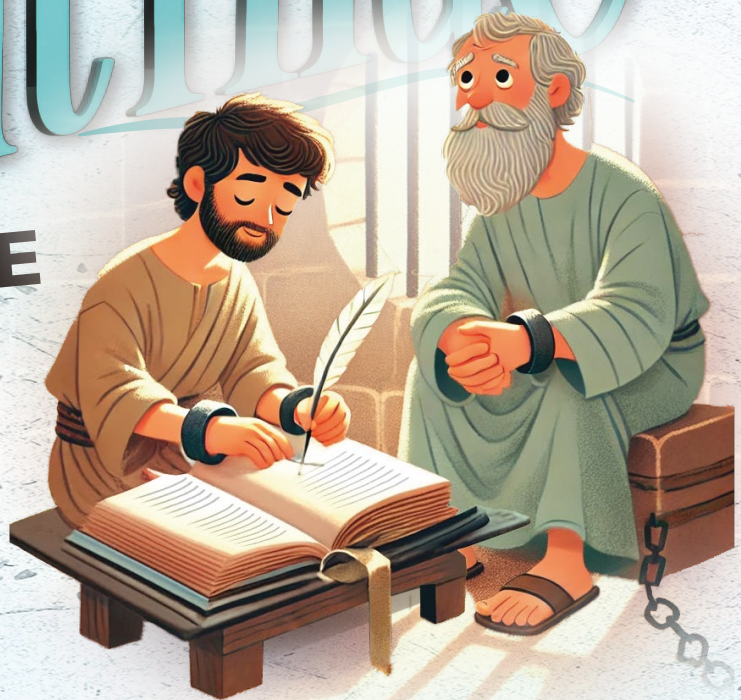


Mahragan El-Keraza
2025

Continue

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



English Edition

Grades 1-2



*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

**Saint
Stephen**

2

**The
Orbana**

3

**Queen Esther
and the Sal-
vation of Her
People**

4

**Our Mother
the Virgin
The Theotokos**

5

**Saint Julius
of Aqfahs**



3



Dear friends,

This year, on our adventure, we will get to know **Gedo Amin** and his friend, **Dokdok**, the woodpecker, along with Gedo Amin's grandchildren

Timon and **Natali**. They have come to help Gedo Amin in a special mission that Gedo has assigned to them.

During our exciting adventure, we will learn many stories, and from them, we will understand how to apply the 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 is the theme verse that inspires the theme for this year's Mahragan as we learn the following lessons:

1. Saint Stephen – We will learn about the faithfulness of Saint Stephen and his dedication to preserving the true faith, as we learn the first anchor (**..But you**) which is **"I Rejoice in His Arms"**.



2. The Orbana – We will also learn about; the components of the Eucharistic bread (Orban) and what it symbolizes as we learn the second anchor (**...must continue**) which is **"Anchored and well Rooted"**.

3. Queen Esther and the Story of the Salvation of Her People – Here, we will understand the importance and power of prayer, by learning about the third anchor (**... in the things which you have learned**) which is **"My Faith is a fortress and a Strong Wall"**



4. Saint Mary, The Theotokos – We will learn about our Mother Saint Mary and her place in our Church as we learn the fourth anchor (**...been assured of**) which is **"My Faith is Life and Constitution"**

5. Saint Julius of Aqfahs – We will learn that Saint Julius was the one who wrote the stories of the martyrs as we learn the

fifth anchor. (**...knowing from whom you have learned them**) which is **"I am Proud of My Forefathers"**





Gedo Amin was the most skilled carpenter. He had many tools. Along with the diligent woodpeckers, they managed to build a strong fence to protect Gedo's Garden from all dangers. Around the fence, there were small houses for the woodpeckers so they could guard the fence and keep an eye on those coming in and going out. One day, a boy and a girl came knocking on the garden door. As soon as the woodpeckers heard them, they knocked and pecked, making loud sounds like, "rata-tat-tat."

Dokdok: Gedo Amin... help! There are kids knocking on the garden door... and the woodpeckers are pecking loudly. Gedo, can you hear me?!

Gedo Amin: Oops!

I forgot. My grandchildren... Timon

and Natali. I told them to come be-

cause I need them for something important. Dokdok, please open the door,. Make sure to tell the woodpeckers that everything is alright.

Dokdok flew to the gate of the garden to open the gate for Timon and Natali

Dokdok: Please, come in... Gedo is waiting for you.

Gedo Amin: My dear ones, welcome. I've missed you a lot... I've been waiting for you.



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



Timon: We missed you so much too, Gedo. Tell us what is the important thing you needed us for?

Gedo Amin: I need you to deliver something to our Abouna in the church. But make sure you deliver it exactly as I give it to you. This is something very important, and I've worked really hard on it. I chose you specifically because I trust your honesty. What makes me even happier is that Abouna knows about it and agreed to send it with you because he knows you are trustworthy

and that you will be able to do the job very well...

I hope you always stay honest and continue to serve the entire church. God always chooses those who are honest to help serve His church.



Timon: Just like what happened a long time ago with the seven deacons that the church chose for service.

Natali: Can you please tell us their story?





Saint Stephen the Archdeacon and the First Martyr



Gedo Amin: His story happened after the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and disciples on the day of Pentecost.

The apostles and disciples began preaching to the people

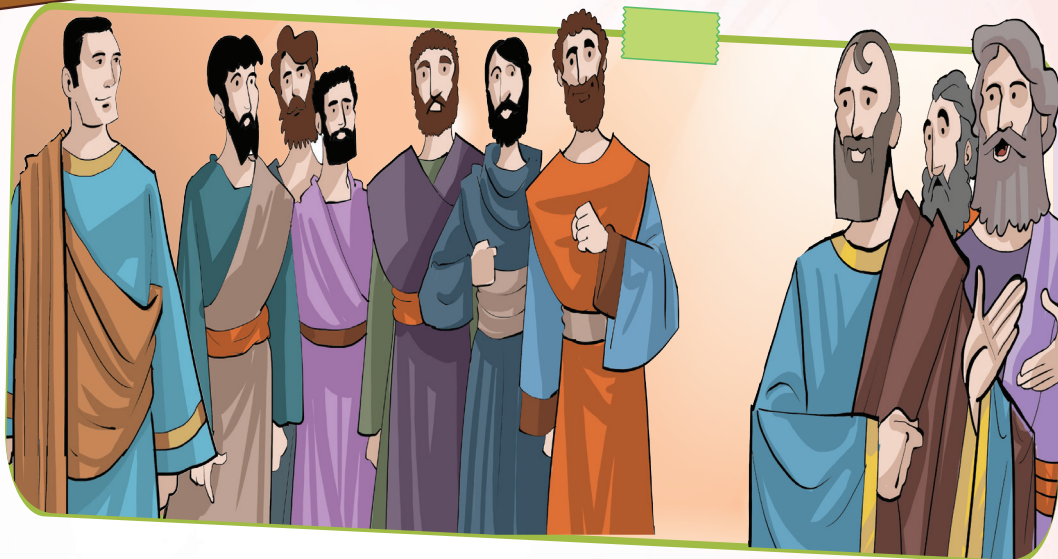
about our Lord Jesus, His crucifixion, death,

redemption, and resurrection. They were spreading His message wherever they could, sharing stories about His love and work for us. Many people believed in the Lord Jesus and became Christians. Day after day, the number of believers grew, and the service was expanding. It became necessary to have servants to help the disciples in the service and meet the needs of the growing number of believers.

