises; for God is king of all the earth. Sing praises with understanding, for the Lord reigned over all the nations: God sits upon His holy throne. Rulers of the people have assembled with God of Abraham: for God's mighty ones have been greatly exalted upon the earth. ALLE-
LUIA.



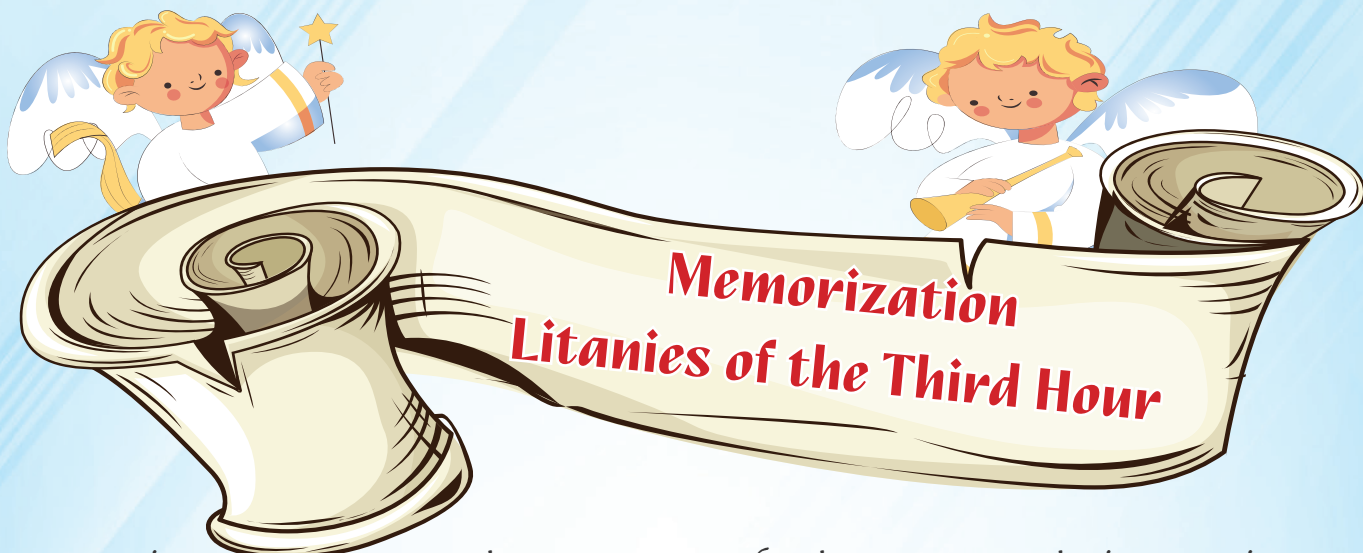
THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN (CH. 14:26-31 & CH. 15:1-4)

When the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, has come, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said unto you. My peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said unto you, "I go away, and come again unto you." If you loved Me, you would rejoice, because I said, "I go unto the Father": for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that, when it comes to pass, you might believe. I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do: arise, let us go from here.

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away: and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me, and I in you.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.





1. Your Holy Spirit, O Lord Whom You sent forth upon Your holy disciples and honored apostles in the third hour, do not take away from us, O Good One, but renew Him within us. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence. And do not take Your Holy Spirit away from me.

Δοξα Πατρι κε Υιω κε Ἀγιω Πνευματι

2. O Lord who sent down Your Holy Spirit upon Your holy disciples and Your honored apostles in the third hour, do not take Him away from us, O Good One, but we ask You to renew Him within us, O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Word; a right and life giving spirit, a spirit of prophecy and chastity, a spirit of holiness, righteousness and authority, O the Almighty One, for You are the light of our souls. O You who gives light to every man that comes into the world, have mercy on us.

