

# 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  
Grades 7-8



**H.H. Pope Tawadros II**

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**Symbols & Blessings of the Cross**

The idea of the Cross was in the mind of God from the very beginning

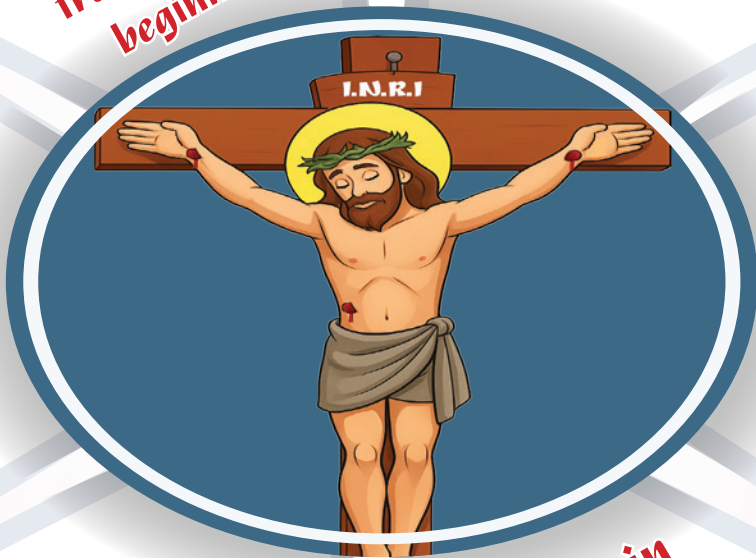
**Cities & Relationships**

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**the Cross in the Coptic Orthodox Church**



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## Introduction: The Scholarly 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.

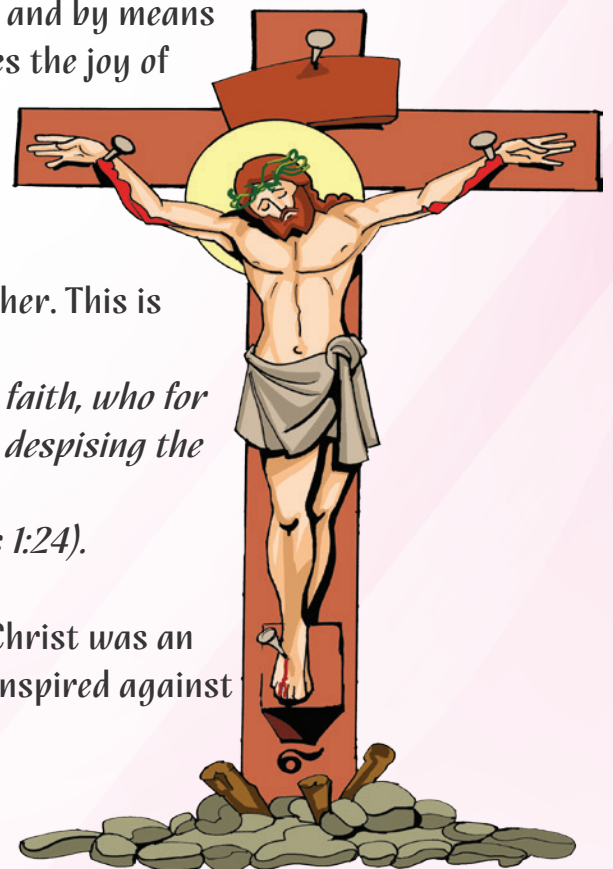
Christianity was founded on the basis of the Cross and by means of the Cross. The Cross has two faces: one expresses the joy of salvation and glorious resurrection of the Lord Christ and His victory for us, while the other expresses the endurance of tribulations and hardships.

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.*

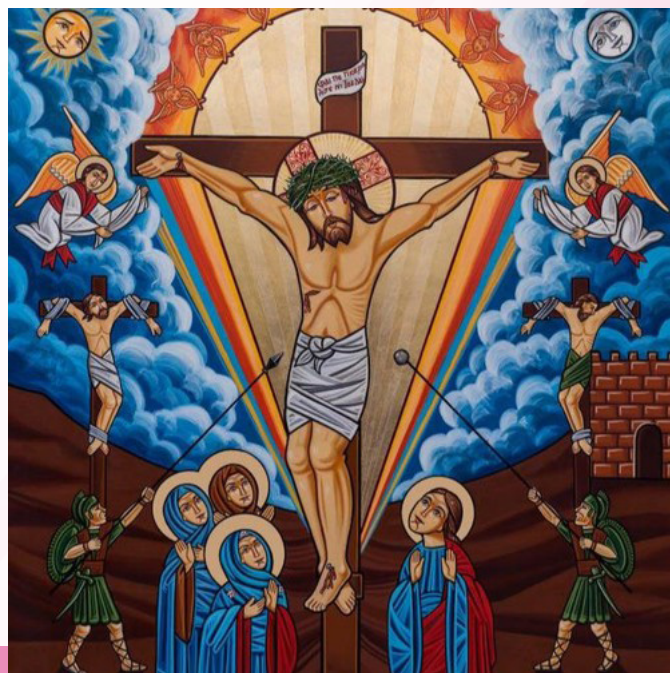


Thanks be to the Lord who loved us, died for us, rose for our sake, and raised us with Him to eternal life with Him in heaven.

## 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 pow*





er 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

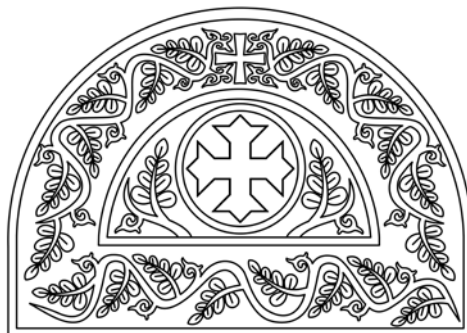
There is no ritual in the Church except if it has a theological meaning, and there is no theological doctrine in the Church except if it has a precise liturgical meaning. Therefore, the Cross is used in the rites because it contains within it all the greatest Christian doctrines.

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 Psalm for Friday, "The Cross is our sign of redemption and reconciliation with God; 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.



## The Perfect Sacrifice

The cross was not merely an emergency idea that happened at the time of the incarnation, but it was in God's mind from the beginning. When the Word became incarnate in the fullness of time, the redemption was fulfilled through the crucifixion of our righteous Savior.

