# Mahragan El-Keraza

# 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



The Parable of the Prodigal Son

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3 Abraham the Man of Faith The Sacrament of Eucharist

> Saînt Macarîus

5

Pope Cyril the First



Hello to all our dear friends! Let me introduce myself: I am **Tommy**, this is my sister **Lauren**, and we are the grandchildren of **Gedo King Oro**, the ruler of the

### City of Healing.

We will tell you about the adventure we had when we discovered the manuscript of miraculous med-

icine. During our journey, we were accompanied by our city's doctor, and we got to know the wise man of the city. Along the way, we learned all the stories and tales in this book. From them, we understood how to apply the verse that says:

<sup>6</sup> 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).



This is the verse that inspires the theme for this year's Mahragan as we will learn the following lessons:

**1. The Parable of the Prodigal Son** – We will learn about God's love for us and His acceptance of every sinner's repentance, leading us to explore the first anchor of our theme verse, "...**But you**" which is represented in the pillar of **"I Rejoice in His Arms".** 





2. The Sacrament of Eucharist – We will learn about one of the pillars of our Church, which teaches us how to remain truly steadfast in our Lord. This leads us to the second anchor, (...must continue) which is "Well Rooted and Steadfast".
3. Abraham the Man of Faith – From Abraham,

we learn about the result of

strong faith and trust in our Lord, 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. Pope Cyril – From Pope Cyril, we will learn about the way to keep the 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**– Finally, we will learn about a hero among the founders of the monastic system, Saint Macarius, leading us to explore the fifth anchor, (...knowing from whom you have learned them) which is represented in the pillar of "I am Proud of My Forefathers"

Once upon a time, one of the greatest wisemen lived in the City of Healing. He had a medication that could heal any sickness and disease. The ingredients for this medicine were written in a scroll. This healing medicine was the source of strength for the city. That is what made King Oro eager to keep this scroll secure in a secret room that had guards. One



day, King Oro woke up and heard someone screaming at the top of his lungs. **Guard 1:** Help! Help, O King! We're in big trouble.

King Oro: What happened? Why are you screaming?

**Guard 2:** During our midnight break, the safe was opened and the secret scroll was stolen.

**King Oro:** What! The scroll was stolen? Blow the trumpets and close the gates of the city before the thief escapes with the scroll. Also, create search parties to look everywhere.

Lauren: Gedo King Oro, what is happening?

**Tommy:** Why are the trumpets being blown so loud?

**King Oro:** The most precious object of the city has been stolen. I told the guards to blow the trumpets and shut the gates of the city. No one will rest until we bring it back.

**Tommy:** No way! The scroll for the magical medicine got stolen! But who would do such an act?!

Lauren: For sure someone from outside the city. There is no way any of the villagers would do



such a thing because they love their city. They love their King because he is the best king in the world. He treats his people with love and respect. King Oro provides all the villagers with the care they need to stay healthy. I cannot imagine anyone would do that. How could someone leave Gedo King Oro and his tender love and all the goodness in the city and go to another city that is far away?





**Tommy:** He probably thinks that outside of the city and away from Gedo he will be free and happy.

**King Oro**: I know what you mean, Tommy. I will let you tell Lauren the story I told you when we were visiting the villagers last time. Meanwhile, I will go check on the guards and follow up on the search.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

(Luke 15:1-24)

**Tommy:** This story is one of the parables the Lord Jesus told us. Our Lord Jesus used to tell parables to explain some difficult concepts in an easy and simple way. These parables were like made-up stories (realistic fiction). They took place in places that were a lot like the cities where the people lived. I want to tell you today "**The Parable of the Prodigal Son**". The Lord Jesus told this parable when He was answering the Scribes and the Pharisees. The Scribes and the Pharisees



were angry when they saw the Lord Jesus was spending time with the tax collectors and the sinners. They said that the Lord Jesus accepts the sinners, and He eats with them.

The Lord Jesus told them this parable to explain to them that He loves everyone no matter how bad their sins are. However, the Lord Jesus does not like the sin. He always keeps His arms wide open for everyone and He searches for them everywhere. And if anyone runs away from God, He waits for them to come back to His bosom and rejoices when he comes back because He is our loving God.

Lauren: I am not sure who the scribes, the Pharisees, and the tax collectors are.

**Tommy:** Let me tell you, Lauren.

were a group of Jewish leaders whose job was to write and copy the Holy Scriptures. The scribes were expected to teach the people about God and His laws. The Lord Jesus scolded them many times because they were not following God's rules that they were teaching the people. (Matthew 7).

The Scribes

were another group of **Jewish leaders** that were very strict about the law. They **literally followed the commandments.** 

The Pharisees

**Tommy:** Let us read the parable from the Holy Bible. Lauren, please open Luke 15:11–24, and let's focus on the three things that Gedo King Oro asked us to pay attention to while reading the Holy Bible.

Help Lauren and Tommy fill in their notes.

Were **a group of people** whose job was to **collect taxes** for the Roman government. They often collected **more money** than they should and **kept the extra money** for themselves.

**Tax Collectors** 



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This parable was about a father that had two sons. One day, **the younger son** asked his father to take his share of his father's money while his father was still alive. He said, **"Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to** me."

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Although the younger son's request was very strange, the father gave his son what he asked and **gave him his share**. A few days later, the younger son gathered all his belongings and left his father's house and traveled to a **faraway country**. There, he **wasted** all his money with a **prodigal living**.