Natali: What did they do at that time?

Timon: The disciples asked the believers to choose seven men from among them who had strong faith and wisdom and were filled with the Holy Spirit (those who were known for their faith). They chose them, and the apostles prayed over them, laying their hands on them, and they ordained them as deacons.

Gedo Amin: Well done, Timon. And indeed, each one of them began to work hard to help the disciples.



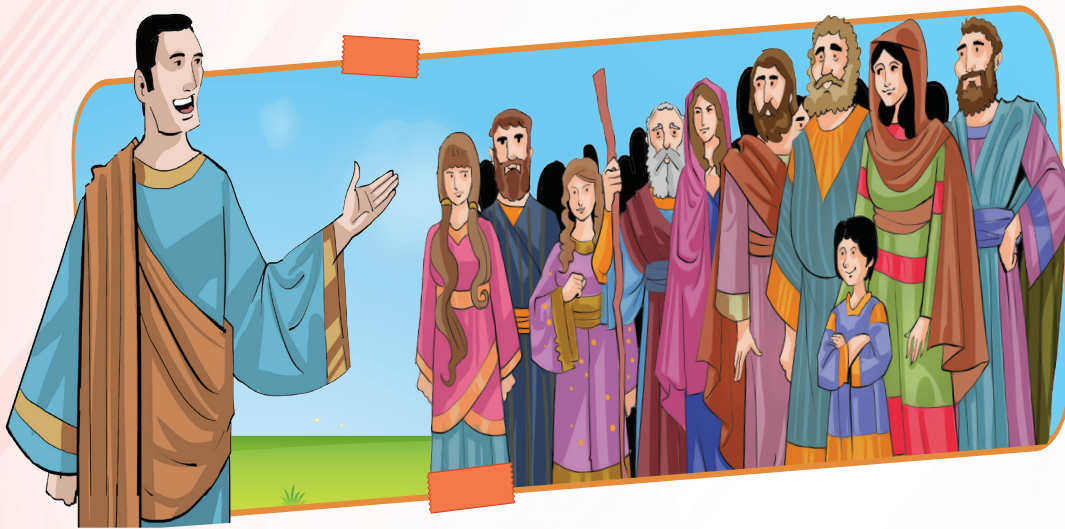


They helped in the services even though it was not easy at all!

Natali: How was it not easy, Gedo?

Gedo Amin: I will tell you about the first deacon of the seven deacons, Saint Stephen. Even though it was not easy at all, Saint Stephen was always joyful and ready to witness for the Lord Jesus in front of everyone around him. He always stayed faithful and continued to be honest all the time. He became one of the heroes of our church. God's love filled his whole heart.

Natali: What did he do, Gedo?



Gedo Amin: Saint Stephen wanted everyone to love God just as he loved God.

So, he would:

☞ Speak to the people about our Lord Jesus, His love for us, His death for us, His redemption, and

His resurrection. Many people

believed in the Lord Jesus because of Saint Stephen's words, and God was performing many miracles through him.

☞ He was always able to answer the questions the Jews and other people who didn't believe in Jesus asked him. He gave them convincing answers that put Saint Stephen in deep trouble. I will tell you how

Gedo Amin: Some of the Jews who did not want to believe in the Lord Jesus asked a group of people to lie and say that Saint Stephen had said things that were not true about God. So everybody turned against our saint and brought him to be judged.

Natali: For sure, at that time, Saint Stephen must have been scared and very upset, right?



Gedo Amin: No Natali. Our saint was not scared. He had strong faith in the Lord. He was ready to witness for Him in front of everyone. At that time, everyone saw his face shining like an angel's face. He stood before them all and showed them his faith in the



Lord Jesus, and talked to them about God's great love and His redemption for everyone.

When they heard his words, they became very angry. Saint Stephen looked up to heaven and said to them: **"I see heaven open, and I see the Lord Jesus standing in His glory at the right hand of God."**

Natali: Wow, how lucky?! That must have been a beautiful thing to see. He must have been so happy.

Gedo Amin: For sure he was, Natali. He must have been joyful because that's the joy we all want to have. We want to be always strong in our faith and our love for God throughout our lives..



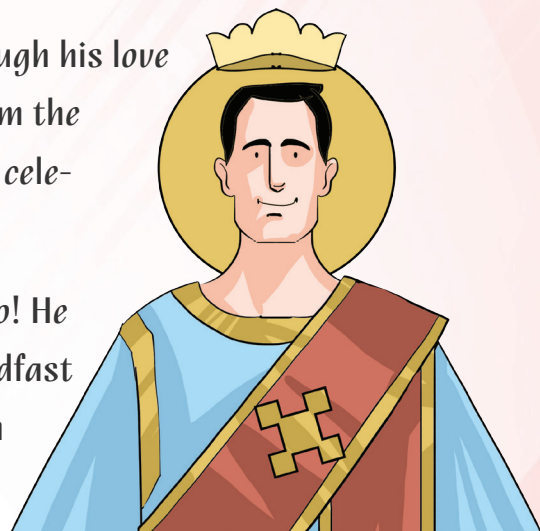
However, the Jews, became angry at Saint Stephen because of what Saint Stephen said about the Lord Jesus and His glory. They dragged him outside the city and stoned him



(they threw stones at him to hurt him). Saint Stephen did not fear or run away. God gave him peace and strength, and he knew for sure that God had prepared a place for him in heaven, where he would live with Him forever. With love in his heart, he prayed to God, asking Him to forgive the Jews what they were doing to him. He said: **"Lord, do not charge them with this sin"** (Acts 7:60).

Gedo Amin: As Saint Stephen witnessed for our Lord Jesus through his love and faith. He was faithful until the very end of his life. God gave him the crown of martyrdom and he became the first martyr. Our church celebrates his feast day on the day of his martyrdom, (Toba 1st).

Timon: The story of Saint Stephen is such a beautiful story, Gedo! He was so brave that he even died to keep his faith. He remained steadfast in the faith, even when it was not easy for him. And that made him joyful in our Lord Jesus' arms.



Gedo Amin: Of course, Timon. As Our Lord promised us saying:



**"With whom My hand shall be established;
Also, My arm shall strengthen him"
(Psalm 89:21).**



Memory Verse

Natali: Thank you, Gedo Amin for trusting us to deliver the package to Abouna. We promise that we will keep it and deliver it exactly as you give it to us.

Gedo Amin: Alright dear, show me how you will deliver the package to Abouna!

And indeed, Timon and Natali took the package from Gedo to deliver it.



On their way to the church, Timon and Natali heard Dokdok calling them. He was flying very fast and following them.

Timon: Hi Dokdok! What brings you here?

Dokdok: I just wanted to see what's inside this package. You guys didn't see how careful Gedo was when he was working on it. I wonder why he spent so many days working on the thing inside it with such great focus. Even when he was choosing the wood he needed for it, he made sure to pick the best kind of wood. I wonder if we can open it before you deliver it to Abouna. Let's see what's inside and then put it back exactly how it was.

