

# MAHRAGAN EL-KERAZA 2026



# MORE THAN CONQUERORS

( Romans 8:37 )



“Yet in all these things we are  
more than conquerors  
through Him who loved us”

( Romans 8:37 )

English Edition  
College &  
Young Adult



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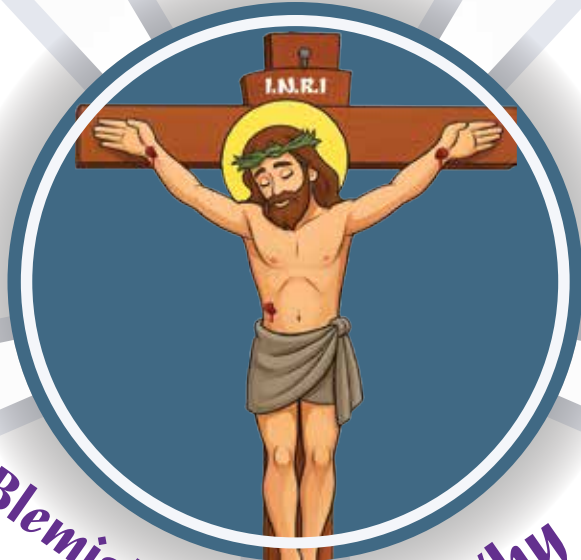
**Introduction:  
The Ecclesiastical  
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Colossians**

**Why  
Death &  
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**Blemished  
Yet  
Blameless**

**True  
Knowledge**



## Introduction: The Ecclesiastical Competition

On the occasion of the 17th centenary of the discovery of the wood of the Holy Cross by Queen Helen in 326 AD, the theme of this year's festival will revolve around The Holy Cross. The slogan for the Mahragan al-Keraza 2026 is: "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

As we know, our Coptic Orthodox Church holds the Cross in a very special place; it is celebrated twice a year, in addition to Holy Week and Good Friday.

The Cross derives its power and dignity from the Lord Christ who was hung upon it. Christianity and the Cross are two sides of the same coin; the Cross is the motto, center, and symbol of Christianity, which testifies to the Cross in the midst of a world lying under the power of the evil one.

Christianity was founded on the basis of the Cross and by means of the Cross. The Cross has two faces: one expresses the joy of salvation and glorious resurrection of the Lord Christ and His victory for us, while the other expresses the endurance of tribulations and hardships.

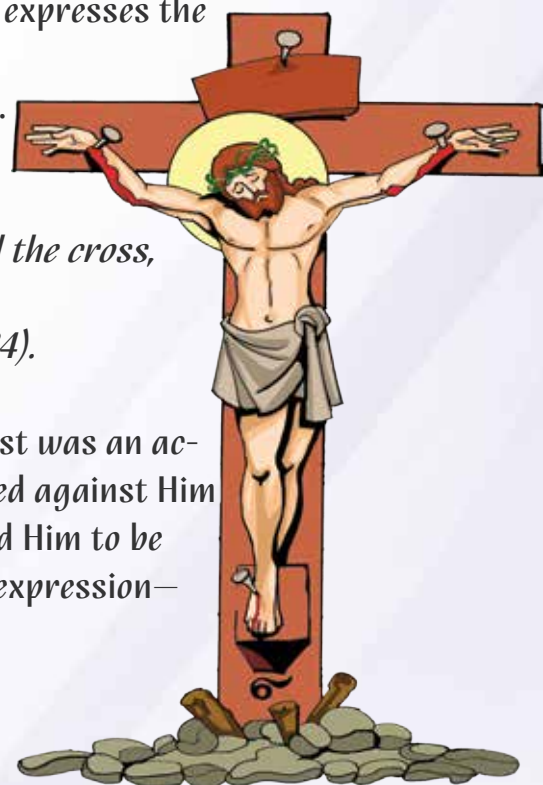
A Christian lives and experiences both truths together.

This is what St. Paul the Apostle meant when he said:

*"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). And also:*

*"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you" (Colossians 1:24).*

We sometimes imagine that the Cross of the Lord Christ was an accidental event in time—meaning that the Jews conspired against Him and delivered Him to the Romans, who in turn delivered Him to be crucified! However, the Cross was—if we may use the expression—





from eternity in the mind of God. In God's foreknowledge, He knew that Adam would sin and would require someone to redeem him and save him from the sentence of death and the corruption of his nature. He knew that this would be achieved through redemption on the Cross. This was manifested in the fullness of time when the Cross turned into a lived reality, as our Lord Jesus was hung upon it and died for us. The Cross remains present before our eyes in time and will remain so for eternity.

Together, we will learn about:

1. The Cross in our Doctrine
2. The Cross in the Liturgy
3. The Cross in our Spiritual Life



## 1. The Cross in the Doctrine of our Coptic Orthodox Church

Many questions revolve around the subject of the Incarnation, the Cross, and Redemption:

- Why was it necessary for God to become incarnate and take the form of a human?
- Why was it necessary for Him to be crucified on the wood of the Cross?

Why the Cross specifically?

When the Lord commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of death, they both ate and fell into sin. Consequently, they deserved the sentence of death, "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

The result was as follows:

1. Adam and Eve fell under the sentence of death.
2. Their holy nature became corrupted.
3. Humanity inherited original sin and the corruption of nature.



## What is the Solution?

### A. Should Adam die?!

If so, where is the love of God?! And where is God's wisdom in his creation plan? Does it suit the dignity of God to create Adam, only for the devil to tempt him, causing him to fall, his nature to become corrupt, and then for him to die?

What if God created a new Adam? The devil would tempt him as well, and he would fall and die... and so on!

### B. Maybe the Lord should forgive Adam and Eve:

But if this happened, where is the justice of God? Did He not say to them: if you eat from the forbidden tree, you shall surely die? Then even if God forgives Adam and Eve, what about the corruption that afflicted their nature?

This corrupted nature would continue to produce more sins, causing Adam to fall into death again and again.

### C. Redemption is the solution:

Meaning that someone else must die instead of Adam.

Thus, justice is fulfilled, and mercy is realized for Adam.

Justice receives its due from the Redeemer when He dies, and we, humanity, receive mercy from God when we are saved from the sentence of death and our fallen nature is renewed.



## Who is this Redeemer, and what are His characteristics?

It is impossible for the Redeemer to be anyone other than the Incarnate God, meaning God must take a human body:

- In His humanity: He is a man who can die.
- In His divinity: He is infinite, sinless, and the Creator.

The Redeemer must possess the following characteristics;

1. To be human: Because the one who sinned was human.
2. To die: Because the wage of sin is death.
3. To be infinite: Because Adam's sin was directed against the infinite God.
4. To be sinless: Because one who lacks something cannot give it.
5. To be the Creator: To renew our corrupted nature and recreate it a second time.





In the fullness of time, the Word of God dwelt in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and took from her a body like ours in everything except sin alone. Thus, we saw “Emmanuel” which means “God with us.” He walked among us, taught us, hungered, thirsted, tired, and slept. We saw His Divinity in His infinite holiness, His unlimited power, and His extraordinary miracles.

Even after He was crucified for us and died, He rose by His own power and trampled death because He is stronger than death. The Divinity raised the united Humanity - He rose and raised us with Him in a luminous, spiritual, glorified body. He rose and will not die forever. Thus, the Lord Jesus is the Redeemer and the Ransom all at once.

Thanks be to the Lord who loved us, died for us, rose for our sake, and raised us with Him to eternal life with Him in heaven.



## Doctrinal Teaching on the Sign of the Cross

We make the sign of the cross in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, amen. In the sign of the Cross, we proclaim

- a. **The doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the oneness of God** (three persons in one God).
- b. **The doctrine of the Incarnation and Redemption** and His descent into the womb of the Virgin (from above to below, we remember that God descended from heaven, and from north to south, how He transferred us from darkness to light).
- c. **God's love for us**, who for our sake endured death on the cross, *"for the joy set before Him He endured the cross"* (Hebrews 12:2).
- d. **Our sins** that Christ carried for us on the cross, *"He Himself bore our sins in his body"* (1 Peter 2:24).
- e. **Our allegiance to the crucified Christ**, and a bold declaration of our faith and pride in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which we were redeemed, saved, and liberated from the captivity of hell and the bondage of Satan. *"if anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me"* (Luke 9:23). *"but far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world"* (Galatians 6:14).

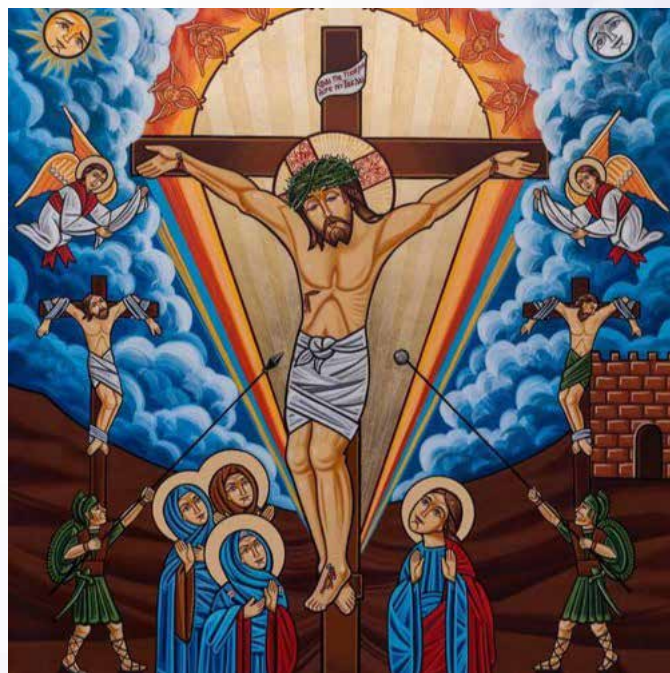
f. **The distinctive sign for believers** in Christ, because it is the sign of their Savior.

g. **The cross as a sign of reconciliation** between God and humanity.

h. **The cross grants us strength**, and in the sign of the cross there is blessing and power to extinguish carnal desires and nullify the power of sin.

i. **Our belief** that the blessings of the new spiritual covenant are due to the cross of our Savior who was crucified for us. *"for the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God"* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

When we remember these, the love of God is ignited within us, and our attachment and hope in Him increase.





## Why did the Lord choose the cross specifically to redeem us?

The cross was an absolute necessity for several reasons:

### a. To lift the curse from us:

Since the fall of our first parents, the curse descended upon the earth, as the Lord said to Adam: *“Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground from which you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”* (Genesis 3:17–19)

And the earth began to bring forth thorns and thistles, and Adam began to toil and eat his bread by the sweat of his face...

This curse must have come from Adam’s descendants. Historically, it is well known that crucifixion itself was the only method by which the curse could be carried out in its nature: *“Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”* (Deuteronomy 21:23).

Therefore, God willed that He Himself would be crucified on behalf of mankind upon the earth, to lift our curse from us. That is why Christ *“redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’”* (Galatians 3:13).

### b. He bore the judgment of death on our behalf:

This is because the judgment of death that was upon us was lifted, as the Lord said to Adam: *“For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”* (Genesis 2:17). But death was not merely the death of the body; rather it followed four stages:

1. Death physically: when corruption entered our nature.
2. Death spiritually: when our fellowship with God was cut off, and there was no longer spiritual partnership between us and Him.
3. Death morally: when we were expelled from the presence of God in the Garden of Eden and driven to the land of thorns and thistles—the realm of fallen nature, animals, microbes, and deadly viruses—the human being who bears God’s image became subject to corruption and decay.
4. Death eternally: everlasting destruction in hell.

Therefore, the cross was a suitable way to remove that terrifying fourfold death which awaited us. On the cross, the Lord died in the flesh and carried our sins in His body on the wood, becoming sin for



our sakes, rejected and cast out by divine justice, not because of Himself—as He was without sin—but as a representative for us, carrying our sins instead of us. He was also mocked by the Jews and the crucifiers in a sorrowful way, as He carried for us our moral death.

**The Lord trampled death:** *“O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”* (1 Corinthians 15:55), because His divinity united with His humanity was stronger than death. Thus He conquered death and triumphed over it for our sake, and opened Paradise for us to enter and rest with the Lord of Glory in an eternal and everlasting kingdom forever.

**He shed His blood for us:** *“For without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”* (Hebrews 9:22). The cross involves, among its procedures, the shedding of blood from many places: from the Lord’s forehead topped by the crown of thorns, from His body torn by the lashes of the whips, from His side pierced by the spear, and His limbs pierced by the nails.

St. Athanasius the Apostolic writes that the Lord chose the cross for the following reasons:

1. So that death would be public, before witnesses, as a confirmation of the resurrection that would follow later.
2. To keep the body whole and undivided.
3. To be lifted up from the earth and draw us to Him.
4. To die with His arms outstretched, gathering the Gentiles and the Jews in His loving person.
5. To purify the air of evil spirits and triumph over them.
6. Fulfilling the prophecies that confirmed the cross: *“They pierced My hands and My feet”* (Psalm 22:16). *“He was wounded for our transgressions”* (Isaiah 53:5). *“Your life shall hang in doubt before you”* (Deuteronomy 28:66)





## 2. The Cross in the Liturgical Rites

There is no ritual in the Church except if it has a theological meaning, and there is no theological doctrine in the Church except if it has a precise liturgical meaning. Therefore, the Cross is used in the rites because it contains within it all the greatest Christian doctrines.

1. We begin our prayers with it.
2. We use it in all the Sacraments and all prayers.
3. It is placed on the church minaret.
4. The shape of the Cross is among the forms of church architecture.
5. It is hung on our chests and is a means of blessing in the hand of the priest.
6. The Church celebrates two feasts for the Holy Cross in addition to Holy Week and Great Friday:

The first is on 17 Thout: which is the feast where we remember the dedication of the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, and the consecration of the Cross in its designated place.

The second is on 10 Paremhat: which is the feast of the discovery of the glorious Cross at the hands of the righteous Queen St. Helena in the year 326 AD.

7. There are many liturgical texts about the Cross such as: "The Hymn of Worshiping Your Cross," "The Living Wood," and "The Cross is Our Pride."
8. In the Doxology of the Feast of the Cross we declare our faith in the Cross as a sign of redemption and reconciliation with God.
9. In the Psali for Friday, we say: He gave a sign to His servants who fear Him; this sign is the name of the life-giving Cross, which they are proud of.
10. It is placed on the altar during the Divine Liturgy, for the priest to bless the people with it.
11. We sign the cross over food and drink to bless it, and it is a sign of strength in all situations of our lives.



### 3. The Cross in our Spiritual Life

Why does God allow trials?

There are different types of trials that God allows us to endure in order to help us reach holy goals.

#### A- Trials for Repentance:

This is often a call to repentance; because when a person encounters this type of trial, they realize they are far from God and in need of repentance. They turn to their father in confession, declaring their repentance before God saying: *"I have sinned against heaven" (Luke 15:18)*, like the Prodigal Son. When the penitent receives absolution from the mouth of the priest, they hear the Lord's saying: *"Your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2)*.

#### B- Trials for Purification:

*For there is no one without sin, or infallible. We struggle against sin so that we do not fall, but "If I fall, I will arise" (Micah 7:8)*. Job was perfect and upright, but because he felt he was righteous, God allowed him to enter into various trials, such as the death of his children, the loss of his wealth, and his bodily illness. This was to purify him from self-righteousness, so he cried out saying: *"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6)*.

#### C- Trials for Commendation:

These are trials God allows so His children may grow in their love for Him and the surrender of their lives into His faithful hand. An example is the trial of our father Abraham, when God asked him to offer his only son Isaac as a burnt offering. He did not hesitate, trusting that God must be obeyed, no matter what He asks, because He commands us for our own good. Abraham was also certain that God's promise is true, and that Isaac is the son of the promise and would produce many descendants. *"God who raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9)*. It was said of him: *"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Galatians 3:6)*.

#### D- Trials for Protection:

This is a fourth type of trial that God allows for protection from pride. As an example of this, we remember our teacher Paul the Apostle when he said: *"Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations; a thorn in the flesh was given to me" (2 Corinthians 12:7)*. This means God allowed the Apostle Paul to be afflicted with a disease to keep him humble and low, fearing he might become proud due to his success in service and the divine revelations given to him.





If trials are from God, and not because of sin, internal joy as well as psychological and spiritual peace will remain with us. Therefore, it was not strange for the Apostle Paul to say: *“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church” (Colossians 1:24)*. Likewise, we are not surprised when we hear about the Apostles that *“they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41)*.

And so, pain turns joy, and insult into glory! In the Litany for the Departed, the Church prays saying: *“For there is no death for Your servants, but a departure.”* This emphasizes that Christ abolished death and nullified its effect, considering it merely a departure

- From the world of earthly things to the world of heavenly things!
- From the world of pain and sorrow to the world of joy and rest!
- From the world of sins to the world of holy saints!
- From the world of temporal things to the world of eternity!

How great is this love, O Lord? That You allow us to enter the Kingdom and sit at Your feet! These are the most enjoyable moments of our lives, when we kneel at Your feet and hear You. Then You take us into Your bosom, and we settle there with You. God will grant us this portion with Him in the heavenly Jerusalem, in the company of the saints, where there is permanent joy forever in His heavenly kingdom.



