

MAHRAGAN EL-KERAZA 2026

MORE THAN CONQUERORS



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

(Romans 8:37)

English Edition
Grades 5-6



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The Story of Our Salvation

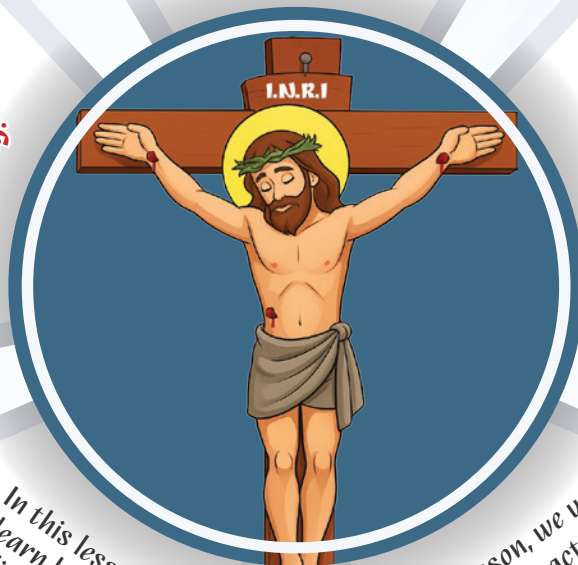
In this lesson, we will learn about one of the symbols of the Cross in the Old Testament. We will learn the first anchor, which is: **"The Cross is an Eternal Plan."**

Saint Paul the Apostle

In this lesson, we will learn how believing in the Lord Jesus makes us more like Him and in doing so, we become His image for everyone. And we will learn the fifth anchor, which is: **"The Cross Leads me to Eternity."**

Why the Cross

In this lesson, we will learn why the Lord Jesus chose to die by being crucified on the Cross. We will learn the second anchor, which is: **"Through the Cross, all Humanity was Saved."**



In this lesson, we will learn how the Cross was a living experience in the lives of our saints. From this story, we will learn about the fourth anchor, which is: **"My Spiritual Fathers Lived by the Cross."**

Saint John the Short

In this lesson, we will learn that we actually use the Cross in all the Church's services. This will teach us the third anchor, which is: **"The Cross in the Church."**

The Panorama of Holy Week

Dear friends, We would like to welcome you to our adventure “Panorama Pistavros”. This year, our friends, Pavlos, Bishoy, Sherry, and Verina will lead us into an exciting adventure. Uncle Matthew will help lead the way as we prepare for the show. During this adventure, we will learn about many interesting stories and how to apply this verse:

**“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”
(Romans 8:37)**

This is the theme verse for **Mahragan El Keraza 2026**. We will all have fun in this adventure together.

Let's get started...





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

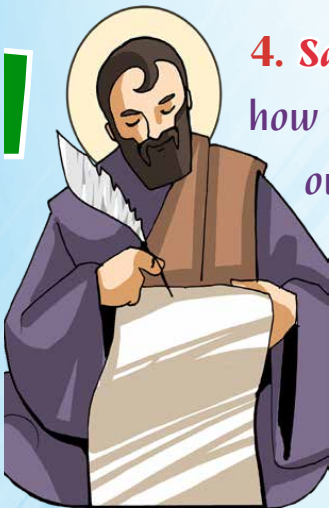


1. The Story of Our Salvation: In this lesson, we will learn about one of the symbols of the Cross in the Old Testament. We will learn the first anchor, which is: **"The Cross is an Eternal Plan."**

2. Why the Cross: In this lesson, we will learn why the Lord Jesus chose to die by being crucified on the Cross. We will learn the second anchor, which is: **"Through the Cross, All Humanity Was Saved".**



3. The Panorama of Holy Week: In this lesson, we will learn that we actually use the Cross in all the Church's services. This will teach us the third anchor, which is: **"The Cross in the Church."**



4. Saint John the Short: In this lesson, we will learn how the Cross was a living experience in the lives of our saints. From this story, we will learn about the fourth anchor, which is: **"My Spiritual Fathers Lived by the Cross."**



5. Saint Paul the Apostle: In this lesson, we will learn that through our faith in God, He helps us offer true repentance and change our ways. From this story, we will learn the fifth anchor, which is:

"The Cross Leads me to Eternity."

Let's get started!



The Cross is an Eternal Plan

This is a new announcement for our Theater brought to you by the **Sunday School Team**. The team members are **Pavlos, Bishoy, Sherry,** and **Verina**, a group of friends with the help of their servant, **Uncle Matthew**.

Announcement

It is time to begin our adventure! Get ready for an unforgettable special journey inside the rooms of "**ΠΙΣΤΑΣΤΗΡΟΣ Theater**." This experience is filled with many exciting stories, new information, thrilling riddles, creative crafts, and memorable pictures. Limited spots available, and surprises beyond imagination. We hope to see you there!

When the children of the Church heard this announcement, they became very excited and rushed to register to participate. Meanwhile, the team began working on all the necessary preparations. They started by choosing the location of the Theater, arranging the rooms to fulfill all the goals of the Theater. Each room had a person assigned to it who was responsible for making sure the preparations were well underway. The team worked together to prepare each room in a creative and exciting way. Finally, on the day before the Theater's opening, the team went to make sure all the finishing touches had been completed so that they could welcome the participants the next morning. But waiting for them there was a surprise...

Sherry: What happened to my room preparations?!



Bishoy: My room too?!

Pavlos: And mine!

Verina: We had all the rooms set up; how did they all get messed up?!!

Uncle Matthew: Everyone, please stay calm and let's figure out what happened here.

Uncle Matthew made some phone calls...

Uncle Matthew: Now I understand the problem. I spoke to the person from whom we rented the place, and they explained that a strong storm had destroyed the whole area. In my opinion, I suggest we help each other repair each room, one at a time, until we fix all of them! The leader of each room should let us know what's missing, and God willing, we'll be able to fix everything right on time for tomorrow's opening!

They began with Sherry's room.

Sherry: Okay guys, are you ready? I named the first station "The Cross is an Eternal Plan." The decorations include a board, colors, and Holy Bibles on each table. It had a big stand with a storyboard that uses a bunch of pictures and symbols. To help you better understand my vision, let me tell you the full story!



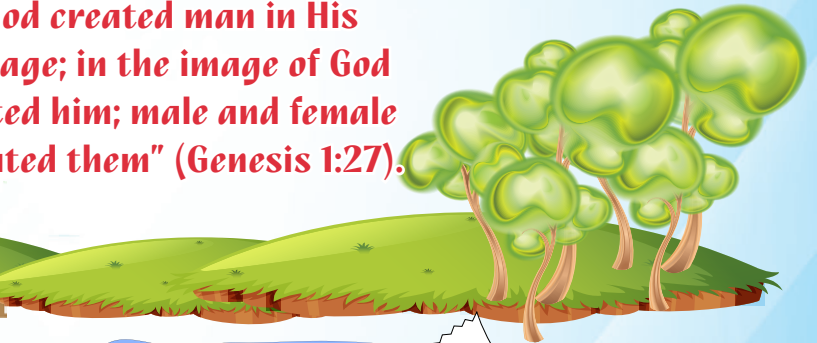
The
Story of Our
Salvation
ΠΙΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ

Out of the abundance of God's love, He formed Adam after preparing all creation. He distinguished him from the rest of creation by the very way in which He created him. Adam was created when God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. God created man in His own image and likeness.



As it is written,

"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27).



God gave Adam free will when He commanded him:
"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"
(Genesis 2:16-17).





Of course, **God could have prevented Adam from eating of the tree.** But because God created Adam with freedom, He let him have the choice to do whatever he wanted. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve made a mistake and **disobeyed God's commandment** when they **listened to the serpent** and **ate from the tree.**

So, they fell into sin, and with them, all mankind. This is because we were all in Adam when he sinned. Since Adam was the head of the creation and its crown, we inherited the consequences of that sin and the fallen nature **from Adam to the end of ages.**

This is why **Saint Paul the Apostle** tells us:



"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." (Romans 5:12).

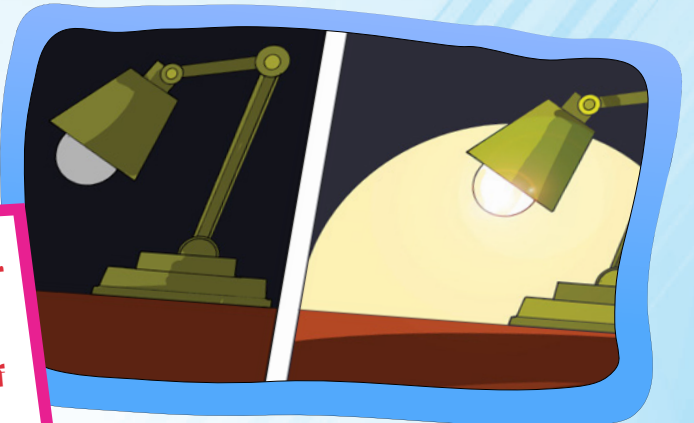
Verina: But what is the punishment for sin?

Sherry: Great question! Let me explain.

1

Adam, Eve, and all their children were sentenced to death.

Just as God had told them, "**For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die**" (Genesis 2:17). As St. Paul reiterates, "**For the wages of sin is death**" (Romans 6:23). Think about it this way: if electricity is cut off from a lamp, it will no longer turn on. In a similar way, death here means separation from the Source of Life, which is God.



2

Because of sin, **their nature became corrupt.**

This is like a person who ate rotten food; eventually it will hurt his stomach, and he will need a doctor to prescribe medication to heal him, or else he will die.

3

Adam and Eve were no longer allowed to live in the Garden of Eden

Thus, humanity inherited **Adam's** sin and the corrupted nature which resulted from it.





And for the life that we lost to return to us, it was necessary to:

1. Lift the sentence of death from us

2. Renew our corrupted nature due to sin

Bishoy: I have a question! Why didn't God let humans die and just create a new human race and start over?

Verina: Or why doesn't God just forgive them instead?

Uncle Matthew: Good question, my friends. The answer is simply because of four major reasons!

**God's
mercy and
love:**

Because **God is merciful and loves mankind**, whom He created in His own image and likeness, He did not desire to create for Himself a new race and allow this one to perish forever.

**God is Holy
and Just:**

Because **our Lord is Holy**, He cannot coexist with or accept sin. **Because He is Just**, He must judge mankind for their sin.

**Corruption
of the
Nature:**

The problem was that **the very nature of mankind itself became corrupted with sin**. For that reason, renewal was necessary.



Fulfillment of the Divine Justice:

Therefore, the only solution was for a **Savior to come and die on behalf of all mankind**, fulfilling divine justice.

Because God is the only One who satisfies the conditions of a Savior, **God, the Word, became Man** and redeemed us.

The conditions for the Savior are that He must be:

Human without sin:



Because humans are the ones who sinned, the Savior had to also be human to redeem us - but One that does not carry the sentence of death. Therefore, **our Lord came down to earth and was born of our Mother, the Ever Virgin, taking on human flesh to be like us in everything except for sin.**

Capable of Dying:



He was willingly crucified and **died in our place and was buried in the tomb.**

Through His death, the Divine Justice was fulfilled, and He lifted the sentence of death from us.