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He did whatever he wanted away from his father thinking that he would be happier if he lived away from his father.

**Lauren:** He thought that leaving his father's house and doing whatever he wanted was true freedom! That's so strange...

Tommy: Exactly, Lauren! Let me continue the story...



**Tommy:** There, in that faraway country, after he had wasted all his money, **a severe famine** struck the country. He felt hungry and he had no money to buy food or find a place to live in. Since he was the one who had chosen this life and distanced himself from his father by his own will, he had to face the consequences of his choice.

So, he tried to find work and eventually found a simple job—as **a pig herder (feeder).** He was so hungry that he wished he could eat the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one allowed him to have any.

Lauren: Wow!! That's really tough. All of this because he misunderstood what freedom truly meant.

**Tommy:** Exactly, Lauren. But the son finally realized his mistake.

He remembered that even the lowest servant in his father's house had a better life than the life he was

living away from his father's house. He thought to himself, "How many of my father's hired servants have food to eat and to spare, and here I am starving to death."

So he decided to go back and say to his father, "I have sinned against heaven and against you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:18–19).



**Lauren:** Good for him. Now we can call the younger son the "**Wise Son**" because he thought about returning to his father's bosom.

**Tommy:** Exactly, Lauren. He was wise because he came to his senses and understood freedom correctly. He realized that everything he thought was limiting his freedom, like his father's teachings and commandments, were actually protecting him from sinning. That's the true freedom.

Lauren: I wonder what happened when he returned to his father?

**Tommy:** He found his father's loving arms waiting for him. As soon as his father saw him from a distance, he ran toward him, hugged him, and kissed him with great joy.

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."

(Luke 15:20).

#### Tommy: The wise son admitted his mis-

**takes** to his father that he was wrong in everything he had done. Out of the father's joy for his son's return, he would not let him finish his sentence and forgave him. The father ordered his servants to **dress him in the finest robe**, put a **ring** on his

finger, and **shoes** on his feet. He even threw a great feast. The father also ordered his servants to s**langhter the fattened calf.** Everyone celebrated with great joy.

Lauren: The father really loved his son, and despite what he had



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done and how far he had gone, when he came back, the father was overjoyed

**Tommy:** And that's the most important point we should understand from this parable, Lauren.

Lauren: What did Jesus want to tell us?

#### **Tommy:** I will tell you.

The **father's character** in the parable represents **God**. Everything the father did for his son shows how God loves each of His children with deep compassion. The love of the father to his son is so clear in everything the father did to his son when he returned back. This represents God and His compassion towards us.

Let me show you how every action of the father is supported by evidence from the passage of the parable.



#### Because of God's Love for us

He created us in His image and likeness, and He gave us freedom of choice. He gave us commandments, not to control us, but so we could have the freedom to choose whether to follow them and live with Him or reject them and distance ourselves from Him (God gave us freedom).

# He gave us freedom.

Because of God's Love for us

He waits for us to return to Him. Once we return to Him, God rejoices greatly. (God's joy at our repentance and our return is beyond any imagination).

#### He rejoices when we repent and return back to Him

#### Because of God's Love for us

Even when we sin, our sin does not change God's love for us. God loves us, but He hates sin. He continues to wait for our return to Him every day. And when we return and run to Him, He accepts our repentance (God accepts

# repentance

He accepts our

#### Because of God's Love for us

The greatest gift God gave us was that He was incarnated, became human, and was crucified to redeem us. He took our place and bore the punishment for us, so that the justice of God would be fulfilled (He gave abundantly).

### His gifts are limitless

### Tommy: Bravo, Lauren!

**Lauren:** Now I understand why you told me that it's possible the one who stole the notebook is someone from our town. We should help Gedo get his notebook back.

**Tommy**: Exactly, we need to help him find it and return it to our city.



Gedo King Oro was happy to find out that his grandchildren, Tommy and Lauren, wanted to help him search for the sacred scroll. Tommy and Lauren began to execute their plan.

**Tommy:** We'll start with the safe which is where Gedo keeps all the secret scrolls. We might be able to find some evidence that leads us to the real thief that stole the sacred scroll.

### Lauren: That's a brilliant idea! (Tommy

and Lauren move toward the room where the safe is). Let's take a look. Did you find anything yet?



before he runs out of the city.

**Tommy:** I think so. Look, I found something important. There are some traces of mud and crushed mulberries on the ground.

Well Rooted

and

Steadfast

Lauren: Do you think it's the footprints of the thief who stole the notebook?

**Tommy:** Yes, exactly! And that's proof that he came from the outskirts of the town, because mulberry trees are planted there, near the city's old wall.

Lauren: Alright, let's go find him



### Tommy and Lauren ran toward the western old wall of the city.

Lauren: Do you see that man holding the jar over there, Tommy?

Tommy: Yes, I see him, Lauren. He looks suspicious.

**Lauren:** Quick, he's leaving footprints. He must have noticed us! Run, Tommy! Hurry, guards, guards! Arrest the man who's jumping over the city wall!

**Tommy:** Watch out, Lauren! He's throwing the jar that is in his hand at us! **Lauren:** Oh no, we couldn't catch him in time!

**Tommy:** Wait, Lauren, look! What is that inside that jar? Wow... can it be? It's the scroll! Yay! **Lauren:** Wow! Thank God! Gedo will be so happy, and the whole town will celebrate, Tommy!