The cross and redemption occurred after many generations in which humans were being prepared to receive God incarnate, born of the Virgin Mary, and to understand the meaning of redemption. In these ages, the Old Testament prophecies described many signs and symbols of the cross and redemption.

The sacrifices are considered among the most important symbols, beginning with the offering of the sacrifice of Cain and Abel to introduce the concept of sacrifices and their symbolism to Christ.

The sacrifices were mentioned in the Book of Leviticus because the laws of priesthood represent one way God (Leviticus is the third book of the Torah five books of Moses).

Levites are the sons of Levi. Levi is a son of Jacob, the one whom God chose to practice the priestly laws thus instituting the Levitical priesthood.

The first seven chapters of Leviticus contain the sacrifices which are offered to the Lord on one altar, and they explain how the priest prepares and

offers these sacrifices. In its entirety, the Book of Leviticus directs our gaze strongly to the person of the Lord Christ, and His one, everlasting sacrifice for the redemption of the human race. Every sacrifice, offering or ritual in this book symbolizes the person of the Lord Christ and His atoning sacrifice.





## The idea of sacrifice

The idea of sacrifice revolves around a pure animal that dies on behalf of a sinful person. When the sinner comes to the door of the tabernacle of meeting with the “animal” sacrifice, the sinner acknowledges the following; :

- 1. That he is cut off** and aware of his sin.
- 2. His confession** that because of his sin he deserves death: *“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23)*, in addition to *“the sorrow of God’s heart.”*
- 3. His acknowledgment of the principle of redemption:** the person who offers the sacrifice places his hand on its head and confesses his sins, and thus the sins are transferred to the sacrifice, that is, a sinless life dies instead of another that deserves death, because *“without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22)*. Thus the innocent life bears the sin, as a sign of the Lord Christ who *“Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24)*.

The purpose of offering sacrifices includes:

1. Atonement for sin.
2. Purification from every impurity.
3. Obtaining forgiveness.

## What is the Book of Leviticus?

- It is one of the five books of Moses known as the Torah or the Books of the Law.
- The writer is Moses the prophet.
- It is the book that explains all the laws and rituals specific to priesthood and the rituals that the people must follow in worshipping God.

The sacrifices and offerings mentioned in Leviticus are:

- 1. Burnt** offering – *“Obedience of the Son” (Leviticus 1)*.
- 2. Grain** offering – *“Incarnation of the Son” (Leviticus 2)*.
- 3. Peace** offering – *“Sacrifice of Thanksgiving” (Leviticus 3)*.
- 4. Sin** offering – *“He bore our sins” (Leviticus 4,7)*.
- 5. Trespass** offering – *“Every sin directed against God Himself” (Leviticus 5,7)*.



*Sin has two results:*

- 1. It grieves God's heart**, proven by the burnt offering.
- 2. It destroys the human being**, proven by sin and trespass offerings.

*Sacrifices are offered as an atonement for the sins into which a person has fallen unintentionally or out of ignorance. (Leviticus 4:2,13,24,22) The ritual of offering the sacrifice is done in five steps:*

- a. Bringing it to the door of the tent of meeting.*
- b. Placing the hand on the head of the sacrifice.*
- c. Slaughter and preparation.*
- d. Sprinkling the blood.*
- e. Burning the sacrifice, some or all of it, on the altar.*

*The repeated shedding of blood every day indicates its insufficiency, because it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). Therefore, one sacrifice remained to be offered once and for all - the sacrifice of Christ, "not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews. 9:12).*

### **Animals from which sacrifices are taken:**

- Livestock such as cattle, sheep, and goats.
- Birds such as pigeons and turtledoves.

### **General rules concerning the law of sacrifices:**

- 1. All sacrifices are slaughtered for the Lord at the door of the tent of meeting, indicating that there is no entrance to the Holy Place without blood.*
- 2. The priest sprinkles the blood first in a circle around the altar of burnt offering, and on the walls of the altar and its base, indicating that the worship established is founded on blood.*
- 3. The blood of the sacrifices and their fat are not eaten because they belong to the Lord.*

*There is no approach to God and no acceptance of worship and no entrance to the Holy Place except through reconciliation by blood – the "sacrifice" offered by the priest himself. There is no entrance to the Father's bosom and no eternal rest except through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ: "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from every sin" (1 John 1:7).*





## The Burnt Offering - Love & Obedience to God (Leviticus 1)

This is the first of the sacrifices and is offered to seek the acceptance and satisfaction of God. It must be offered before anything else and for the forgiveness of sins or thanksgiving.

It was called the burnt offering because it is completely burned with fire – except the skin. Its fragrance and smoke ascend upward before the Lord:

*“an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma” (Leviticus 1:9).*

This is a clear symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the severe sufferings He endured, which ended with His death in which divine justice was fulfilled and salvation was accomplished. This is when God the Father smelled a sweet aroma.

### The role of the priest and how to offer the Burnt Offering sacrifice

- If it is from animals such as the herd and the flock, no one may eat from it.
- The offerer brings his offering to the door of the Tabernacle of meeting, standing outside not inside, because the Lord Christ suffered outside Jerusalem.
- He puts his hand on the head of the sacrifice, confessing his sins and God's goodness.
- The priest kills the bull before the Lord (at the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting), and sprinkles the blood in a circular way as symbol of eternity.
- The burnt offering is skinned and cut. The priests put fire on the altar, then arrange the pieces with the head and the fat on the wood. The wood is a symbol of the Cross.
- The legs and the entrails of the offering are washed with water (a symbol of purification) and everything is placed on the altar.
- If the offering is from birds such as pigeons or turtle doves it is a symbol of meekness and simplicity). Its blood is squeezed on the side of the altar, and the feathers are removed outside, indicating that what is unclean must be taken away.





## With what is the Burnt Offering offered?

It is offered from **males of animals only** (a symbol of Christ the Head of the Church), such as cattle for the able and sheep for those unable.

It must be **without blemish** because the Lord Christ is without sin.

The burnt offering symbolizes:

Complete surrender and perfect obedience in the person of the Lord Jesus. In His sacrifice on the cross, which was offered by our Lord with good pleasure, He became for us a mediator and eternal sacrifice. The fire by which the sacrifice gets burned is a symbol of the divine fire that burns sin.