Unlimited:



Because God is **unlimited**, His blood is enough to redeem all of humanity, from **Adam** to the very last human being.

Stronger than death:



Because He is God, **He is stronger than death. He overcame death, and after three days, He raised Himself from the dead.**

The Creator:



By His resurrection from the dead, **He gave us eternal life and renewed our corrupted nature.**

That is why

our teacher, Saint Peter the Apostle, said:

“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18–19).



For the **blood of the Lord Jesus Christ**, which was shed on the cross, is sufficient to bear the sins of the whole world. **But for every person to benefit from this precious gift of salvation, he or she must:**



Believe in **the Lord Jesus**, our Redeemer and Savior, and **receive the sacraments of Baptism** and Chrismation in the name of the Holy Trinity. When he or she sins, he or she **repents and confesses**, regularly **partakes of the Body and Blood of the Lord**, and perform good works. In doing so, **he or she declares that he or she has accepted God's redemption.**



The Cross expresses the most beautiful love story in human history – the story of God's love for mankind and His redemption.

Sherry: Yes, truly, the Cross and redemption were in **God's plan** from the beginning. Even though our understanding of redemption became clearer in the New Testament, **God had already prepared symbols of it in the Old Testament.** All of them point to our **Lord Jesus Christ.** That is why we will learn about **one of the symbols of the Cross in the Old Testament:**

God's people, the Israelites, were living in **slavery** in Egypt for many years (about 430 years). Because of their suffering, they were crying out to God. So, God heard their cry and sent **Moses** to deliver them from slavery. **God** told **Moses** to go to **Pharaoh**, the King of Egypt, and ask him to let His people go. However, **Pharaoh** refused. So, God allowed plagues to come upon **Pharaoh** and Egypt. Each time, **Pharaoh** would ask **Moses and Aaron** to pray and ask God to remove the plague. God would remove the plague, but **Pharaoh would continue to refuse to listen to God's command.** Finally, **the 10th and final plague** happened.

The Passover Lamb (Exodus 12)

Verina:

What happened in the
final plague?





Sherry: Because **Pharaoh's** heart was hardened, and he refused to let God's people go, **God said to Moses** that **every firstborn in the land of Egypt would die** – from **Pharaoh's** house to the lowest servant, and even the animals.

God also told **Moses** that each family from God's people should offer a **lamb**. But not just any lamb, the lamb had to be:

- **Without blemish**, meaning healthy and perfect
- **Male**
- **One year old**, meaning full of energy



Every family should sacrifice it at the same time. **"Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight"** (Exodus 12:6). God told them to put the blood of the lamb on **the two doorposts and on the doorstep of the houses** so that their firstborn would not perish. **God said to Moses and Aaron, "And when I see the blood, I will pass over you..."** (Exodus 12:13).

They were to eat it **roasted (on fire with two sticks)** with **unleavened bread** (bread without yeast) and bitter herbs. God told them: **"In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones..."** (Exodus 12:46). They were **not to leave any of it until morning**. "You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire" (Exodus 12:10).



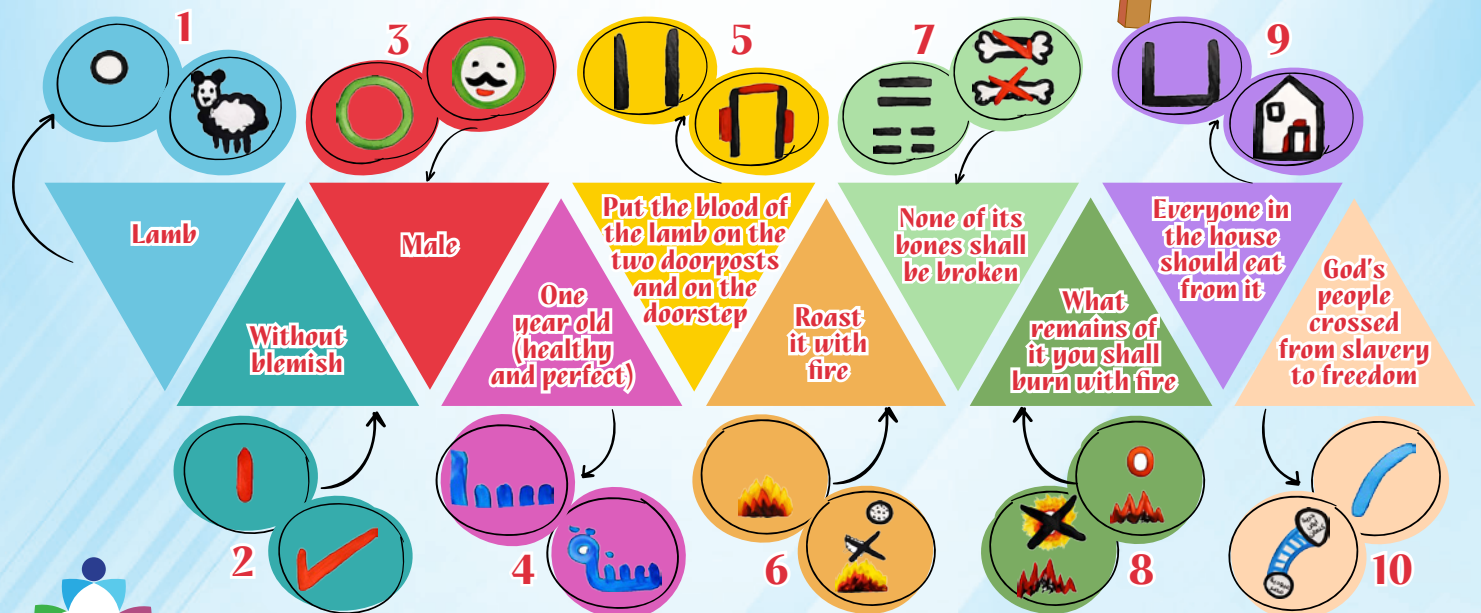
And the Lord told Moses and Aaron: "So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord" (Exodus 12:14). In other words, they always remember this day.

And to this day, the Jewish people consider this day a feast to commemorate everything that God had done with them in delivering them out of Egypt. Their Exodus, or exit from Egypt, would not just be a story that happened and ended, but it would be a continuing work of God in the life of His people.

Indeed, they called it the **Feast of the Passover**. The word "Passover" is a Hebrew word that means "passing over" or "crossing." On that day, God's people crossed from slavery to freedom, heading toward the Promised Land (the land of Canaan).

Sherry: And now I will show you how to explain the story using the sketch board: Use the 10 points below as you draw a small house,

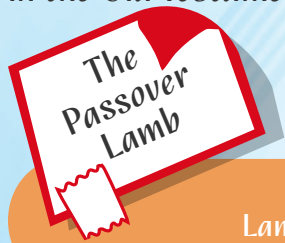
- Color the two doorposts and the doorstep in red (to illustrate the blood of the lamb).
- Draw the family inside ready to leave.
- Write underneath your drawing: "God's people crossed from slavery to freedom."





Bishoy: I understood the story of the Passover lamb... but how is it a symbol of the Cross?

Sherry: Let me explain! I will show you each scene from the story of the Passover Lamb. I will also explain how the Passover Lamb is a symbol of the Cross in the Old Testament.



Lamb

Without blemish
(healthy and perfect)

Put the blood of the lamb on the
two doorposts and on the doorstep
of the houses.

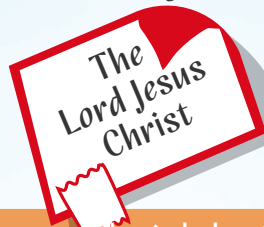
After being slaughtered, it was
roasted on crossed rods and eaten
with bitter herbs.

None of its bones shall be broken.

None of it was to remain until the
morning

Everyone in the household should eat
of it.

God's people crossed from slavery to
freedom.



It was prophesied about Christ that, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7). This is because He is the Lamb of God: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

Our Lord Jesus Christ was without blemish or sin, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19)

This was a symbol of how the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ redeems us, cleanses us from every sin, and saves us from eternal punishment. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22)

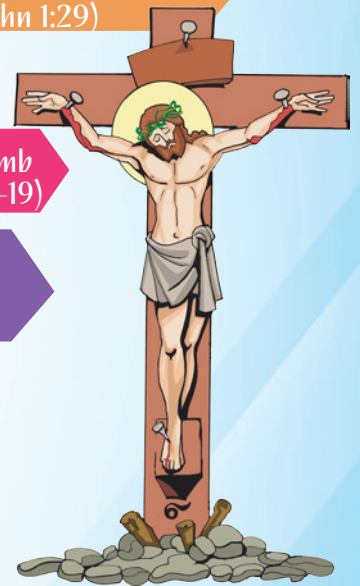
Likewise, Christ was lifted on the wood of the Cross, suffered pain, and took on Himself our sins.

None of Christ's bones were broken. "Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs" (John 19:32-33).

The Lord Jesus died on the Cross and was taken down from it on the same day.

We also eat His Body and drink His Blood in Holy Communion.

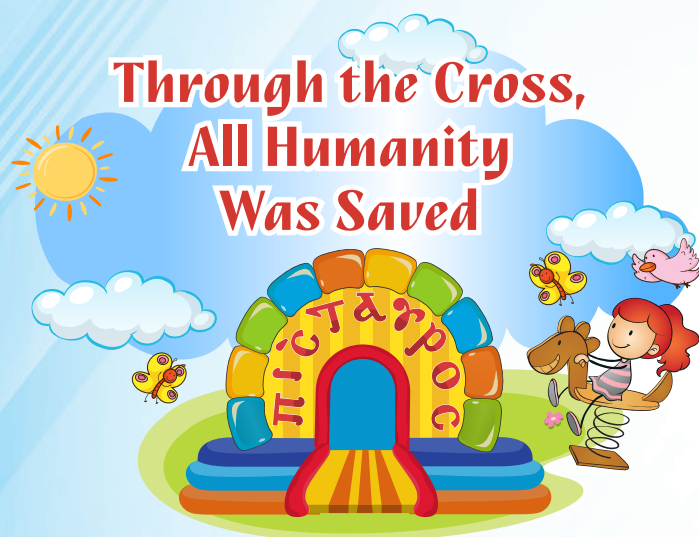
Likewise, we all must partake of the Lord's Holy Body and drink His Precious Blood. By His redemption, the Lord Jesus saved us from the slavery of sin and opened for us the doors of Paradise. Through partaking of the Eucharist regularly, we are united with and remember Him.



Verina: Truly, **the Cross expresses the most beautiful love story in human history...** You are right, **Sherry**, to call the first room **“The Cross is an Eternal Plan.”** I can start drawing the symbols for the Theater.

Bishoy: I can prepare the Holy Bibles and the pens on the tables.

Pavlos: And I will prepare the colors!
And they all began preparing the first room.



After they finished the preparations for the first room, the group was excited to complete the journey of preparations. The second room was titled: “Salvation for Humanity is Through the Cross” They found tools scattered everywhere (wood – ropes – pieces of metal – piles of cement – stones – lighting – speakers). **Pavlos** oversaw preparing this room. He began explaining the room to them.

Pavlos: Because I love theater, I thought we could present the story here using **different sets of designs and scenes.**

Verina, Sherry, and Bishoy: What does that mean?