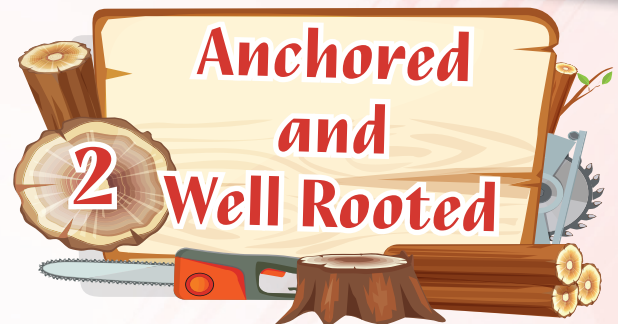


Natali: Of course not, Dokdok. We promised Gedo to deliver it safely and Gedo trusted us. We have to keep our promise to Gedo.

Dokdok: Don't you worry, guys. Just give it to me, Timon, I just want to see it.

Timon: No, no. Ouch! Move back, Dokdok! No, no. What you're trying to do is not right.

Dokdok: Come on, don't worry, nothing is going to happen to it.





Timon: Be careful, careful, Dokdok! The package is going to fall!

Natali: What's wrong with you, Dokdok?! Look what happened. Now the box broke open and the stuff inside it fell in the mud.

Dokdok: I am so sorry; I didn't mean it. I just wanted to see what's inside that box. It is just a piece of wood. Why was Gedo making such a big deal of it?

Timon: No, Dokdok. It is not just a piece of wood. It is the Orbana stamp. It has a specific shape that cannot be changed, and it has writing and crosses on it.

Dokdok: I don't understand, Timon... Orbana and a stamp!!! What does that mean? And you're saying the seal's shape can't be changed?! Please explain to me how it should look like and I will make you a new one just like it.





The KOrbana



Timon: I will explain to you how the Orbana is made from the beginning. Each step tells us something about Our Lord Jesus.

The Orbana is baked in a place called **Beth-lehem**.

Bethlehem means "**the House of Bread**"



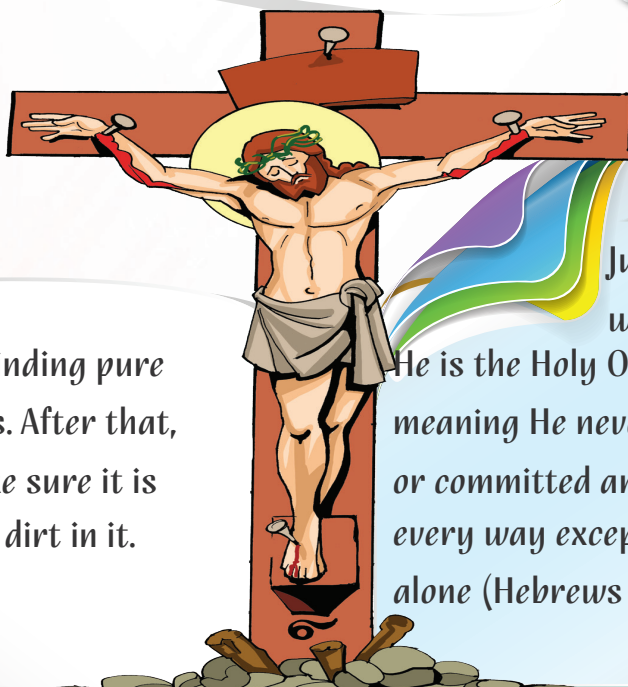
Bethlehem

Bethlehem is where the Baby Jesus was born. He was born in Bethlehem or the **House of Bread**.



The Orbana is made from flour mixed with water and yeast

The flour comes from grinding pure white whole wheat grains. After that, **the flour** is sifted to make sure it is clean without any dirt in it.



Just like the Lord Jesus was without blemish (John 8:46) He is the Holy One born without sin, meaning He never did anything wrong or committed any sin. He was like us in every way except for sin alone (Hebrews 4:15)

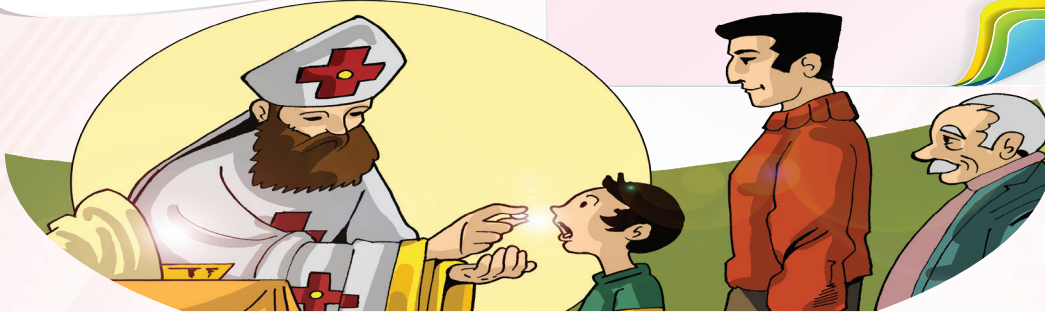


Continue in the things which you have learned (2 Timothy 3:14)



And to bring **the flour** together and unite it, the baker (the one who bakes the Orban) adds **water** so that it becomes a dough.

The water symbolizes the Holy Spirit, who brings the entire Church together.



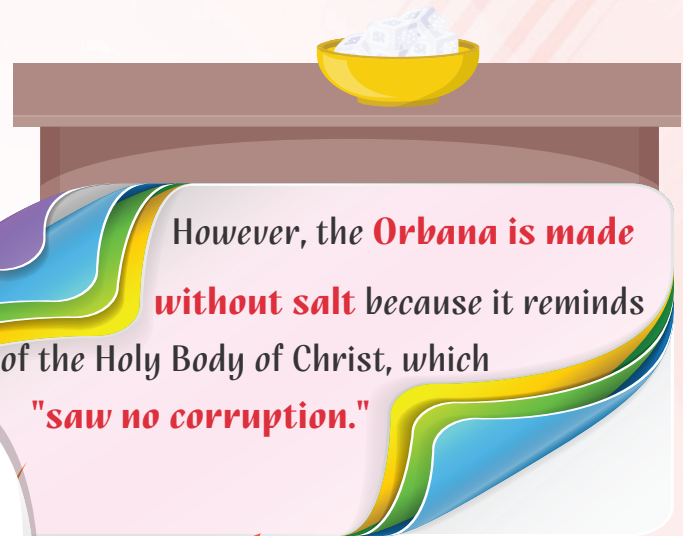
Then, we add **yeast** to the dough, so the dough rises and becomes fluffy. Yeast is a living substance that makes the dough rise, but its activity stops when it goes inside the hot oven.



We do this because **yeast reminds us of sin.** The Lord Jesus carried our sin instead of us in His Holy Body to redeem us through His sacrifice on the cross.



We do not add **salt** to the dough.
We usually add **salt** to keep food from
spoilng or going bad



However, the **Orbana** is made
without salt because it reminds
us of the Holy Body of Christ, which
"saw no corruption."

Then we shape the
dough as a **circle**
to make a perfectly
round Orbana. The
round shape has no
beginning or end

It reminds
us of the
Lord Jesus Christ,
who has no begin-
ning (**everlast-
ing**) and no
end (**eternal**).