## 2. St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians

### Introduction to St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians:

- **The Author:** Saint Paul the Apostle.
- **Time of Writing:** During his first imprisonment in Rome.
- **The Place:** Colosse, a city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).
- **The Church:** St. Paul did not establish it himself; rather, one of his disciples, Epaphras did.
- **Purpose of Writing:** Epaphras consulted Paul on matters of faith, as some individuals had risen from among the Judaizers and Gnostics, preaching false teachings. Therefore, our teacher Paul wrote this letter from a prison in Rome to confront and correct these errors that began to spread in Colosse, including: mixing Greek philosophy with some Jewish teachings, claiming there are mediators between God and man other than Christ, as well as calling for the worship of angels and a greater emphasis on rituals than true faith.

The Epistle came to powerfully declare: "Christ is all and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

### The relationship between the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians:

- In the Epistle to the Colossians, it is revealed that Christ is the giver of everything to His church, He is the source of perfection, and Christ as the Head of the church is the source of all its needs for knowledge and salvation.



Saint Paul





- In the Epistle to the Ephesians, the church is defined as the Body of Christ, and Christ is the Head of this body.
- In the Epistle to the Colossians, we learn that Christ is the Head of everything. Therefore, we understand that the two letters are complementary; for this reason, the Apostle requested that the people of Colosse and Ephesus exchange and read both letters.

## Chapter One

### Colossians 1:1–2

- **“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ”:** Since Paul is a messenger of Christ, they must believe his words and abandon the teachings of the Gnostics and Judaizers.
- **“Grace to you and peace”:** Grace is the sum of all blessings flowing from God. We become children of God, and the Holy Spirit dwells within us, changing our nature and filling us with peace.
- **“From God our Father and the Lord Jesus”:** This indicates equality between the Father and the Son, as both are the source of grace and peace.

### Colossians 1:3–5

- **“God and Father of our Lord”:** This does not mean two different Gods. Rather, it combines two attributes of God: He is God, and He is the Father of Jesus Christ. This is clear in the English translation and aligns with John 20:17: “I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.”
- **The Famous Trio:** Paul highlights “Faith, Hope, and Love.” Note that Hope allows us to hold onto faith despite persecution and pain.
- **“The word of the truth of the gospel”:** This hope is heard through the Gospel. The Gospel does not just promise forgiveness, but the glory prepared for us in heaven.



- **“Which you heard before”:** Referring to what was preached to them by Epaphras.

### **Colossians 1:6–8**

- **“Which has come to you”:** That is, the Gospel.
- **“As it has also in all the world”:** The Gospel that reached them was not restricted to one specific group of people, as was the case with the Jewish Law. Likewise, salvation is not only for some, as the Gnostics say; but rather, it is for the whole world.
- **“And is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you”:** The Gospel has come to have fruits in the whole world, just as it had fruits in you.
- **“You heard and knew the grace of God”:** These are the first fruits of the Gospel—that the people heard and knew, meaning they experienced and tasted God’s grace, which changed their lives. There are people who hear but do not experience change in their lives.
- **“From Epaphras”:** Here we see that Epaphras founded the church of Colossae. The Holy Spirit records his name here in the Holy Bible, for God does not forget anyone’s labor.

### **Colossians 1:9–11**

- **“That you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk”:** This is what Paul prays for. He prays for the Holy Spirit to give them a new power of perception, through which they may know God’s will and be filled with this knowledge. This ensures there is no room for other worldly knowledge, bad experiences, or the distraction of heretics.

The knowledge the Apostle desires for them is to be **“in all wisdom,”** meaning they are filled with wisdom that is not human, but the spirit of wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit and is given with **“spiritual understanding”**. Wisdom is the intellectual knowledge of the basic principles of Christian life. Understanding is the practical use of that wisdom; it means realizing these principles and turning them into practical behavior. Simply put, this means following God’s commands and





**Church of Colossae**



living rightly.

- **“That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him”:** From this, we understand that the goal of knowledge is not just knowledge itself, as the Gnostics say, but the goal is to act in a way which pleases God. The Apostle links knowledge with behavior.
- We also understand that knowledge is for everyone because its source is the Holy Spirit; it is not limited to the clever or philosophers, as the Gnostics claim. The Holy Spirit is able to turn a simple, unlearned person into a wise one, **“that you may walk worthy of the Lord,”** so that we can please Him, bear fruit, and He can be revealed through us for the glory of His name.
- **“Growing in the knowledge of God”:** The Holy Spirit teaches us the knowledge of God every day. It is a growing knowledge that develops daily for those who persist in prayer and studying the Word of God—meaning a daily, quiet fellowship with God.
- **“Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power”:** The power that God gives us is limitless; its limits are the power of His glory, and that is infinite. However, there is no power given from above without the requirement of our personal effort.

**“God, who created us without us, cannot save us without us.” (Saint Augustine)**

We must know that our eternal life is connected to the situations of **daily life**. We must choose to live in a way that befits the children of God. In our life’s journey, we face various moments—situations, milestones, decisions, and challenges. Ask your servant about these daily situations and challenges.

### **Colossians 1:12–14**

- **“Giving thanks to the Father”:** God created us, and when we fell, He sent His Son to save us. He made us worthy of the eternal inheritance because we became a new creation.





- **“Inheritance”**: The Spirit tells our souls that we are heirs. The Apostle called this inheritance the “inheritance of the saints in the light,” because God Himself is light.
- **“The Father who has qualified us”**: We gained a share in the Heavenly inheritance through the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son.
- **“Delivered us from the power of darkness”**: We were once slaves to the devil, who is the ruler of darkness, but Christ set us free from him. He no longer has power over us.
- **“Conveyed us into the kingdom”**: The word “kingdom” means we have become subjects of Christ the King. In the Greek language, this word refers to a victorious king who moves the people of a kingdom he defeated to any place he wants. Christ defeated the devil on the cross and entered the kingdom of Hades to take the captives to Paradise. After the resurrection, He will take us to the Heavenly Kingdom, the **“Kingdom of the Son of His love.”**



### **Colossians 1:15–17**

The Epistle to the Colossians speaks about our Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church and His glories. Here we see a description of the glory of Christ as the Creator. Paul the Apostle explains who Christ is in response to the heresy of the Gnostics.

- **“The image of the invisible God”**: The Son has the same nature as His Father; just as the son of a human is a human. Therefore, Christ has the same nature and essence as the Father. The Father is invisible, and the Son, who is the image of the Father, became visible so that we may see Him and

know the Father. He is the depiction of His essence and the radiance of His glory. The word “image” in Greek means an exact image of the original, not one of the “emanations” as the Gnostics claim. It is an image that carries the same nature and the same attributes.

- **“Firstborn of all creation”:** Christ, the Son, is born of the Father and is not a created being. The expression “firstborn” does not mean the first of God’s creations. Rather, the word “firstborn” means “the head,” “the beginning,” or “the originator” of all God’s creation. “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made” (John 1:3). Creation is created; it is not “born.”
- **“The Creator of All”:** If He is the Creator of all, did He create Himself? He is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). Did God exist without wisdom and then create wisdom for Himself? Certainly not.
- **“For by Him all things were created”:** The word “for” explains and interprets the meaning of “firstborn of all creation.” He is the “first” because He is the Creator of every creature. This phrase is equal to “all things were made through Him” (John 1:3). The English translation of this verse is “All things were made through Him.” Thus, through our Lord Jesus Christ, life began and flowed. He has power and authority over all things because He is the one who brought them into existence.
- **“All things were created through Him”:** Christ, the Son of God, is the one who created everything. “For by Him all things were created, and without Him nothing was made.” This means all things were indeed created by Him.
- **“And for Him they were created”:** The Son of God became human (took on a body) to restore the world to how God intended it, so that God’s name would be glorified. Similarly, our Lord Jesus Christ took on a body to gather people into one body (the Church) to submit to God. He is the Lord, Owner, and Ruler of all because He is the Creator of all. Every creature of Christ declares His extraordinary power and love; all creation glorifies Christ.
- **“Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, or Powers”:** These are various ranks of angels. Here,





the Apostle is responding to the Gnostics who claim that these ranks of angels were higher than Christ! Certainly not.

- **“He is before all things”:** This refers to the eternal nature of Christ. His existence precedes all existence; He is the first and the last. He is above all angels and their ranks because He is the one who created them. So, what is the point of worshiping angels then?
- **“In Him all things consist”:** He is the foundation, the pillar, and the preserver of all existence

### **Colossians 1:18–19**

Adam was the head of the old creation. Eve came from him, and their children came from him as well. Therefore, the entire world since Adam is from Adam’s body, but it is a dead body because the head—Adam—is dead due to the sin of breaking God’s commandment. Christ came in our human body to die on our behalf and renew our corrupted nature. He rose with a new, eternal life. Everyone who is baptized as a member of Christ’s body becomes part of this living body, which is the Church. We belong to this body through baptism. Just as Eve was the mother of the body sentenced to death, the Holy Virgin Mary became the mother of the living body through the work of the Cross and the Resurrection—meaning the Church.

- **“Firstborn from the dead”:** There were people who rose from the dead before Christ, but they died again. They rose in a body like our current one and did not enter into glory. However, Christ rose in a radiant, spiritual, and glorified body that can never die again. He raised Himself by His own power



and entered into glory with this body; He is the reason everyone else will rise.

- **“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell”:** It was the Father’s good pleasure that all fullness or completeness should be in Christ. This is for the benefit of the Church. Every bit of wisdom, power, and everything we receive is from His fullness. “Fullness” refers to the union of the divine nature with the human nature, without mixing, blending, or change. For He is God who appeared in the flesh; therefore, He is not one of the “emanations” as the Gnostics said, but He is God Himself. **“And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16).**

**“From all of this, it is clear that Jesus Christ cannot be a created being. Instead, He is Jehovah, the Creator of all things—Jehovah in human form who lived among us.”**

### **Colossians 1:20–23**

- **“To reconcile all things to Himself, by Him”:** Naturally, peace is for whoever accepts reconciliation, believes in Christ, and offers repentance for their evil deeds.
- **“having made peace through the blood of His cross”:** The blood of Christ atones for us. This means His Blood covers us so the Father sees His redeeming Son and the Savior of humanity instead of our sins. This was reflected at the time of the Passover in the Old Testament when the destroying angel saw the blood on the doorstep of the house and the two doorposts, for Christ is our Passover. The mention of blood affirms that our Lord Jesus Christ has a real body, not an imaginary one as the Gnostics claim.
- **“Whether things on earth or things in heaven”:** The reconciliation was between God and man (2 Corinthians 5:18), between man and man, and between those on earth and those in heaven. They have become one church, and Christ is the head of both.





Saint Epaphras

- **“And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself”:** “Himself” refers to God, who was “pleased to have all fullness dwell in Him”. St. Paul tells the Colossians that they can experience this reconciliation “after you were strangers.” He says this because sin caused a separation between God and man since Adam hid from God. The Colossians became strangers, meaning they were separated from God because of their past evil thoughts and deeds. **“He has now reconciled”** means He made them His people, His flock, and His own.
- **The Apostle says: “In the body of His flesh”:** This body is the center of reconciliation. We hide in it, so He covers (atones for) our sins and we become “blameless.” Christ alone is the one who is blameless, but our union with Him makes us blameless as well. The Father no longer sees us in our sins but sees us in Christ: “in the body of His flesh” we are blameless because He justified us by His blood.
- **“And above reproach”:** Who can bring a charge against us? Satan. But for those who remain in Christ, the blood of Christ cleanses us. The Apostle then adds a new condition for being “blameless and above reproach,” which is staying firm in the correct faith handed down by the saints, saying, “if you continue in the faith.” The Apostle urges the people of Colosse to hold onto the correct faith against the confusing attacks of heretics so they do not lose

this reconciliation and the resulting inheritance. Whoever remains in faith benefits from the blood of Christ.

- **“And not moved away from the hope of the gospel”:** The hope of the gospel is Christ, who will present us as complete for an eternal inheritance in His kingdom. Christ is the foundation of all our blessings. The hope of the gospel is what Epaphras preached, not anyone else, as some heretics claimed.
- **“Which was preached to every creature”:** He says this by inspiration to show that the gospel will reach the whole world. Christ died and rose for the sake of the whole world, and whoever accepts and believes in the Word Who reaches them is saved by means of salvation.

**Using verses 21 and 22, reflect on what we were and what we have become in Christ. (The Story of Human Salvation is explained from verse 12 - verse 23). Read these verses and complete the following table:**

The Savior	Characteristic of the Savior	How the Salvation Happened	What humanity was saved from	The change that occurred
Lord Christ				



## **Colossians 1:24–27**

• **He says: “I now rejoice in my sufferings”:** He did not say he rejoices because of the pain, for pain itself is not a cause for joy. Instead, joy comes from the comfort God gives him in the middle of his pain. It also comes from the news of the faith spreading and that the people of Colosse have become believers. Note that the Apostle is writing this letter while he is in prison.

**Discussion Question:** Were the sufferings of Christ incomplete, such that our teacher Paul the Apostle is completing them?

• **“To fulfill the word of God. The mystery which has been hidden”:** (Ephesians 3:3)  
The mystery that was hidden but has now become clear is the joining of the Gentiles with the Jews to be one church. This church has glory and an inheritance for everyone, prepared by Christ for all who believe in Him.



## Chapter Two

### Colossians 2:1–3: St. Paul's Struggle for The Colossians' Sake

- **“Laodicea”**: A city in Asia Minor near Colosse. Epaphras preached there as he did in Colosse, since they faced the same problems, but it seems the church of Laodicea was larger.



Church of Laodicea

- **“I want you to know what a great conflict I have”**: Every action and service for building the Church of Christ faces severe wars and deceptions from Satan. Paul wanted to go to them, but his chains in prison prevented him. So, he settled for sending letters and praying for them. What was he asking or struggling for in his prayers for them?
- **“That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love”**: There is no comfort except through love. The Holy Spirit joins our hearts together in love, as He connects the members of Christ's body through joints (Verse 19). These joints are comprised of love. The Apostle used the word “knit” to show the strength of the bonds of love between us. Whoever responds to the



Holy Spirit will love his brothers, being filled with the Spirit's comfort. Note that true comfort from the Holy Spirit is tested during trials and hardships. True love is known by its persistence, even before others who wrong us.

- **“To all riches of the full assurance of understanding”:** We cannot reach a certain understanding of divine mysteries without love. How can we enter the King's house and look at His secrets if we do not have love?
- Understanding in Greek refers to practical or experimental knowledge, which comes through following the commandments to know Christ. Here we see the relationship between spiritual behavior and gaining spiritual knowledge. Whoever obeys the commandments will know Christ through experience. **“Full assurance of understanding”** means complete and correct understanding. Whoever has this understanding and knows Christ will easily detect the errors of heretics.
- **The Holy Spirit** is the one who teaches and reminds those filled with His love. Here the Apostle wants them to understand that philosophy and Judaism will not give them anything. Instead, righteousness, knowledge, and wisdom are in Christ, who gives everything to His church.

**“To the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”**

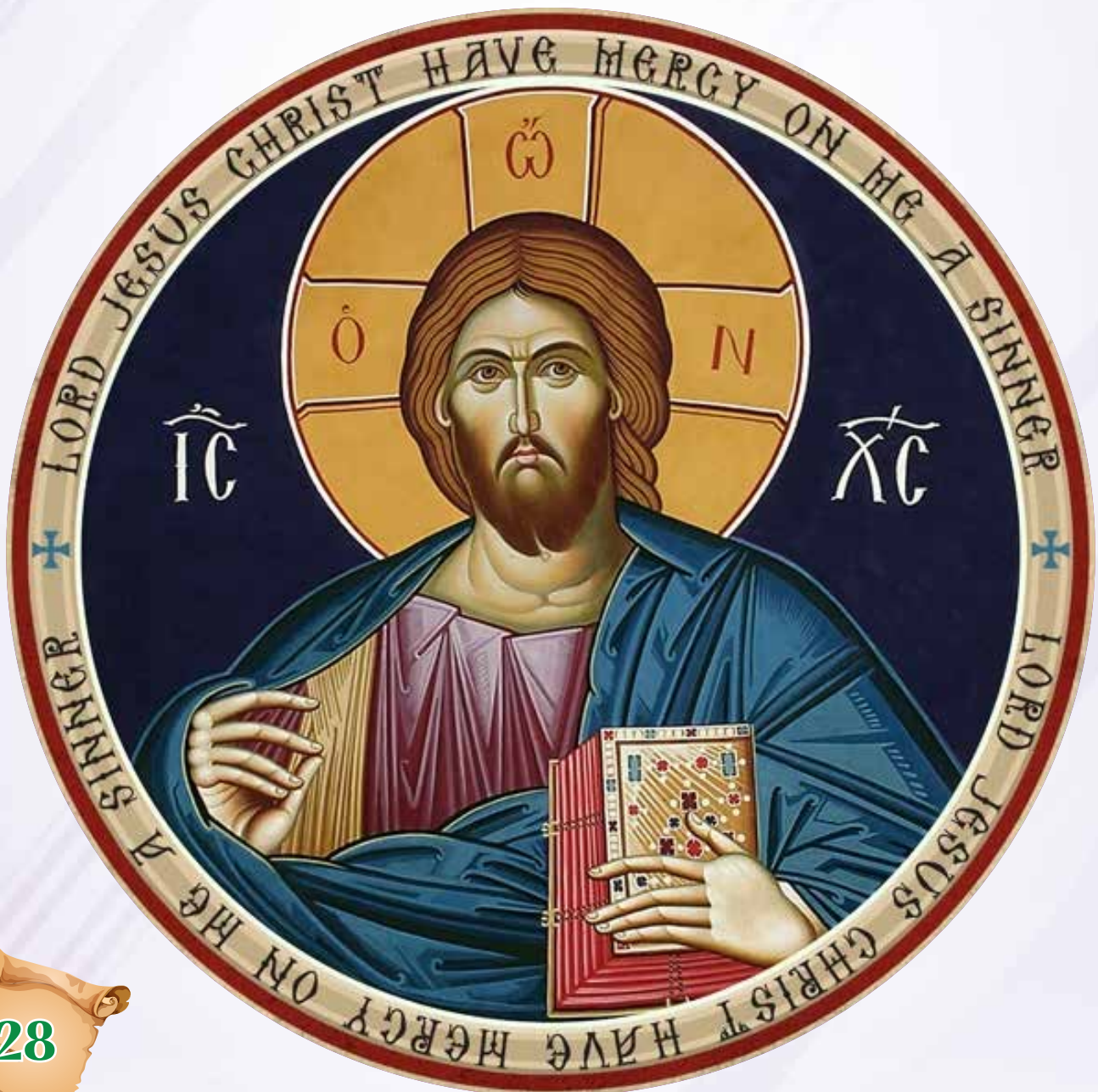
The Apostle prays that God opens their hearts so they understand the mystery of the Father and Christ—the relationship between the Father and the Son. The Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. Through the incarnation of Christ, we became children, and the Holy Spirit pours divine love into us. These are God's eternal purposes in Christ regarding the Church.