Uncle Matthew: Think of it as **“How do I turn the story into something we can see, hear, and live” – not just decoration!** If the decoration shows the physical space, **then the different sets include the shape of the place, the sound, the lighting, the accessories, and the costumes.**

Pavlos: Exactly, **Uncle Matthew!** The beautiful sets will make the children feel that the story is real. They will understand the meaning through their eyes and ears before we explain it with words.

All: That’s wonderful!



Verina: But what will **the set** be about?

Pavlos: **A set design for Golgotha.** We will make a large background from cement blocks and place **the Cross** on top of it. Around **the Cross** we will place different questions to help us understand and think about the meaning of the Cross. Around the Cross, we will build large question marks. All these questions will be written without answers. Meanwhile, the background music will be sad, and the lights will create different lighting effects.

Sherry: Slow down, artist! Just so we are clear, what are the questions about?

Pavlos: Questions that help us answer an important question: **Why the Cross exactly?** In other words, **why did God choose the way of crucifixion to accomplish His redemption for us?**

Why didn't He choose any other kind of death?




Sherry: I like your question — **especially since the Cross was a punishment of shame, curse, and pain... It was a punishment for criminals because its suffering was severe and unbearable.**

Pavlos: While we're preparing the room, I'll answer this question for you!




**Why
the Cross?**
πισταρπος




Pavlos: Um... what if He got old and showed signs of aging and died? Could we then say that He died for us and on our behalf?

Verina: Of course not ... that way, He would have died like most people do.



Pavlos: To understand **why the Cross**, let's think - are there other alternatives? For example, if the **Lord Jesus** had died **of an illness**, could we really say He died for us and on our behalf?

Sherry: No, because then He would have died because of the sickness.



Pavlos: Imagine someone wanted to offer a lamb as a sacrifice, but while walking on the way, the lamb became tired and died. Could the person say, "I offered a sacrifice?"

Bishoy: Of course not! The lamb died before it was sacrificed. He would have to buy another lamb and offer it properly.

Pavlos: Exactly... **That is why Christ had to die in a way that was not ordinary.** In other words, He had to be slain for us.



Sherry: But why did the Lord Jesus choose the Cross exactly? There were other ways He could have died - such as by the sword, stoning, or burning. Let me tell you! He chose crucifixion and accepted it for many reasons, including:

1 The Cross is public and visible



Our Lord Jesus Christ chose the Cross so that **it would be high and visible**, and in this way, **He showed us the reality and truth of the Resurrection**. From the moment Christ was hung on the Cross, it was done publicly. All those who witnessed the Crucifixion saw the nails go into His hands and feet, the crown of thorns placed on His head, and the soldier driving the spear into His side. **Therefore, they made sure, first, that the Man who was crucified was Christ Himself and not someone else pretending to be Him. Second, they knew that He Himself is the One Who rose from the dead. When they saw the holes made from the nails and His wounded side, they knew that the One who died was the same Person who rose again. Third, Our Lord Jesus Christ wanted to die standing to show that He is stronger than death. We cannot understand the Resurrection without understanding the Cross, and likewise, we cannot understand the Cross without understanding the Resurrection. This is why we believe and preach His death and Resurrection.** Through this, He conquered death while retaining the wounds of His suffering in His body, proclaiming His victory over death to everyone! **He declared the reconciliation of Heaven and Earth**, showing us that the Cross opened a way to connect Heaven and Earth, like a bridge.



2 The Cross is a sign



The Cross had to be a sign for the **Lord Jesus**, the Son of Man. The sign of the Cross is simple yet powerful! We move our fingers in all four directions over our bodies to do the sign of the Cross because the salvation was for the entire world.

3 On the Cross, none of His bones were broken

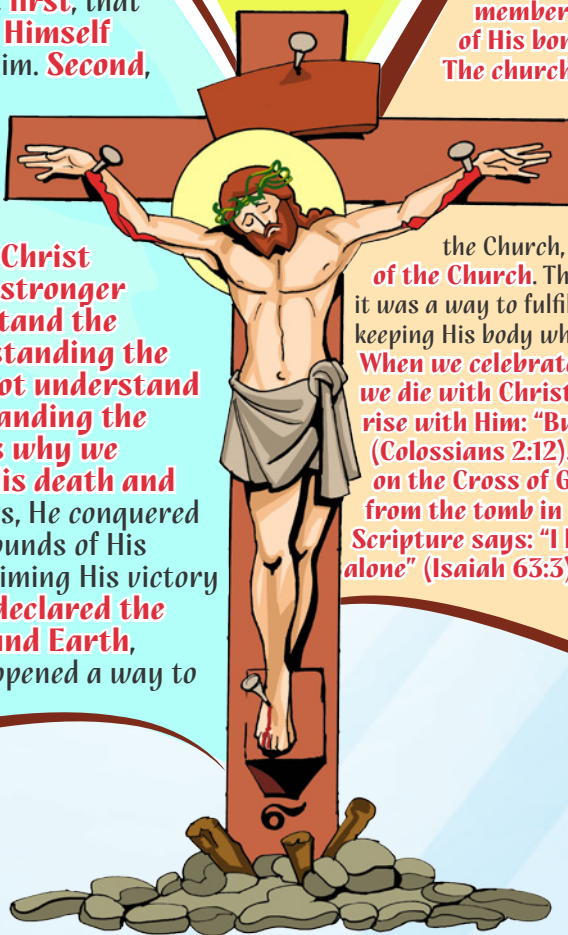
The Lord Jesus wanted His body to remain whole, and for none of His bones to be broken. God had previously shown His people this in the instructions for the Passover Lamb. As it is written, **"nor shall you break one of its bones"** (Exodus 12:46).

Therefore, it was within Christ's will for none of His bones to break. **"For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones"** (Ephesians 5:30).

The church is the spiritual Body of Christ. And God's will was for the Church to remain whole and without division. If they had cut off His head, it would mean separation from

the Church, **because Christ is the Head of the Church.** Therefore, He chose the Cross since it was a way to fulfill the sentence of death while keeping His body whole.

When we celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism, we die with Christ, and we are buried and rise with Him: "Buried with Him in baptism" (Colossians 2:12). We do not die with Him on the Cross of Golgotha, nor do we rise from the tomb in which He was buried. As the Scripture says: **"I have trodden the winepress alone"** (Isaiah 63:3)).



4 The Cross is shame and suffering.

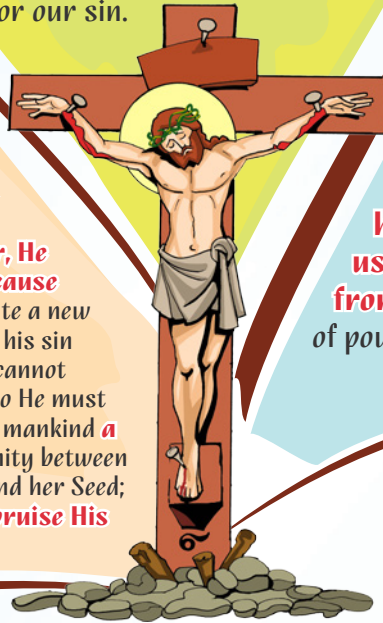


A

As it is written in the Holy Scriptures regarding sin: **“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people”** (Proverbs 14:34). It is also written, **“That sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful”** (Romans 7:13). **And although God loves the sinner, He hates sin and evil very much. Because He is Love, He did not desire to create a new human being and leave Adam to die in his sin forever. At the same time, He is Holy, so He cannot accept anything wrong. Likewise, He is Just, so He must judge mankind for his sin. Therefore, God gave mankind a covenant and a promise: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel”** (Genesis 3:15).

B

Therefore, **the Lord Jesus became incarnate and redeemed us.** He carried our sins and died for us, to remove the sentence of death from us. **And so, He carried the shame and disgrace of sin on our behalf.** He endured suffering in our place, because it was the punishment for our sin.



C

The Cross is a shame and a curse, as the verse says: **“Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”** (Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:23). Christ's suffering **was very severe.** In this way, **we understand how much God hates sin, and how great His love is for us. And so, the Cross was transformed from a sign of shame and disgrace into a sign of power, victory, triumph, and glory.**



Therefore, we boast in the Cross and say:

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14).





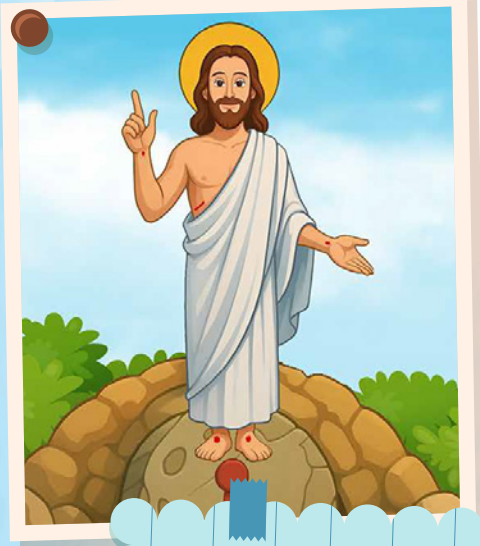
Uncle Matthew: Great, Pavlos. I wonder if we can continue the lesson by asking an important question. When we answer this question, we will better understand the concept of redemption. This question is:...

How did the Lord Jesus die if He is God, who does not die?

We believe Jesus Christ has One, united Nature—both fully Divine and fully human—united without mingling, confusion, or alteration. This “One Incarnate nature of the Divine Logos” means Christ is a single person in whom the Divinity and humanity are perfectly united.

Pavlos: First, we must understand that God does not die, and death has no power over Him. He is the Giver of life to every living being. This is what we believe and what we pray in our prayers:

“Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal.”



For the servant: Explain the nature of the Word. One nature before the union — a Divine nature. And one nature after the union — from the union of the two natures, the human and the Divine.

To redeem us, God dwelt in the womb of **our mother, the Virgin Mary**, and took from her a complete body. **He became incarnate** and thus He became a complete human being like us in everything, except for sin. **He became Man.**

Christ's Divinity never parted from His humanity, not for a single moment nor a twinkling of an eye.

Both fully Divine and fully human - united **without mingling, confusion, or alteration.**

Without mingling - the attributes of human nature did not mix with the attributes of the Divine Nature. Mingling happens between liquids and produces a new liquid. But Divinity did not mix with Humanity. **And without alteration** - the attributes of the Divine Nature did not change, and the attributes of human nature did not change.

Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ was fully God and fully Man.



In His humanity, He hungers, sleeps, suffers, and dies.



And in His divinity, He does not hunger, nor sleep, nor suffer, nor die.