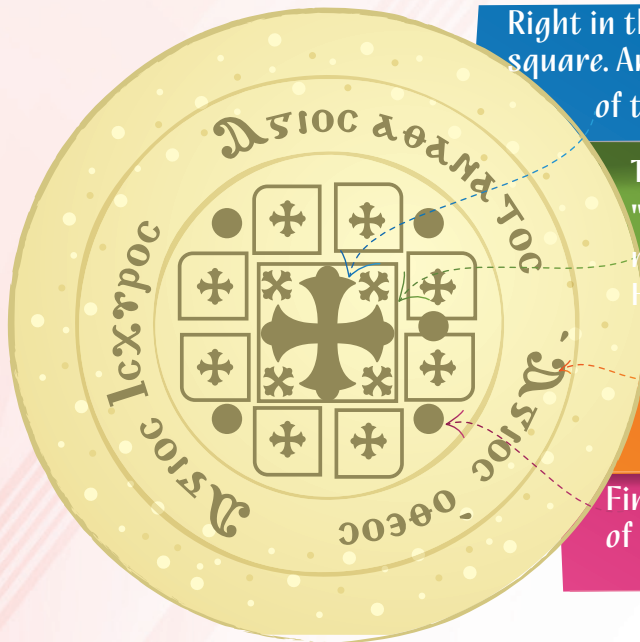
While baking
the Orbana,
the baker prays
psalms because
the book of Psalms
has so many
prophecies.

These prophecies
are about **Our Lord**
Jesus from the Old
Testament.

Dokdok: Now I understand what **Orbana** means and how it tells us about **Our Lord Jesus**. I also learned that it has to be **round**. Can you describe to me how the stamp looks so I can make a new one instead of the one I broke?

Natali: Listen, Dokdok, I will explain to you how to make the Orbana. After kneading and shaping the Orbana into a round shape, we use the stamp just like the one Gedo Amin made. We use it to stamp each Orbana. The stamp has a specific design. Each part of that design reminds us of something important. I'll explain how

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



Right in the center of the Orbana, there's a large cross inside a square. Around that cross are 12 smaller crosses, to remind us of the twelve disciples of the Lord Jesus.

The square in the center that has the large cross is called the "**Spadikon**", which is a Greek word meaning "**The Lord's**". It reminds us that the Lord Jesus is always present in the midst of His church.

Around the design, there's a Coptic writing that says: "**Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal**". This is the hymn which Nicodemus was singing when he was burying the Lord Jesus.

Finally, the baker makes five holes to remind us of the wounds of our Lord Jesus at the time of His crucifixion.

Timon: After the Orbana is baked, it becomes ready for Abouna to choose the perfect Orbana that will be offered on the altar, and will become the "**Lamb Orban**". At that time, everyone in the congregation sings together the hymn "**Kyrie Eleison**", which means "Lord, have mercy", 41 times.

The Lamb Orban: Abouna picks one of the Orbanas in the basket (the number of Orbanas is always an **odd number** 3, 5, 7,...). Abouna looks for the best one because, through the prayers of the liturgy, the Holy Spirit descends on the bread and turn it to the Body of Christ, and on the grape juice (wine) and turns it to the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.





Each person who partakes of the Body and the Blood of our Lord receives many blessings. One of these blessings is steadfastness and union with Christ. And that's what the Lord Jesus said:

"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56).



Memory Verse

Timon: Wow! Bravo, Dokdok! You made a new stamp exactly like the one Gedo made!

Dokdok: Alright, now let's hurry to the church and give it to Abouna. I see him at the church door from up here—let's catch up with him!

Natali: Hi Abouna...

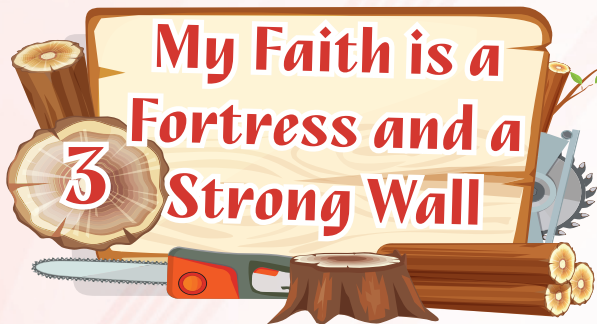
Abouna: Oh! Hi Timon and Natali! How are you doing?



Timon: Thank God, Abouna. Gedo sent you the new stamp for Orbana.

Abouna: Gedo Amin is a wonderful man! He is a talented artist! I really appreciate all the things he makes. He always make it with such precision and care. Thank you so much. Let me check it out. Wait a minute. Something is not quite right! **Abouna was very surprised when he first saw the seal.**





Abouna: Are you sure guys Gedo Amin made this stamp?!!

Timon: No... I mean yes!

Natali: As you can see, Abouna, this one looks exactly like

it. I am trying to say that this one is very similar to Gedo's work.

Abouna: What's going on, Timon and Natali? Something is not right with you both.

Timon: Honestly Abouna, this is not the seal that Gedo Amin made!



Timon and Natali told Abouna everything that happened and what Dokdok did. And they showed Abouna the stamp that fell from Dokdok in the mud. They showed Abouna how the orig-

inal stamp broke.

Timon: Well! We are so sorry Abouna for not telling you the truth from the beginning.

Natali: Yes, Abouna, we are also sorry for not going back to Gedo to tell him what happened to the stamp he made.



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

Abouna: Thank you, guys. Great job for telling the truth... and for trying to keep your promise as much as you could. I told you, there is no way that Gedo Amin made such silly mistakes. Over here some of the Coptic letters are missing from here, and the number of crosses is not correct either. This could not be Gedo Amin's work.

Timon: Great job for what, Abouna? We made a mistake, and we're really embarrassed. We don't know how to tell Gedo the truth.

Abouna: You did well by trying to fix your mistake and you confessed your mistake. As for Gedo, we pray that God gives you the right words to speak to him so you can apologize to apologize to him. We also, need to pray that God may help Gedo not to be upset with you.



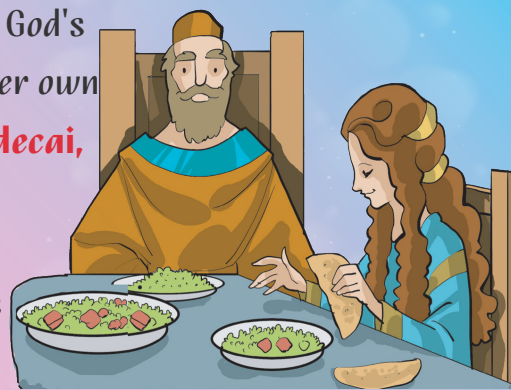
Natali: Wow, Abouna! We pray that God gives us the right words to speak. This is such a beautiful request. I've never heard anyone making such a request in prayer before!

Abouna: Actually Natali, there is a beautiful heroine who prayed to God to protect her and her people, and she asked Him to give her the perfect words to speak to the king. Let me tell you her story!

The Queen that Saved Her People The Book of Esther



Abouna: A long time ago, there was a beautiful Jewish girl (from God's people) named **Esther**. She lived in Persia, a land far away from her own country. Her parents died when she was little, so her cousin, **Mordecai**, took care of her. Mordecai loved God so much and always trusted Him. Mordecai taught Esther to trust God and to love Him. He taught her to serve Him and obey His commandments. Esther was also obedient to Mordecai.