The bells rang, announcing the start of celebrations all over the town – a celebration for finding the missing scroll. After that, the doctors began preparing the medicine using the formula that is recorded in the scroll to make the miraculous medicine and distribute it to everyone. But something happened that no one expected!

**Gedo King Oro**: How is this happening? What went wrong? Is something wrong with the doctors? Or is it with the ingredients they used? Why is everyone getting sick after taking the medicine? I don't understand!

**Doctor John:** The issue is with the active ingredient, Your Highness. **Lauren:** What do you mean by "active ingredient"?



Gedo King Oro: It's the main ingredient that makes the medicine work.

**Doctor John:** We followed the instructions very carefully to make the active ingredient exactly as it's written in the scroll. However, I suspect that someone had changed the recipe for the active ingredient in the scroll.

**Gedo King Oro:** So are you trying to say that the recipe for the active ingredient is written incorrectly in the scroll?

Doctor John: Yes, exactly.

**Tommy:** Can we just take out that active ingredient or replace it?

**Gedo King Oro:** That is Impossible. It's the most important component of the entire medicine. Without it, the medicine wouldn't be effective, and it would not help the sick. The active ingredient,

Tommy, is the one that enters inside us and heals us from our diseases.

Lauren and Tommy: What do you mean?

**Gedo King Oro:** Let me simplify it to you with something you both know very well – our Church – so you can understand what it means.









**Gedo King Oro:** One of the Sacraments of our Church's seven sacraments is called **"The Sacrament of Sacraments"**. When we practice that Sacrament, it is like when the sick person takes a medication. In other words, **when we practice it, we get our sins forgiven.** Can you guess which sacrament it is?

Lauren: I am not sure, Gedo. Can you tell us please?

Gedo King Oro: The Sacrament of Eucharist, Lauren! The Eucharist is the sacrament



After we practice the Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of Chrismation, we must receive the Sacrament of Eucharist After we practice the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession, we must receive the Sacrament of Eucharist



through which we are united with the Lord Jesus.
Lauren: Why do we call it "The Sacrament of Sacraments"?
Gedo King Oro: We call it "The Sacrament of Sacraments" because it is like the crown for all the sacraments. Let me give you some examples:



After the **Sacrament of Holy Matrimony**, the couple should partake of the **Sacrament of Eucharist** regularly. When someone is ordained a **priest**, he must partake of the **Sacrament of Eucharist** at the end of the ordination liturgy.

And finally, in the **Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick**, the sick person must **confess** before receiving the sacrament, and then partake of the **Holy Eucharist** after the sacrament is completed.



**Tommy:** Gedo, I know when the Eucharist was established!

Lauren: When Tommy?

**Tommy:** On Holy Thursday, when the Lord Jesus gathered His disciples in the Upper Room in St. Mark's house. He instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist before them.

Gedo King Oro: Well done, Tommy!



Before our Lord Jesus established the Eucharist, He washed His disciples' feet, to teach them that before partaking of the Eucharist, they must be prepared and repent



And after He washed their feet, He took the bread in His hands, **blessed** (gave thanks), **broke** it, and **gave it** to the disciples to eat, saying to them: **"Take, eat; this is My body"** (Matthew 26:26). And that is why we call the Eucharist **The Sacrament of Thanksgiving.** 

After that, the Lora Jesus took **the cup** of the grape juice, and when He **gave thanks**, He **gave it** to His disciples, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:27–28).





When the Lord Jesus instituted the Eucharist, He used leavened bread. This is because the leavened bread has yeast, and yeast symbolizes sin. By doing this, He wanted to show us that He would carry our sins through His sacrifice on the cross. is d

In this way, the Lord Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Eucharist and told His disciples: "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19).

**Tommy:** Gedo, can you explain the meaning of "**Do this in remembrance of Me**"? n the Yeast is a living substance that makes dough rise, but its action stops when it is baked in the hot oven. That means that just like when the yeast stops working once we put it in the heat, the Lord Jesus Christ stopped original sin through His sacrifice on the cross, paying our debts for us.



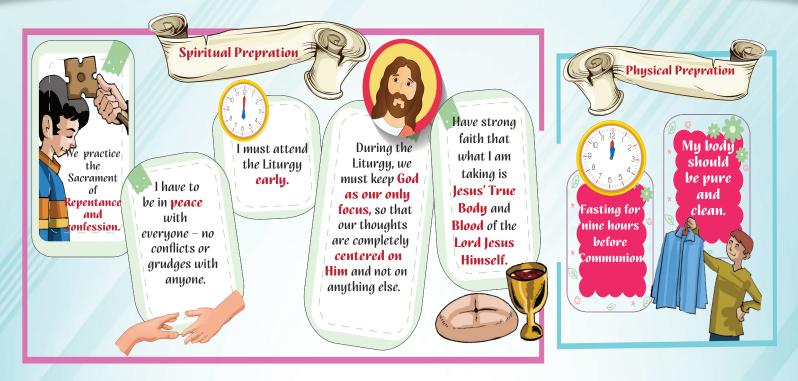
King Oro: It means that we must continue to practice the sacrament of Eucharist regularly and carefully, always remembering everything the Lord Jesus has done for us. The word "in remembrance" means that the Lord Jesus wanted to remind us that this is a living remembrance – meaning that Christ Himself is truly present in His Body and Blood every time we pray the Liturgy. That is what makes the Eucharistic sacrifice the continuation of the sacrifice of the Cross

Gedo

**Gedo King Oro:** I am sure you all know that we have to prepare ourselves before receiving the Holy Communion.

Lauren: I know what we have to do, Gedo!