On the cross hung God incarnate. What happened on the Cross to the Lord Jesus was **the separation of the human Spirit from the human Body. But divinity did not separate from the human body, nor from the human spirit.**





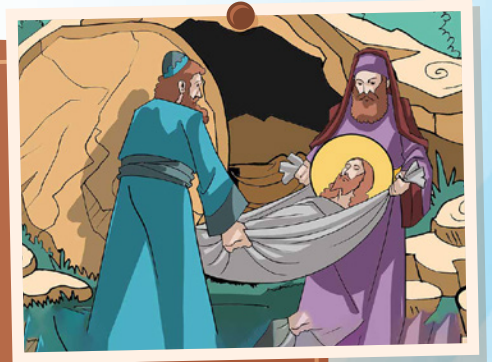
Let me try to explain it in a different way that will help us understand this concept! Picture this: If we take a piece of paper and place it in a container of water, the paper will absorb the water. Then, if we cut the paper that we soaked in the water into two halves, did the water leave either half? Of course not! Both pieces of paper are still wet! So, in this example, **the water symbolizes the Divinity, the paper symbolizes the Humanity**, and the soaked paper represents our Lord Jesus. When the paper was divided into two parts, the water did not leave either part. In the same way, when the human spirit separated from the human body, the Divinity did not leave either of them.



So, the death that the Lord Jesus went through was death according to the body.

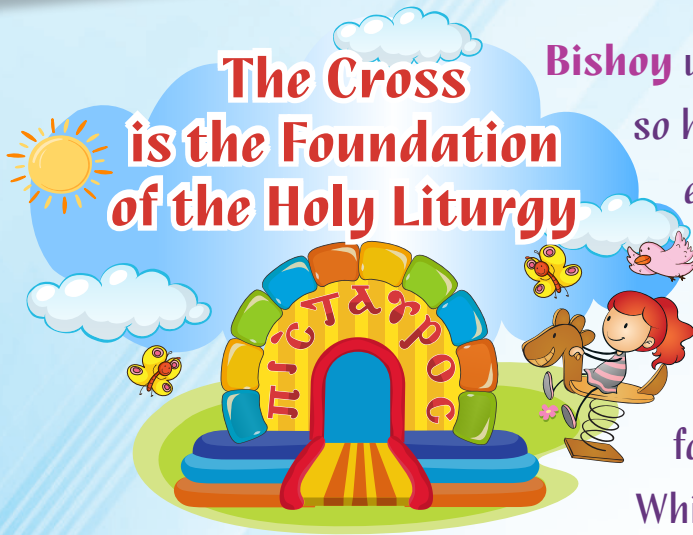
That is why we pray in the Ninth Hour of the Agpeya: "O You who tasted death in the flesh at the ninth hour for us sinners."

And because of the complete union between the divine nature and the human nature, we can say that the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is God, died. And we understand clearly that this death belongs to His human nature, not His divine nature. Thus, we have a clear assurance that His divinity did not separate from His humanity for a single moment nor a twinkling of an eye.



Sherry: Wow, now we really understand our doctrine regarding the Cross. **For through the Cross came the salvation of humanity.** You picked a great name for this room, **Pavlos!**

After Pavlos finished explaining the lesson, they finished decorating the room. Later, they moved to organize the next location.



The Cross is the Foundation of the Holy Liturgy

Bishoy was the one responsible for the third room, so he began showing his friends its contents. He explained to them that he wanted all the decorations to make the children feel as if they were inside the church. He also wanted to explain to them how the Cross is the foundation of our church's Liturgy.

While **Bishoy** was speaking, **Uncle Matthew** stepped out to make a couple of important phone calls about the theater's preparations. And while they were arranging the room, they heard a repetitive, loud sound, almost like knocking.

Sherry: Do you hear that sound coming from over there, near the boxes labeled "**Third Room Preparations**"? Come, let's see what's going on!

Verina: The sound is coming from the big box over there! Come on, let's open it!

All of them: A clock?!

Bishoy: Strange... but that wasn't part of our props!

Pavlos: It also looks strange... It's divided into the days of the week – Sunday, Monday, and so on. **It's as if it is telling the events of a week...**

And look carefully – each day has a small symbol next to its name: **An olive branch – a tree – a crown – coins – bread and a cup – a cross – a book – the Lord Jesus risen from the dead.**





Uncle Matthew: What do you think about the idea of the clock?!

When you explained the theme of the room to me, **Bishoy**, the idea of the clock came to my mind – we could use it as a **visual aid** while explaining the events in this room. Along with the rest of the preparations you have made, I think it'll be helpful.

Bishoy: The idea is really beautiful and perfect for the lesson.

Sherry: Can you explain to us the symbols that appear each day of the week and how they relate to the lesson?

Bishoy: Sure! How about I explain the lesson to you, and I am sure you'll be able to figure out how each symbol is connected to the story.

I'll ask you at the end for the explanation. So, pay attention!

Bishoy: Our Coptic

Orthodox Church is organized in all of her prayers, and the specific order and arrangement are called "**the rites**."


And the Church, through all her rites, **prepares us to live and understand every occasion**. Among these rites is

the rite of Holy Week


(Pascha Week).



Verina: Hmm, I wonder why it is called **Holy Passion Week** or **Pascha Week**?



Bishoy: It is called the "**Holy Passion Week**" because the Lord Jesus completed the work of redemption during it through His holy sufferings. He endured in our place the suffering and pain that we deserved, for it was the punishment for our sin. He died in our place, rose, and redeemed us. By His Resurrection, He renewed our nature which was corrupted by sin and gave us a new eternal life with Him.



Uncle Matthew:
It is called **Pascha Week** (the Week of Crossing – the Passover).
It is a sign of the passing over of the angel of death in the land of Egypt and the salvation of the children of Israel by the blood of the lamb. In the same way, the Lord Jesus helped us cross from death to life by the shedding of His Blood on the Cross, granting us a life everlasting.

Our teacher
St. Paul the Apostle says:



Memory Verse

"For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." (1 Corinthians 5:7)

Bishop: That is why **Holy Week is considered one of the holiest and most spiritual weeks of the year.** During it, the Church, with all her rites, **prepares us to live and understand the depth of our Lord's sacrifice and His great love for us.** **The appearance of the church and the way of prayer changes during this week, compared to other days of the year:**

The Appearance of the Church:

The whole Church is **covered in black**, including the lectern and the pillars of the Church. The curtain of the altar, which was previously red all year long, gets changed for a black one with either a Cross or an icon of the crucified Christ on it. Even the priests **wear a vestment that is purple or black.** An icon of the Lord Jesus is placed in the middle of the church — either while He is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, or crowned with thorns, or hanging on the Cross. **And the sanctuary is closed**, so no Divine Liturgies are celebrated on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of the Holy Pascha Week.



The Prayers:

The Pascha prayers are prayed outside of the altar and are instead prayed in the nave — between the chorus of deacons and the back of the church. The reason is that the Lord Jesus suffered and was crucified at Golgotha, outside the city of Jerusalem.

The hymns during Holy Week are chanted in the sorrowful tune.

The prayers and readings have a special order this week.

There are five daytime hours and five nighttime hours: The First Hour, the Third Hour, the Sixth Hour, the Ninth Hour, and the Eleventh Hour. Except on Great Friday, when an additional hour is added — the Twelfth Hour — which is the hour in which our Lord Jesus Christ was taken down from the Cross to be wrapped and buried.

It should be noted that the day actually begins from the evening of the previous day. For example, Tuesday Eve prayers are prayed on Monday night, etc.

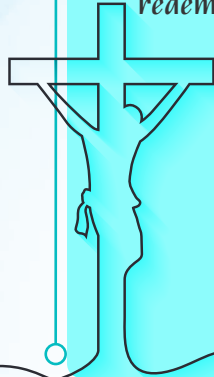


The Pascha Prayers of each hour are organized as follows:

1. Prophecies
2. Pascha Praise
3. Psalm and Gospel
4. Exposition
5. Litanies
6. Concluding prayer and the Blessing

Prophecies

Which speak about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus and His plan for our redemption.



Pascha Praise

"Thine is the power, the glory, the blessing, and the majesty forever amen..." We chant this hymn 12 times. **This is prayed instead of the Psalms that are prayed in the Agpeya prayers.**

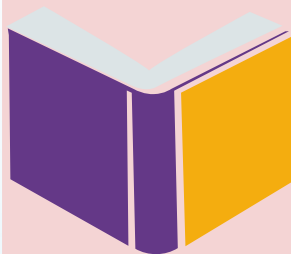
The reason the Church replaces the Psalms in each of the Pascha prayers with the praise "Thine is the power," is because the Psalms include prophecies about the entire life of the Lord Jesus. But during this week, the Church **focuses on giving glory to the suffering of Christ**. Therefore, the Church arranged to use this praise taken from the Book of Revelation: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12). See also Revelation 5:13, 7:12.

Psalm and Gospel

(in Coptic and Arabic)
 The Church chose certain verses from the Psalms **that prophesied about the events of this week**. The Psalm is typically first chanted in Coptic in the **"Edriby" tune which is the melody of the hymn Ke eperto...** And the Gospel is read in Coptic and English/Arabic in the **sorrowful tune**.

Exposition

It is a brief explanation **of the readings of each hour**.



Litanies

Prayers and supplications – a group of prayers to God. **The litanies in the morning** are accompanied by prostrations or metanoias because we are fasting. **The evening litanies** are without prostrations. After the litanies comes the Concluding prayer and the Blessing.

Concluding prayer and the Blessing



Let us talk about our play about Holy Week, starting from **Palm Sunday until Resurrection Sunday**, and help me identify the symbol that matches each of those days!

Palm Sunday:

It is the **Feast of the entry of Jesus Christ** into Jerusalem as King, in a great procession. The people welcomed Him with joy, and in their hands were **palm branches**. They spread them on the road along with their garments, while they were shouting and saying: **“Hosanna to the Son of David!”** which means, **“Save us, O Son of David!”** After that, **He entered the temple and drove out the sellers of doves and the money changers and rebuked them** (Matthew 21:12–13).



And **our beautiful Church** arranged that **in the Matins, or the morning of Palm Sunday**, there is a procession called the **Procession of the Cross**. The deacons **hold a cross decorated with flowers, olive branches, and palm branches**. Abouna holds the censer, or “shoriya,” in his hand. **They begin walking around the church, and they read 12 Gospels, each with its own Psalm, in 12 different places inside the Church. Each Psalm and Gospel is connected to the icon of a saint, an angel, or a specific place.**

In each place, we find a **clear connection to the Cross**. This is because Sunday was the beginning of the week that would end with the **crucifixion of our Lord Jesus**.



Also, the Church arranged that after the Palm Sunday Liturgy, a prayer called “**The General Funeral Prayer**” is prayed.

Because during Holy Week, **if anyone departs to heaven, funeral prayers are not held for them because the Church is consumed with the passions of Our Lord. Instead, the departed person attends one of the Pascha hour prayers.**

(During Holy Week, offering incense is also not permitted.)

After the General Funeral prayers, the appearance of the Church changes, and it is completely covered with black curtains, which match the rite of Holy Week.

Monday of the Holy Pascha:

Our Lord Jesus Christ **curse**s the **fig tree** because, from a distance, it appeared lush and green, as though it would bear fruit. But once He got closer, there was no fruit. **He then went to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple for the second time.** (Mark 11:15–19)

Lastly, He returned to spend the night in **Bethany**





Tuesday of the Holy Pascha:

He went out from **Bethany** to the **Temple in Jerusalem**. On the way, they passed by the fig tree that **Christ** had cursed and found it withered. (Mark 11:20–26). **He spent the whole day teaching in the Temple**. (It was the last day the Lord Jesus entered the temple before the Crucifixion.) He taught in **many parables about being ready for the Kingdom of God** - the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the Talents, and the Wedding Feast of the King's Son.