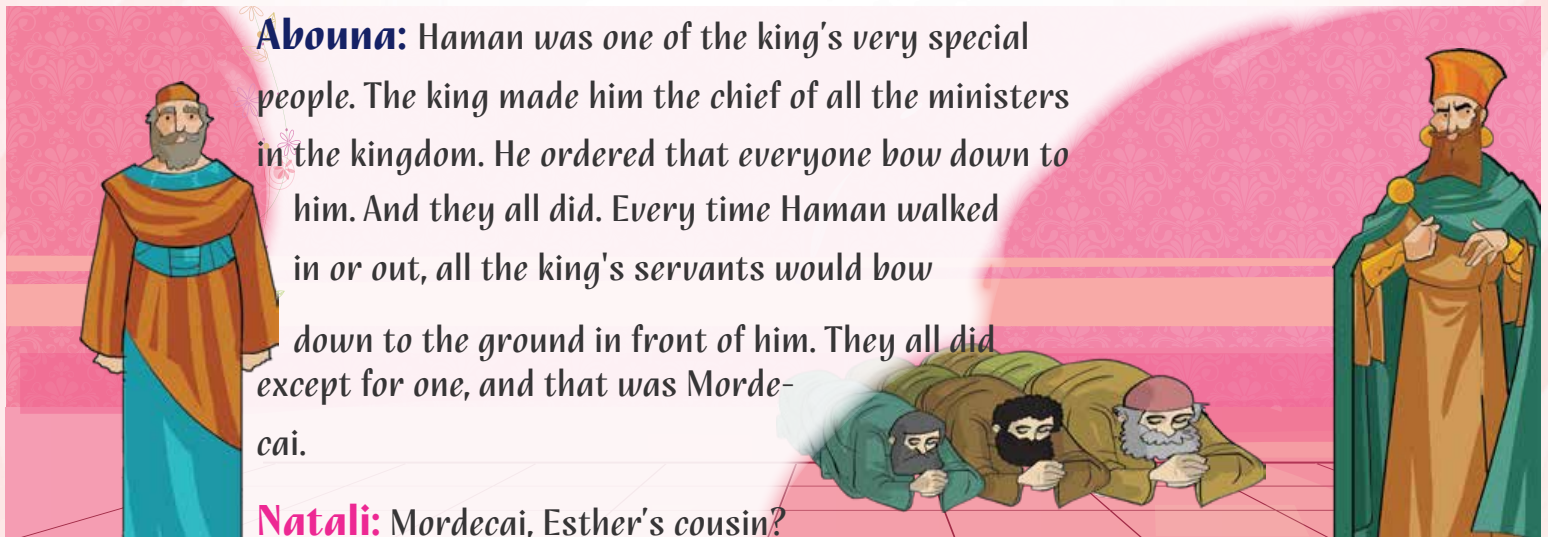
Continue in the things which you have learned (2 Timothy 3:14)



Abouna: God gave **Esther** a special grace more than all the girls who were with her, and the King of Persia chose her to be his queen. But no one knew that she was of God's people. Then, one day, there was a conspiracy. Someone whose name was **Haman** had an evil plan to hurt God's people, the Jews.

Timon: A conspiracy? What happened?

Natali: And who is Haman?



Abouna: Haman was one of the king's very special people. The king made him the chief of all the ministers in the kingdom. He ordered that everyone bow down to him. And they all did. Every time Haman walked in or out, all the king's servants would bow down to the ground in front of him. They all did except for one, and that was Mordecai.

Natali: Mordecai, Esther's cousin?

Abouna: Yes, exactly. Mordecai, because he loved God, followed His commandments and obeyed Him. God's commandment said that he should bow only to God. Haman was very angry that Mordecai wouldn't bow down to him. Haman was a wicked man, so he plotted a conspiracy and an evil plan not only to get rid of Mordecai but also to kill all of God's people.

Timon: And what was this conspiracy?



Abouna: Haman went to the king and said, "There is a group of people who have different customs than ours, and they do not follow the king's rules. That is why the king should get rid of them."

Timon: For sure God's people would never follow the king's customs because they only follow God's commandment even if they were in a strange land. I wonder if the king agreed to Haman's idea to get rid of the Jews.

Abouna: Unfortunately, he did. The king agreed with Haman. Haman then wrote letters announcing the date when they would get rid of all the Jews in the kingdom. He sealed

the letter with the king's stamp and sent a letter to each town in the kingdom. Haman wanted to get rid of Mordecai and all the Jewish People.

Natali: The whole Jewish people? That's terrible! How could this happen? This is a huge problem!

Abouna: Yes, it's a big problem indeed. But God is always with His children and will never leave them. Let me tell you what happened next... When Mordecai and all of God's people heard the news, they prayed and fasted. When Esther heard that Mordecai and all the people were fasting and praying hard, she sent messengers to ask him about the reason. Mordecai wrote her a letter explaining what had happened. He also sent her a copy of the king's announcement, stamped with the king's stamp, and asked her to talk to the king for her people. But, of course, the request was very difficult for her to do.





Timon and **Natali**: Why was it so difficult?



Abouna: This was a difficult thing to do because there was a rule in the kingdom that no one could go talk to the king unless the king himself called for them. If anyone entered to the king without the king calling them, they could be killed. That was the reason why, at first, Esther did not want to go talk to the king. But after Mordecai told her about what was happening, she changed her mind.



Natali: How? And what did she do?

Abouna: Esther always trusted in God's promises. She asked Mordecai to ask all the Jews who live in the land to fast and pray for three days before she goes to the king. Esther and all her servants fasted too. They believed that God would answer their prayers and save them. Esther prayed with a strong faith, asking God to save them. She also asked God to give her favor in the king's eyes and to give her the right words to speak when she sees him. She also asked God to make the king change his decision and not to kill all the Jews. At the end of her prayer, she prayed for all her people, saying



"Heed the voice of those who have no other hope" (Esther 14:19).



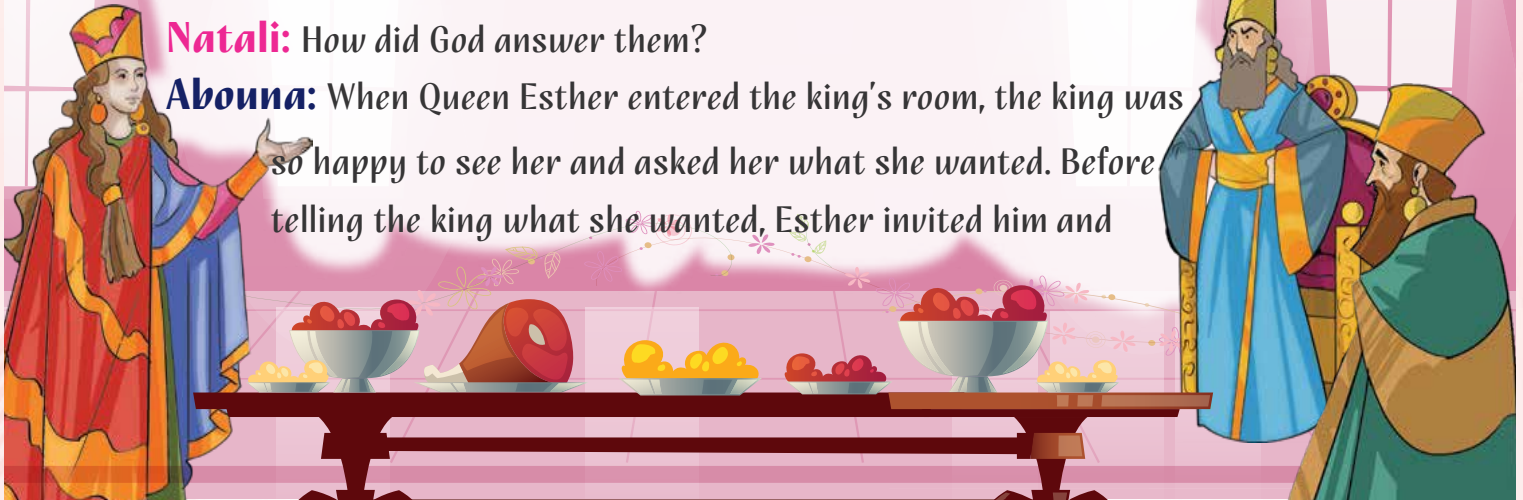
Memory Verse



Abouna: Indeed, through the power of their prayers and fasting, God answered them.