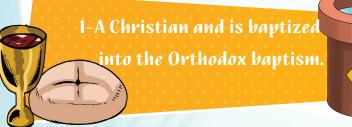




If we fall short in any of these points, we should **go to Abouna** (the priest) and **ask him for guidance**.

Gedo King Oro: Well said, Lauren! Well done.

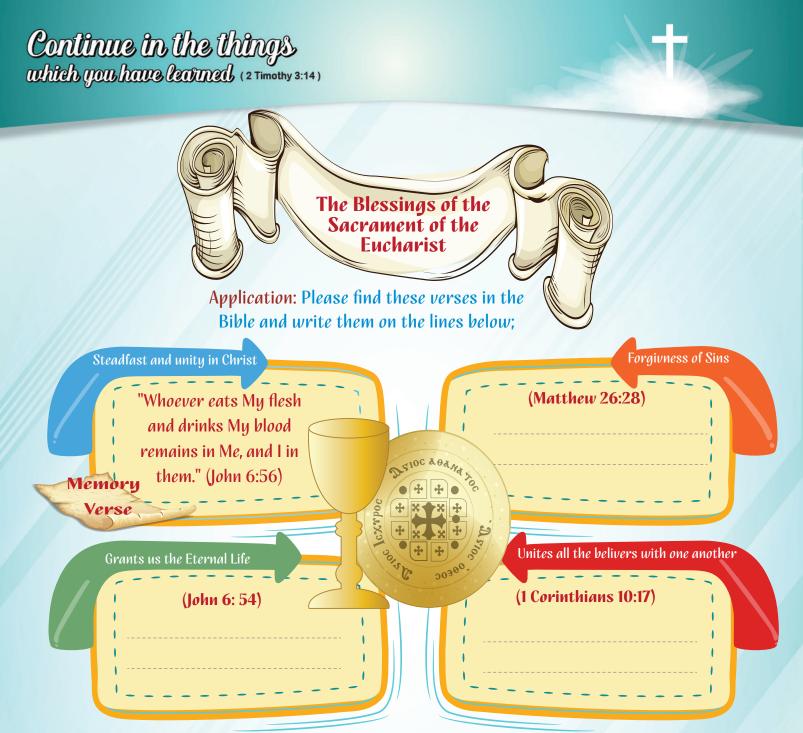
And remember, everyone who receives the **Body and Blood of the Lord** must be:



2–A believer in the Truth and the effectiveness of partaking in the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus

You should also know the many blessings we get when we partake of the **holy Eucharist**. That is why I told you that the holy Eucharist is a **medicine for all our sicknesses**.





Through **partaking of the holy Eucharist**, **our sins are forgiven**, and we are **united as believers** with one another, remaining **steadfast and united with the Lord Jesus** so that we may **receive eternal life**.

**Tommy:** So, we understand your point now: the effective participation in the Sacrament is the most important thing, as it is the true medicine for healing.

**Lauren:** But what should we do now? How will we know the right ingredient from the original manuscript?

**Gedo King Oro:** There is only one solution. **All:** What is it, Gedo?



My Faith is a Fortress and a Strong Wall"

him with this mission. Please, Gedo? **Lauren:** And I want to go too, Gedo! **Gedo King Oro:** The answer is with the Wiseman of the City. He was the first one in the city who made the medicine correctly with my Great Gedo, the first doctor of our city.

**Doctor:** With your permission, Your Highness, I will take with me the manuscript and go see him immediately. He will surely know where the mistake is and fix it.

Tommy: Can I go with the doctor and help

Gedo King Oro: Agreed. I will send you guards to protect you along the way.

On the way, Tommy and Lauren asked the city's doctor about the Wise Man, and his story.



**Doctor:** The story began when the Wiseman of the City was a young man living in a faraway village, surrounded by his family and loved ones. He met the great doctor who had the manuscript of the miraculous medicine that we have now. Out of his love for the great doctor of our city, and a desire to be like him, he chose to dedicate his life to helping people by giving them the right medicine to help them feel better.



He stayed with him and learned everything from him to the point that he left his village and family and came to live with the great doctor on the outskirts of our city. Together, they made medicine for the entire city and achieved great success.

Because of him, our city became one of the greatest cities in making this miraculous medicine. He preserved everything he learned from the great doctor until now.

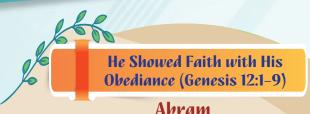
**Lauren:** That's strange. Who would leave their family, their loved ones, and their village, to live in a strange place they don't know?

**Doctor:** It's not strange at all. His love for the great doctor made him willing to sacrifice everything. That's why he left everything behind, because of his love for him. There's a story in the Old Testament which tells us about someone who did the same – left his family, his home, and his life to live in a strange land, because of his great trust and love for God. Let me remind you of his story.



**Doctor:** Our Father Abraham is known for his great faith. He was remarkable in his obedience and love for God. Even though Abraham faced many difficult challenges, he always had strong faith and trust in God's promises. He believed that with God's power, he could overcome any obstacle he faced. I will share his story with you now.