On this day, Judas began to consult with the



chief priests and the Pharisees about handing over the Lord Jesus to them. For this reason, our beautiful Church arranged that beginning from the Eleventh Hour on Tuesday, we add "My Good Savior" to the second verse of "Thine is the Power..." because the plan to put Jesus to death had officially begun. Also, the Lord Jesus set the time of His Crucifixion in the Gospel of that hour (Matthew 26:2).

In that same hour, we chant the famous hymn "**Pekethronos**" or "**Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.**"

(Psalm 45:6)

Through this, the Church declares that she sees the Lord Jesus Christ as God, seated on His throne, judging forever and ever.



**Wednesday of the
Holy Pascha:**

We read in the Gospel according to St. Matthew (26:6-13) about the pouring of the fragrant oil, worth 300 denarii, on the head of our Good Savior. We also remember Judas Iscariot agreeing with the chief priests to hand over Christ for 30 pieces of silver. In order to remind us of the kiss of the betrayal (which Judas Iscariot used as a sign to hand over the Lord Jesus), the Church forbids kissing (the liturgical kiss of peace, such as kissing the Gospel after it is read and kissing the priest's hand) from Wednesday night until the Divine Liturgy of the Feast..

**Covenant
Thursday:**

On this day, the Lord Jesus established the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. **Our beautiful Church** arranged the rites of this feast to remind us of all the events that took place. The day is divided as follows:



During the Matins Rite of Covenant Thursday, we do the "Procession of Rebuking Judas." It is done opposite of the usual procession; the deacons process clockwise around the Church, instead of counterclockwise. This reminds us of Judas' betrayal and directs us to rebuke ourselves for our sins that caused our Beloved Redeemer to suffer.



The Church prays the Prayer of the Lakkan (Washing of the Feet) to remind us of what our Lord Jesus did on this day – that He girded Himself with a towel and washed the disciples' feet. (John 13:4–5)

The Liturgy of Covenant Thursday:

Because on this day **the Lord Jesus established the Eucharist**, our **beautiful Church** arranged that on this day **the sanctuary be opened for the first time all week, and the Divine Liturgy is celebrated**. But **the Liturgy of Covenant Thursday** has many differences from a typical Liturgy, so that it matches **the rite of Holy Week**



For example:



Abouna **chooses the Lamb without praying the Agpeya first**, and he prays the Liturgy in the annual rite.

Abouna **does not pray the Prayer of Reconciliation**, because reconciliation had not yet been completed before the Crucifixion of the Lord Christ. Note that the reconciliation between God and man was only completed through the Cross.

The people do not exchange the holy kiss (in remembrance of Judas' kiss). **The Commemoration of the Saints is not said, and "Through the intercessions..." is not said**, because the saints did not enter Paradise until after the redemption.

Good Friday:

It is the day **we were redeemed by Our Lord Jesus Christ**. On this day, our **beautiful Church** arranged the rite in a way that prepares us to live the events of the day and its details.



The image of the Cross of the Lord Jesus (the Crucifixion Stand) is placed in the center of the Church on Great Friday. To the second verse of Thok te ti Gom or "Thine is the Power..." we add, **"The Lord is my strength and my praise, and He has become my salvation."**

Because on this day, the Lord Jesus was crucified, died, and accomplished salvation for us.

In every hour of the Pascha prayers, four Gospels are read to tell us the events of the arrest of the Savior, His trial, His crucifixion, and His burial.





The Prayer of the First Hour (6:00 a.m.) focuses on the **trials of the Lord Jesus Christ.**



The Prayer of the Third Hour (9:00 a.m.) focuses on issuing the order to crucify the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and He was handed over to be scourged.



The prayer of the sixth Hour (12:00 p.m.)

focuses on the Lord Jesus Christ being lifted up on the Cross, and therefore



during this hour, the **deacons** vest in their tonias or tunic, and their badrasheens or stole (a long, narrow scarf-like vestment,) in black or dark blue as a sign of sorrow. The church lights **candles in front of the icon of the Crucifixion** and Abouna **offers incense** before the icon, in honor of the crucified **Lord Jesus Christ.**

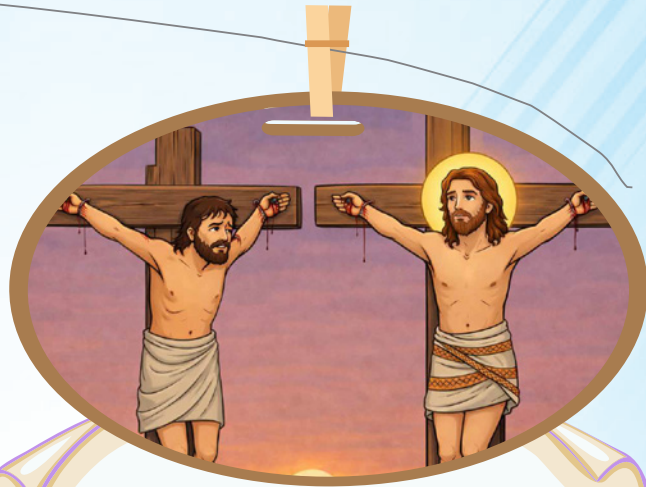


During this hour, the most beautiful hymns are chanted, which express the story of the Cross and Salvation, **such as the hymn "Fai Etafen" — "This is He who offered Himself as an acceptable sacrifice upon the Cross..."** and the hymn **"O Monogenees" — "O Only-Begotten Son..."** which explains the incarnation of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, His divinity, and His acceptance of the Cross by His own will to redeem us.



Then in the first Gospel of the sixth hour, we read: **“Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.” (Matthew 27:45)**

At this moment, the lights and candles are put out, as an example of the darkness that happened over the earth.



The Church prays the prayer of **“The Confession of the Thief,”** to remind us of what the right-hand thief did on the Cross, and to make what he did an example for each one of us in this moment. So, it is prayed in a beautiful tune, just as the Thief asked and said:

Remember me O my Lord when You come into Your kingdom.



“Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” (Luke 23:42)



The Prayer of the Ninth Hour (3:00 p.m.):

focuses on when **Our Lord Jesus delivered His Spirit on the Cross**, thus, lifting from us the sentence of death. And so, our joy begins with the precious salvation we have been granted.

Therefore, the lights of the church and the candles are lit.



The prayer of the Eleventh Hour

(5:00 p.m.):

focuses on when the Centurion pierced our Good Savior in His side with a spear, and when **the Body was taken down from the Cross.**

The prayer of the Twelfth Hour (6:00 p.m.): focuses on when Christ **was wrapped and buried in the tomb.** and because salvation is now completed, at this time our **Our beautiful Church** starts by:



The door of the sanctuary is opened, and the icon of the Crucifixion is lifted and placed in **front of the altar inside the sanctuary.** **The priests and deacons change their garments to the vestments of joy** (from black/blue back to red/white), and the candles are lit. The deacons return to the Chorus of Deacons to pray. We pray the Pascha praise 12 times as usual (**we say one quarter inside the sanctuary and one quarter outside the sanctuary**).

The hymn **Pekhetronos**, or "**Your throne, O God...**" is chanted. **After the Gospel and the litanies, we pray "Kyrie eleison" 400 times,** accompanied by prostrations or metanoias, facing all four directions. After that, **a procession is made with the icon of the Crucifixion inside the church.**

Then the Priest, or the Bishop if present, **takes the icon of the burial, places spices and ointments on it, and wraps it in a white cloth.** On it is placed a triangular ribbon as a symbol of the seal with which the tomb of the Lord Jesus was sealed. Two candlesticks are placed, one on the right and one on the left, as a sign of the two angels who were inside the tomb. During the wrapping, the whole church chants the burial hymn, **Golgotha.**



Bright Saturday:

Bright Saturday or Apocalypse Night (Abu Ghalamsees):

On this night, **the Lord Jesus Christ descended into Hades and brought out the souls of all the righteous of the Old Testament who had died in hope. He led them into Paradise** and gave them joy after a long wait:

“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive...” (Ephesians 4:8)

The word “Abu Ghalamsees” is a Greek word meaning **“Revelation”** or **“Announcement,”** because one of the most important readings of this night is the **entire Book of Revelation.**

On this night, we also read the praises and prayers of the prophets, which tell us how the Lord **gave them joy through salvation.** The church is decorated in white. Among the beautiful hymns of the Church on this night, the hymn of the Pauline Epistle, the Psalm, the Gospel, and the hymn “Agios” – each is chanted **half in the sorrowful (hazayni) tune and half in the annual joyful tune.** The vigil ends with the Divine Liturgy and partaking of the Holy Eucharist.

Resurrection Sunday:

The whole church is decorated with white. The hymns are chanted in **the joyful (farayhi) tune**, and it remains this way for 50 days (**the Holy Fifty Days**), rejoicing in the salvation completed on the Cross.



Sherry: I think I figured it out! So, the symbols for the days are:

Sunday = Olive branch

Monday = Fig tree

Tuesday = Crown (a symbol of the parables of the Kingdom)

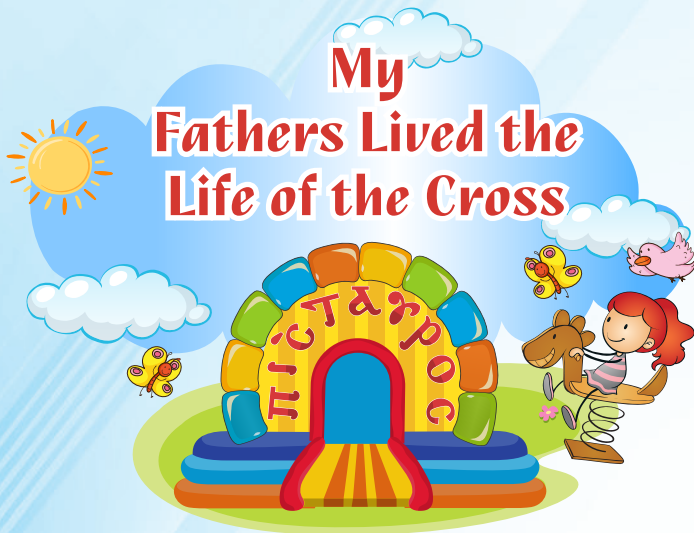
Wednesday = The 30 pieces of silver

Thursday = The bread and the wine

Friday = The Cross

Saturday = The Book of Revelation

Sunday = The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.



My Fathers Lived the Life of the Cross

After finishing the preparations for the third room, the team quickly moved onto the fourth room. It contained many costumes that the children would be able to use to represent different saints. Verina was responsible for this room!

Verina: My plan for this room was to have each child wear the clothes of his or her patron saint and take a picture! After that, they will go to the computer, and

we will teach them, using an artificial intelligence program, how to create a **short video** that tells the story of their **patron saint**.

Pavlos: Were you able to find costumes for all the saints?

Verina: Yes! And I divided the costumes into two piles. One section for the martyrs (male and female), another section for the saints (male and female) who were not martyred, and I made a special section





for the monks' clothing, whether they were martyred or departed in peace, because they have special garments, like the kolonsoa and the eskim.