Natali: How did God answer them?

Abouna: When Queen Esther entered the king's room, the king was so happy to see her and asked her what she wanted. Before telling the king what she wanted, Esther invited him and



Haman to two banquets (one banquet each day). After the second banquet, Queen Esther told the king her request.

Timon: I wonder what her request was!

Abouna: Esther asked the king to save her life and the lives of her people because they were in great danger. She told him that the one that wanted to kill them all was Haman. When the king heard that, he became very angry and ordered that Haman be killed.

Natali: God answered their prayers and fasting and saved His people. Please continue, Abouna, what happened next?



Abouna: Let me tell you... One of the rules in the kingdom was that the king can never cancel the law he made. So, the king made a new law. The new law said the Jewish people can defend themselves. That meant that if someone came to fight them, they could fight back. And they indeed defended themselves. Everyone became joyful because God heard their prayers and saved them. They celebrated their victory and



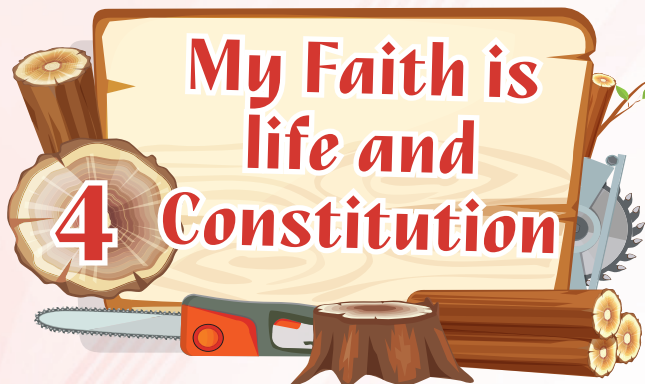
salvation every year
with a feast called the **"Feast of Purim."**

Timon: Really? After they had a huge problem and were about to be killed, now they're celebrating their victory?

Abouna: Exactly, Timon! You see how when they trusted God and obeyed His commandments even when everyone around them wasn't, God answered their prayers and saved them. Same for us. When we follow God's commandments, God will surely hear our prayers and save us. He will give us the perfect solutions for our problems. no matter how hard or difficult they are,

Abouna: You, too, are brilliant and brave. I am sure that God will give you the right words to apologize to Gedo Amin, and that he will forgive you. Now, go to Uncle George the Orban maker, he can help fix the seal your Gedo Amin made.

And so, they went to Uncle George the Orban maker, to the room where he makes Orban-as (Bethlehem).



Timon and **Natali**: Uncle George, Uncle George, we missed you!



Uncle George:
Timon and

Natali! So good to see you both. How's it going? You are here today to bring me the communion stamp that Gedo Amin made. Right?



Natali: Yes... but unfortunately, it fell, and the engravings are no longer clear. Abouna told us to show it to you; maybe you can fix it.

Uncle George:
Let me see.
Oh wow, I cannot see

any engravings at all.



Timon: So, what can we do to fix it and bring it to its original shape?!

Uncle George: The only one who can fix it is the one that, originally, made it. He has the tools and the ability to fix it. He's the best person to restore it back to its original shape because he's the one who made it. Exactly just like what happened to us.





Timon: It happened to us? When did we fall in the mud?!

Uncle George: Yes, Timon, all of humanity fell into sin, and our nature became corrupted

The Virgin Mary, the Mother of God (Theotokos)



Uncle George: Let me tell you the story all the way from the beginning...

When Adam and Eve didn't listen to God's word and fell into sin, they were sentenced to death. Not only them, but all their descendants (children) after them. Everyone inherited sin and its consequences. That was how they separated themselves from God. Their nature was corrupted, and all humanity became in need of someone to save them from sin, its

punishment, and the consequences. We became in need of someone to lift the sentence of death from us, renew our corrupted nature, and to give us a new life.

God promised us that He would be born from the seed of a woman, that He would take our place, redeem us, and save us, so we could return to live with Him forever. People waited for this promise to be fulfilled for many many years. Many prophets of old spoke prophecies about God coming and being born of a virgin girl (a girl that was never married). They also, wrote about her beautiful qualities.

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



Year after year and each Jewish girl (from God's people) wished to be that girl. Then, when the perfect time came, and God chose the one He wanted to be born from so He would fulfill His promise for God to redeem us as He promised, He chose a simple girl that no one knew. That girl was filled with many beautiful qualities. No other girl was like her who came before her or after her. She loved God with all her heart, and she loved the people too. She was quiet and humble. She was also full of wisdom and loved to pray and to serve. And many other beautiful qualities that no one else ever had. Can you guess who the girl is?



Natali and **Timon**: Our Mother, the Virgin Saint Mary.



Uncle George: Yes, the girl who had all these qualities is our Mother, the Virgin Saint Mary. She lived in a small town called "Nazareth." One day, God sent **Archangel Gabriel** to her to deliver a message, saying: "**And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and shall call His name Jesus**" (Luke 1:31). When the Virgin Mary heard this, she became confused because she was not married (**virgin**).

Natali: So, she was a virgin, just like the prophecies told us!

Uncle George: Yes, Natali, and that's why our church calls our Mother, the Virgin Saint Mary, by the title "**The Ever-Virgin**." This means that she lived her whole life and never got married. She was a virgin, before, during, and after giving birth to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Natali: Yes, Uncle George, can you, please tell us the rest of the story?

Uncle George: The Virgin Mary was surprised and asked the angel how will this happened? The angel answered and said to her: **"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God"** (Luke 1:35). Right away, the Virgin Mary, with all humility, obeyed what the Lord told her.

Uncle George: After that, the Archangel Gabriel also told her that Elizabeth, her cousin, is pregnant. When Saint Mary heard from the angel that her relative **Elizabeth** was pregnant and about to give birth to a child, she immediately ran up the hills to Elizabeth's house to serve her. When she arrived, as soon as Elizabeth heard Saint Mary's greeting, something very strange happened that confirmed that the Virgin Mary was indeed the **"Theotokos"** which means (**Mother of God**).

Natali and Timon: What happened?

Uncle George: The child in Elizabeth's womb leapt (jumped) for joy, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She recognized that **Saint Mary was carrying the Lord Jesus** in her womb. She said with a loud voice:



"But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43).

Memory Verse





Uncle George: Then, Saint Mary praised God and thanked Him. She said: "**For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed**" (Luke 1:48). Since then, the church always honors her. The church calls the Virgin Mary as the "**Theotokos**" which means (**The Mother of God**). And we always pray and say : "**We exalt you, the Mother of the True Light...**" (The introduction of the Orthodox Creed). This reminds us of Saint Mary's great honor and position in our church.



Timon: She truly deserves to be honored by everyone... after all, she is the "Mother of God."