### was born in **Ur of the Chaldeans**, a famous and wealthy city. Abram lived with his father **Terah** and his brothers, and he was married to **Sarai**.

Although the people of **Ur of the Chaldeans** worshipped the idols, Abram had a faithful and pure heart. **Abram** was ready to live for God, with his wife Sarai, even though everyone around them did not worship God.

God wanted to set apart a people for Himself in order to...

1. Have a nation that believed in God in the midst of pagans, to be a reminder of God's commandments. 2. God wanted to prepare the world for the coming of the Lord Jesus in the flesh through this nation to save all humanity.

That's why God chose Abram. God told him to leave his country and go to a land that God would show him.

Lauren: Did Abram respond to God's call?

**Doctor:** Of course, Lauren! Every time God called Abram, he obeyed and responded to the call, even though he didn't know where he was going.



### In the First Time...

God asked Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldeans and said, "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you..." At that time, Abram listened to God's voice, and he left Ur of the Chaldeans with his wife Sarai, his father Terah, and his nephew Lot. They settled in the land of Haran and lived there for 15 years until his father Terah passed away (Acts 7:2).

#### Then God called Abram for the second time...

### In the Second Time...

God told Abram to leave the land of Haran and go to the land that He would choose for him. God promised that Abram would become a great nation and that He would bless him and his descendants. So, Abram left for the land of Canaan (which includes modern-day Lebanon, Palestine, and part of Jordan). He took with him Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew. At that time Abram was 75 years old.



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Verse

When Abram arrived in **Canaan**, God appeared to him and confirmed to him that **this was the land He had promised to Abram** and his descendants. Abram gave thanks to God and built an altar for the Lord. It was Abram's custom to build an altar to God wherever he went. After this, Abram traveled to a place called **Bethel** where he built another altar and set up his tents (Genesis 12:1–9).

And this was **the first station** in the life of the hero of our story, Abraham's life. We learn from **his strong willingness to obey God**. As the Holy Scripture says about him:

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going." (Hebrews 11:8)

There was a famine in Canaan, so Abram went down to **the land of Egypt**. After a while, Abram returned back to live again in **the land of Canaan**, specifically in Bethel. There, Abram lived with Lot his nephew.

#### Abram

With His Faith, He Offered Love... (Gensis 13:1–18)

became very rich. He had a large flock of livestock. One day, Abram's shepherds and Lot's shepherds had an argument. When Abram heard of the problem, he wanted to make peace with his nephew Lot. So, Abram told Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren." (Genesis 13:8). Although Abram being older, he made Lot choose the land where he wanted to live, and Abram would take the other part. Lot chose the best land, which was near the Jordan, and settled near Sodom and Gomorrah. Abram, on the other hand, settled in the land of Canaan.

Abram's decision showed **his great love and trust in God**. Because of his faith and his trust in God, God gave him everything and promised him to give him all the land before him. God will give it to him and to his descendants forever.

Abram kept his love for Lot to such mextent that when he heard about the war against Sodom and Gomorrah, in which Lot and his family were captured along with their possessions, Abram didn't hesitate to act. Abram took **318 of** his strong men to save Lot. He was able to successfully rescue Lot and his family and their possessions. After the victory, God reassured Abram, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your very great reward"



At that time, God promised Abram that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky

"And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).

This is the second station in the life of the hero of our story and it shows his great love. This great love was coming from his deep trust in God.







When Abram was **99 years old**, God appeared to him and made a covenant with him. He changed his name from Abram to **Abraham**, meaning "**Father of Many Nations**" and changed Sarai's name to **Sarah**.

God promised Abraham that **Sarah would give birth to a son, Isaac**, and that He would make His covenant with Isaac (Genesis 17).

**Lauren:** Even if it seemed impossible because of their old age? I wonder if God kept His promise to Abraham!

**Doctor:** Let me finish the story and you'll find the answer. One day, Abraham hosted **three men** (**the Lord and two angels**).

During the visit, the Lord told Abraham that around the same time next year, he and Sarah would have a son. And indeed, after a year, God fulfilled His promise to Abraham and gave them Isaac which means **"son of laughter"**, just as He had said. At that time, Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90 years old (Genesis 18:1–15, 21:1–8). **Tommy:** Is it real ly possible that after that many years, God fulfilled His promise to Abraham?!

**Doctor:** God always keeps His promises. That's why we call Isaac the **"Son of the Promise,"** because through him, God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled – the promise he had been waiting for with great faith.



And Tommy, one of the greatest moments in Abraham's life is one that showed the depth of his faith and trust in God. It proved that his love and obedience to God were above everything else.

Tommy and Lauren: Can you please tell us?

19).

Doctor: It was the time when God asked Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to Him. God asked him to offer his son because He wanted to show Abraham's faith and righteousness to the whole world so that he would be a role model for all. Since Abraham fully trusted in God's promise – that his descendants would be as many as the stars in the sky and knew that God loved him, he did not hesitate to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. He was sure that even if Isaac died, God had the power to raise him from the dead and bring him back to life. "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac... concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (Hebrews 11:17–

So, the next morning, Abraham took two of his servants and his son Isaac and set out for the place God had shown him.

Abraham built an altar and put Isaac his son on it. Both Isaac and Abraham obeyed and submitted completely to God's will. At that moment, God saved Isaac and provided a ram for Abraham to offer as a sacrifice instead of Isaac his son.