Sherry: What are the **kolonsoa** and the **eskim**?

Verina: They are part of the **monks' clothing**, Sherry. I bet the children will ask the same question! In explaining to them what those garments are, we will also explain to them the meaning of the phrase **"The Cross Bearers."**

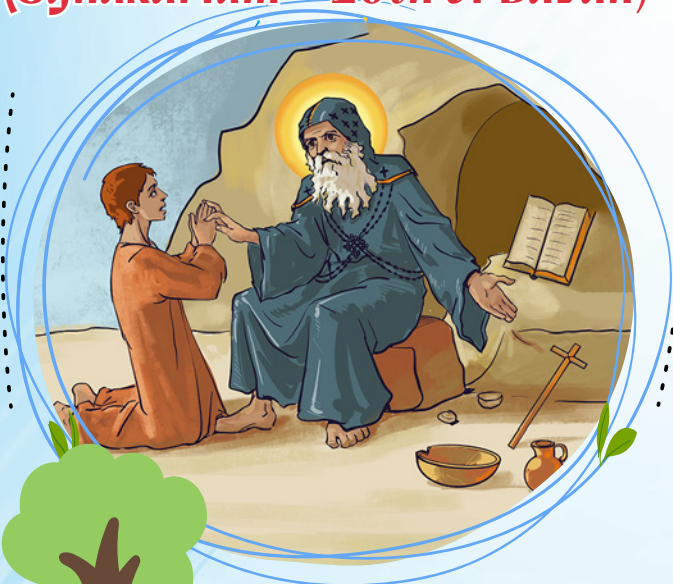
Sherry: The story of whom?

Verina: I will tell you! And I'll also show you how to make a video, too!!



Saint John was born around the year 339 A.D., in a town in Upper Egypt to godly parents. The name **"Youhanna"** (John in Arabic) means **"God is gracious."** As John grew up, his love for God and his longing to devote himself to **worshipping God** and to the **monastic life** kept increasing daily.

When he was **18 years old**, God guided him to go to the wilderness of **ΨΙΔΗΤ**, (a Coptic word which means **"the balance of hearts"**) The young man **John** quickly left his family, and went to the wilderness of Scetis, which was filled with **holy and godly elder monks**. There, he met a holy elder monk, **Abba Bimwa**.



When he arrived, he made a **metanoia** (a bow of respect), and asked Abba Bimwa to allow him to **stay with him**.

So, the teacher began to **test him** by telling him about the hardships of monastic life. And he said to him, "My son, you cannot live with us, because **the wilderness is difficult**, and those who lived here **depend on the work of their hands**, in addition to much **fasting, prayer, and a life of asceticism**." The young man John answered him humbly, while weeping: "Do not send me away, my father, for God's sake, because **I have come to be under your obedience. If you accept me, God will help me through your prayers.**"



So, **Abba Bimwa prayed**, as was his custom, and asked for God's guidance with many tears, that the Lord would show him what to do with the young man John. He continued praying until near dawn.

At that time, an angel appeared to Abba Bimwa and said: "The Lord is telling you, **receive this brother with joy** because I have sent him to you. His rank will be great, and his service will be like incense **accepted before Me** throughout all generations."

Even though at that time, a person seeking monastic life would typically remain under a period of testing **for three years** before becoming a monk, but because John excelled in his spiritual life,

John was worthy for the Lord to send a special angel to command Abba Bimwa to accept him into the monastic life. In the morning, **Abba Bimwa** called the young man, John, and **gave him spiritual advice**.

After that, he brought him **monastic garments**, and Abba Bimwa and John stood praying over them. They continued fasting for **three days** and **three nights**. After that, **the angel of the Lord** appeared before them

and marked the garments **with the sign of the Cross** **three times**, and in the morning, **Abba Bimwa** clothed John in the **monastic garments**.





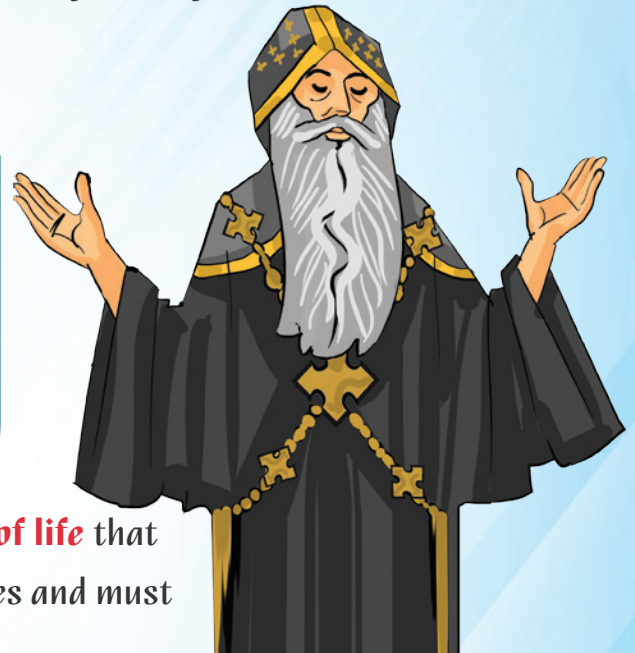
Bishoy: I know that the monk's clothing existed since the days of **Abba Anthony the Great...**

Verina: That's right, Bishoy. When an angel appeared to him in the form of a man wearing long garments, and also wearing the **monks' eskim** – which is a **leather belt decorated with crosses**, and on his head a **kolonsoa with crosses**. From that time, the clothing the angel wore became a monastic habit. That's why we call monks, **"The Cross Bearers."**

The Cross Bearers

It is a term that is generally used for all saints and martyrs,

and especially for the monastic fathers and ascetics. It means **"those who wear the Cross."** Spiritually, this means that for them, the Cross is infused into every aspect of their lives.



The Cross is a **source of comfort and victory**. It is **a way of life** that they live every single day, because they struggle all their lives and must **persevere with patience**.

And indeed, Abba John began his monastic life with **great asceticism**.

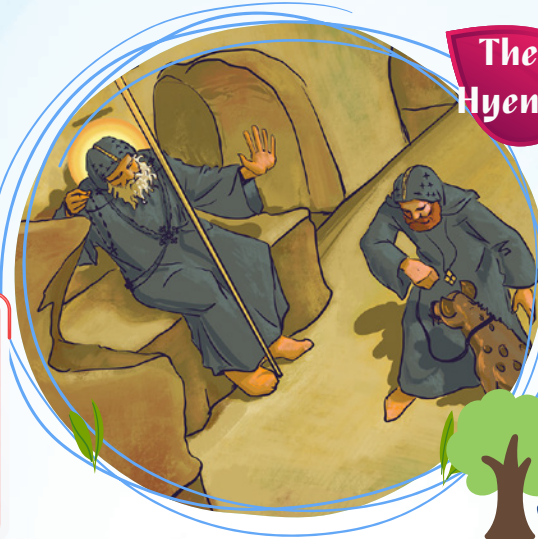
The spiritual fathers used to test the beginner monks to see **how obedient they were**. Sometimes they would **give them tasks that seemed unreasonable or unacceptable**. The **obedience** of a monk to his teacher was one of the virtues that **monks are known for**. Abba John was called **"the angel"** because he was **very humble and very obedient** to his teacher Abba Bimwa. There are many stories that show this.

Sherry: Can you tell us some!?

Verina: Abba Bimwa asked John to bring him a **“clay jar”** that he had seen among the tombs. However, there was **a hyena** there — **a wild and dangerous animal**.

So, John asked his teacher, **“What should I do about the hyena, my father?”**

Abba Bimwa answered him, **“If it comes to you... catch it, tie it up, and bring it here.”**



The Hyena

Abba John obeyed his teacher. He went to the tombs as his teacher had asked. And indeed, **he found the hyena.**

He went forward to catch it, but it ran away from him. So, he chased it and said to it, **“My teacher told me to catch you and**

tie you up.” Immediately, the hyena stopped. He caught it, tied it up, and **brought it to his teacher as he had asked him to do.**

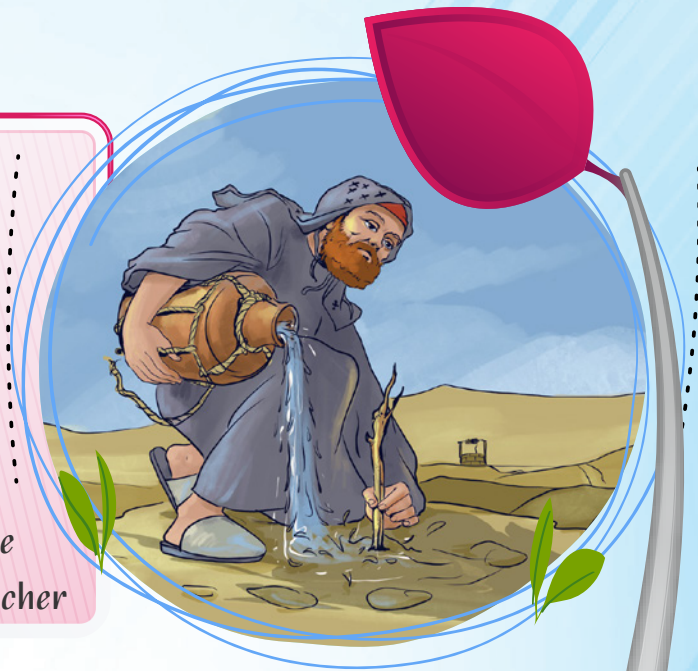
Sherry: Wow! So, the hyena obeyed Abba John because of his obedience to his teacher!! What a beautiful miracle!

Verina: I will tell you another beautiful story about Abba John the Short that I love very much... and I learned a lot from it. Once, **Abba Bimwa gave Abba John a dried tree branch.** He told him to plant it and **water it every day until it bore fruit.**

Pavlos: A dry broken tree branch to produce fruit? It doesn't work that way hahaha. And what did Abba John do?



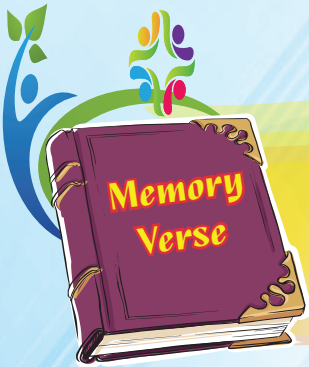
Verina: Because John trusted his teacher, he **carried out his command with full faith** that the branch would **bear fruit**. And get this, the water was very far away, but without hesitation St. John would travel **a long distance** to the water source at night and return in the morning just **to water this tree branch**. He persevered in doing the same work **for three years**, until the dry branch **became a fruitful tree**. Then his teacher



took some of its fruit with him to the Church and presented it to the elders, saying: **"Take, eat from the fruit of obedience."** They all glorified God for this wonderful miracle.

Uncle Matthew: The obedience of Abba John the Short to his teacher, Abba Bimwa, truly brought him many blessings. Through this, he fulfilled the verse that says:





"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls." (Hebrews 13:17).