### *Symbols in the Divine Liturgy*

The priest walks around the altar carrying the chosen Lamb. The priest also says: *“this cup also after supper mixed it of wine and water”* as he moves his finger around the rim of the cup in a circular motion, indicating that the blood of Christ is for eternity and for all people. Throughout the Book of Leviticus we can understand the different aspects of the death of the Lord Christ, for He was the true burnt offering:

- *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).
- *“Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God”* (Hebrews 9:14).
- *“And gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma”* (Ephesians 5:2).

*And Christ is the sacrifice that bears sin: “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7).

The death of our Lord Christ fulfilled the animal sacrifices.



## The Cross in the Burnt Offering

The Burnt offering is the sacrifice of obedience which was fulfilled on the cross by the Son's obedience to the Father — obedience unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8).

Since the sacrifice of the cross was unique in its kind and its possibilities, no single type of sacrifices or offerings could fully express it.



The word “*Oblation*” is a Hebrew word given to the offerings and sacrifices offered to God, to bring us closer to God and please Him.

## The Grain Offering - Partnership of life with the Crucified (Leviticus 2)

The grain offering refers to the complete humanity of the Lord Christ on earth and represents His life and the sufferings He bore in the body. It indicates thanksgiving to God for His goodness, because the Lord Christ gave us His body and blood that we may live by them forever. It is described separately, but it accompanies the animal sacrifices.

### The role of the priest and how to offer the Grain Offering

It is made from *fine flour and mixed with oil*, indicating the union between the Son and the Holy Spirit. *Incense* is placed on it, indicating prayer and the priestly work. It is *cooked with fire*, indicating the pains of the Lord Christ in His life, not only on the cross, for He was despised and rejected by people. It is *cooked in a casserole* which is a ceramic vessel containing the flour and oil which indicates the Virgin Mary who carried the Lord Christ. The priests eat from it because they have a share in serving the Lord. It is offered **without yeast** because yeast symbolizes sin, and **without honey** which symbolizes worldly pleasures.

### With what is the Grain Offering offered?

- 1. Flour:** The Lord Christ likened Himself to the grain of wheat: “*Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain*” (John 12:24).
- 2. Oil:** pure olive oil – symbol of the Holy Spirit: “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me...*” (Isa. 61:1).
- 3. Incense:** represents the priesthood and prayer and the fragrant aroma of Christ – “*a sweet aroma to the Lord*” (Leviticus 1:17).
- 4. Salt:** makes food good and preserves from corruption – symbol that the relationship with God makes life pleasing and meaningful – “*You are the salt of the earth*” (Matthew 5:13)





## Symbols of the Grain Offering

It symbolizes the personal life of the Lord Christ on to the Father to accomplish the work of redemption. ground, it symbolizes His pains and sorrows which He life - He was wounded for our transgressions. The white the flour indicates the purity of our Lord Christ, who also the Bread of Life.



## Symbols of the Grain Offering in the Divine

### Liturgy

The Liturgy explains the life of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth, beginning from His incarnation, His service (teachings), Salvation (incarnation, suffering), and until the second coming of Christ.



## The Cross in the Grain Offering

The cross and redemption could not take place without the incarnation of our Lord Christ. The grain offering is a symbol of Christ's incarnation and His life which culminated in the purpose of the incarnation – the cross.

## The Peace Offering - The cross is the center of peace (Leviticus 3)

The Peace Offering is the sacrifice of thanksgiving offered to thank God for His gifts. It is **the only sacrifice from which the priest, the offerer, and his friends eat – a type of fellowship, partnership with God and people.**

## The role of the priest and how to offer the Peace Offering

The offerer places his hand on the head of the sacrifice and gives thanks to God. It is slaughtered at the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting. The priest sprinkles the blood around the altar in circular shape. The fat which covered the entrails, kidneys, and liver is offered on the altar because it is the best part of the animal. The rest of the peace offering is placed on the altar over the wood. *The blood and fat are not eaten, according to the command in Genesis: "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood" (Genesis 9:4).*



## With what is the Peace Offering offered?

The Peace offering may be offered using cattle, sheep, or goats *without blemish* – males or females – because it symbolizes the partnership between God and His Church, and the Church is the Bride of Christ. Birds are not offered because they are not suitable for a peace offering.

## Symbols of the Peace Offering in the Divine Liturgy

The Eucharistic mystery is the sacrament of Thanksgiving for the sacrifice of the Lord Christ, the Giver of life, and it stands upon the peace offering, being an extension of the sacrifice of the cross.

It is reflected in the prayer of reconciliation, symbolizing peace between God and humanity, between the heavens and the earth. The Liturgy is a communal prayer performed by the priest with the people, just as in the peace offering the priest shares with the offerer and his friends in eating it.



The Peace Offering comes after the burnt and grain offerings because we cannot feel peace except after reconciliation between God and humanity on the cross, and after the Lord Christ offered Himself for humanity. The Lord's portion is the fat which is the best part of the sacrifice and the source of energy in the animal's body. Similarly, we must offer the Lord all our energy and dedicate to Him all our senses and being.

## The Cross in the Peace Offering

The fat from the Peace offering is burned on the Burnt offering; making the work of the cross evident as our Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself to give us peace.

## The Sin and Trespass Offerings - Atonement for sins and complete salvation (Leviticus 4–6)

There are two sacrifices within one law because sin has two aspects:





- The *transgression against others* (whether unintentionally or deliberately) and the trespass offering is presented for it.
- - The *transgression against God* and His holiness (Leviticus 5:14) and the sin offering is presented for it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ gathered within Himself these two sacrifices, and for this reason the priest has to eat from both sacrifices to bring the sins and transgression of his people before God in order to redeem them. Likewise, our Lord Jesus Christ requires that we eat from His holy Body for the forgiveness of our sins and to obtain eternal life: *“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day”* (John 6:54).

## The Sin Offering

### The meaning and symbols of the Sin Offering

The sin offering is offered as atonement for the sin of the one presenting it, for the following:

1. *Sins of ignorance* whether known or unknown, done willingly or unwillingly, without persistence.
2. Whoever *swears* and then retracts his oath.
3. If someone *conceals* testimony.
4. If someone *touches a dead body* or an unclean animal.