**“In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”**

Christ is the Person of Wisdom. He contains all wisdom and it is stored within Him. This means He



possesses a hidden wisdom that is far from sight. The word “treasures” means very valuable things that cannot be priced, making Him the source of all wisdom. This is a response to the Gnostics who said that knowledge comes through philosophy, the human mind, and research. They even imagined that their human wisdom could be better than Christ Himself. Therefore, the Apostle explains to them that Christ has all wisdom within Him, and any wisdom outside of Christ is earthly and deceptive, like the one that led Eve astray. Christ gives His divine wisdom to any believer He chooses, provided they stay firm and united with Him, rather than relying on earthly human wisdom.





## **Colossians 2:4–7: Walk in Christ**

• **“With persuasive words”:** Persuasive words is any speech that looks appealing but carries deadly poison within. This is Satan’s goal: to deceive believers with anything outside of Christ to kill them. The Gnostics deceived them by claiming that puffing up with knowledge away from Christ is where salvation lies.

**The Goal of the Epistle:** Christ is the Head of the Church, the source of all its goodness, as well as its strength and protector. “In Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17). He is the manager of all its affairs, and the Apostle warns them: “Lest anyone should deceive you” by claiming there is another source. Neither our minds, nor our philosophies, nor our human strength, as the Gnostics say.

• **“And beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith”:** This is what Epaphras told the Apostle, so the Apostle wanted them to remain firm in the faith they had received. Although he was far from them, in his prison in Rome, he was occupied with them in his thoughts and concerns, praying for them as if he were living with them. “For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit”. The spiritual person is one whose human spirit is submissive to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit leads their spirit, while their spirit leads the body. So our teacher Paul the Apostle was occupied with the state of every church and the people of Colossae, praying for them, and the Holy Spirit gave him the guidance and teaching to correct any doctrinal error they received from the Judaizers or Gnostics.

• **“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”:** The meaning is to continue in what you learned from Epaphras about Christ and do not drift toward the deviant ideas that try to deceive you. His saying: **“Walk in Him”** means their steadfastness in Christ and their union with Him, for He is the way that leads to the Father’s bosom. Steadfastness in Him happens:

1. For those who believe, are baptized, and live a life of repentance following the commandments of the Book. For such a person, the life of Christ becomes theirs. And the Christian uses their members as instruments of righteousness.
2. Continual partaking of the Body and Blood of the Lord.
3. Not denying one’s faith.
4. Doing good deeds which befit a life of piety.



## Roots and Rocks

• **“Rooted and built up in Him”:** The comparison here is between Christians and plants, which have roots that extend deep into the ground. The deeper the root is in the water, the more the plant grows. Therefore, the call of Christ was: “Go into the deep”. Note that the phrase “in Him” means that whenever we are firm in Christ and united with Him, we enter into the deep and are quenched by the waters of the Holy Spirit and grow in Him. For the Spirit descends upon us only because we are united and firm in Christ.



• **“Built up in Him”:** The previous comparison was like a plant that grows; here the believer is compared to living stones in a building whose foundation is the Lord Christ. The building refers to the alignment of believers in love to complete the structure. Our firmness in Christ is the reason He gives us His life: “For to me, to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). In this way, we become living stones.

• **“Established in the faith”:** Meaning to be made firm or anchored. Surely, whenever a Christian is rooted in Christ, their faith is strengthened—the correct faith that we received from Christ through the Apostles and the Church. And being “established” means not being wavering.



- **“As you have been taught”:** Just as Epaphras taught you, not the Judaizers or the Gnostics.
- **“Abounding in it with thanksgiving”:** (That is, in faith) meaning increasing or overflowing or having your faith grow. How does our faith grow? “With thanksgiving”. For whoever lives thanking God for everything, their faith grows, but whoever lives grumbling, their faith decreases. Therefore, the Church teaches us to start all our prayers with thanksgiving.

### **Application:**

God may allow some trials, and whoever lives a life of thanksgiving in the midst of trials is confident that God will intervene. They see the hand of God stretching out to save them from the trial, so their faith grows; whereas whoever grumbles loses the sight of God’s hand, so their faith does not grow and they do not benefit from the lesson of the trial, and this does not please God.

### **Colossians 2:8–10: His Warning Against Philosophy and False Teaching**

Here we see the Apostle warning against two dangers:

- **Philosophy:** Meaning Gnosticism and its danger in teaching that salvation is possible without the blood of Christ.
- **Judaizing:** Which is the “tradition of men.” This does not mean traditions in general, but rather the teachings of the Jewish fathers that contradict the Law, and which the Lord Christ Himself attacked. The danger of these is that they explicitly contradict the Law. There is also a danger in following the Law literally without the spirit of the Law. This is what is meant in this verse by the phrase **“tradition of men”**: meaning what the Judaizers taught about the necessity of adhering to the letter of the Law and returning to the rituals of the Law that were a symbol of Christ. Once the Symbol (the Lord Christ) came, the symbol is abolished.

In this chapter, there is a Law from the Old Testament and a Mystery from the secrets of the Church and creed. Discover them with the reference for each of them. And discuss what the relationship is between the Law and the Mystery.



- **“According to the basic principles of the world”:** The word principles means basics or elements. Therefore, the Apostle used the word “principles of the world” as a reference to weak elements or basics. Philosophy or Law-based rituals will not lead anyone to know God, for no one knows God except through Jesus Christ.
- **“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”:** The word “Godhead” refers to the divine being and essence. In the Incarnation, the Divinity united fully with the Body. Thus, Christ is God even though He took the form of a man. The word “dwells” carries the meaning of permanence. This verse also indicates that Christ did not leave His body after finishing His redemptive work. Rather, the union of the Divinity with the Humanity (the Human Nature) occurred without mingling, confusion, or alteration, and they have not separated for a single moment or a twinkling of an eye (after the union of the Divinity with the Humanity) in one nature.
- **“And you are complete in Him”:** Meaning that in Christ, we are filled with all divine blessings. “And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). That is, we take everything we need for our salvation, and we are filled with all wisdom, holiness, and grace through our union with Him. We also receive eternal life, holiness, and glory. Through a life of repentance, we continue in a life of steadfastness in Him. We do not need any philosophy or Jewish principles or the “basic principles of the world”—meaning human laws, customs, and formalities.

**The Incarnation of Christ and the indwelling of all the fullness of the Godhead in Him bodily gave me, a sinful person, the right to have the Holy Spirit dwell in me. I receive eternal life, glory, holiness, wisdom, and every spiritual blessing. Was it possible for me, a sinner, to have the Holy Spirit dwell in me? This is a complete response to the Gnostics who, in their pride, thought that through their minds and philosophies, they could reach God.**



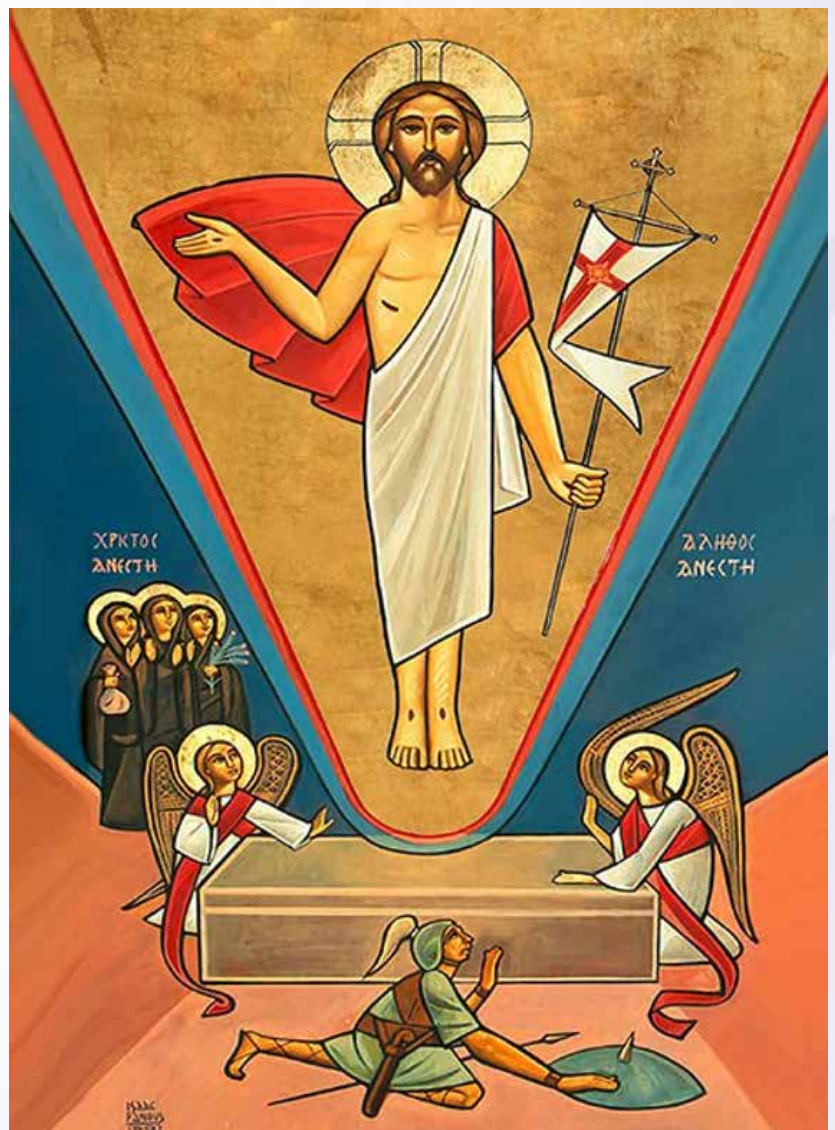


## Colossians 2:11-13

The Judaizers were requiring believers to be circumcised as a condition for salvation, and by this, they misled the people of Colossae. Here the Apostle says that the Gentiles received spiritual circumcision through baptism, which means death and resurrection with Christ. Just as physical circumcision involved the death of a part of the body for a person to live, spiritual circumcision of the heart means no need for physical circumcision. There is no excuse for the Judaizers' lack of understanding of this truth, for the Law spoke of circumcision of the heart: "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live" (Deuteronomy 30:6). Here we see that circumcision of the heart is made by God, and whoever's heart is circumcised lives.

- **“Through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead”:** There is no baptism except after faith in what God did through Christ. The power that Christ gives us to walk in newness of life is the power that raised Christ from the dead so that we may live. From now on, from the death of sin, into eternity to give us eternal life.

- **“Putting off the body of the sins of the flesh”:** The human body means our old humanity, and our relationship to Adam or the fallen human nature that we inherited from him. The word “putting off” is an



indication that we take off the old nature, and the old person dies within us to be born a new person renewed according to the image of their Creator.

- **“Buried with Him in baptism”**: Therefore, the Coptic Orthodox Church performs baptism by immersion so that burial occurs. This means that everyone who is baptized shares with Christ in the act of His death as Adam, so that they may rise with Christ in His life—He who rose from the dead to eternal life.
- **“In the circumcision of Christ”**: Spiritual circumcision was through the death and resurrection of the Lord Christ. Through baptism, we die with Christ in our old humanity and rise as children for a new internal person possessing the life of the eternal Christ and having the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit helps whoever wants to judge themselves before the death of sin.
- **“And you, being dead in your trespasses”**: Sin means spiritual death, which is separation from God, and no one can raise the dead and give them life except God.

### **“He has made you alive”**

How? By giving us a new life from the water and the Spirit. He raised us with the same life that was in the Resurrection, so we have a new life.

### **“The uncircumcision of your flesh”**

Refers to the state of distance and impurity we were in and the evil desires that were working in us because of sin, and this carries a reference to original sin, or the uncircumcised heart. “Having forgiven you all trespasses”: God does not only give us life, but He does not leave the weights of our sins upon us; instead, He gives us power to rule over sin. He is the one who lifted all our previous sins from us and raised us from our eternal death and gives us power and supports us with His grace so that sin does not rule over us again and we die.





## Colossians 2:14–15: Wiping Out the Handwriting

- **“The handwriting”**: In Greek, it means a written admission by a person that they are a debtor. The “handwriting” is the document that recorded our disobedience and rebellion against the commandments of the Law, which sentenced us to death.
- **“Nailing it to the cross”**: It is said that there was a custom at that time that when someone had a financial note against another person and the value was paid, they would hang it with a nail on the doorstep or on a wall to indicate that the debt had been settled by the debtor. It was also said that when a law or an order was canceled, the Romans would lift it up and pierce it with a high nail. We look to the Cross to see the legal proof that the huge debt owed to God’s justice has been fully paid. The Jews failed to fulfill the commandments of the Law, though they said “all that the Lord has spoken we will do,” and thus they signed a “handwriting” against themselves by their commitment to the Law. But the Law became a judge and a prosecutor against them, sentencing them to death. The Gentiles also failed to fulfill the moral law (conscience), as they sinned against what their conscience pointed out to them. The general law is that the soul who sins shall die. By the Cross, God wiped out this “handwriting” that was against us, announcing the justification of man from the sentence of death (and not the innocence of man), because Christ united with the human body and died on our behalf. The Lord Christ completed all the requirements of the Law by His death, and by His death, He finished everything the Law complained about against us.

**Activity:** In (Colossians 2:13–14), we find 3 actions the Lord Christ performed that express how He paid the debt written in the “handwriting” and nullified its effect—what are they?

- **“Having disarmed principalities and powers”**: These are the fallen angels, Satan and his soldiers; God stripped them of all their authority and influence. “Principalities and powers” are ranks



of angels, and when Satan fell, he dragged some of these angelic ranks with him. Man was enslaved to Satan when he sinned. Satan used to seize every soul upon its passing, as he would demand the price of sins from them. Since man had nothing to pay with, he would seize the person himself and cast him into Hades. But Christ ended Satan's authority by His Cross, paid the debt, freed man from Satan's slavery, and disarmed the principalities and ended their authority.

- **“He made a public spectacle of them”:** The Lord exposed Satan's hostility toward the human race and his conspiracies against us, as he deceived humanity with the temptations of sins and evil worldly pleasures. He tried this with Christ, just as he was accustomed to seizing all souls from Adam until Christ. But he could not seize Him, because the Lord Christ alone was without sin, and Satan could not overcome Him. Thus, it became clear to us that all the temptations of sin are nothing but a deceptive demonic trick that leads to eternal destruction for us.

### **Colossians 2:16–17**

- **“So let no one judge you”:** The letter “So” (Faa) here indicates that since Christ has defeated all spiritual enemies, it is foolish for us to return to worldly philosophies or the weak principles of the Jews for salvation. Salvation was accomplished by the Cross, and there is no salvation for us except through death with Christ and resurrection with Him, and this is done through Baptism.

- **“New Moon”:** The beginning of every month, which is a festival for the Jews.
  - o **Festival:** A feast that occurs every year.
  - o **Sabbath:** Occurs every week.

The Jews celebrated these days in a literal, incorrect way, even to the point of preventing good deeds during them. All these things no longer have meaning after Christ, after He freed us from the yoke of sin. As for the Jewish feasts, they were merely a symbol of Christianity and a shadow of things to come.