Verina: So true, Uncle Matthew. Let me continue telling you his story, so you can understand how great **Abba John's obedience and love for his teacher really was.**

Abba Bimwa was sick for twelve years, and Abba John served him that entire time. When the time of **Abba Bimwa's departure** drew near, he gathered all the elder monks, took the hand of Abba John, and entrusted him to them. He commanded them, saying: **"Keep this one, for he is an angel and not a man."** Abba Bimwa also instructed his disciple, Abba John, to live in the place where he had planted the **Tree of Obedience.**

After that, **Abba Bimwa departed in peace.** As for Abba John, he obediently carried out his teacher's words, moved, and **lived beside the tree.** Many people gathered around Abba John and **became his disciples and learn from his teachings.**

He became a father and spiritual guide to many. His disciples chose to live in caves near his cave so they could learn from him. Among his disciples was **his older brother**, who learned under Abba John until he became a virtuous monk.



During the visit of **Pope Theophilus**, the 23rd Patriarch, he laid his hand on the head of Abba John to ordain him a priest. All those present heard a voice from heaven saying: **“Worthy, worthy, worthy.”**

Throughout his priesthood, God gave Abba John a very special gift. During the **service of the Mysteries**, he could discern who was worthy to partake and who was unworthy.

Uncle Matthew: Also, Verina, one of the virtues that Abba John had was that **he cared about the salvation** of every soul. He helped people live **a life of repentance and return to God**. To confirm my words, I will tell you the story of **Saint Paesa**, and how Saint John treated her.



Saint Paesa,

At the beginning of her life, **Saint Paesa lived to serve God**, and she spent all her money serving the needy.

The devil tried **to pull her away from the love of God**. So evil people gathered around her, drew her away from God, and led her to do sinful deeds and wrong actions. She opened her house to sin and evil.



News about her reached the monks and elders in the **wilderness of Scetis**. They were very sad for her, because they knew how great her love and generosity for God had been. They asked Abba John to go to her, help her repent, and turn away from the path of sin. **The saint asked them to pray for him, and he went to her.**

He spoke with her and gently rebuked her for **leaving the love of God** and for the sinful life she was living. The saint wept out of sorrow for her. Paesa was moved, and she asked Abba John, **“Is there repentance for me?”** He said to her, **“Yes, but not in this sinful place.”** So, she agreed to leave the place and went with him so that he could take her to one of the convents for nuns.

While they were journeying on the way, it became very late. He asked her to sleep in one place, and he slept in a place far away from her. When he stood up to pray, **he saw a pillar of light coming down from heaven to the earth, and angels carrying her soul.** He went closer to her and found that she had departed. So, he prayed a long prayer to God and asked Him to reveal Paesa’s fate to him. He heard a voice saying, **“Her repentance was accepted in the very hour she repented.”** And he buried her.

Saint John returned and told the elders her story, and they glorified God for **accepting Paesa’s repentance.**



One day, the **barbarians attacked** the wilderness. So, Abba John moved to the Eastern Desert, to the area of Qulzum near the **mountain of Abba Anthony**. He lived in a cave there. The Lord arranged for a faithful man to serve him. He would come once every week to bring him **everything he needed**.

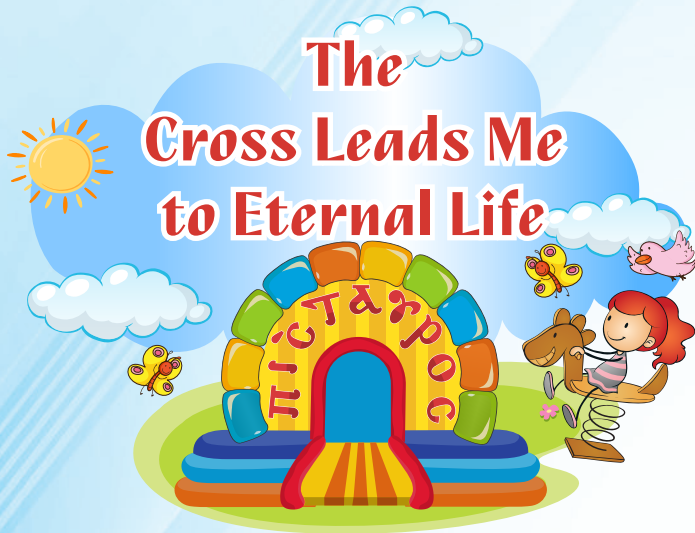
When the time of **his departure drew near**, the saint became ill. He sent his servant to bring something for him from the village.



That night, **angels and a group of saints** came and received **his pure soul** and took it up to heaven. When his servant returned to the cave, **he found the body of the saint bowed down on the ground**, because he had delivered his pure spirit while praying. He was about 70 years old at the time of his departure. The Church commemorates him on the **20th day of the blessed month of Babah**. After that, his disciples transferred him to the **wilderness of Scetis**. The Lord worked many miracles through his body. **May his prayers be with us all, amen.**

After Verina finished telling the story of Abba John the Short, she and the rest of her friends practiced creating videos about their patron saints' lives so that they could do it with the kids tomorrow. Each one of them began trying it out, and the results were joyful for everyone. They agreed to name this room: **"The Fathers Lived the Life of the Cross"**

After that, they all moved to the last room!



The Cross Leads Me to Eternal Life

Because it was the last room in the Theater adventure, it was special, exciting and joyful. It was the main room in the theater. Of course, Pavlos was responsible for it, and it was a lot of work, requiring many preparations.

Pavlos: Since it's the last room, I thought we could do a mini play about a Bible character. Through it, the children will understand the meaning of how **faith in the Lord Jesus Christ** leads us to eternal life with

Him. That is why I named the room: **"The Cross Leads Me to Eternal Life"**

Verina: And which character did you choose?

Pavlos: Our Holy Bible is full of many, many characters who lived this meaning. One of them is **Saint Paul the Apostle**, whose **life changed** when he came to **know the Lord Jesus**. He also helped change the lives of others and helped them know the Lord Jesus - just as he did with **Onesimus**, a runaway slave. I'll tell you all about him!





Saint Paul the Apostle

ΠΙΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ

The Philosopher of Christianity

Saint Paul was **born in Tarsus** in Asia Minor, which is present day Turkey. It was a major center of Greek philosophy and advancements at that time. So, Saint Paul, **although a Jew**, had a **Greek education**, and a **Roman citizenship**.

Saint Paul was from **the tribe of Benjamin**, from the sect of the **Pharisees**, which was a strict Jewish group.

Just like many people at that time, he had two names: His **Jewish/ Hebrew name** was **Saul**, which means **"wanted"** and his Greek name was **Paul**, which means **"small."**

Eventually, he went to **Jerusalem** to continue his education. There, he learned **the Jewish Law** and was trained at the feet of his teacher, **Gamaliel**.

Gamaliel was one of the greatest and **most respected teachers** among the Jews. At the beginning of his life, **St. Paul was very zealous**, and he put great effort into **persecuting many Christians**.

He believed that what he was doing **pleased God**. Actually, at the time when **Saint Stephen** was stoned, **he approved** of his stoning and **guarded the clothes of those who were stoning him!**

The most important day in the life of our teacher Paul the Apostle was when **the Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared to him** while he was on his way to **Damascus** to arrest the Christians there. And he heard a voice saying to him: **"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"** So, he said: **"Who are You, Lord?"** And the Lord said: **"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."** At that time, he said: **"Lord, what do You want me to do?"** (Acts 9:1-6)



So, the Lord told him to go to **Damascus**, and there he would be told what to do. He **could not see**, so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. He remained there **for three days**, until **Ananias** came to him, as the Lord had commanded him, and **prayed for Paul**. Then he received his sight, and after that he **was baptized**. From that day on, **his whole life changed**.



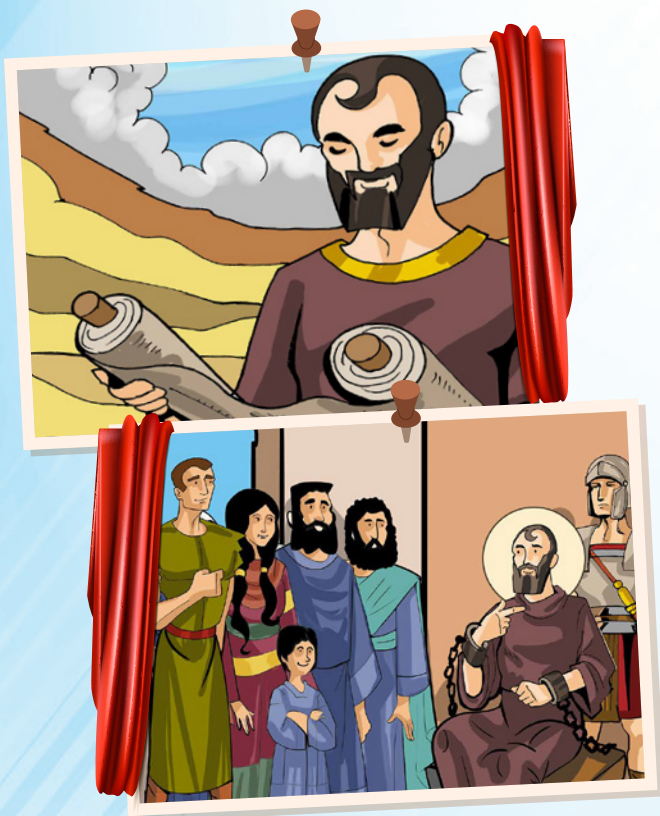
After Saint Paul believed, and **before** he began his ministry, he spent **a period of solitude for three years** in the Arabian desert, to **re-read and understand the Scriptures** in the correct way, after coming **to know the Lord Jesus**. (Galatians 1:16-17)

After his retreat, he returned to **Damascus** and **began preaching in the synagogues** about the Lord Jesus, telling everyone that **He is the true Son of God**. He faced great persecution from the Jews, but **he continued in his ministry** nonetheless.



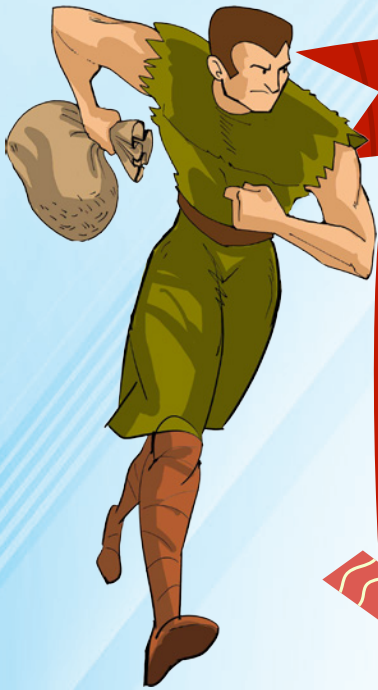
Our teacher Paul **made three missionary journeys**. During them, he wrote **14 epistles** (letters), which make up a large portion of **the New Testament**. Therefore, Saint Paul the Apostle is considered the first to preach to the Gentiles and to teach them about the Lord Jesus. That is why we call our teacher Paul, **“the Apostle to the Gentiles.”** Ultimately, because he spoke to the people and **preached to them about the Lord Jesus**, he was arrested and taken as a prisoner.

When he went to **Caesar in Rome as a prisoner**, waiting for trial, he was allowed to live by himself with the soldier who guarded him, in a rented house for two years. (Acts 28:16–30). While he was chained with the soldier assigned to guard him, **he was allowed to receive visitors**.