Then, Abraham heard a voice from heaven saying: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies." (Genesis 22:16–18).



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God rewarded Abraham for his **strong faith and his trust in Him**. Abraham also believed God's promises that He would bless him and He would give him many descendants. God's faithfulness to Abraham was evident in the fulfillment of His promises.

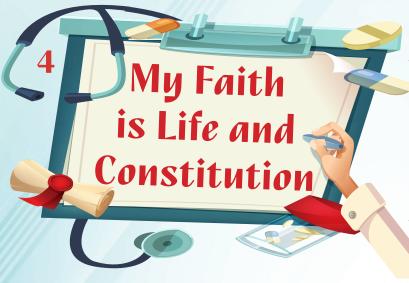
Blessing Abraham's descendants reminds us that from his descendants would come the **Messiah**, **the Lord Jesus Christ**, through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed.

Abraham went back home with his son Isaac, filled with joy because God saved Isaac.

**Tommy:** Truly, when we hear the story of our father Abraham and his trust in God, we learn what happens when we have strong faith and trust in God.

**Lauren:** You are right, Tommy. Because Father Abraham had faith and trust in God, God blessed him and gave him success in everything he did his entire life. You can definitely call him a "**hero of faith**."

Tommy, Lauren, and the Doctor arrived at their destination and continued their conversation.



The Doctor, Tommy, and Lauren went to the wise man of the city to tell him everything that had happened. The wise man looked at the manuscript, reviewed it, and was able to figure out what went wrong. He began to correct the mistakes and fixed the manuscript to its original recipe. Everyone was happy and thanked the wise man, and they went

back excited to tell everyone about what had happened. But when they arrived at the city market, they heard some sad news.

**Tommy:** What are the people talking about? What is this strange medicine they're telling everyone about?!

**Doctor:** Wait! Let me find out.

The doctor began to investigate the matter. A while later, he was able to figure out the source of the problem.

**Doctor:** It seems like **someone took advantage** of the fact that the miraculous medicine had an issue and people were getting sick, so he started going around spreading some strange medicine and using it to treat the people. **No one knows the source of that strange medicine.** Unfortunately, many people took that medicine and got hurt because it is **bad medicine**.

Lauren: Oh no! What's the solution then?!

**Doctor:** For sure the King had heard this news. Let's go to the palace and see what the King will do. **Lauren:** Hi Gedo, King Oro. We're back.



**Doctor:** Good afternoon, Your Highness. Mission accomplished. The Wise Man of the City was able to figure out the mistake in the recipe of the miraculous medicine. We tested it and it works fine now.

Gedo King Oro: Excellent news... I am so glad to hear that.

**Tommy:** But as we were coming back home, we heard some sad news circulating around the town. For sure you heard of it. What will we do about this?



Gedo King Oro: Don't worry. I've found a solution. I am hoping that my solution will take care of the problem.

**Lauren:** Tell us the solution so we can help you, Gedo.

**Gedo King Oro:** I'll write a public announcement that will be read by everyone in the city, to warn them of the bad effects of the new medicine and caution against any

strange medicines or teachings of unknown source. I'll ask all citizens to be careful and to watch out. They have to reject anything wrong that comes their way. We must preserve and pass on what we've learned to those who come after us. I'll also include a copy of the life stories of our ancestors who stood strong against false teachings and promoted the right teachings.

Lauren: What a brilliant idea, Gedo! I wonder who this hero is.

Gedo King Oro: Pope Cyril the First, the "Pillar of the Faith". I will tell you his story.



> Pope Cyril the First The Pillar of the Faith (Synaxarion Abib 3rd)

Gedo King Oro: Pope Cyril the First was born into

a family that loved God very much. His uncle was Pope Theophilus, the 23rd pope. Pope Theophilus took great care of him. He sent him to study at the Theological School of Alexandria, which was one of the major centers of education at that time. However, Pope Theophilus didn't just stop there; he also sent him to the Monastery of Saint Macarius the Great in Wadi El- Natrun to learn from Abba Serapion who was a disciple of Saint Anthony the Great.

Pope Cyril the First spent five years in the monastery, learning and studying. He loved studying the Holy Scriptures, and the Lord blessed him. God gave him a special talent to be able to learn any book he read by heart.



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After that, **Pope Theophilus** ordained Pope Cyril a **deacon**. He then ordained him **a priest**. Although Pope Cyril was young, everyone around him admired him and loved him because of **his deep understanding of the Holy Scriptures and his unique way of teaching**. After Pope Theophilus departed to heaven, the people voted to elect **Pope Cyril the First** as the **24th** Pope of Alexandria number. He dedicated himself to caring for his people and teaching them the Christian faith and doctrine.

**Lauren:** But Gedo, you told us that he was one of the **Heroes of the Faith** who stood up to the false teachings and instead he spread the correct teachings. Can you tell us how he did that?

**Gedo King Oro: Pope Cyril the First** was one of the most brilliant writers in theology (the divine nature). He writes with accurate understanding. One of the main issues he stood against was the **Nestorian heresy**.



Nestorius denied the **single, united nature of the Lord Jesus Christ**. Instead, Nestorius said that the Lord Jesus had two separate natures – one divine and one human. This belief is **wrong** because it **separated the divinity of Christ from His humanity**. Also, Nestorius refused to call Saint Mary "**The Theotokos**" which means **Mother of God**. He insisted that she gave birth to a human being, not **God in the flesh**.