Uncle George: You are right, Timon! Let me continue telling the story. After the Virgin Mary gave birth to our Lord Jesus in **Bethlehem**, she watched the Lord Jesus grow little by little. She was with Him in many events. She even followed Him all the way to the cross. After our **Lord Jesus ascended to heaven**, she continued to help the disciples in their service until the day of her departure to heaven (the day she passed away). She departed to heaven on the **21st day of Toba**. This day became a great feast in our Church. Saint Mary is the greatest among the saints. That is why, in her icon we see a halo around her head—because she is the **Mother of God**.

Natali: The icon of our Mother, the Virgin, is so beautiful! It's full of lovely colors. (**An icon is a picture that has been anointed with Chrismation oil**).

Uncle George: That's true, Natali! You'll notice that the Virgin Mary is always wearing red in the icon because **the color red is the royal color**. Kings and queens would wear red. This is because she is **the Queen the Mother of the King of Kings**, Our Lord Jesus Christ. That's why, in the icon, she is dressed in red. Similarly, Jesus is also wearing red because He is the **King of Kings**.



Natali: And she is also wearing blue, the color of the sky. I wonder why!

Uncle George: Because our Mother, the Virgin Mary, carried Jesus in her womb, she became **the Second Heaven**.

Timon: Yes! The Virgin Mary is the second heaven.

Natali: Right, Timon! It looks like are going over the titles and traits of **our Mother**, the Virgin Mary. I wonder why?



Timon: For sure I do. Because I want to know them to call on her using her titles when I ask for her intercession in my prayers.

Uncle George: Well done, Timon! That is exactly what our beautiful Church teaches us—to honor her and always ask for her intercession. Because of her great honor, our Church calls on her before the angels and all the saints. We also sings many hymns and praises about her!

Here is picture of the **Theotokos (Mother of God)** for each of you, so you can always remember her titles and attributes.

Natali: Thank you so much, Uncle George! I can list them for you:

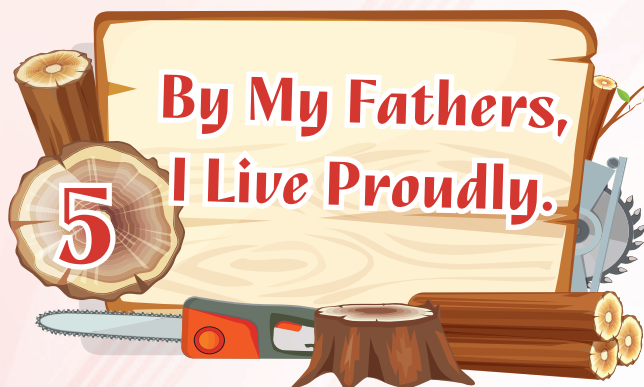
**The Theotokos
(Mother of God)**

**The Ever
Virgin**

**The Second
Heaven**

The Queen

**The Mother
of the King of
Kings**



After Uncle George finished his talk, Timon and Natali set off, and Dokdok, who was waiting for them at the church door, joined them. They were so excited to go back home and see Gedo

and tell him everything that had happened to them. On their way, they had this conversation...

Dokdok: I'm so sorry, guys, for what I did... and sorry that I couldn't take care of what Gedo made. I should have learned from Gedo how to be trustworthy.

Timon: Even though what happened wasn't supposed to happen, you've realized your mistake Dokdok, which is a good thing. We trust that God will give us nice words, and for sure Gedo will forgive us just as Abouna told us.



Dokdok: I'm sure Gedo will forgive me because he always forgives me when I make a mistake. I learn a new lesson every time I make a bad choice. You guys should be proud of Gedo. He's such a kind man, and everyone who lives with him learns from him day after day. Every day I learn something new from him.

Natali: Like what, Dokdok? Can you give us an example of something you have learned from Gedo?





Dokdok: I have so many stories, I'm not sure which one to tell!

Timon: You know, Dokdok, you should write down what you learned every time something happens so we all can learn new lessons every time someone reads your stories.

Dokdok: Hmmm, keep a journal! I wonder how this would help.



Natali: Your journal could benefit all of us, Dokdok... Everyone could learn from what Gedo does.



Timon: Do you know, Dokdok, what helps us learn the history of our church and the stories of our fathers and grandfathers? This happens by writing and passing it on faithfully from generation to generation.

Dokdok: Can you tell me more, Timon?

Timon: Let me explain to you!

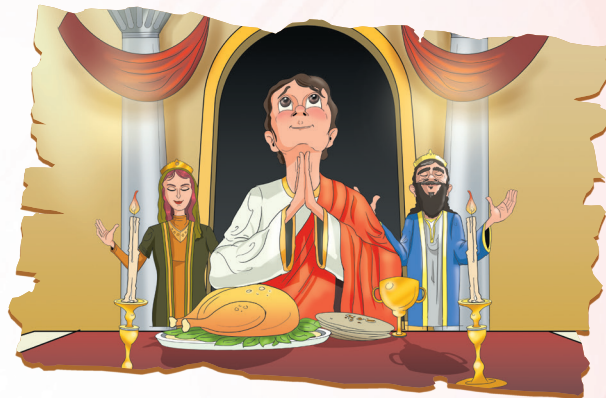




Saint Julius of Aqfahs (Synaxarium Tout 22nd)



Timon: Our church has strong, deep roots. One of the most important of these roots is the heroes who have kept the True Faith. With the power of God and His protection, they were able to stand firm in their faith in front of everyone. Even when it meant they needed to sacrifice their lives for their faith (they became martyrs). Their love for God was so strong that they led many people to Christianity. And we, their children, should know their stories and learn from them. I will tell you about an important saint who **collected many stories of the martyrs** of our church. His name is **Saint Julius of Aqfahs**. He is known as “**The Writer of the Stories of the Martyrs**” in our church



Saint Julius was born to a very wealthy Christian family in a city called **Aqfahs** in Egypt, which is why he was named “**Julius of Aqfahs.**”

Later on, Julius moved to the city of **Alexandria**. He lived there during the time when Emperor Diocletian persecuted the Christians.



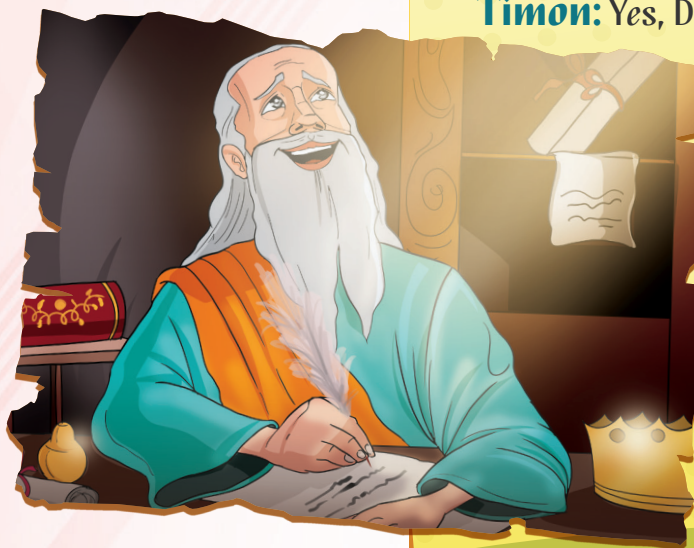
Julius served the saints who were getting martyred. He visited them in prison to help and to encourage them. And whenever they were brought to trial in front of the judge or the king, he would follow them. And if he saw any of them enduring torture, he would get them medical care.