During his **imprisonment**, he preached and taught many people. Also, during his imprisonment, **he wrote four of the fourteen epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon**. We call them the Prison Epistles!

In his letter to Philemon, we learned that **Onesimus, the runaway slave**, was **changed** and came to know the Lord. Let me tell you his story!



Onesimus, the Runaway Slave

Onesimus was a slave **belonging to Philemon**. Philemon was a **Roman citizen** and a merchant — **not a Jew**. He lived in a city called **Colossae**. He believed in the Lord Jesus and **turned his house into a church**. The believers gathered there to pray and hold meetings. He and his household always **served God with love**.



But **Onesimus became greedy, stole from Philemon**, and ran away with everything he had stolen **to Rome**. There, he met the **Apostle Paul**.

To learn where Onesimus met Saint Paul the Apostle, look up

Philemon
1:10

Acts
28:16



Our teacher **Paul met Onesimus** while he was **imprisoned in Rome**. He got to know him, and Onesimus told him his story. Then our teacher Paul began to speak to Onesimus **about the Lord Jesus** – how He came and redeemed us **by His blood**, how He opens His arms to all people, and how **He accepts the repentance of everyone** who returns to Him. After hearing Saint Paul's words, Onesimus came to know **the great love of God**, Who accepts all sinners and longs for their return. **His life began to change**. He believed in the Lord Jesus, **repented and confessed all his sins**, was baptized, and became a new person.

That is why our teacher Paul told Philemon about Onesimus!

**Acts
28:16**

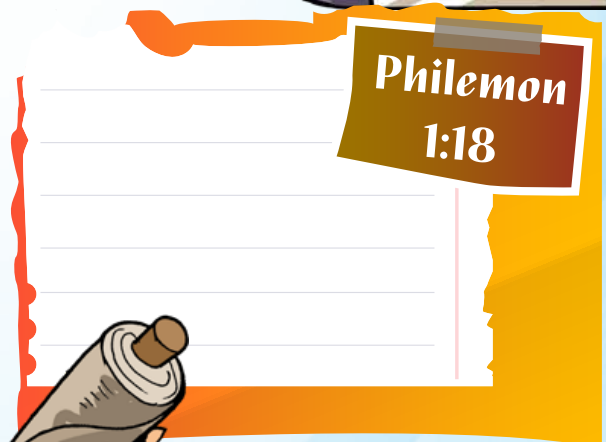
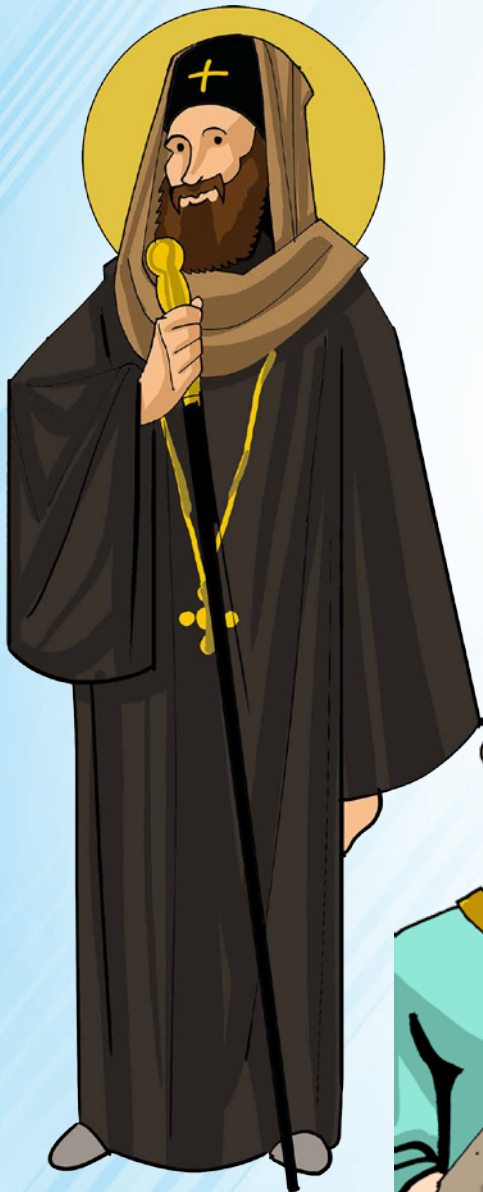
And just as the life of our teacher Paul changed when he came to know the Lord Jesus, so too the life of Onesimus was changed after he came to know the Lord Jesus.

After being **a runaway slave who stole**, he became a **new person** – **a useful brother** in service. Just as Saint Paul cared to help Onesimus repent and return to God, he also worked **to bring peace and reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus**.

That is why our teacher Paul **sent a letter to Philemon**, asking him **to forgive Onesimus and pardon him**. He told him how much he loved Onesimus, and that he had changed and **become useful to our teacher Paul and to Philemon in service**.

He told him to receive him **as a brother**, not as a slave. And the amount that Onesimus had stolen, our teacher **Paul promised to repay** Philemon for it. Our teacher Paul was confident that Philemon would obey his words and would **do even more for Onesimus than he had asked**.

To find out how much Saint Paul loved Onesimus, look up...





And so the life of Onesimus was **changed from a runaway slave who stole into a repentant and useful person** – useful to himself and to the whole Church.

Onesimus became a **bishop of the city of Beroea**, and he received **the crown of martyrdom** on the **21st of Amshir**.

Uncle Matthew: What a wonderful story, Pavlos. In order **to apply this story to the lives of everyone who hears it**, let's help the children focus on the steps of offering true repentance. Let me walk you **through offering true repentance** step by step.



1. Steps for offering true repentance:

- a. Have faith in the Lord Jesus and hope that He can forgive my sins.
- b. Admit my mistake and deeply regret doing it.
- c. Decide to stop the sin.
- d. Stay away from the source of sin so I don't do it again.

2. Prepare for the Confession Session

Through quiet time and prayer, I can ask God to reveal my sins to me. In order to not forget any of my sins, I can write my sins on a piece of paper.





3. Confession before God

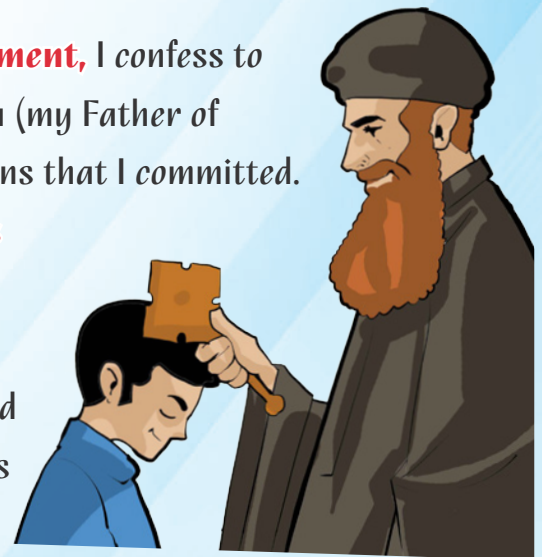
I stand and pray in my room. I should remember my sins and ask God for forgiveness and ask Him to help me not fall into sin again.

4. Apologize

I humbly apologize to the person whom I upset. I ask that person to forgive me for my wrongdoing.



Then, and **without any fear or embarrassment**, I confess to God in the presence of Abouna (my Father of Confession) about all the sins that I committed. After this, **Abouna places the Cross on my head and prays for me the absolution** because God Himself carried our sins and abolished them





by His blood which He shed on the Cross. Abouna says in the absolution, **“May God absolve you,”** to show that God is the One who forgives our sins through the authority He gave to Abouna. This is God’s promise to us:



“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)



Pavlos: That is amazing, Uncle Matthew. Would you be able to teach this last part at the end of the play?

Uncle Matthew: Sounds like a good plan to me, Pavlos.

They all started preparing for the final station. Costumes, decor, lighting, sound, and more... That way they would have completed all the required preparation. They benefited from redoing some of the preparations. They all joyfully worked together through the adventures. Now it is time for the opening and welcoming people into the exhibit. The visitors were so impressed to see the multiple forms of presentations which presented solid content. People left the exhibit reciting the theme verse:

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

(Romans 8:37)





Memorization

PSALM 123



If it had not been that the Lord is among us, let Israel say; if it had not been that the Lord is among us when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their wrath was kindled against us. Then the water would have drowned us. Our soul would have gone under the raging flood; then our soul would have gone under the unlimited water. Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us for a prey to their teeth. Our soul has been delivered as a sparrow from the snare of the hunters. The snare has broken, and we were delivered. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. ALLELUIA.



Memorization

Gospel of the Eleventh Hour

THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE (CH. 4 : 38-41)

And He arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they requested Him concerning her. And He stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her, and immediately she arose and served them. When the sun was setting, all those who had any sick with diverse diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, "You are Christ, the Son of God!" And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was Christ. Glory be to God forever. Amen.



Memorization

Litanies of the Eleventh Hour



1. If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where shall I, the sinner, appear? The burden and heat of the day I did not endure because of the weakness of my humanity. But, O merciful God, count me with the fellows of the eleventh hour. For, behold, in iniquities I was conceived, and in sins my mother bore me. Therefore, I do not dare to lift up my eyes to heaven; but rather, I rely on the abundance of Your mercy and love for mankind, crying out and saying, "God, forgive me, a sinner, and have mercy on me."

Δοξα Πατρι κε Υιω κε αζιω Πνευματι



2. Hasten, O Savior, to open to me the fatherly bosoms, for I wasted my life in pleasures and lusts, and the day has passed by me and vanished. Therefore, now I rely on the richness of Your never ending compassion. So, then, do not forsake a submissive heart which is in need of your mercy. For unto You I cry, O Lord, humbly, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before You, and I am no longer worthy to be called Your son, so make me as one of Your hired servants."

**ΚΕ ΝΥΝ ΚΕ ΑΙ ΚΕ ΙΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΕΩΝΑΣ ΤΩΝ
ΕΩΝΩΝ: ΑΜΗΝ**

3. Every iniquity I did with prudence and activity, and every sin I committed with eagerness and diligence, and of all torment and judgement I am worthy. Therefore, prepare for me the ways of repentance, O Lady the Virgin; for to you I appeal, and through you I seek intercession, and upon you I call to help me, lest I might be put to shame. And when my soul departs my body attend to me, and defeat the conspiracy of the enemies, and shut the gates of Hades, lest they might swallow my soul, O you, blameless bride of the true Bridegroom.





Memorization

Absolution of the Eleventh Hour



We thank You, our compassionate king, for You have granted us to pass this day in peace, and brought us to the evening thankfully, and made us worthy to behold daylight until evening. O God, accept our glorification which is offered now, and save us from the trickeries of the adversary, and abolish all the snares which are set against us. Grant us, in this coming night, peace without pain, or anxiety, or unrest, or illusion; so that we may pass it in peace and chastity, and rise up for praises and prayers. And thus, at all times and everywhere, we glorify Your holy name in everything, together with the Father, who is incomprehensible and without beginning, and the Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver, Who is in one essence with You, now and at all times, and unto the ages of all 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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