- **“But the substance is of Christ”:** What is required of the body is not abstinence from food or drink, but rather to glorify Christ. No one is permitted to use this verse to attack fasts in the Orthodox Church, for the Church does not forbid food because it is impure. The proof is that after the fasting period ends, we eat everything. It is also not permitted to apply the Apostle's words to the





Church, to which Christ gave this authority.

### **Colossians 2:18–19**

Here the Apostle responds to the false teachers among the Gnostics who called for the worship of angels based on a corrupt argument. They claimed that worship belongs to God alone, but true humility does not stand before God, for God is a very lofty Spirit. Humans are made of matter and



are therefore very impure, so how can the impure stand before God? The solution in their view was the worship of angels. Our teacher Paul here does not attack the true humility to which the Lord Christ called us, but rather the false humility to which the Gnostics called. The intention of the verse is, of course, the call to worship the Christ only.

- **“Intruding into those things which he has not seen”:** They pretended to have a superior level of spiritual growth and imagined that in their worship they saw ranks of angels in heaven; this is nothing but hallucinations resulting from the pride and deceptions of demons.
- **“Vainly puffed up”:** This puffing up is from the misleading devil who inspired these ideas in their minds through their fleshly minds. Whoever is puffed up and says what precedes in (verse 18) is not holding fast to the Head, which is Christ. Holding onto anything other than Christ is the cause of pride, and this is the reason for all heresies. Whoever holds onto anyone other than the Head, Christ, is not confident in Christ, for there is no head for the Church except Christ. Whoever holds onto angels



and worships them leaves the Head, Christ, and replaces Him with some creatures, and this is like the worship of idols. We notice that the members of the Church are connected to one another as members of one body, and all are connected to the Head, Christ.

- **“Joints and ligaments”:** The Holy Spirit binds all the members together in love and establishes them all in the Head, “knit together,” meaning that every member of us supports the other, meaning they back them up, support them, and strengthen them with the gifts God has given to serve one another.
  - **Note:** The Church believes in the intercession of angels, and this is different from the worship of angels. We do not worship anyone but Christ; as for intercession, it is a love that makes everyone pray for everyone.

### **Colossians 2:20–23: You Have Died with Christ**

Our death with Christ freed us from our slavery to sin, freed us from the Law, and we became Christ’s alone. So why the symbols and basics that were explaining the danger of sin? We have matured now; there is no need for the stage of childhood.

- **“Self-imposed religion”:** Meaning any additions to the Law or excess in adhering to formalities in worship; this does not agree with personal desires and was not commanded by the Law, such as those who considered marriage an impurity.
- **“Do not touch”:** For the Law forbade touching a dead body or else the person became impure. We notice that all things related to the Law are material (and their time has ended).
- **“A show of wisdom”:** It has the form or appearance of wisdom, something similar to wisdom, or a reputation for wisdom. Outwardly, these people were considered wise, but it is foolishness before God.
- **“If then you were raised with Christ”:** Death with Christ was completed in Baptism, and through it we have also acquired a new nature that transcends and rises in its conduct above all the primitive





ordinances. Why then do you return to ancient symbols that were only for discipline when you were spiritual children?

**Fasting and celibacy in Christianity** are not considered food or marriage impurities; rather, they involve self-control over desires to prevent impulsiveness, so there may be an opportunity to experience the delight of the relationship with God. As for the Gnostics, they considered marriage and some foods to be an impurity, which is why the Apostle attacks them.

- **“Indulgence of the flesh”:** The Gnostics thought that asceticism provided satisfaction for humanity. But in reality, they satisfied human vanity and filled it with pride and a love for appearance and boasting before people, and the person’s feeling that they are superior to others.

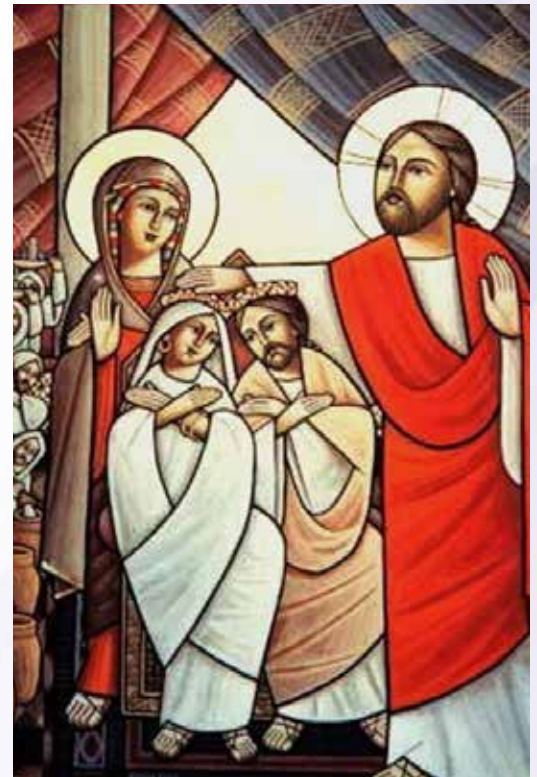
### **Application:**

There is no fulfillment outside of Christ, and this is the goal of Christian asceticism, whose purpose and aim is to be truly filled with Christ, satisfying the soul, body, and spirit.

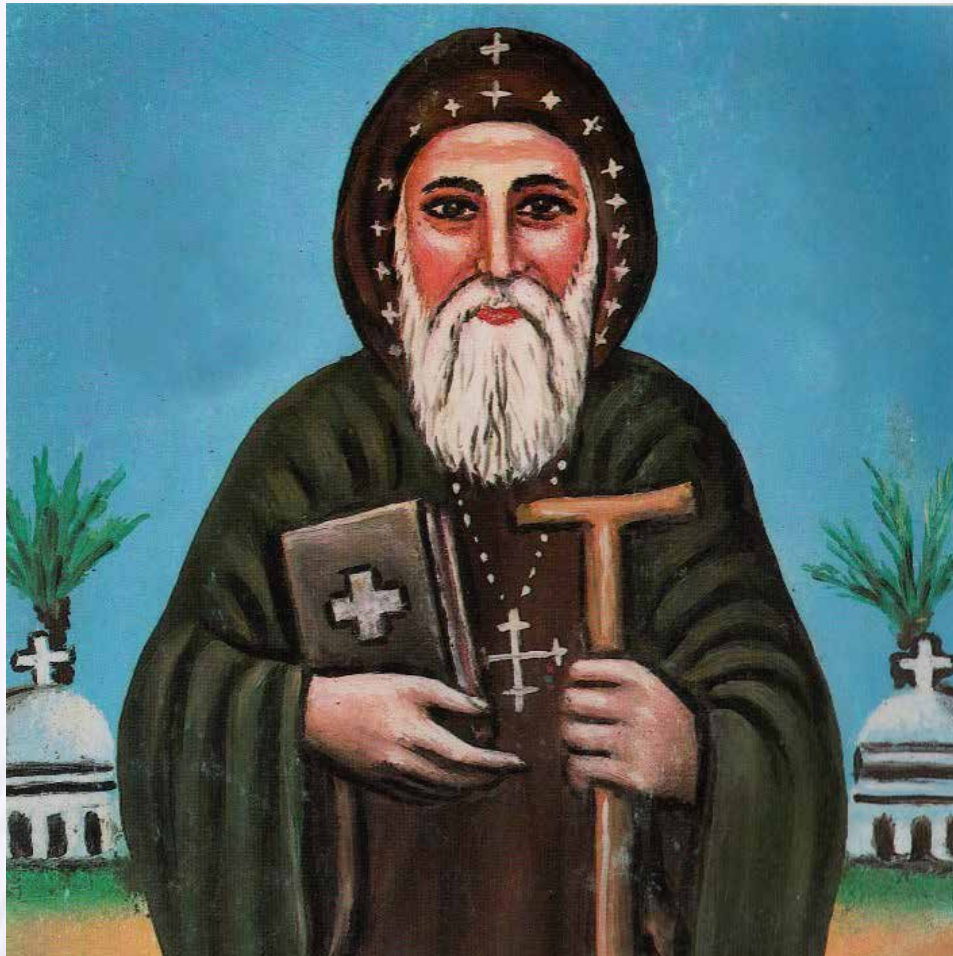
## **Chapter Three**

### **Colossians 3:1–4: What do you seek and what do you care about?**

- **“If then you were raised”:** Since you were raised with Christ, then do such and such.. And the resurrection with Christ took place in baptism; and Christ ascended to the heavens while the disciples watched Him ascend to draw their attention and our attention to the heavenly things to which He went to prepare a place for us. For heaven has become a home for us, and we are strangers here on earth. As for the worldly person, he cares about what is in the world. And the Apostle’s saying means that as long as you have received a new nature, then seek what is consistent with it, and by this, you qualify for the heavenly inheritance.



- **“Seek... set your minds on”:** Seek Christ and set your minds on having a portion in heaven, and be busy with heavenly things and the word of God. His saying “set your minds on” originally means the preoccupation of thought and its focus on an important matter. It is a higher degree than “seek,” as it expresses internal longings and persistence in the request until we get what we want; we might seek once and then fall silent.
- **“For you died”:** We died with our old self in baptism. This saying “For you died” is an answer





to what he said: “Set your minds on things above, not on things on the earth”. Whoever remains dead to sin and to the world, the life of Christ—which he took through His resurrection with Christ in baptism—continues in him, and it is an eternal life. This eternal life is hidden from people because we die and are buried and our bodies decay like other people. But the life that is in us is the life of Christ with which He rose from the dead.

- **“Your life is hidden”**: Christ is our life; God made us alive spiritually through Him. This is the life of grace that we live now, but this life does not appear before people, meaning it is hidden because Christ Himself is not visible. All that appears are the fruits of life, and what we have taken now has made us a living seed with its life hidden within it.
- **“In God”**: Christ united us with Himself, so His eternal life with which He rose from the dead became ours, and by His incarnation, He carried us in Him to the bosom of His Father.
- **“Then you also will appear... in glory”**: In heaven, glory will be public. “The glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). Christ will appear in His glory at the end of days and we will be with Him. Glory now is hidden in God; He is the source of our life and its protector, and our life is hidden in Him, and glory will be revealed in us in eternity.

### Verses and Practical Applications

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1).

#### **Application:**

- Think every day: What am I looking for more? Earthly needs or heavenly things?
- Today’s challenge: Dedicate 5 minutes to pray and say to Christ: “I want to seek what is above.”

#### **Application:**

“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).

Review your daily priorities (phone? study? prayer?), and see where our Lord is on the list.

**Interactive question:** If someone saw your daily schedule, could they say that you care about things above?



**Application:** “Put to death your members which are on the earth...” (Col 3:5).

Think of a habit or weakness that needs to be “killed,” and a small practical step to start today (like controlling anger or leaving a wrong habit).

### Colossians 3:5–6

- **“Put to death”:** Here begins lessons in practical behavior. “Put to death” linguistically means to sacrifice continuously. Consider your members dead to your desires; did you not die with Christ in baptism? Therefore, maintain this death to the world and its desires so that this death appears as a choice, by standing before sin as if dead, and standing before God in prayer as a son seeking help.
- **“Your members which are on the earth”:** The meaning is certainly not to cut or sacrifice our physical members, but rather the sins and desires that we commit with them. This is like the Lord’s saying: “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off”. As long as we are on earth, sinful desires will move in our members. The intent is to consider the member that craves earthly desires

as a dead member. If we respond to the earthly desire that works in this member, it becomes an instrument of sin.

God gave us the Holy Spirit as a helper so that sin does not rule over us. The matter is in our hands: whoever struggles to keep God’s commandments and puts his members to death (meaning he stands before his desires

as if dead), the Spirit rejoices in him and helps him. But whoever neglects the Spirit grieves and extinguishes Him, finds no help from the Spirit, and has thus quenched Him.

### Colossians 3:7–8

- **“You used to walk in these ways”:** The people of Colossae, like all other nations, used to live in idol worship and the sexual immorality and impurity.. that came with it before they believed..





**“But now”:** Do not miss the opportunity. No one is guaranteed tomorrow, and no one knows if there will be a chance for repentance then.

- **“Rage”:** Quick-tempered irritation.
- **“Malice”:** A harmful act toward others resulting from deep-seated hatred and dislike.
- **“Slander and filthy language”:** There is slander against God, and slander against people (lying about them), who are made in the image of God. Filthy language is the outward expression of wrong heart-thoughts and emotions into cunning and idle words.

### **Colossians 3:9-11**

- **“Do not lie”:** Lying is one of the works of the Devil, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Therefore, everyone who lies has become a child of the Devil. The Devil still lies to people, making them think that there is happiness and joy in sin, while it is only a temporary pleasure followed by a guilty conscience.
- **“Put on the new self”:** This happened through baptism; in baptism, we put on Christ and received a new nature. This means we should reflect His virtues in godliness, such as love, service, humility, and gentleness.



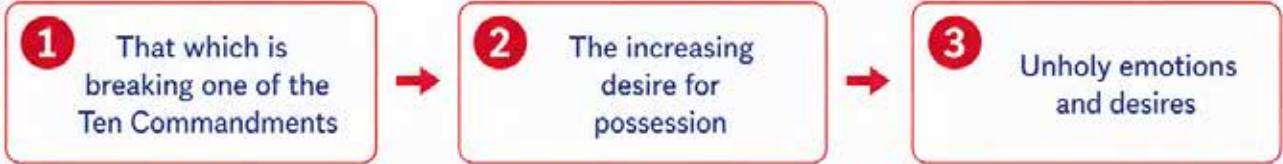


## The Heart That Breaks God's Commandments

Sin begins in the heart when we desire what God has forbidden.



**ACTIVITY:** Through this chapter, write the physical desires that the phrases express.. and Paul the Apostle asked that we put them to death



### COMMON EXAMPLES



### THE NATURE OF THE DESIRE



A material desire against God's commandments



Impurity of heart, evil thought, body, spirit



**REFLECTION:** Examine your heart. What desires are leading you away from obedience? \_\_\_\_\_

“ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.”  
(Colossians 3:8)



**APPLICATION:** If someone bothers you today, choose to respond with gentleness instead of anger.



**CHALLENGE:** Write down a situation that happened today where you could have gotten angry, but you chose to forgive instead.



**APPLICATION:** Every day, ask yourself: What part of me needs to be renewed today so I can be more like Christ?

“And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” (Colossians 3:10)



• **“Renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator”:** God created Adam in Paradise, where Adam could see God, know Him, and know His will. Adam loved God because God is good, and man feels this when he knows Him. Also, because Adam was created in God’s image and God is love, Adam was full of God’s love.

o When God created man, He said: “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). Thus, Adam had love, freedom, wisdom, holiness, and authority.

o As sin increased, man moved away from the image of God and the knowledge of God. Therefore, Christ came to redeem humanity and sent the Holy Spirit to renew our nature.

o As God’s love increases in our hearts, we gain a supreme understanding of God. Here, our image changes to become like His, reflecting His glory.

o Renewal, as understood from the original Greek word, is a process that continues throughout life and is not something completed in a single moment. The phrase “renewed in knowledge” indicates that the person being renewed will know and perform God’s will.

• **“Christ is all, and is in all”:** The inspiration here does not look at believers as separate individuals, but as people created anew in Christ, who is their life and their head. Therefore, their previous lives and differences (such as gender) have ended. Everyone has “put on” Christ and left the old self behind. Christ has become everything to us; we need nothing else.

o He is the life of every baptized Christian and everything to all of creation. Christ is the only goal we look toward. He is in us all as our life; He alone satisfies all our needs and is what we hope for in eternity.

o Note that the Apostle Paul always focuses on Christ to respond to the Gnostics.



This is a blow to the Jews and those who follow Jewish laws (Judaizers) who felt superior because they were Jewish. It is also a blow to the Gnostics who felt superior because of their “special knowledge” and philosophy, and to the Greeks who felt superior to others and called them barbarians.

### Colossians 3:12–15

- **“Put on”**: This refers to the outward appearance, which must be adorned with virtues. We were stripped by sin, and by baptism we put on Christ. But the saying “put on” refers to the importance of the struggle so that we may acquire the image of Christ and His virtues. Whoever struggles, Christ gives him His life and His righteousness.
- **“As the elect of God”**: Put on, because you are the elect of God; He wants to give you this appearance, that you may put on Christ. Here we see the importance of good works for salvation, and it alerts the believers to the importance of the Christian conduct required of them.
- **“Holy”**: Those who are consecrated to the service of God entirely. **“Tender mercies”**: The “tender” are the inner feelings, which we now express as the “heart.” Thus, what is required is a merciful heart toward the brethren, and showing love to others while they are in their afflictions. Mercies combine compassion and kindness.
- **“Kindness”**: Speech without harshness, and encouraging without provoking the anger of anyone, and being a help to others.
- **“Humility”**: Against pride and self-admiration; it is an internal feeling of unworthiness of divine blessings, knowing that every good is from God and not from oneself.
- **“Meekness”**: Does not wound anyone and does not anger anyone, and bears insult and does not return the same. It was said of the Lord Christ, the Meek, that He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets.





## Applications: Living Out What We Learn

God transforms our hearts so we can love others, forgive, and walk in His peace every day.



- **“Over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Colossians 3:14):**

Do a practical act of love for someone today without them knowing it was intentional (such as a word of encouragement, a simple service, or a kind message).