Julius always wanted to be present at the places of martyrdom to take the bodies of the saints and honor them with great respect. He would then send their bodies to their home towns and kept them in a safe place so that people could get blessings from them.

Since Julius was so rich, he had **about 300 servants**. He ordered his servants to travel everywhere Christians were being martyred to take care of the bodies of the martyrs, bury them and write the life stories of each of the martyrs. **Saint Julius** would personally review the story of each martyr, making several copies of each one so that their story could spread to many places to make sure many people learned about their stories.

Dokdok: And that's how we learned what each martyr did to keep the faith, and we all keep learning from their stories.



Timon: Yes, Dokdok, God protected Saint Julius and gave him strength to serve the saints and take care of their bodies. He recorded their stories for us to learn from them. Then, one night, the Lord Jesus Himself appeared to Saint Julius in a vision and said: **"Rejoice, my beloved Julius, for many crowns are prepared for you. Go to Samannud and confess My Name, for many will believe in Me because of you."**

So, Saint Julius went to Samannud as the Lord told him. He declared his faith in the Lord Jesus. He endured many sufferings and performed many miracles through God's power and many people believed in the Lord Jesus because of him. Even the **governor of Samannud** and many others believed and became Christian. At the end, Saint Julius was martyred, and our church celebrates his feast day on the **22nd of Tout**.





Dokdok: I wonder where I can find the saints' stories that Saint Julius wrote?

Natali: Our church gathered all the stories of the saints that Saint Julius wrote, along with stories of other saints, in the book "**The Synaxarium.**"

Dokdok: And what is the book of the Synaxarium?

And until nowadays, new saints and
martyrs are added to the Synaxarium.
These are people who lived with us and
were able
to bear
witness
to the
Lord
with



The Synaxarium

Natali: The **Synaxarium** is the book that has **stories** of our fathers, the martyrs and saints, along with commemorations of feasts and fasting days. It is organized according to the days of **the Coptic year (the martyr calendar).**

their strong faith, in front of everyone around them. This way, we get to know their stories and learn from them. **They are our friends, and we ask for their intercessions through our prayers with them, while they ask the Lord on our behalf. Since God loves us and loves them, He hears our prayers and their intercessions for us, and He rejoices in our love and friendship for one another.** That's why the Holy Bible teaches us



"Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their of their conduct" (Hebrews 13:7).



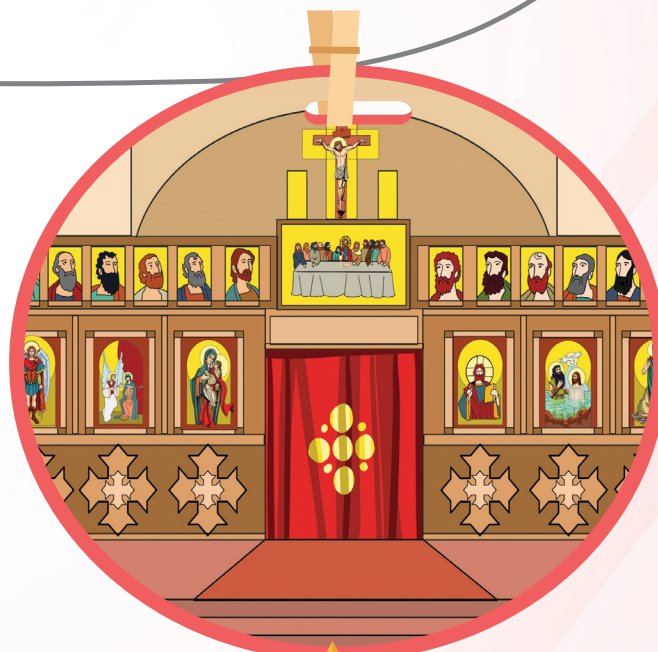
Memory Verse

Our church celebrates the martyrs in many different ways:



1

When we celebrate their feasts



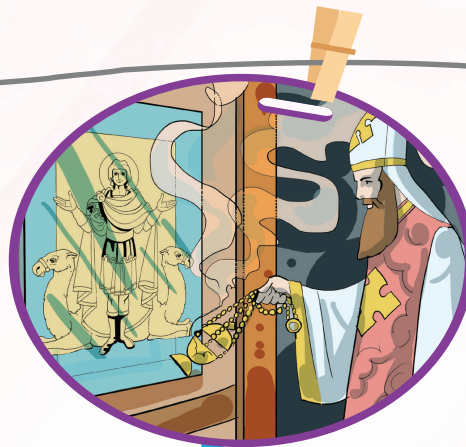
2

When we name churches after their names.



3

We name the priests,
bishops, monks and
nuns after the
names of the saints
and the martyrs.



4

Abouna offers incense
in front of their icons
because we are one
with them, We all love
the Lord Jesus. They
pray to the Lord on
our behalf and we ask
for their intercessions.



5

We paint icons to tell their
stories to remind everyone
with their faith and their
hard work to keep the faith;
so we can imitate them. We
also light candles in front of
their icons because they
were a light to the world.

Dokdok: Honestly, I really like the idea of recording the stories I learn from Gedo Amin, so everyone can learn from them.

Then, Dokdok, Timon, and Natali arrived at Gedo's house and told him everything that happened. Gedo thanked them for their honesty and that they had confessed their mistake. Gedo took the Orbana stamp and began to fix it. He returned it as good as new. Then, Timon, Natali, and Dokdok took the stamp and brought it safely to the church and gave it to Abouna.



Let us give thanks to the beneficent and merciful God, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, for He has covered us, helped us, guarded us, accepted us to Himself, spared us, supported us, and has brought us to this hour. Let us also ask Him, the Lord our God, the Pantocrator, to guard us in all peace this holy day and all the days of our life.

O Master, Lord, God the Pantocrator, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, we thank You for everything, concerning everything, and in everything, for You have covered us, helped us, guarded us, accepted us to Yourself, spared us, supported us, and have brought us to this hour.

Therefore, we ask and entreat Your goodness, O Lover of mankind, to grant us to complete this holy day, and all the days of our life, in all peace with Your fear.

All envy, all temptation, all the work of Satan, the counsel of wicked men, and the rising up of enemies, hidden and manifest, take them away from us, and from all Your people, and from this holy place.



But those things which are good and profitable do provide for us; for it is You Who have given us the authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, through the grace, compassion and love of mankind, of Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, through Whom the glory, the honor, the dominion, and the worship are due unto You, with Him, and the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, Who is of one essence with You, now and at all times, and unto the age of all ages. Amen.



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



Come let us kneel down, let us ask Christ our God.

Come let us kneel down, let us beseech Christ our King.

Come let us kneel down, let us entreat Christ our Savior.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, our God, through the intercession of Saint Mary and all Your saints, preserve us, and bring us to a good start. Have mercy on us according to Your will forever.

The night has passed; we thank You, O Lord, and we ask You to keep us this day away from sin and deliver us.





Memorizations



The Orthodox Creed



We believe in one God, God the Father, the Pantocrator, Creator of heaven and earth, and all things, seen and unseen.

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, by Whom all things were made; Who for us, men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried. And on the third day He rose from the dead, according to the Scriptures. Ascended into the heavens; He sits at the right hand of His Father, and He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets. And in one holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic Church. We confess one baptism for the remission of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. 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)



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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