The sin offering is also offered on some occasions and all the feasts.

### With what is the Sin Offering offered?

It is a mandatory sacrifice for all but the type of sacrifice differs according to the person who offers it.

1. The high **priest** or the anointed priest: offers a *male bull*.
2. The whole **congregation** (the people): offers a *male bull*.
3. The **ruler** (the king): offers a *male goat*.
4. Any individual from the **common people**: offers a *female goat* (the people represent the Bride of Christ).



## The Trespass Offering

### The Meaning of the Trespass Offering

The trespass offering makes atonement when there is transgression against the rights of God:

1. The rights of God include the firstborn, tithes, offerings, vows, in addition to the sanctuary dues.
2. The rights of people are if someone betrays another in a deposit, trust, theft, false oath, usury, and the like.

### With what is the Trespass Offering offered?

- A ram without blemish
- The sacrifice here is considered **most holy**, because it symbolizes the Lord Christ who “made Himself a trespass offering.” (Isaiah 53:10)

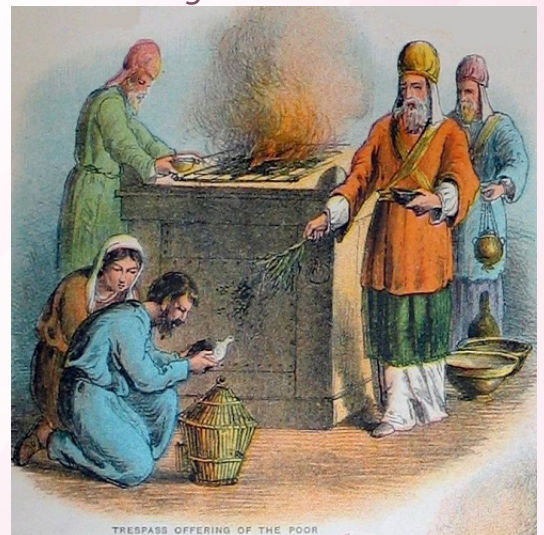
Compensation is paid for the damage plus one-fifth added to the original (tithes, first fruits, etc).

This was seen put into practice by Zaccheus the Tax Collector.

### Symbols of the Sin and Trespass Offerings

#### Sin Offering

- The veil points to the body of Christ, and the sprinkled blood points to the blood that was upon His body; and this veil was torn on the day of the Cross.
- The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ is a complete atonement (the sprinkling of the blood seven times upon the veil is a sign of complete forgiveness of sin), and the incense points to prayer and the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ the atoning One. Pouring the blood at the base of the burnt altar is the link between the Cross of the Lord Christ and His *atoning intercession*.
- Burning the fat is a sign of the *consecration of the senses*.
- Burning the remainder of the sacrifice indicates that **God hates sin**. The head points to the thoughts, the legs to the wrong behaviors, and the entrails to the wrong feelings and intentions. It is burned outside the camp as the Lord Christ was crucified outside Jerusalem.



TRESPASS OFFERING OF THE POOR



## Trespass Offering

- It points to the work of Christ in the forgiveness of our sins directed against God.
- It is not enough that we repent and confess our sin, but we must restore what we have wronged in the rights of others.
- The **skin** is our declaration of the acceptance of this sacrifice from its owner, and it reminds us of what God did when **He made garments of skin for Adam to cover his nakedness**; and Adam was considered the priest of the family.

## Symbols in the Divine Liturgy

### Sin Offering

In the Fraction prayer, the priest divides the Body into parts, and afterward places the Blood upon the Body. In the Holy Pascha Week, the Church prays the Pascha prayers outside the sanctuary, as a sign of the crucifixion of the Lord Christ outside Jerusalem. Likewise, the sin offering is burned far from the Holy of Holies.

### Trespass Offering

In the Divine Liturgy, we unite with the Body and Blood of the Lord, which is atonement for our sins that we inherited and that we have committed.

## The Role of the Priest and How the Sacrifice Is Offered

The bull is brought to the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting, and the offerer lays his hand upon the head of the bull, slaughtering it before the Lord. The priest takes of the bull's blood and brings it into the Tabernacle of Meeting, and he dips his finger in the blood and sprinkles the blood seven times upon the veil and upon the altar of incense. The remainder of the bull's blood is poured at the base of the altar of burnt offering.

If the priest offers the sin offering and the trespass offering for another person, he eats of the flesh of the sin offering and the trespass offering. But *if the high priest or the priest himself sins*, he does not eat of the flesh of the sin offering or the trespass offering, but **it shall be burned completely**. Sin corrupts the life of man, destroys it, and makes him rejected by God and by people.



## The Golden Words

The crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ is considered the central event in Christianity, and it represents the crown of God's plan for the redemption of mankind. Despite the pain of the Cross and His suffering, the Lord Jesus spoke seven phrases, known as the Seven Last Words. They were mentioned in the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John). These words were distinguished by the **element of giving** - while He was on the Cross in the appearance of weakness and defeat, He was giving:

1. Forgiveness to His crucifiers.
2. Paradise to the believing thief.
3. To the Virgin Mary a spiritual son, care, and attention.
4. And to John the beloved, a spiritual mother, and he deserved the blessing of the holy Virgin in his house.
5. To God the Father, He paid the divine justice which was required.
6. To mankind, an atonement and redemption.
7. And He also gave us assurance of the work of salvation.

He Who did not receive anything from anyone, gave to everyone, and carried our sins in His body on the Cross. We offered Him nothing but bitterness and vinegar. He descended from His throne for our sake and for our salvation. *"He made Himself, of no reputation taking the form of the bondservant, and coming in his the likeness of men"* (Philippians 2:7).

Although He did not talk during the trials, torture and mockery, He spoke words for our benefit and for our salvation.

Each word carries a sign, a goal, and a meaning. The seven words indicate:

1. That He is a **Priest**: interceding for His crucifiers.
2. That He is a **King**: granting the right-hand thief a share in His kingdom.
3. That He is a **Shepherd**: caring for His Church.
4. That He is a **Teacher**: Proving that He is the expected Messiah for whom the prophets are foretold.
5. The Lord **who pays the price of redemption**.
6. **Announcement of joy** by establishing redemption.
7. That He **declared victory** and the defeat of Satan.