The Nestorian

Heresy

Nestorius began teaching his wrong teaching to the people of **Constantinople**, but they refused to believe his ideas, and they refused to change their beliefs that they had received from their forefathers. When Pope Cyril heard about the Nestorian heresy, he was very upset. He wrote in his **Paschal letter** (that he sent to churches around the world on Easter every year) a message, **confirming the right faith**. He explained the errors in Nestorius' teachings. He also **sent many letters** to Nestorius, explaining why his ideas were wrong.

I. Nestorius' mistake based on verses from the Holy Bible that confirm the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ



2. Nestorius' mistake based on the teachings of the Church Fathers who came before him. They all called SaintMary "The Theotokos"

Memor

Versi

lemor

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh..." (1 Timothy 3:16).

"Behold the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23)

Pope Cyril explained that the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is united with His humanity without mingling, without confusion, and without alteration. Pope Cyril gave the example of fire and iron: When a blacksmith heats a piece of iron in the fire, the iron becomes red-hot and takes on the properties of fire while staying iron. If the blacksmith hammers the iron, the hit affects the iron, not the fire, yet the fire is fully united with the iron. The fire remains fire and the iron remains iron. In the same way, the divinity and humanity are united without mingling, confusion, or alteration. Pope Cyril explained the whole world the upright faith of our Coptic Orthodox Church.



The Incarnate Word has one nature after the union of the divine nature (God the Word) with the human nature (which He took from our Mother, the Virgin Mary, through the work and descent of the Holy Spirit upon her). This union is without mingling, confusion, or alteration. His humanity never separated from His divinity. Therefore, Christ is fully God and fully Man. He has all the attributes of a human and all the attributes of divinity in perfect unity.



Tommy: Was Pope Cyril able to convince Nestorius?

Gedo King Oro: Unfortunately, no. Nestorius was so stubborn.

He refused to accept Pope Cyril's letters. However, Pope Cyril, with his patience, love, and wisdom, tried several times to reach out to him. He sent delegates to speak with Nestorius and correct his mistakes, but **Nestori**-

#### us refused to meet with them.

When all attempts failed and people started to follow Nestorius' false teachings, **200 bishops gathered** together in the city of **Ephesus** in the year 431 AD to discuss the Nestorian heresy. **Pope Cyril was the leader of the Council** of Ephesus. The 200 bishops and Pope Cyril decided to **excommunicate Nestorius and all his followers.**  After the council, our Coptic Orthodox Church added the introduction to the Nicene Creed "We exalt you, O Mother of the True Light" to confirm the Church's faith that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God – The Theotokos.

> Pope Cyril wanted to make sure everyone learns the true faith. He wrote many articles and books. Some of his most famous writings include:

> > 1- Commentaries on certain
> > books of the Holy Bible
> > 2- Letters against the Nestori-

an heresy.

3– The Divine Liturgy (St. Cyril's Liturgy)

The Church honors Pope Cyril the First and gave him several titles, to show us his great role in keeping and defending the true faith. Among these titles is "Pillar of Faith."

The Church celebrates the day of his departure to heaven on the **3rd of Abib**.



**Tommy: Pope Cyril the First** truly deserves the title "**Pillar of Faith**." after all his great struggles and efforts to preserve the faith of the Church.

**Doctor:** The proclamation that Your Majesty will distribute will indeed be an important source to teach our entire city how to discern between what is true and what is false.

Then, the king's proclamation started to spread all over the city. Days later, joyful sounds and singing were heard in the city...





**Gedo King Oro:** What's happening? What are these sounds?

**Guard:** Your Majesty, the Wiseman of the City has left his cave and is coming to the palace. The people are cheering joyfully for his arrival.

**Gedo King Oro:** The Wiseman of the City is coming down to the palace after all these years? I wonder what the reason is. Quickly, send the royal carriage to bring him to the palace.

**Lauren:** Look! The wiseman arrived. I see him coming through the gates of the palace!

**King Oro:** Welcome, welcome, Wiseman of the City! We are very happy to see you.

#### Wiseman of the City: This

visit is way overdue. What I've come for should have happened a long time ago.

**Tommy:** And what is it that has brought you here?

Wiseman of the City: What has recently happened in the city





made me think about how we can avoid it in the future. I have come up with an idea, and I hope Your Majesty will help bring it to life.

Gedo King Oro: Please, I am all ears.

Wiseman of the City: We cannot store the manuscripts in a vault.

Gedo King Oro: What?! But that's the safest place in our city.

**Wiseman of the City:** The safest place is in the minds of the people. The most secure way to preserve the manuscripts is not to lock them away in vaults, but to ensure that everyone in our city learns them and understands them. Having one person alone who knows the right formula, will cause the heritage of our forefathers to be lost. Teaching it to the people will preserve the formula from being forgotten and protect the people from any strange teachings. This way, it will be passed down to every generation after us. I am ready to teach everyone the accurate formula to make the medicine.

#### Lauren: And how will we do this?

**Wiseman of the City:** A school. We will establish a school where we will teach everyone our values. This is the same way our Coptic Orthodox Church has been keeping the faith from generation to generation.

#### Everyone: How?

Wiseman of the City: I will explain it to you.