- **“Bear with each other and forgive one another...” (Colossians 3:13):** Choose a person you need to forgive or someone you have a tense relationship with to make peace.

- **Question:** What is stopping me from forgiving? How can I fix that?



- **“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts...” (Colossians 3:15):** When you feel tense or worried, stop for a minute and pray: “Lord, let Your peace rule in my heart.”

- **Challenge:** Record a situation today where the Lord gave you peace in the middle of trouble.



- **“Longsuffering”**: Self-control in the time of anger and patience with wrongdoers. Both the meek and the longsuffering are also calm and cheerful.
- **“Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another”**: Christ is our example in endurance. The beginning is endurance and the end of the journey is forgiveness.
- **“And be thankful”**: This is a feeling of God’s kindness toward us. This comes after “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts”: Whoever has a heart full of peace feels and trusts that everything is for the best. They thank God even in hard times, and you find them loving toward everyone, filled with deep compassion for all.
- **“Love is the bond of perfection”**: Love is the mother of all virtues and the most noble of them; it brings all virtues together. “Perfection” is a state that cannot be surpassed. The goal is for God’s people to be connected in the most perfect way possible, which is through love.

There are those who connect with others for various personal interests, and these connections often end in problems. However, the most perfect of all connections is love: first toward God, and second toward all people, even enemies.

**“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16).**

**Application:** Start every day with one verse to think about; focus on living that word, not just reading a large amount.

**“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17).**

**Application:** Before you act, ask yourself: “If Christ were in my place, would He do this?”

### **Colossians 3:18–25**

**“Wives...”** In those times, women had no rights and were treated like property that men could buy. Christianity came to give equality, so some women began to rebel against their husbands. We notice that women are often tempted by disobedience, while men are tempted to not love their wives or even be harsh with them. Because of this, the Apostle says to men: **“Love [your wives]”** using the word Agapy (Agape), which means a self-sacrificing love modeled after the love of Christ.





To women, he says: “**Submit.**” Children are also tempted by disobedience. A child who learns to obey their parents finds it easier to obey their teachers and, later, their bosses at work. This makes them successful and well-liked in life.



God does not only ask for obedience to holy parents, but to **any parents, as long as they do not ask the child to leave their faith or commit a sin that angers the Lord.** Fathers are also tempted to be harsh, to punish their children too severely for no reason, or to neglect them. Therefore, the Apostle gives each person advice that fits their specific situation.

God encourages servants by telling them they will receive a great reward if they are faithful to their masters. He will also punish masters if they treat servants unfairly, for God does not show favoritism. Here, Paul is working within the laws of that time which allowed slavery. When he asks a servant to be faithful, it is not just to please the master, but to please the Lord. Therefore, we should do all our work with **sincere hearts**, as if we are doing it for God.

When women submit to their husbands, children to their parents, and servants to their masters, this may be a reason for the husbands, fathers, or masters to believe. They might be won over to Christ, instead of the wives or servants being a reason for blasphemy against God.



## Chapter Four

In this chapter, our teacher Paul the Apostle focuses on: Prayer, Service, Witnessing, and Relationships between servants.

### Colossians 4:1-4

In the middle of life's hardships, we feel our need for God. Through prayer, we get help from Him. After the hardship goes away and we feel joy, we must continue praying with thanks to God. Therefore, our teacher Paul the Apostle said,

**“Devote yourselves to prayer,”** meaning we should persist with faith and trust in God's promises.

**“Being vigilant”:** This means having an *alert mind and disciplined senses* so that sins do not crawl in and dirty the heart. It means *continuous prayer with wakefulness and without distraction*. This is the teaching of the Lord Jesus that we saw during His prayer vigil in the Garden of Gethsemane.

### May the Lord Open a Door for us

1. God gives a reason to speak.
2. He prepares minds to listen and respond.
3. He opens hearts to faith.
4. He removes the obstacles of the devil.
5. The Lord gives us the strength to speak the secret of the Gospel and prepares the opportunity.

Note that Paul began the message by praying for them, and here he asks for prayer for himself; which is called **intercession** in Christianity. He asks the Lord for strength in service and preaching, not for his release from prison or for the ability to perform miracles.

**“The mystery of Christ”:** This refers to non-Jewish people entering the faith. This is what upset the Jews and eventually led to his imprisonment.

**“Make it manifest, as I ought”:** To speak with wisdom so that the message is accepted.





## **Colossians 4:5-6**

The two main ideas here are, behaving with wisdom before others - testifying through love and behavior - and speaking with grace and salt - kind and influential speech.

**“Walk in wisdom”:** We ask God for wisdom so we can act properly with people who are outside the faith, so we don't become a stumbling block to them. We should treat them with love, kindness, and without fault.

**“Redeeming the time”:** A “ransom” is a price paid for something precious. The meaning here is that time is very valuable. Let us seize every opportunity to do things that honor the name of Christ, whether in our private lives by going deeper in faith and repentance, or through good deeds. Every moment that passes never returns, so ask yourself - was it for eternal life or for a life that fades away?

**“Let your speech always be with grace”:** Meaning it should be characterized by kindness, which comes from the grace working within us.

**“Seasoned with salt”:** Salt is added to food to preserve it from spoiling. It also gives food a good taste. Our speech should have a “good taste”—meaning it should be gentle and loving and filled with wisdom. This does not stop those in charge from correcting people who do wrong, but it should be done firmly yet with love and politeness.

## **Colossians 4:7-9**

Our teacher Paul the Apostle was held under guard in a house he rented in Rome, and he was allowed visitors so his disciples used to visit him. Paul sent Tychicus with letters to Ephesus and Colosse, along with Onesimus who was from Colosse (the servant mentioned in the Letter to Philemon) who ran away from his master and came to Paul in Rome. Paul then sent him back to his master. Tradition says that Onesimus became the Bishop of Berea, and Philemon became the Bishop of Colosse.



**“Who is one of you”:** Meaning he is from Colossae. The epistle explains why Paul was in prison and how he turned prison into a place for preaching and teaching. They will also bring news about the people of Colosse to Paul and share Paul’s love and care for the faith with them.

### **Colossians 4:10–11**

Aristarchus traveled with Paul often during his ministry before his imprisonment, then traveled with him to Rome. He chose to stay with Paul to serve him. Mark is the “Karo” (preacher) of our Egyptian land and one of the seventy apostles.

**“About whom you received instructions”:** These were recommendations to welcome him and treat him well as a messenger of Christ. This was usually done through Tychicus, who carried the letter.

**“Those who are of the circumcision”:** They were Jews before they believed. They are Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus.

**“A comfort”:** Meaning they provided solace. Having them around and receiving their love gave Paul comfort during his hardship and imprisonment.

### **Colossians 4:12–14**

Notice Epaphras’s prayers for the people he preached to. He knows the enemy’s (Satan’s) attacks against believers and his tricks to shake their faith.

**“Who is one of you”:** He is from Colossae and is a Gentile (not Jewish). He is a result of Paul’s ministry and the founder of the churches in Phrygia.

**“Demas”:** Paul did not give him any words of praise. Perhaps Paul sensed the beginning of Demas’s drift toward turning away and returning to worldly things, which Paul mentioned later in (2



Timothy 4:10).

### **Colossians 4:15–18**

Archippus may have felt weak in his service. Here, Paul emphasizes that God wants him to continue his work for the Lord. This might be because Archippus was filling in for Epaphras while he was away. Archippus is the son of Master Philemon.

**“Remember my chains”:** Paul mentions his imprisonment because of his preaching and service. They should pray for him. When he remains strong, they too are strengthened and remain firm. They follow his example in enduring pain, as he is a role model for them.

**“Those in Laodicea”:** Most likely, this refers to the letter known as the “Letter to the Ephesians.” The Letter to the Ephesians was a circular letter sent to all the churches in Asia, with Ephesus as the capital. It is possible that the church in Laodicea was the largest or most famous among them.

**“The salutation by my own hand”:** He writes this word with his own hand and in his own handwriting as a sign of his love for them. It is also a sign that the letter is authentic and comes from Paul personally.

**“Grace be with you”:** Paul is saying that the grace he has experienced in his own life is what he wants to work within all of you.







## 3. Why Death and the Cross?

This year, our Coptic Orthodox Church celebrates the 17th century since the discovery of the Holy Wood of the Cross by Queen Helen, on the **10th of Baramhat**.

The Cross is the foundation of the Christian faith. It was not a sudden solution at the time, but rather *God's plan from the beginning*. Christ is the one who chose to save humanity through the Cross.

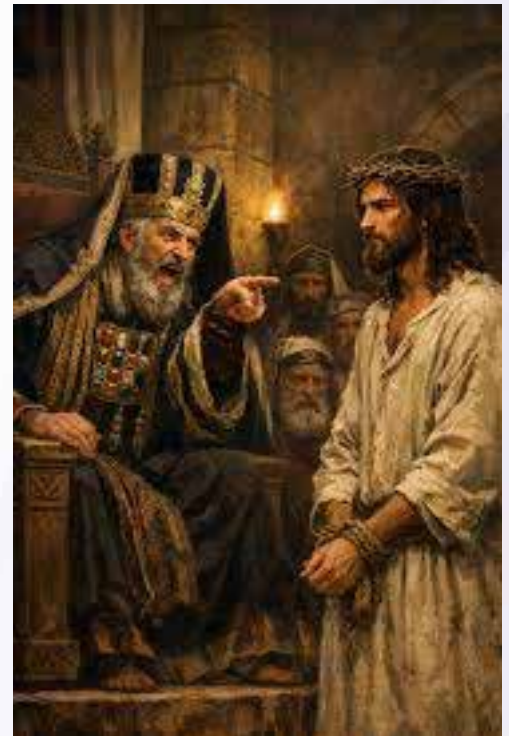
### Biblical Evidence

Many verses in the Holy Bible confirm this: In the Gospel of John: Jesus said, "

- *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14).*
- *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32).*

In these verses, Christ shows that the Cross was the specific way He chose to die to complete the work of salvation. When the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate, he told them: "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." The Jews replied: *"It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death" (John 18:31).*

There is a historical "lie" in this statement. The Jews did have the power to kill people at that time. For example, they killed St. Stephen. The high priests, in particular, had the authority from the Roman Empire to punish people even to the point of execution. We also know that Saul of Tarsus (before he became Paul) took letters from the priests to bring Christians from Damascus for trial. We find that the high priests had decided from the beginning that Jesus must die. They didn't tell Pilate, "We are going to put him on trial (and he might be innocent)." Instead, they said, "We don't have the authority to kill." This shows **they had already decided to kill Him but wanted to avoid responsibility in front of the Jewish people**. They wanted the Romans to take the blame. However, these events happened so that Jesus Christ could be crucified.



**Jewish law did not use crucifixion as a punishment;** they used stoning (as happened to Stephen), the sword, or being thrown into a furnace. But Christ's own intention was the Cross. Therefore, it was arranged for the Roman governor to judge Him so that the sentence would be death by the Cross.

We can reflect on how, for the first time, both Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles) shared in one sacrifice: the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. The Jews were the ones who made the decision to execute Him, and the Gentiles were the ones who carried it out in their own way - the Cross. It is well known that in the Roman Empire, the Cross was a punishment reserved for slaves and the worst criminals. Because those people did not have the rights of Roman citizenship, the Cross was a symbol of being cursed.

### Why must blood be shed to receive forgiveness?

#### **"And without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22)**

God, the Good and Holy, created man for incorruption and immortality — meaning to live forever. *"O Great Eternal God, who created man for incorruption" (Prayer of Reconciliation, Liturgy of St. Basil),* because he was created in the image and likeness of God.

- Human life is not self-derived; it is **poured into man by God.** *"For with You is the fountain of life" (Psalm 36:9), and "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live" (Ezekiel 37:14). "Christ who is our life" (Colossians 3:4), "For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).*
- **Sin is separation from God.** *"They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters" (Jeremiah 2:13).* Sin is also a violation of God's laws and commandments: *"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4),* and the punishment for violation is death.
- "I brought upon myself the sentence of death." The natural **consequence of sin is death,** *"For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "Death entered the world through the envy of the devil" (Liturgy of St. Basil), and "We fell from eternal life" (Liturgy of St. Basil).* Thus, man faced a double sentence of death: the consequence of sin (death) and the punishment for sin (corrupted nature).
- The loving **God did not leave man** to death despite sin, violation, and disobedience. *"As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11), and "You did not leave us until the end" (Liturgy of St. Basil).*
- God's leniency with sin conflicts with His absolute holiness and righteousness. *"But as He who*





*called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15–16).*

- Man must be punished because he sinned. The sentence of death must be carried out because God hates evil and rejects sin. His holiness cannot tolerate disobedience or impurity, and His justice demands it: *"For I will not justify the wicked" (Exodus 23:7).*

## The Dilemma

Even though God is just, holy, and hates evil, He loves sinners. He is compassionate and full of mercy. *"The Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin." (Exodus 34:6–7)*

- If God **ignored sin**, it would mean He is **not holy** or just
- If God **punished people** with full force, it would mean He is **not loving**.

To solve this, a substitute was needed to die in place of humans. Job once asked: *"If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait until my renewal comes." (Job 14:14).*

## Who is the substitute?

This substitute must have the following specific qualities:

1. **Human:** The law says, *"life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth." (Exodus 21:23–24).* Since humans are the ones who sinned, the substitute must be a human. Animal blood cannot truly take away human sins (Hebrews 4:10).
2. **Infinite (Unlimited):** Because the sin was committed against an infinite God, the issue affects all of humanity from the beginning of time. Sin entered the world through one man (Adam), and death spread to everyone because everyone sinned (Romans 5:12). Just as one man's disobedience made many people sinners, one man's obedience will make many people righteous (Romans 5:19). Who is the Redeemer whose sacrifice is valuable enough to cover all of humanity, across all ages, from Adam to the end of time? He must be a great and precious Savior, with infinite value.
3. **Holy and Without Evil:** The Bible says: *"Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf" (Leviticus 22:20)* These physical defects that God rejected in animal sacrifices were a sign that the true Sacrifice who would save humanity must be perfect, holy, and without evil. Otherwise, people could say to Him: *"Physician, heal yourself!" (Luke 4:23)*



Someone who lacks something cannot give it to others. How can a sinful person save another sinner when they themselves need someone to save them from their own sin? *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).*

4. **Stronger Than Death:** The Redeemer must be able to
  - *"destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14–15).*
  - The Savior must be able to say: *"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, where are your plagues? O Grave, where is your destruction?" (Hosea 13:14).* Then the saying will come true: *"Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54–55).*
  - The Savior had to enter the home of death to defeat it. He had to walk through the valley of the shadow of death without being held by it. He had to die, taste death, then triumph over it and rise again, breaking its power because *"it was not possible that He should be held by it" (Acts 2:24).*
5. **The Creator:** To recreate humanity, the Redeemer must be the Creator.
  - *"Your hands have made me and fashioned me, an intricate unity; yet You would destroy me. Remember, I pray, that You have fashioned me like clay" (Job 10:8–9). "*
  - *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14).*
  - *"But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine'" (Isaiah 43:1).*

Who is the Substitute who can save humanity and die in our place?

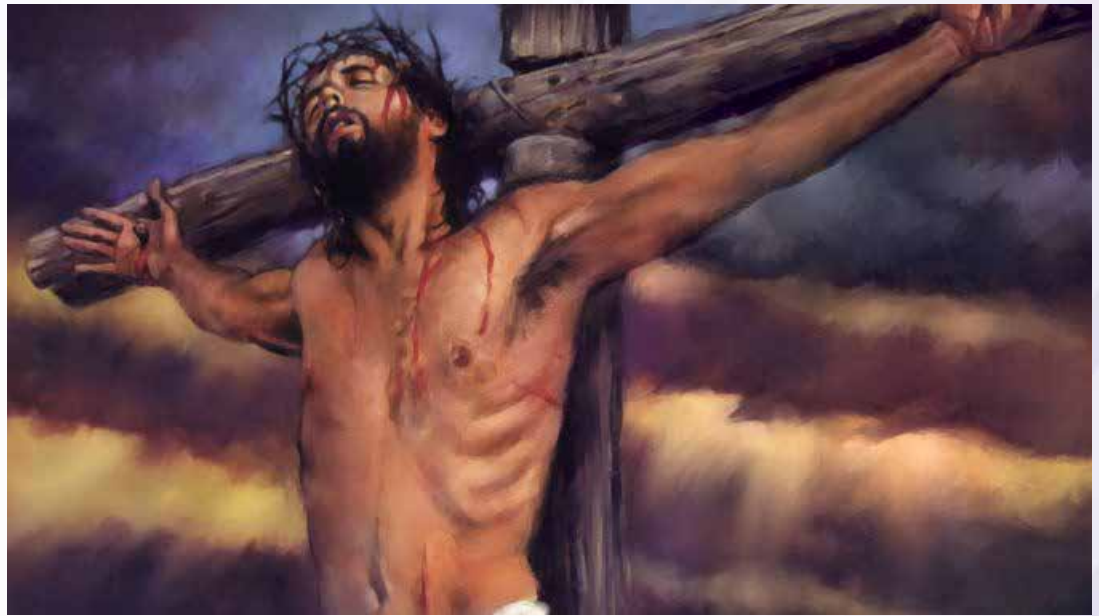
**Who is infinite but God alone,** *"from whom and through whom and to whom are all things" (Romans 11:36)?*





And who is **Holy** but God alone and our Lord Jesus Christ? *"Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22)*. The Lord Jesus alone was **stronger than death**, *"who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light" (2 Timothy 1:10)*. And who is the **Creator** but God alone? *"God who created all things through Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9)*; *"For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Revelation 4:11)*.