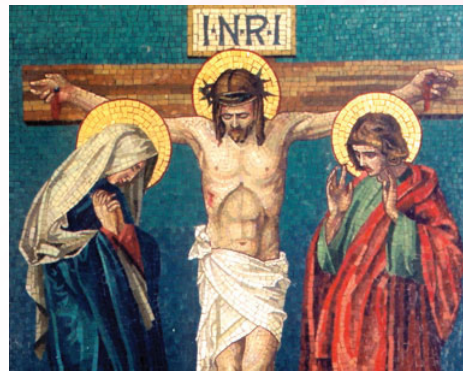


## The Seven Words of the Lord Christ on the Cross

**“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” (Luke 23:34)**

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke on the Cross with:

1. God the Father
2. Humans:
3. Saints – Saint Mary and Saint John the beloved
4. Evil ones who repented – The right thief
5. His crucifiers



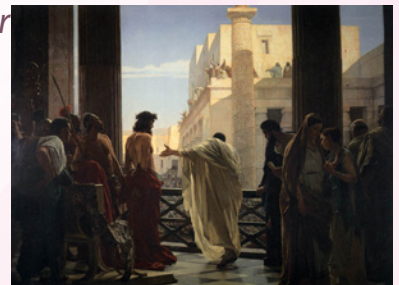
### Atoning Intercession

When the Jews crucified our Lord Christ, they thought that they were killing Him according to the Law, because in their view He had broken the Law; but they did not know that He is the giver of the Law and that they themselves were fulfilling the Law. They thought that our Lord Jesus Christ is an ordinary man and did not understand that He is the Son of God in truth: *“For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8).*

The Lord Jesus showed the unlimited extent of love, mercy, and forgiveness, despite the harshness and injustice which He endured, though He is the righteous One who committed no sin. He offered forgiveness to His executioners and crucifiers. His mission was to reconcile the guilty man with the righteous God through his death on cross. He said about Himself: *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10), “and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28)*

The word **“atonement”** means covering with blood. His request of forgiveness is an atoning intercession which means, *You have carried out your will, O Father, in atoning for the sins of mankind, so forgive them.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ in forgiving His crucifiers presented to us a practical example of carrying out His commandment to *“Love your enemies, bless those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.” (Luke 6:27–28)*





He prayed for His crucifiers while He was hanging on the Cross, and in the depths of His pain, He asked forgiveness for them and made excuses for them. This prayer extends in its effect to everyone who desires to repent

He was wounded for our sins; therefore, He intercedes before the Father for the forgiveness of the sins of everyone who repents. For this reason, He says: **“Father, forgive them,”** because I have paid the price of their sin. From this time on there is no debt remaining upon them; I have fulfilled the divine justice and paid the debt of all. I died for them and for those who will come after them. And when He says, “forgive them,” He intends this for all the sinners who repented from Adam until the end of the ages, because His redemption is unlimited. *“I came for this hour ...”* (John 12:27).

Out of the last seven words of Jesus Christ, the first three were for **forgiveness**. He mentioned His enemies before His beloved ones and the last four words were a **revelation** and announcement that salvation has been completed.

### **Shall we forgive others?**

Our Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven us so that we also may forgive others and enjoy the blessings of forgiveness which come to us and proceeds from us. Thus we pray in the prayer of Our Father: *“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”*

There are many examples of people to whom the phrase *“They do not know what they do”* applies;

#### **1. Saint Longinus, the soldier**

The one who pierced the side of the Lord Christ with a spear, then believed in the Lord Christ and became a saint.

#### **2. Saint Aranius Governor of Anesnah:**

Who shed the blood of tens of thousands of Christians and killed them brutally; but the Lord Christ drew him to Himself, so he believed in Him and was martyred.



### 3. Saul of Tarsus:

Saul remained in the evil of his wickedness and the harshness of his persecution toward the Christians, until the Lord of glory appeared to him and he became the great apostle, Saint Paul. The Lord Christ offered salvation to the whole world, but only those who follow Him enjoy this salvation:

- The repentant believers.
- Those walking in the way of the Lord.
- Those who enjoy the work of the Holy Spirit and His mysteries and practice righteous deeds.

When we hear the phrase: “for they do not know what they do,” we say in truth: “And I also, O Lord, will do as You did: all who angered me, offended me, and caused me pain, I will forgive them because they do not know what they do.” Thus we try to share with our Lord in His work and love.

The Lord Christ left us an example to follow in life when He forgave His crucifiers despite the pain they inflicted upon Him. Let us forgive those who have wronged us - forgive and it will be forgiven you.

### “Today you will be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43)

Our Lord Jesus Christ said this to the right thief when he confessed his faith in Him. This is a confirmation from the Lord Christ to the thief that:

1. He is the **Judge** even while He is on the Cross, and that He will forgive him and he will come into his kingdom today.
2. As **Savior and Lord**, He has the authority to grant eternal life to those who believe in Him, regardless of their sins or their past circumstances.
3. He came to seek and to save what had perished, and He is **ready now to save** completely everyone who comes to Him with faith and repentance.

Trust that God hears your prayers and gives you more than you ask. The Church has become accustomed to calling the right thief the repentant thief, for he repented and believed in the Lord Jesus. Christ placed the repentant thief in the position of the sheep on His right, and the left place was for





the other thief who blasphemed (Matthew 25:33).

- The right thief is the first human being who addressed the Lord Jesus while He was on the Cross.
- The Lord answered him quickly, while He did not respond to the others with even one word
- The sinner heard the call and entered Paradise, and the Lord Jesus still calls us to be with Him in Paradise. Will you respond to His call?"
- The right hand thief is the only one who defended the Lord, while the twelve disciples fled. Therefore, do not despise anyone, for it is possible that they may precede you to Paradise.
- With one short and focused phrase, the thief was able to obtain everything and became an example of the power of repentance and the forgiveness and mercy of the Lord Jesus. His prayer became a source of meditation, and the whole Church repeats with him: *"Remember me, o lord .when you come into your kingdom"*

The right thief deserved the kingdom, for what he did was truly wonderful, since:

- He confessed the Lord Christ as King, saying: "Remember me, O Lord."
- He confessed to Him as King, saying: "when You come into Your kingdom."
- He confessed to Him as Savior, able to bring him into Paradise.