Κε Νυν κε Ἀι κε Ις τοϋς ἑῶνας τῶν ἑῶνων: Ἀμήν





3. O Theotokos, you are the true vine who bore the Cluster of Life, we ask you, O full of grace, with the apostles, for the salvation of our souls. Blessed is the Lord our God. Blessed is the Lord day by day. He prepares our way, for He is God of our salvation.

Κε νυν κε ἀὶ κε ἱς τοῦς ἐὼνᾶς τῶν ἐὼνων: ἄμην

4. O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who is present in all places and fills all, the treasury of good things and the LifeGiver, graciously come, and dwell in us and purify us from all defilement, O Good One, and save our souls.

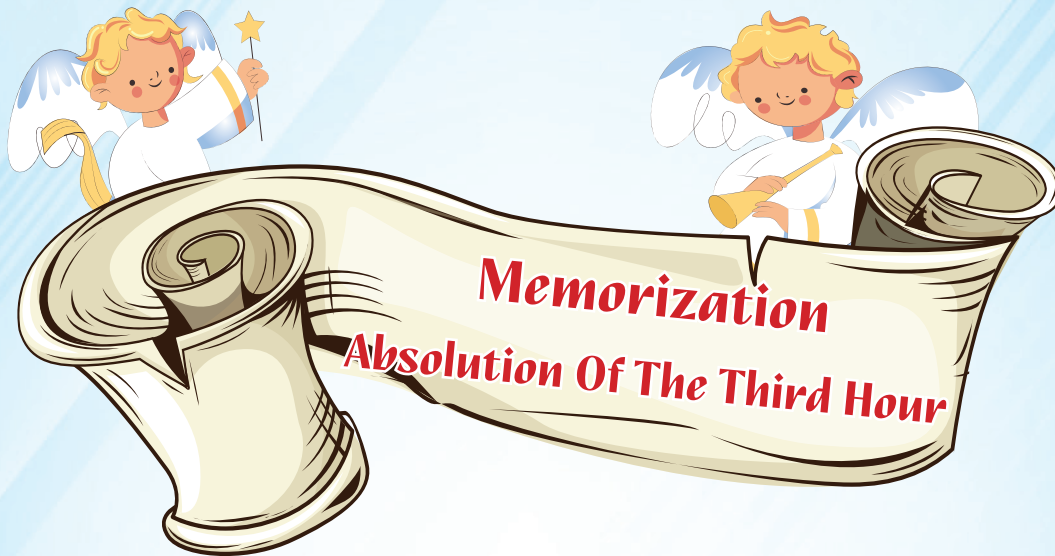
Δοξα Πατρι κε Υἱω κε ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι

5. Just as You were with Your disciples, O Savior, and gave them peace, graciously come also and be with us, and grant us Your peace, and save us, and deliver our souls.

Κε νυν κε ἀὶ κε ἱς τοῦς ἐὼνᾶς τῶν ἐὼνων: ἄμην

6. Whenever we stand in Your holy sanctuary, we are considered standing in heaven. O Theotokos, you are the gate of heaven, open for us the gate of mercy.





O God of all compassion, and Lord of all comfort, who comforted us at all times with the comfort of Your Holy Spirit, we thank You for You raised us for prayer in this holy hour, in which You abundantly poured the grace of Your Holy Spirit upon Your holy disciples and honorable and blessed apostles, like tongues of fire.

We ask and entreat You, O Lover of Mankind. Accept our prayers, and forgive our sins, and send forth upon us the grace of Your Holy Spirit, and purify us from all defilement of body and spirit.

Change us into a spiritual manner of life, that we may walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. And make us worthy to serve You with purity and righteousness all the days of our life. For unto You is due glory, honor, and dominion, with Your good Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of all ages. Amen.



*Continue in the things
which you have learned* (2 Timothy 3:14)



Continue

IN THE
Things Which
YOU HAVE LEARNED
(2 Timothy 3:14)



*Through the grace of God and under the auspices of His Grace Bishop David, Bishop of the Diocese of New York and New England, 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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