It is clear that God alone is able to save humanity and pay the price for them. He is the one who is *"Almighty over all things" (Genesis 48:3)*. *"I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior" (Isaiah 43:11)*. *"Is it not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior; there is none besides Me" (Isaiah 45:21)*.



Salvation required someone to die on behalf of humanity.

How can God die when He *"alone has immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16)*? And **how can a human save another human when a human must be the one to pay the price?** God's way to make this happen was to become human (the Incarnation). Indeed, *"God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16)*.

The Incarnation is when **God united Himself with our human nature which became subject to death**. *"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14)*. He took a body exactly like ours, but without sin, to taste death for our sake, on our behalf, and in place of everyone.

- *"O You who tasted death in the flesh at the time of the ninth hour" (Ninth Hour Litanies)*



- "We proclaim Your death, O Lord" (The Divine Liturgy).  
Here, **in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, all the qualifications of the Savior are complete.** He alone is infinite, able to do all things, Holy and without evil, stronger than death, and the Creator who became a human to die on behalf of all people.
- *"This is He who loved His own who are in the world, and gave Himself as a ransom on our behalf, unto the death which reigned over us, by which we were held, being sold under our sins" (The Divine Liturgy).*
- *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7).*

### Could anyone else besides Christ have performed the Redemption?

The answer is **definitely not**. While angels are righteous, no angel is infinite, all-powerful, stronger than death, or a creator. All the prophets and the children of Adam inherited his sin and needed redemption themselves, from the first human to the last.

Even the Virgin Mary, despite her great purity, needed this unique Holy Savior. She herself said, *"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47).*

All prophets inherited the "original sin" and also committed sins themselves.

- *"There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10)*
- *"All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Romans 3:12)*
- *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)*

Therefore, **God came to us**. He joined with our human nature and took a body for Himself. *"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8).* He did this to **redeem us with His precious blood**, *"like that of a lamb without blemish or defect, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:19).*

## Signs of Christ's Death and His Victory Over Death

### 1. David the Prophet and Goliath

The Savior is compared to the young David facing the giant Goliath. David defeated him not for his own sake, but for his people. **Just as those behind Goliath were defeated when their leader fell, humanity fell because of Adam's disobedience, and those who stood behind David shared in**





**his victory.** Even though they didn't fight, they won because David won. In the same way, everyone who believes in Christ and stays close to Him through spiritual practices like the Sacraments and good deeds shares in Christ's victory. Through Him, we overcome sin, death, and corruption.

## 2. The Bronze Serpent

In the past, the Lord told people bitten by poisonous snakes to look at a bronze snake on a pole to be healed from death. *"The Lord said to Moses, 'Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live'"* (Numbers 21:8). *"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him"* (John 3:14–15).

Jesus explained this connection to a man named **Nicodemus**. According to the teachings of Saint Cyril the Great, the bronze serpent is a symbol of Christ being lifted up on the wooden Cross.

- The Bronze Snake was lifted on a pole so everyone could see it and live. In the same way, Jesus was lifted on the Cross at Golgotha so everyone could receive eternal salvation. St. Ignatius says: *"When the body of the Word was lifted up, just as the snake was lifted in the wilderness, He drew humanity to Him for their eternal salvation."*
- Only those bitten by a snake who **looked at the Bronze Snake** were healed. Similarly, Jesus died for the salvation of all people, but not everyone is saved. Only those who believe and rely on the name of the Savior receive redemption. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).
- Healing from the snake bite depended on each person looking with faith and trust. Likewise, everyone who believes in our Savior Jesus is saved from sin and eternal death. *"Because he has*



*set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name" (Psalm 91:14). "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth!" (Isaiah 45:22). Here, looking means "faith."*

## What is the difference between the biting snake and the Bronze Snake?

The first snake crawls on the ground and carries deadly poison. It represents those who are "alive" in name but "dead" spiritually. The snake made by Moses had the same shape but **gave life**. The snake, which is usually a symbol of evil and death, became a symbol of good and life. This points to our bodies that die because of sin. Jesus took a body exactly like ours—He became like us in every way but without sin. As St. Paul says: "God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3).

St. Augustine says: "What is the lifted snake? It is the death of Christ on the Cross. Since death came through a snake, its symbol became the image of a snake. The bite of the [real] snake was deadly, but the death of the Lord gives life. By looking at the snake, the snake loses its power; by looking at death, death loses its power."

## Why death by the Cross?

Why didn't the Lord Christ die in his childhood at the hands of Herod among the thousands of children? And would he have paid our debt with his death then? Why didn't the Lord Christ die a natural death in his bed like other people? Why wasn't the Lord Christ killed in another way other than the cross? Such as burning, stoning, or beheading with a sword.

### 1. Why didn't the Lord Christ die a natural death?

- If the Lord Christ had died like any human, who could have claimed that He died for us?
- If the Lord Christ had died because He grew old and His body weakened like other humans, His death would have been for Himself.
- If the Lord Christ had died in His youth due to an illness or an accident, we would have thought He deserved to die.
- The Lord Christ died for us, therefore He had to die in His youth and in an unnatural way, He had to be sacrificed for us.
- The death of Christ was not for Him but for us and on our behalf. He did not deserve death; we did.





- He did not die His own death, but our death... therefore He died crucified.

## 2. Why didn't the Lord Christ accept being stoned?

*"Then they (the Jews) took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by" (John 8:59).*

And another time: *"Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them: 'Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?'... Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand" (John 10:31, 32, 39).*

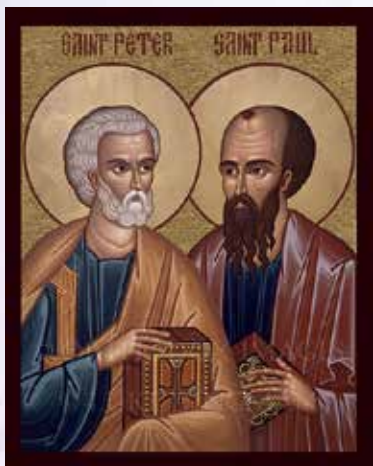
Death by stoning or by being thrown from a mountain would inevitably lead to the breaking of bones... and the Lord Christ did not want His bones to be broken. God previously specified this clearly in the ritual of the Passover lamb, saying: *"You shall not break any of its bones" (Exodus 12:46), and "They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break one of its bones" (Numbers 9:12).*

When the soldiers came to break the legs of those being crucified, they did not break His legs because they saw He was already dead. **This happened to fulfill the scripture that says: "Not one of His bones shall be broken" (John 19:36).**

Jesus wanted to keep His bones whole and unbroken because *"we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Ephesians 5:30).* The Church is the body of Christ and He did not want His bones to be broken apart. **He desires one whole, healthy, and undivided Church.** The cross was the only method of death that kept the body whole and not torn apart.

## 3. Why didn't the Lord Christ die by beheading?

- Beheading was the way Roman citizens were executed, while the cross was for slaves and commoners. Jesus did not have the honor of Roman citizenship.



- Saint Peter and Saint Paul were martyred on the same day. Paul died by beheading because he was a Roman citizen (see Acts 22:25). However, Peter died by being crucified upside down because he was Jewish and did not have Roman citizenship.
- It was necessary for Christ to die by crucifixion and not by beheading, not only because He wasn't a Roman citizen, but because He intended this.

**Christ is to the Church as the head is to the body.** *"And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23).* How could the Head (Christ) be separated from the Body (the Church)? *"And He is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18).* *"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23).* Therefore, Christ wanted to keep His head attached to His body to declare to all generations that He will never be separated from His one and only Church forever.

#### 4. Why did the Lord Christ not die by burning?

There was something else after death, which is the Resurrection: *"Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it" (Acts 2:24).*

Christ had to rise from the grave because He is stronger than death. He died only because He wanted



to die on behalf of humanity; a death sentence did not apply to Him because, as it was said of Him: *"Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22).* Therefore, it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him. He also had to appear to His disciples after His holy Resurrection so they could be certain of it. **The body they saw after the Resurrection had to be the same body that was buried, without changes, so they could be**

sure that the one who died was exactly the same one who rose, and not someone else. If Christ had died by burning, how would He have risen?

The same applies to death by stoning. Would He have risen with a healthy body—which might make them doubt the Resurrection—or would He have risen with a broken body? How would He walk and announce His Resurrection to everyone? Also, regarding beheading: How would He rise while carrying the marks of death in His body so everyone could verify His Resurrection?



## 5. Why did the Lord Christ choose the Cross?

**To be the path leading to Heaven:** Suspending Christ on the Cross between heaven and earth reminds us of Jacob's ladder, which he saw set up on the earth with its top reaching to heaven, and the Lord standing above it, and angels ascending and descending on it. The Lord said of Himself: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6).

**The Cross is the only way of death that keeps the deceased standing:** Any other way of death leads to bending over or falling, except for the Cross. Even after the spirit is surrendered, the body remains upright. Thus, Christ died but remained standing.

**To be both the Priest and the Sacrifice at the same time:** Christ wanted to die while standing because, on the Cross, He was performing the roles of both the Priest and the Sacrifice. In the "Fai Etaf enf" melody, we find this beautiful meaning: *"This is He who offered Himself as an acceptable sacrifice on the Cross for the salvation of our race."* When Pilate wanted to hand Jesus over to the Jews so they could kill him in their own way (by stoning), they answered craftily: *"It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death"* (John 18:31). Even though they killed Stephen just a few months later, stoning was the Jewish method of execution. Jesus did not want to be stoned; he wanted to be crucified. This is why John the Evangelist commented: *"This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled"* (John 18:32). The Lord Jesus wanted to:

- Be killed by the advice of the Jewish priests because he is a **"holy sacrifice."**
- Be killed by the Romans so that his sacrifice would be completed through crucifixion. **He chose the death of the cross.**

Jesus announced this intent from the beginning during his talk with Nicodemus: *"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him"* (John 3:14–15). The cross was a clear plan in the mind of Christ. It was a calculated will and a desire he wanted to fulfill for the salvation of humanity. Saint Athanasius believes the Lord chose the cross for these reasons:

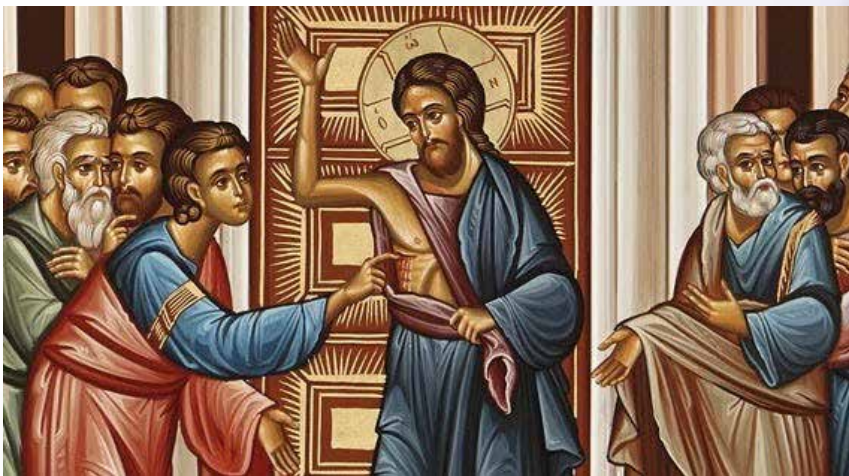
1. To make death public in front of witnesses, confirming the resurrection that would happen later.
2. To keep the body whole and not divided.
3. To die with open arms as a sign for all of humanity to accept Him, bringing together all nations and people in His loving person.



4. To be lifted up from the earth and draw us to Him, as said: *"And I, if I am lifted up, will draw all people to Myself."* By being lifted on the cross, He **raises us above the level of the earth and dust.**
5. To clear the air of evil spirits and give us victory over them.
6. To fulfill the prophecies.
7. To carry our curse because *"Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree"* (Galatians 3:13). This is because death by crucifixion was considered a shame and a curse: *"His body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, for he who is hanged is accursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:23)."* *"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'"* (Galatians 3:13). So, He wanted to die on the cross to carry and erase all the curses that had fallen on humanity.
8. To carry for us the fourfold sentence of death: physical, spiritual, eternal, and moral.
9. To shed His blood for us so we could be forgiven. *"And without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness!"* (Hebrews 9:22)

**The cross was the only way to die while leaving marks on Christ's body.**

These marks did not stop Him from rising from the dead, and *the resurrection did not erase the marks.* Christ rose carrying the signs of the cross and the wounds in His body to prove that the same body that died and was buried is the same body that rose.



Let us ask Thomas, who said: *"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe"* (John 20:25). How would Thomas have been sure of the resurrection if Christ had died by fire, or by stoning, or by being beheaded?! Then Christ appeared to them and said to Thomas: *"Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe... Because you have seen me, you have believed"* (John 20:27, 29).



## The Healing Side of the Cross:

The cross is not just a way to save us and forgive sins; it is also **medicine and healing for human nature** that was made sick by sin. Sin did not just ruin man's relationship with God; it also ruined man's inner self and left him weak and broken. Through our connection with the crucified Christ, a person is healed from the wounds of sin. Their inner freedom and purity are returned. As it says, *"by his wounds we are healed"* (Isaiah 53:5). He did not just heal the body; He renewed the soul and raised it from spiritual death. In this way, the **cross becomes the medicine of life**, returning man to his original state of being in God's love.

The Church lives the power of the cross through its sacraments, because every sacrament is an extension of the work of the cross in the soul.

- In **Baptism**: A person is buried with Christ to become a new creation and is healed from the corruption of the old nature.
- In **Repentance and Confession**: One is washed from the wounds of sin and regains inner peace.
- In the **Eucharist**: We unite with the living Christ who was crucified and rose, gaining healing for the body, soul, and spirit.

Thus, the Cross is present in every moment within the Church as a constant source of forgiveness, healing, and new life. In Coptic Orthodox thought, the Cross is our weapon and our hope; it is the secret of life, victory, and love, and the path to glory where we will live with our Holy Savior forever. Therefore, **the Cross** encompasses **Redemption, Love, Justice, Mercy, Reconciliation, Victory, Glory, Discipleship, and Blessing**



## 4. Blemished Yet Blameless

*"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one other, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (Galatians 5:17).*

*"If you do not want to stop praying, do not stop longing for it; for longing is the continuation of prayer." (St. Augustine)*

### The flesh lusts against the Spirit:

**The flesh:** This refers to the force within us that resists what is good. The flesh produces nothing but sin, pulling a person toward earthly desires and physical pleasures.

**The Spirit:** This refers to the work of the Holy Spirit within the **"new person."** It pulls a person upward to long for heavenly things. While the Spirit draws a person to pray, the flesh draws them to sleep or distracts them with excuses like tiredness or anything to stop them from praying.



### **"These are contrary to one another":**

This conflict will continue as long as we live in our earthly bodies. As the "inner new person" grows, the "old person" recedes. A believer has the freedom to choose which one to nourish. Whoever fights against sin and perseveres in prayer and praise allows their inner spirit to grow and their old flesh to wither.

### Choosing Your Path:

Every grace we receive in baptism must be nurtured through effort, or it will be lost.

**The Path of the Spirit:** If we walk by the Spirit, our bodies become *"instruments of righteousness."* We see God's creation with our eyes, praise Him with our tongues, lift our hands in prayer, and move our feet toward peace and service. This leads to the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23).

**The Path of the Flesh:** If we follow worldly desires, our bodies become *"instruments of sin,"* leading to deadly works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21).





## Desires of the Flesh

*"For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever." (1 John 2:16–17)*

## The Development of Desire

- **Inclination:** We have an inclination toward money, food, dignity, etc.
- **Urgent Desire:** The idea takes control and worldly desires become urgent.
- **Carrying Out Desires:** Practicing **physical desires** on a continuous basis.
- **Habit, Adaptation, and Control:** I have become alive to physical desires; these are what control my thoughts and behavior.

## The Growth of Spiritual Desires

- **Inclination:** Toward the Gospel, solitude, repentance, and knowledge
- **Urgent Desire:** Spiritual Practices
- **Obedience to Spiritual Desire:** **Submission to the will of God**
- **Habit, Adaptation, and Control:** The state of holiness

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us the gift of freedom from sin through His cross. He was nailed to the cross so that **we could "nail down" our worldly desires and replace them with holy, spiritual ones.** In this topic, we will look at three worldly desires we need to replace. The first is **anxiety**, which we need to exchange for the **desire for peace.** In a troubled world, many have lost their peace despite having modern comforts.