**"Woman, behold your son." Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother."**

**(John 19:26–27)**

### **He cares for all**

- It is natural that a person in pain would be the focus of people's attention. But our Lord Jesus Christ, in His pain, was the One who cared for others.
- The Lord Christ cared for the holy Virgin Mary, who was very sorrowful as she saw her only beloved Son, the meek and gentle One, humiliated and suffering unjustly. Here the Lord teaches us:
  1. To speak with our mother the holy Virgin Mary and to ask for her **intercessions** for us; and likewise, to converse with those who are sad.
  2. **Dedicating oneself to the service** of the Lord and to the Church does not mean neglecting one's household and relatives, especially as it is written: *"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith."* (1 Timothy 5:8)



3. The **spiritual motherhood** and the honor of the holy Virgin for us as children of the apostles.
4. It sheds light on the **importance of the community and relationships within the Church** (the Body of Christ), and the importance of caring for one another with special love, as members in one spiritual family whose Head is the Lord Christ.
5. The **Spiritual Motherhood** of the holy Virgin who took John as a son to her. The Lord had given him to her as the most beloved of His disciples. And the holy Virgin Mary remained in his house as a precious jewel until she reposed. This was a great blessing for the house of Saint John, which the Lord Christ granted him as a reward for his love. He was more than the rest of the disciples in love, and he also followed the Lord Christ to the Cross, remaining beside Him.



The Lord Christ gave His mother to John, the beloved disciple, making her a mother to the apostles and to all believers, and to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, in addition to her being the pure Virgin, the Mother of God, the Theotokos.

### **“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)**

The Lord Christ was praying on the Cross “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” – which is the opening of Psalm 22, which fully applies to the events of His crucifixion.

- This does not mean that His divinity departed from His humanity, for *His divinity did not depart from His humanity for a single moment nor the twinkling of an eye.*
- Nor does it mean that the Father separated from Him, but rather that the Father allowed Him to be left to suffering.

An illustrative example is a father who takes his child to the dentist for a tooth extraction, and the child cries, clinging to his father saying, “Why did you leave me?” This indicates that the pains of the Crucifixion were real.





- Our Lord Jesus Christ bore the punishment of sin and was crying out from the extremity of its weight.
- God the Father turned His face away from our Lord Jesus Christ while He was bearing the weight of human sin from Adam to the last of the human race.
  - The Father looked to the Son as a sinner for our sake, as He carried sin in His body and bore its curse.

Our Lord Jesus Christ represented mankind in many things:

1. Fasting and prayer.
2. Obedience to the Law.
3. Enduring pain and paying the price of sin.

Since sin caused all this pain to our Lord for our salvation, let us examine ourselves carefully (Ephesians 5:15).

**Jesus cried out with a loud voice.** If the Lord Christ in His last breath was merely an ordinary human, He would not have been able to cry out with a loud voice. This indicates the power of His divinity. For He is the God-Man, or God manifest in the flesh. We may sometimes think that the Lord has left us, but the Lord has not and will never depart from us. Mary Magdalene did not see Him, yet He was standing behind her, and she did not know that it was Jesus (John 20:14).

## “I thirst” (John 19:28)

### Longing for every soul that believes in Him

1. From the **spiritual aspect:**
  - He was thirsty for the salvation of mankind, just as He said to the Samaritan woman, “Give Me a drink.” He did not mean physical water, but **He was thirsty for the salvation of Samaria** and the people of Samaria



## 2. From the **physical aspect**

- He was thirsty, and in His foreknowledge He knew that they would give Him vinegar, not water. And this was so that the prophecy about Him might be fulfilled which says: *“And for My thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”* (Psalm 69:21)

His throat had become dry, and He endured until no strength remained in His body, so He said: “I thirst.” This was foreshadowed in the book of Psalms, *“My strength is dried up like a potsherd”* (Psalm 22:15). The fluids of His body had been depleted and drained unto death for many reasons:

1. The great sweat which flowed from Him like drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane and on the way while He carried the Cross.
2. The much blood which flowed from Him because of the scourging, the crown of thorns, the nails in His hands and feet, and the spear in His side.

## “It is finished.” (John 19:30)

### The Triumph of Salvation

Our Lord Jesus Christ declared the completion of His mission to accomplish salvation for mankind through His atoning death on the Cross. Divine justice took its course, and the Lord Jesus achieved the complete victory and granted the gift of eternal life to everyone who believes in Him.

Thus...

- The prophecies were fulfilled.
- Every righteousness was accomplished.
- His priestly work was completed.
- All love was perfected through Christ’s pain.



Our Lord completed the work for which He came; He finished it on the Cross and completed the work that was before Him prior to the Cross. One work remained for Him to do after He delivered His spirit on the Cross- that He should descend into Hades, preach to those who were waiting in hope, and bring them from Hades to Paradise.





Thus, He completed the work of reconciliation between heaven and earth. He completed the work of salvation for all, and the seed of the woman (our Lord Christ) crushed the head of the serpent, and He reigned on the Cross - *“say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns; the world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously.’ (Psalm 96:10).* He destroyed the kingdom of Satan in the very place of his dominion (the air).

The phrase “It is finished” is **a shout of joy and victory**. The Lord was able to redeem us by His blood, establish His spiritual kingdom, and destroy the kingdom of Satan who had been called *“the ruler of this world” (John 13:30).*

**“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” (Luke 23:46)**

### **The Perfection of Redemption**

*“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father.” (John 16:28)*

The Lord Jesus cried out with a loud voice. This indicates that He possessed a power beyond the power of humanity, which is the power of divinity. This also expresses that the will of the Father and the will of the Son are one will. Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ died in the flesh. He took our place as sinners and on the third day He rose victorious over death, and by His Resurrection He gave us the hope of resurrection. *“Into Your hands I commit My spirit.” (Luke 23:46)*

He places His spirit into the hand of the Father and **not into the hand of another (the enemy)**, *“the ruler of this world” (John 14:30).*

He delivered the spirit with His authority and surrendered His spirit voluntarily, by His own will. Therefore none among men can say that He died against His will. The Lord Christ said: *“I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” (John 10:18)* After He delivered the spirit, He descended into Hades, preached to those who died in hope of the resurrection, and brought out the souls who were in prison. *“went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:19)*



St. Paul further explains this by saying, "Now this, 'He ascended'—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens..." (Ephesians 4:9–10)

And with this we cry out saying, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

The words of our lord Jesus on the cross are not mere sayings but they are commandments to guide us as they express forgiveness, mercy, substitution, responsibility, pain, completion and perfect surrender





# The Liturgical Rites for the Feast of the Cross

The Church honors the Cross because it is the **means of reconciliation between heaven and earth**, and the instrument by which the Lord saved our race from the grasp of the Satan. Thus, our Coptic Orthodox Church presents her doctrine through her rites. The *Holy Scripture* presents the **sound text**; the *writings of the Fathers* present **sound understanding**, and the *liturgies* present **sound expression**. Our Church presents the deep meaning of the Cross through the Rites of the Procession of the Cross, which is celebrated three times in the year.