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Saint Macarius the Great Friend of the Cherubim (Synaxarion, 27th of Baramhat)

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:

"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." (2 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:

0ur Оиг Fathers the who **Fathers the Avostles** Monks established who received the faith from our Lord for us the lesus Christ and delivered it to their systems of monasticism. Many disciples and their disciples delivholy of fathers were trained ered it to us generation after generunder their guidance, ation until it got to us. and they held important roles in the Church.

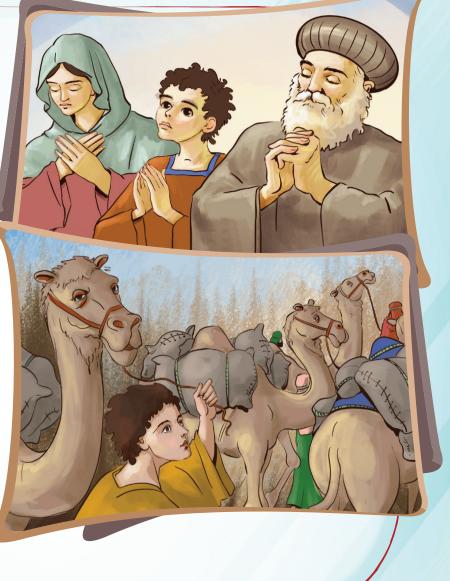
**Tommy:** Our fathers the monks that live in the desert?! How did they have a role in our Church?! **Wise Man of the City:** I will explain what I mean and talk to you about one of the founders of monasticism so that you can be sure of what I'm saying.



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**.



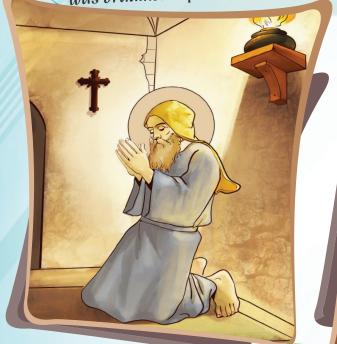
Abba Macarius was born in the fourth century in the village of Menouf (one of the villages in the Ashmoun district of the Menoufia Governorate) to pious Christian parents. He did not have any siblings. One day, his father had a vision in which God promised him a son who would be blessed and whose name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



**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: some people from the village spoke badly of him, telling untrue stories about him. The people of the village became angry, mocked him, and hurt him. But later, God revealed the truth, and the villagers realized they were wrong. They went to ask for his forgiveness. 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 him-

self 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.



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 se-

verely, 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' ser-

mons 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, 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.

**Tommy:** The story of **St. Macarius the Great** is very inspiring. Now I understand your point about how the monks have always had a very important role in our Church!

After the Wiseman of the City finished telling them the story of Saint Macarius, King Oro decided to build schools to teach all the children of the city everything they needed to know in order to live a good and healthy life. King Oro asked the Wiseman of the City to put lessons together to teach the children the true faith. Tommy and Lauren were so excited to be the first students to join the school. They had a big celebration to open the school that all the people of the City attended. By keeping the upright faith and the stories of the great fathers, their city became one of the greatest cities in the world and it became the City of Healing





O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful Your name became in all the earth! For the greatness of Your splendor has been exalted above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have prepared praise, because of Your enemies, that You might put down an enemy and avenger.

For I will regard the heavens, the work of Your fingers; the moon and stars You have established. What is man, that You have been mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You have visited him? You made him a little less than angels, You have crowned him with glory and honor; and You have set him upon the works of Your hands. You have put everything under his feet: all the sheep and oxen, and the beasts of the field, and the birds of the sky, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how wonderful Your name became in all the earth! ALLELUIA.





In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not the Light, but was sent to bear witness to the Light. That was the true Light that gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world did not know Him. He came unto His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

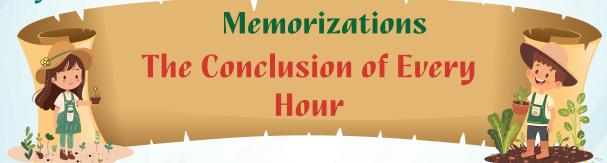
And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of His Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, `He who comes after me is preferred before me: for He was before me." And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Glory be to God forever. Amen





O God Who causes the light to burst forth, Who lets His sun shine upon the righteous and the wicked, Who created the light which illuminates the whole world, enlighten our minds, our hearts and our understandings, O Master of all, and grant us to please You this present day. Guard us from every bad thing, from every sin, and from every adversitive power; through Christ Jesus our Lord, with whom You are blessed, with the Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver and one essence with You, now and at all times and unto the ages of all ages. Amen.



Have mercy on us, O God, and have mercy on us, who, at all times and in every hour, in heaven and on earth, is worshipped and glorified, Christ our God, the good, the long suffering, the abundant in mercy, and the great in compassion, who loves the righteous and has mercy on the sinners of whom I am chief; who does not wish the death of the sinner but rather that he returns and lives, who calls all to salvation for the promise of the good things to come.

Lord receive from us our prayers in this hour and in every hour. Ease our life and guide us to fulfill Your commandments. Sanctify our spirits. Cleanse our bodies. Conduct our thoughts. Purify our intentions. Heal our diseases. Forgive our sins. Deliver us from every evil grief and distress of heart. Surround us by Your holy angels, that, by their camp, we may be guarded and guided, and attain the unity of faith, and the knowledge of Your imperceptible and infinite alory. For You are blessed forever. Amen.



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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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