***Peace is the result of a heart at rest: with God, with oneself, and with others.*** It is a heavenly gift that grows every day through repentance, love, and calmness. "

- ***"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).***
- ***"The peace that comes from worldly actions is a delusion." (St. Isaac)***



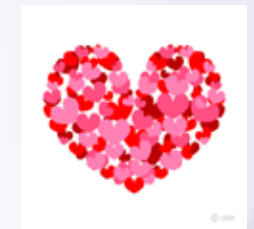
## 1. Peace of Mind

This means filling the mind with the **thoughts of Christ**. This makes our thinking holy and cleanses it from confusion and anxiety. A calm mind comes from trusting that God is in control of everything. The Church teaches us that prayer and reading the Bible keep the mind from wandering; a mind focused on Christ does not fear world events but sees God's hand in everything.



## 2. Peace of Heart

This is the work of the Holy Spirit within us, giving us comfort despite trials. The Lord said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you" (John 14:27). **This peace cannot be taken away by hardship**. A calm heart is like a temple where Christ lives, leaving no room for hate or destructive sadness. The Church calls us to keep our hearts pure through constant repentance and reconciliation with God.



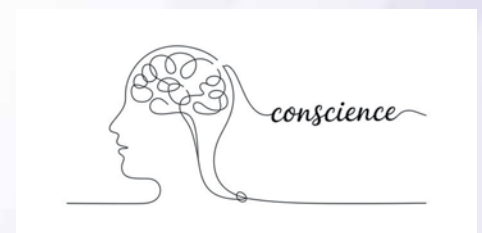
## 3. Peace in Relationships

This is the result of true love. We should strive to be peacemakers, not people looking for personal victories. "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). The Church sees unity and love between people as a reflection of being one body in Christ. Whoever lives with forgiveness and patience becomes an instrument of peace wherever they go.



## 4. Peace of Conscience

It is the inner comfort resulting from true repentance and walking in the light. As it is said, "There is no peace for the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22), because sin shakes the peace of the heart. However, when a person is washed in the blood of Christ through the sacrament of repentance and confession, true peace returns to them.



## A Prescription for Peace

Peace is not just a momentary feeling; it is **the fruit of a pure heart living in the embrace of God**. To Live in Peace and Reassurance, We Must:

1. Realize there is a Great God who governs and manages the universe; He is the **secret of life** and





existence. We must believe in His protection and care, and that He cares for us more than we care for ourselves. *"The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore"* (Psalm 121:7-8).

2. Believe **He is the Almighty** (Pantocrator), capable of everything. In His power, He can deliver us from all our troubles and solve all our problems. He is stronger than all the forces of evil that fight against us. *"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us"* (Ephesians 3:20).
3. **Be sure our lives are in God's hands**, not in the hands of people to do as they wish. He is a Lover of mankind and does not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that they return to Him and live. Faith in this brings reassurance and peace into our hearts. We say with the Prophet David: *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"* (Psalm 27:1).

We must trust and take refuge in God the Almighty. We ask with our teacher Paul the Apostle: *"Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you"* (2 Corinthians 13:11).

## The Desire for Purity and Cleanness

### Purity is More Precious Than Life



In the forests of Northern Europe lives the **Ermine**. It is a small animal known for its snowy white fur. This animal takes great care of its coat and fears getting it dirty. Hunters take advantage of this to trap it. Instead of using a mechanical trap, they use another trick: when they find the animal's burrow (in a tree or between rocks), they smear the entrance with black tar. When they see the animal, they release their dogs to chase it. The animal naturally flees toward its burrow, but when it finds it stained with black tar, **it chooses to leave its home rather than soil its clean white fur**. It bravely faces the barking dogs that surround it until the hunters arrive. **The Ermine prefers purity over its own life.**



## The White Flower

Some tourists visited coal mines in England and found a brilliant white flower in the middle of the black coal dust. They learned from their guide that **this plant secretes an oily substance that prevents dust from sticking to it, so it does not get dirty and maintains its whiteness.** He showed them this practically by placing some black dust on the flower, and it did not stick.

If the Ermine preferred to die pure rather than live in filth, and if this white flower—which quickly dies with the heat of the air—secretes an oily substance to maintain its whiteness in the midst of blackness... **can you not, you who are anointed with the Holy Myron oil, keep yourself pure in the middle of this world?**

This was the commandment of our teacher Apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy: "Keep yourself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22). Know that he would not have commanded you to be pure if he did not provide you with the means to fulfill this commandment with joy and celebration.

## What is Purity?

The life of purity is not just refraining from physical sins—whether by acting, seeing, hearing, or imagining. Rather, it is **guarding the senses of the heart so that it remains pure at all times.** The heart is the core of the Christian person, which has become a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit, starting from the sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation, passing through the sacraments of Confession and Communion, in a permanent and continuous way through various spiritual means. Guard your heart, eyes, ears, mouth, hands, thoughts, and feet, so that you do not slide into the swamps of sin; for their smell is foul, their bitterness is intense, and their thoughts are violent.

## Purity Is Not:

A call to deprivation or suppression. Rather, it is a call to taste the sweetness of friendship with the Holy God and union with Him, fellowship with the heavenly beings, and seeing God.

## Purity Is:

Hatred of evil and corruption. I may fall, but by divine grace, **I rise again.** I am not condemned for my fall, but rather for surrendering to sin and the repetition of falling without rising.

Many people limit "Purity" to not practicing physical sins, but Purity is a broader concept to live by:

- **Purity of the Body:** Where the Spirit of God dwells in it, so it is not used for the sake of lusts.





- **Purity of Thought:** Do not let the mind not be the devil's playground, but meditate on God.
- **Purity of Emotions and Senses:** Emotions are Divine gifts that set our souls ablaze with the love for God and others
- **Purity of the Heart:** It expands to include all humanity, and seeks what benefits others.
- **Purity of the Environment We Live In:** The believer looks forward to seeing even the earth as a holy sky.

### **Beware of the Danger of the Senses**

The danger of the sense of sight is that it influences the mind. Every part of the human body rests and becomes active at times, *except for the mind; it never rests and is never still*. It is always active, even during sleep. Since sight connects with what is presented to the mind, one must guard the mind, as it is the gateway to the rest of the human entity. The enemy begins his negotiation and displays his goods through the mind, using trickery, adornment, and deception. Lust lies hidden in its lair until the mind interacts with it; it creeps in unnoticed. Sin begins with a look, then a thought, and then sin occurs. *The pure person is not just one who has reached perfection in purity, but also one who longs to reach it.*

- **Application:** Perform a metanoia (prostration) for every sin during your day, so you may start your tomorrow with a pure heart. Everyone who says, "Lord Jesus," is like one holding a sword in his hand to strike down the enemy.



### **Replacing Grumbling with the Desire for Contentment**

Our teacher, Paul the Apostle, says in his second letter to Timothy: *"For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good..."* (2 Timothy 3:1-3).

The word contentment indicates **thanksgiving** along with **sufficiency, peace, joy, and faith**.

We remember the story of Abraham and his nephew Lot when a conflict arose between the herdsmen of Abram and the herdsmen of Lot. We find that Lot journeyed eastward and they separated from each



other. "So Abram said to Lot, 'Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen'" (Genesis 13:8).

Human nature tends toward discontent and greed—looking out only for oneself, and a selfish love for the larger portion rather than giving. Lot preferred the land over love; he preferred the thing over the person, and this is **greed**. It is known that a human is a well of desires, always wanting more.

### Contentment:

Our teacher, Paul the Apostle, said a beautiful word to his disciple Timothy: "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6).

We saw our father Abraham refuse to take anything in return for his battle and the risk he took to defend the people of Sodom, not even a sandal strap (Genesis 14:23). Saint Mar Isaac says: "Leave what is in the hands of people, and people will love you. Leave what is on earth, and God will love you."

### Ask Yourself:

Do you want to be rich? You naturally answer, "Of course." We may find that money has become a major goal in human life but **is money a goal or a means?** Many make money their goal, and appearances have become a god to them. Things have become more important than people; they even evaluate individuals based on their possessions and appearance.

### Contentment and Wealth:

Be careful not to focus on appearances in your life or let your possessions control your will. St. Paul says: "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition... But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:9, 11).

Money is a blessing and not a sin; it is a sacred gift from God who gave us everything to enjoy. However, money is a means, not a goal. **It is meant to meet needs.** It is a good servant but a bad master. The more a person's possessions increase, the more their attachment and love for money grow. Therefore, it is said: "**Keep money in your pocket, not in your heart. Keep it in your hand, not in your mind, and use it for necessities.**"

Some believe that possessions complete their personality. This is wrong thinking, for a person's true





beauty is internal: in their mind, heart, spirit, and gentleness. **"Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness"—this is your true wealth.**

You can refer to 2 Kings 4:8–15 to learn the meaning of satisfaction and inner fulfillment. Therefore, satisfaction and contentment are what define a person, not their car, home, position, or money. It is about their mind and heart. However, the culture currently presented by society promotes more possession, the desire to imitate others, and a lack of satisfaction.

### **How do we grow in contentment?**

We live in a society that promotes a culture of "creating a need" and turning it into a "necessity." For example, the need for mobile phones was created. In the beginning, only 10% of people had them, then the percentage increased until they became a necessity. Then it became a necessity to have a phone with more modern specifications. This happens in many cultures: a need is created, then it is turned into a necessity, and we become enslaved by the thing.

### **How do I choose what I want and be satisfied with what I have?**

*"For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:11–13).*

- **I have learned:** To have a new nature after becoming a Christian. Additionally, his many travels and sufferings served as a special school for him.
- **To be content:** To be satisfied with what I have, even with the minimum.
- **I know how to be abased:** Meaning I am content even while live at the lowest standard of living.
- **To Abound:** Meaning I keep more than my needs from whatever I have, no matter how little, and give what is extra to those in need. The word "**abundance**" means **overflowing to others**. There may have been times of plenty and wealth in his life, but *in his wealth he did not become proud, and in his poverty he did not grumble*. Let us beware of grumbling and remember what happened when the children of Israel grumbled against God in the wilderness.
- **I have learned both to be full and to be hungry:** In all the circumstances that Paul faced, he was trained. Spiritual life generally requires training and struggle. If he was hungry, he accepted hunger from the hand of the Lord and tried to benefit from it without complaining. If he was full, he was thankful. There are those who grumble in their distress and forget God in their joys.



Paul learned how to live in Christ satisfied and joyful; therefore, Christ strengthened him in everything and in every situation.

While the world teaches us to always look for more— better appearances, more money, more fame — Paul the Apostle calls us to a completely different desire: **the desire for contentment.**

Contentment is not laziness or indifference, but rather an **inner strength that makes a person happy and satisfied with what they have, without stopping their pursuit for the better.** Paul was not satisfied because he obtained everything, but because he put his trust in Christ who strengthened him in all circumstances: in poverty and wealth, in success and failure, in rest and fatigue.

Contentment is saying: "O Lord, as long as You are with me, I am content, for in You is my sufficiency."

#### **Practical Application:**

- Try every day to thank God for three simple things you have.
- When you see what others have, instead of comparing, say in your heart: "Lord, give me what suits me, and I will be happy with it."
- Remember that contentment is not measured by what you own, but by the extent of your trust in God's love for you and your satisfaction with what He grants you.
- *Lord Jesus, teach me to rejoice in what I have, and to find my fulfillment in You alone. Deliver me from the desire for comparison, and fill my heart with the desire for contentment, so that I can do all things through You, for You are my strength and my peace. Amen.*
- Pray the Serenity Prayer: *Grant me, O Lord, to change the things I can change, to accept the things I cannot change, and grant me the wisdom to know the difference between them.*

To practice contentment and satisfaction, learn the following:

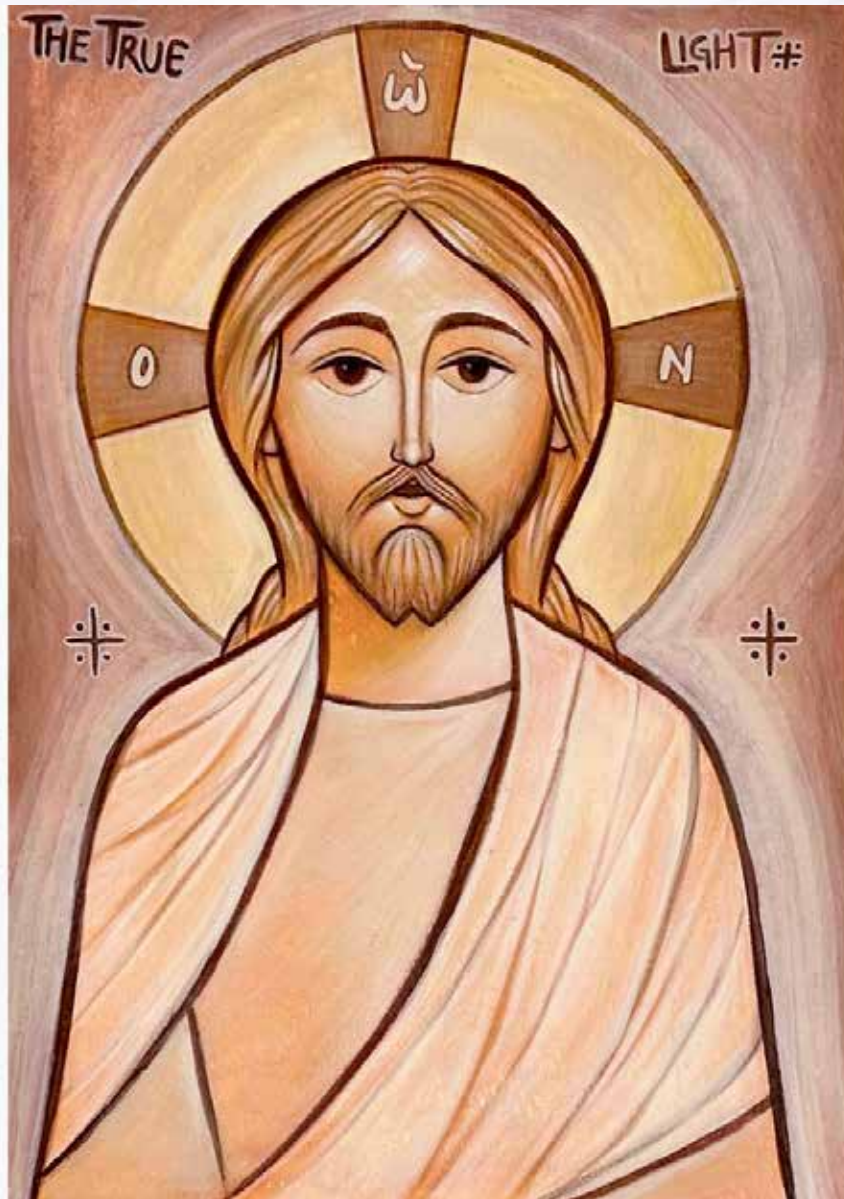
1. Avoid the phrase "Why me?" in your life.
2. Use positive phrases in all your conversations, and speak with a smile.
3. Write down 30 things you thank God for in your life.
4. Do not be overcome by anything, do not crave everything you see.
5. Care for your mind, heart, and soul, **in Christ**, for this is what gives you sufficiency.
6. Look at things with dignity, be satisfied and content, and do not look at others.
7. Walk according to your needs, not according to your desires.
8. Do not cling to everything you own: learn to free yourself from the worship of things; learn the





love of giving, for **nothing exhausts a person more than living for themselves.**

9. Try to have inner freedom, and do not let feelings of selfishness overcome you, as this increases sentiments of poverty and hunger, and increases feelings of envy and discontent.



## 5. True Knowledge

If you find a post on Instagram, or a video on TikTok, saying something strange about the Bible or the Church - Do you believe it? Do you share it? Do you ask? Do you ignore it?

Let us compare the knowledge provided by God and the knowledge provided by the serpent (you may refer to Genesis 2:9, 16, 17; Genesis 3:1-6).

- Eve wanted to correct the serpent. The sentence she used to express her doubt was “*Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’*” Eve replied to the serpent: “*We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’*”

Eve’s style of dialogue shows she did not fully grasp the commandment. She also added to God’s commandment “**do not touch it**” While she had the mental knowledge of the command, she hadn’t deeply internalized it. It was a conversation that reached a level of naivete—**believing everything without wisdom or discernment.**

### What are the types of knowledge?

God gave us a mind capable of understanding. People can perish from ignorance and a lack of knowledge as the Bible says: “*My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge*” (Hosea 4:6).

God wants us to know what benefits us and what benefits others. However, the problem humans have faced from the beginning is wanting to “know” just for the sake of knowing, **even if that knowledge causes them harm.**

A person must focus on educating themselves with spiritually and ecclesiastically beneficial information, in addition to general cultural knowledge. Those who do not seek knowledge live in an intellectual vacuum; when they speak to others, they say nothing of depth or benefit.

But you must ensure the soundness of every piece of knowledge that reaches you, and its benefit before you accept it. Know that **knowledge is not an end in itself, but rather a means for your benefit.**





- **Sensory Knowledge**

Acquired through the senses: what people know by sight, touch, smell, or hearing.

- **Intellectual Knowledge**

Acquired through the mind: known through study or reasoning.

- **Divine Revelation**

A type of unveiling or divine announcement through which the Lord reveals what He wants His saints to know. This is done by the Holy Spirit, of whom it was said in the book of the Prophet Isaiah: *“The Spirit of wisdom and understanding... the Spirit of knowledge” (Isaiah 11:2)*. This is what the Psalmist requested in his prayers, saying: *“Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths” (Psalms 25:4)*.