- The raising of incense early in the Feast of the Cross, which is celebrated twice a year: on 17 Tout and 10 Baramhat, in addition to the procession of Palm Sunday.

On these occasions, the Church celebrates the Cross and honors it in a deeply moving manner. The deacons carry the holy Cross adorned with roses and lit with candles, and they process with it through the church, while the priests carry the censers.

## Rites of the Procession of the Cross

The Procession of the Cross begins by processing around the altar. Then the priests and deacons stand before the door of the great sanctuary.

- Portions from the Psalms and the Gospel are read.
- After each Gospel the Gospel response is chanted.
- Then the Response of the Cross is chanted: *“Through His cross: and His holy Resurrection: He restored man once again: to the Paradise.”*
- Then they stand before the icon of the holy Virgin Mary, and they read the Psalm and the Gospel, and both responses (the Gospel response and the Cross response) are chanted.

Thus, the procession continues through twelve stations, where the priests and deacons stand at each station and read the Psalm which speaks about the icon or a related theme.

The Gospels speak about the kingdom of the New Covenant, which was proclaimed by the salvation of the Lord in His death upon the Cross and His resurrection. The word **“Your kingdom”** is repeated in the twelve Gospels approximately twelve times.



In these stations the Church presents to us the concept of the Cross, and how the martyrs bore witness to the Cross. Thus, the readings direct our sight toward the Cross and toward salvation. The **Twelve Stations** (Psalm and Gospel) are divided into **three groups**.

## The First Group

### The Plan of Salvation and the Servants of Salvation

- These stations concern the plan of salvation, and the servants of salvation (God the Father, the Virgin Mary, and the chiefs of the angels). The Father chose His Mother to become a mother to the Son of God who took flesh from her. (Luke 1:30–31)
- Archangel Gabriel, the head of the angels, announced the service of the Incarnation.
- Archangel Michael announced the Resurrection of the Lord when he rolled away the stone from the mouth of the tomb.

### 1. Before the Door of the Sanctuary

**Psalm - 104:4, 138:1** *“He makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flaming fire.” Before the angels I will sing praise unto Thee; I will worship toward Thy holy temple. Hallelujah.*

**Gospel - John 1:51** Our Lord to Whom due glory says *“Ye shall see heaven opened”* There is nothing that opened heaven except the Cross and Him Who was crucified upon it. And the sanctuary is the place which became heaven. Its door is the gate of heaven. At the door of the sanctuary the Church tells us: The Cross is the key to the gate of heaven, the gate that was shut and opened only by the Cross and the Crucified.





## 2. Before the Icon of the Holy Virgin Mary

**Psalm - 87:2, 5, 7** *"The lord loves the gates of Zion more than all dwelling of Jacob... For in thee dwell the joyful ones together. Hallelujah."*

**Gospel - Luke 1:38-56:** The Visitation of the Holy Virgin Mary to Elizabeth. The holy Virgin was the first to bear the Cross. She bowed in complete obedience and she carried many crosses and sufferings, yet the greatest was the Cross of the Redemption, which many cannot bear, for it points to His humility. (Luke 1:48)



## 3. Before the Icon of the Archangel Gabriel (the Announcer)

**Psalm - 34:7-8** *"The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in Him. Hallelujah."*

**Gospel - Luke 1:26-38** The annunciation of the Archangel Gabriel to the holy Virgin Mary.



## 4. Before the Icon of the Archangel Michael (the Leader)

**Psalm - 103:20-21** *"Bless the Lord, ye His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word. Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts, His ministers that do His will. Hallelujah."*

**Gospel - Matthew 13:44-52** *"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field." Whoever **bears the Cross** leaves all the treasures of the world in order to obtain the precious pearl.*



## The Second Group

### The Icons of Salvation

*"These are they who were washed in the blood of the Lamb, and who loved*



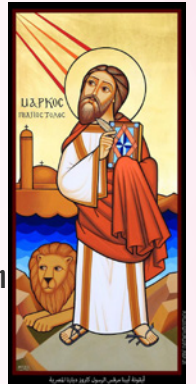
*not their lives even unto death.” (Revelation 11:12)*

In this group we see: **St. Mark** the Apostle, the apostles, the prince of martyrs **St. George** and **St. Anthony** the father of the wilderness. The Church places them always before our eyes that we may behold the end of their life and imitate their faith. (Hebrews 7:13)

## 5. Before the Icon of St. Mark the Evangelist

**Psalm 68:12** - *“The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who proclaimed it.”*

**Gospel - Luke 10:1-12:** The Lord appointed seventy others and sent them to preach the Gospel. This is the **Cross of service and ministry**. They were sent as lambs among wolves. Thus the great evangelist St. Mark the Apostle, the preacher of Egypt, became an example of bearing the Cross of service for the sake of delivering the joyful Gospel to us.



## 6. Before the Icon of the Apostles

**Psalm 19:4** - *“Those who did not hear their voices in all the earth; their sound went forth, and to the ends of the inhabited world their words reached. Alleluia.”*

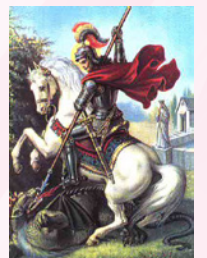
**Gospel - Matthew 10:1-8:** Then He called His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits. Those who carried the cross of preaching for the Lord Christ learned this method from the Lord of glory Himself, saying to them: *“Preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 10:7)*



## 7. Before the Icon of the Martyrs

**Psalm 96:11** - *“Light has dawned for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, O righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. Alleluia.”*

**Gospel - Luke 21:12-19:** *“But before all these things they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to synagogues and prison”* The cross here is the **offering of**





life and the **endurance of persecutions.**

**8. Before the Icon of Saint Anthony** (Or any saint of the heroes of self-denial)

**Psalm 68:35** - *“Awesome is God in His saints; the God of Israel is He who gives power and strength to His people.”*

**Gospel - Matthew 16:24–26:** Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

### The Third Group

#### The Church

The procession stops at the doors of the holy church (*The means of Salvation*)

Therefore we see the doors of the church: the Northern door, the Eastern door, the basin (Lakan), the Baptism, the place of salvation, the mysteries of salvation, and the beloved dwellings.