- **Knowledge from Others**

Acquired through others via books, newspapers, movies, media, or knowledge that comes through friends or colleagues.

- **Knowledge of the Devil**

This can be cast into people’s minds, as he did with Eve, or through a thought, a dream, or one of his subordinates. This knowledge may be false, or it may be true but used for a bad purpose. Know well that if the Devil gives you some knowledge, he does not give it to you for free, without a price, or without a demonic goal. **He wants to reach you to harm you, or to put you under his authority or guidance.**

## **Beneficial Knowledge**

The world today is passionate about seeking knowledge about the moon and planets, using spacecrafts that cost vast sums of money. However, there is not nearly the same longing for the knowledge of God. Man is very happy to bring some rocks from the moon or some pictures because they give him some knowledge of the nature created by God, *without being happy with the knowledge of God Himself*. The same can be said about many of the discoveries made by man.

### **1. Know God, and Know that He Sees You Wherever You Are**

There is a big difference between knowing God and knowing about God. The latter only means understanding some facts about Him. However, knowing God indicates a personal relationship and



complete harmony with Him. Knowing God is what qualifies a person to draw near to Him and feel His presence. **Those who live in sin do not know God; they only know about Him.** If they truly knew Him, they would cling to Him and never offend Him. This is the greatest knowledge, which we speak of in the Gregorian Liturgy: *“You have given me the learning of Your Knowledge.”* This is also what Christ said in His prayer to the Father: *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God...”* (John 17:3).

## 2. Know the Word of God and His Commandments

As Saint Paul the Apostle said to his disciple Timothy: *“and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith”* (2 Timothy 3:15). This book is *“profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”* (2 Timothy 3:16). Through it, one learns the way of the Lord and how the saints walked in it. How beautiful are the words of the Prophet David in the Great Psalm: *“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law”* (Psalm 119:18).

## 3. Know Yourself

Another type of knowledge is to know yourself. In a world full of confusion, where principles change and identity is lost, it becomes necessary to stop for a moment, look inside yourself and ask: **Who am I? Why did God create me? And what is my role in this generation?** The Holy Bible always reminds us of our identity: *“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him”* (Genesis 1:27). You must know that you are created in the image of God; thus you have dignity and a mission. To live this message truthfully, you first need to know yourself.

### Knowing Yourself

True knowledge is not just about having a lot of information. It is about standing honestly before God—in prayer, in confession, and in reading the Word. It involves asking yourself:

- Who am I? Why do I live? What does God want from me?
- Am I living according to His commandment? What are the values I build my life on?
- Am I the person God created me to be, or has society influenced me?





*“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves” (2 Corinthians 13:5).*

**Do you know your abilities and the gifts God has given you that you need to discover?**

You must know how to invest your energy. Energy consists of effort and time. You must manage these well for the glory of Christ, for your own growth, and for serving others.

You need to know your sins and weaknesses—their size, their nature, and their danger. Do not let them lead you; instead, try to fix them. Knowing yourself is not enough; you must also know your “time” or the era you live in.

## **Knowing Your Time**

This means understanding the age you live in: its challenges, opportunities, dangers, and paths. Know



the history of your country and the ideas and principles that control and move the world. Do not be a stranger to the time you live in. **Learn from the mistakes of those before you.** Do not walk through life without awareness; interact wisely with the events around you.

- Whoever knows themselves can understand their time and choose their path with awareness. **They can say “No” at the right time and in the right way.**
- The Lord Jesus rebuked the crowds because they did not recognize their time: *“You know*

*how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times” (Matthew 16:3).* It is not enough to be believers only inside the church. We must be enlightened by the Holy Spirit to understand our surroundings and remain faithful despite the world’s changes.

- *“Do not be outside of your time, but be insightful of God’s purposes in your time.”* — St. Athanasius
- *“He who knows himself knows how to repent, and he who knows his time knows how to live according to God’s will.”* — St. John Climacus

Know your time, be a voice for truth amidst the noise. Hold onto your faith, understand your culture, and arm yourself with spiritual discernment, *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).*



## Harmful Knowledge

What enters your mind as knowledge affects your thoughts, senses, and feelings. It may also affect your relationship with others. Moreover, it is stored in your subconscious and then emerges in the form of suspicions, thoughts, or behaviors. By taking in this knowledge, you have allowed it to leave an internal and external impact on you, and you may not be able to limit its spread or the extent of its harm.

Therefore, **we must use our minds with the wisdom given by the Lord for what benefits us and others.** Your mind is like a computer; it has a specific capacity for gathering information, so do not occupy a large part of it with trivial matters that hinder it from recording what is useful. Store in it only what is useful and what is necessary for your life. Know that **whatever you store in your mind will eventually come out, whether you want it to or not.** Information you stored

in your subconscious years ago may surface from your memory at an unexpected time or on an occasion you weren't aware of.

Not all knowledge is beneficial; there is knowledge that causes the mind to lose its simplicity and purity, making its outlook on things change for the worse. Therefore, every spiritual person must be very careful about the quality of their knowledge so they do not bring "wars" upon themselves through it:

**Knowledge of harmful things:** These are not in our best interest and collect things in our mind that hurt us. Unfortunately, **knowing these harmful things is sometimes called "general culture."** Also, some knowledge affects a person's thoughts and feelings, wrongfully shaping their principles and directing their path in life. Some knowledge is clearly wrong and you must stay away from them completely, which requires no advice or questioning.





**Knowledge that changes a person's views of others:** If you hear a negative opinion about someone, your thinking toward them may change.

**Knowledge that leads to doubt:** As one writer said: **It is easy for doubt to enter a person's mind, but it is very difficult for it to leave.** If you lend your ear to someone who casts doubt into your heart or if you read things that make you doubt your faith or the Holy Bible—you may need to exert great effort to treat this doubt. It may stay with you for a long time until grace finds you, relieves you of it, and grants you strength and stability.

The simple person believes everything and some are deceived in matters relating to doctrine and faith, falling into doubts. On the other hand, depth in thinking may lead to depth in faith; one discovers the falsehood of doubts, rejects them, and does not accept them. However, depth in thinking may also lead to pure rationality far from faith, where one tries to examine matters higher than his own thinking regarding God. Thus, **he falls prey to doubt in everything: in God and His existence, in God's response to prayer, and in faith in general.** Therefore, you must gain knowledge with caution.

**Transmission of Knowledge and Ideas:** Friends may provide you with information or pass on harmful experiences. After you suffer from that knowledge, you try to get rid of it and succeed by



the grace of the Lord; however, what you have passed on to others may still remain firm in them, harming their knowledge. **You would then be condemned for harming others because you were the cause.** At that point, your sin does not tire you in your own knowledge, but rather in the transmission of that harmful knowledge to others. It is your past that haunts you: the harmful knowledge that you spread, whether by word, writing, or other ways. This includes those who launch or spread rumors, whether with the intent to harm, defame, or for mere entertainment and gossip.

**Impure Sexual Knowledge:** Browsing pornographic sites, books, novels, or TV series that contain inappropriate sexual content, may generate desires, weaken spiritual life, and lead to sin.

**Knowledge Related to Violence, Sorcery, or the Devil:** Participating in certain electronic games, reading books about magic or devil worship, or watching certain satanic movies is another form of harmful knowledge.

## What is the difference between Knowledge and Wisdom?

**Knowledge:** To know the commandment “Love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44) and to know the path of Christ.

**Wisdom:** To act according to the commandment, forgive, and truly love those who harmed you. To walk in the path of Christ no matter how narrow it is or how much effort it requires.

In Coptic Orthodox thought, knowledge is **a life to be experienced, not just information to be stored**. It is the knowledge of the Person of Christ: *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).*

## What are the characteristics of useful knowledge?

- It leads me to **growth** (spiritually and mentally).
- It contains **light, love, and edification**.
- It is consistent with the **Word of God** and the **Church’s teaching**.
- Its source is **reliable**, not unknown and not just a “trend”.

The Church requires us to be aware of modern developments and use them, but the idea is: how do we benefit from the offerings of the modern age? We return to the origins, which are the only refuge for what we face in our lives. This means if we want to know specific information we need to practice:

### 1. The Virtue of Discernment

It is a divine gift for those who have set in their hearts the desire to please God with all their heart and strength. It is not the result of human wisdom or merely reading many spiritual books; rather, it is **divine enlightenment for those walking toward the Kingdom with an upright heart**. It is grace that guides a person in their behavior and actions with wisdom toward the inheritance of the Kingdom and eternal life. Requirements to receive the grace of discernment include:

- **Heartfelt Sincerity:** Purity of soul and motives in walking with God.
- **Divine Enlightenment:** The pouring of God’s light and wisdom into the obedient heart.
- **Constant Clinging to God:** Always existing in His holy presence, seeking His counsel in everything, and **carrying it out with complete faithfulness**. Constant prayer is helpful for this..





**2. Commitment to the Holy Books:** We can benefit from the experiences of godly individuals, where we hear the voice of the Lord and His guidance for us. This includes reading the writings of the Fathers to see practical examples of Christian life.

- A youth asked his spiritual father: “Father, which books do you advise me to read so that I may grow in wisdom and understanding?”
- The father replied: *“Read, my son, what builds you up and benefits you in a time when readers are few. Stay away from strange sources that might be harmful to knowledge or cause worry and anxiety. Do not gather around social media, computers, and Facebook; we must be selective about what we hear or watch from these sources so they benefit us without harming us. But I recommend to you first, my son, to read the Holy Bible and the Books of Wisdom. They are an **inexhaustible source of wisdom, written by holy people moved by the Holy Spirit, and through them, God speaks to us.**”*

Ignorance of God’s word leads to destruction *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”* (Hosea 4:6). Knowing the Scriptures is eternal life: *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent”* (John 17:3). **God’s word must bear fruit** within us

once we have memorized and acted upon it. Discernment and distinction prevent a person from following just any spirit or teaching, and they do not believe every thought. Instead, they weigh everything according to God, following the revelation of the Holy Spirit who takes from the Lord Jesus and gives to the soul—granting the spirit of wisdom, discernment, and distinction.

It is told of St. Anthony that when he was asked which virtue is most capable of protecting a person from all the traps of the enemy, he replied: *“It is Discernment that teaches a person how to walk on the straight ‘Royal Road’ and how to avoid the rugged, treacherous paths.”*

**Discernment** is the eye of the heart that distinguishes between thoughts and deeds. It is a divine gift that requires us to persevere in asking for it from God Himself, the Hypostasis of Wisdom.



### 3. The Virtue of Discipleship

A self-sufficient person is like a **blind man** who dares to **trust only in his own judgments and personal**



**distinction.** In contrast, those who wish to live a life of discipleship recognize their need to hear the opinions and counsel of others.

No matter how intelligent you are, remember the scripture: *“And lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).* Your understanding operates within a limited circle—the circle of your own knowledge, experience, and personal vision. There is no harm in adding other visions, knowledge, and experiences to your own by asking questions or seeking the counsel of a Spiritual Father.

#### 4. Spiritual Guidance

It is important for each of us to have an experienced **Confession Father** to guide us on the path to Heaven, just as we learn from the experiences of the Holy Fathers and those who have gone before us.



We need discipleship and learning from God’s holy people—those who labored and struggled to acquire virtue and wisdom. We have many saints who lived and left us their experiences. Therefore, we must learn from the Church Fathers and her teachers. For this reason, the Gospel calls us to emulate their faith and virtues:

*“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (Hebrews 13:7).*

**Benefit from the advice of fathers** as long as you have opportunities to learn from their experience and trials. Therefore, it says: *“Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will explain to you” (Deuteronomy 32:7).*

Statistics indicate that 87% of internet users rely on it in one

way or another to obtain information or scientific news—a significant percentage. Also, 3 out of every 5 users turn to the internet to find the meaning of a scientific term or to verify the accuracy of scientific information.



## Discussion Questions

- Does the internet provide sufficient information on all subjects?
- How accurate is the information provided?
- Does this mean we should reject the internet, media, and all means of communication?

It is not that we should reject Social Media, but rather we should approach it with the following:

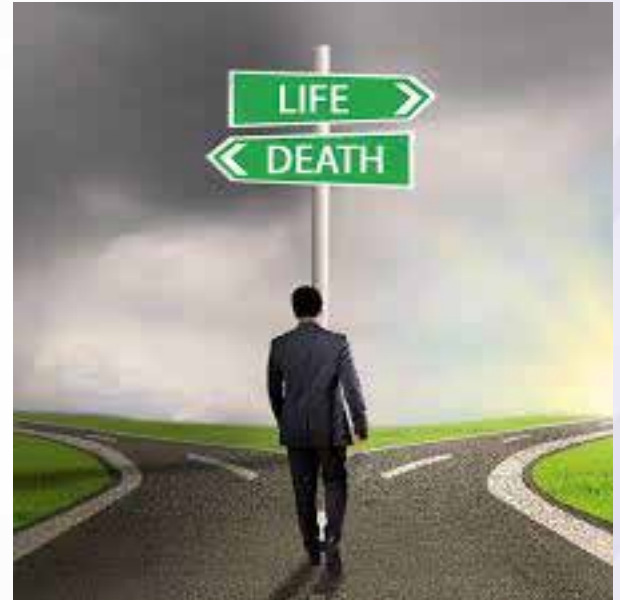
**Spiritual Fulfillment** Enables me to sort and distinguish between programs, and to select what is **appropriate** and **beneficial** from them.

**Cultural Fulfillment** Fills my mind with important issues, making me capable of criticism and positive choice, rather than submitting to the promotion of negative things that have a dangerous impact on our minds.

**The Ability to Choose** The person who is spiritually and culturally full is able to sort, criticize, and **distinguish**. They choose what they see as constructive and reject what they see as trivial or destructive. *"A satisfied soul loathes honey"* (Proverbs 27:7).

**Educating Our Conscience** A **repentant** heart is one that loves Christ, grows in spiritual experience, studies the Gospel and the fathers and the spiritual path, has a spiritual father, perseveres in the struggle against sin, and is enlightened by the Holy Spirit. **One should be sensitive to the movements of the Holy Spirit within them when warned of a sin, a magazine, a book, a friend, an idea, or a movie.** We should be sensitive to sin in all its forms: thought, word, deed, relationships, etc.

**Educating our thoughts:** We must take on the mind of Christ, as our teacher the Apostle Paul said: *"But we have the mind of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 2:16). In this way, one can fulfill the commandment of the Gospel: *"bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5). An enlightened mind through the Spirit, united with Christ, studying the Word, and



understanding the pitfalls in the path of the Spirit, understands the issues of this era and its trends. **A mature mind discerns between right and wrong and has a strong will to choose what is right.**

**How do I get sound information from internet sites?**

1. **Search for a scientific source or a trusted church site:** One of the most important things you should consider is obtaining a sound source for scientific information or church research from a site written by a team of researchers, scientists, or specialists. They should not be imaginary people or people about whom no clear information can be found. For example, trusted sources can be found in public research bodies, well-known universities, or specialized scientific journals.
2. **Stay away from sites that lack transparency or credibility:** Some information may be misleading to achieve financial gain or the like. For example, sites that sell a certain product may contain a lot of incorrect and undocumented information, focusing only on highlighting the features of the commodity they sell to the user. This may seem acceptable at first glance as it could be scientifically possible but will you find accurate details about this on the site of the company selling the product? You will most likely find encouraging information for the consumer, not scientific information or facts. The absence of scientific facts and the presence of undocumented information are reasons that you should not rely on this site as a source of scientific information.
3. **Always look for the latest developments:** Science discovers something new every day. It is very important, if you are looking for scientific information, to choose the latest research and compare it with other literature to reach a sound scientific result. It is not logical to rely on research in a field of science from 5 years ago for obtaining current information.





## Memorization

### PSALM 28

Bring to the Lord, O sons of God, bring to the Lord young rams; bring to the Lord glory and honor.

Bring to the Lord glory to His name; worship the Lord in His holy court.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; God of glory has thundered; the Lord is upon the many waters. The voice of the Lord is mighty; the voice of the Lord is in great beauty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar; the Lord will break the cedar of Lebanon. And He will beat them small like the calf of Lebanon; and the beloved one like a son of the unicorn. The voice of the Lord cuts a flame of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord will shake the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord strengthens the deer, and will uncover the forests, and in His holy temple every one speaks of glory. The Lord dwells in the flood, and the Lord will sit as a king forever. The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace. ALLELUIA.

### The Gospel of the Third Hour

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

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

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





## Litanies of the Third Hour

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

Δοξα Πατρι κε Υιω κε αγω Πνευματι

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

Κε νην κε αι κε ις τοις εωνας των εωνων: αμην

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

Κε νην κε αι κε ις τοις εωνας των εωνων: αμην

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

Δοξα Πατρι κε Υιω κε αγω Πνευματι

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

Κε νην κε αι κε ις τοις εωνας των εωνων: αμην



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

### **Absolution of the Third Hour**

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

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

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





**WE ARE  
MORE THAN  
CONQUERORS**

**THROUGH  
HIM**

**WHO  
LOVED US**



**ROMANS 8:37**

*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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