### 9. Before the North-facing Door

**Psalm 84:1** - *“How lovely are Your dwellings, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes even faints, for the courts of the Lord. Alleluia.”*

**Gospel - Luke 13:22–30:** “And He went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him: ‘Lord, are there few who are saved?’ And He said to them: ‘Strive to enter through the **narrow gate.**’ At the northern door we remember that the *cross is the narrow gate*, and since we long to enter the kingdom, we must enter through the narrow gate. The command of the Holy Scripture to us: *“Strive to enter through the narrow gate.”*



## 10. Before the Laqan Basin

**Psalm 29:3–9** - *“The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; The God of glory thunders; The Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful. Alleluia.”*

**Gospel - Matthew 3:13–17:** Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to **John to be baptized by him**. At the Laqan basin we remember the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism means death with Christ, the descent of our Lord Jesus Christ into the Jordan River means that He died for mankind. This acceptance was the cause of the Father’s joy: *“This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 3:17)

## 11. Before the Eastern Door

**Psalm 118:19–20** - *“Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, and I will praise the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. Alleluia.”*

**Gospel - Matthew 21:1–11:** And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethpage at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them: “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied...” The Gospel of the entry of the Lord Christ into earthly Jerusalem as a heavenly King in the procession of victory, for the cross is the procession of the King and the throne of the King.

## 12. Before the Icon of John the Baptist The greatest born of women

**Psalm 52:8** - *“But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.”*

**Gospel - Luke 7:27–35:** *“For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.”* In the cross of the Son of God we see ourselves attracted to His Fatherly love, and we are supported by the fellowship and prayers of the saints, and we rejoice in the mysteries of the holy Church





## Symbols and Blessings of the Cross

The idea of the Cross was in the mind of God from the very beginning, before the fall of Adam. God, in His foreknowledge, knew that He would respond in the fullness of time for our salvation and redemption. God knew that the Jews would deliver Him to the Romans to be Crucified and He knew all the events of the Cross beforehand. Thus the Cross was an eternal idea in the heart and mind of God. And as He promised redemption, He declared from the beginning, after the fall of Adam:

*"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). In the fullness of time, the promise was fulfilled through the Cross.

### Preparing our Minds for Redemption

God prepared the mind of mankind for the idea of redemption and the Cross from ancient times, through the following:

#### 1. The Promise of the Savior

On the day when God drove man out of the Garden of Eden, He gave him hope and the promise of redemption, saying to him: Do not fear, O Adam, and do not grieve; from your seed will come One who conquers Satan and restores you again to Paradise. *"Thus the woman's Seed shall bruise the serpent's head."* (Genesis 3:15)

#### 2. The Prophecies

The prophets of the Old Testament foretold the redemption that would be accomplished by the Incarnate Son. They described the accompanying events with great accuracy. The prophet Zechariah predicted that our Lord Jesus Christ would be sold for thirty pieces of silver and would be pierced in His side by a spear (Zechariah 11:12; 12:10). David predicted the events of the Cross in great detail, includ-





ing the betrayal by one of His disciples (Psalms 41:9), the death of the Lord Christ and His resurrection (Psalms 3:5;16:10; 22:22). The prophet Isaiah predicted the sufferings of the Lord Christ (Isaiah 53). The prophet Amos predicted the darkness that would come upon the earth at the time of His crucifixion (Amos 8:9).

### 3. The Persons

There were persons who lived in the Old Testament who symbolized (in certain aspects) the redeeming Lord Christ such as Abel, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph the righteous, Moses the prophet, Joshua son of Nun, Job, Jonah, and others.

### 4. The Sacrifices

The sacrifices that God commanded in the Law of the Old Testament explained and deepened the idea of redemption through blood. The sacrifices were varied, and each sacrifice symbolized the Lord Christ from a particular aspect. These sacrifices were offered daily, indicating that **they could not remove sin nor take away its effects**. Among these sacrifices were the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. Thus, man realized his need for redemption and for a mediator between God and man. Even Job said: *“There is no mediator between us, who may lay his hand upon us both.”* (Job 9:33) It was impossible for an animal to be the mediator, for the mediator must be of higher rank than man and have favor before God. Thus, mankind came to know that he needed a greater Mediator who would come in the fullness of time. These sacrifices that were continually offered were only **a shadow and reminder** to mankind of the need for the true Redeemer.

Therefore, there had to be one sacrifice offered once, whose effect would remain forever. This was the sacrifice of the Lord Christ. *“These are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”* (Hebrews 10:10) *“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”* (Hebrews 10:14)

Let us lift our eyes to behold Jesus the Crucified, that we may be drawn to Him. We confess our sins before Him, and place them with Him upon the Cross so that we may rise with Him and enjoy the new Resurrection.



## Symbols of the Cross in the Old Testament

For us Christians, the sign of the Cross is a symbol of salvation. It is our faith in the **doctrine of redemption, salvation, and hope**. The Cross declares that after death there is life; death is not the end, but the beginning of a new life. Therefore, the sign of the Cross is present in our life and our daily practice. We sign it upon our faces, our bodies, and upon our food. The mention of the Cross is always in our mouths, and the sign of the Cross is made in all the rites of the Church.

The Cross contains faith in the One Triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God Amen. It also contains the doctrine of Incarnation, Redemption, and Resurrection.

The symbols of the Cross show how God prepared the plan of salvation for mankind in the Old Testament before the coming of the Lord Christ. Salvation through the Cross was in the mind of God from the beginning and was not a sudden event in time. Among these symbols are:

### 1. Cain and the Mark

*"And the Lord set a mark for Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him."* (Genesis 4:15) After killing Abel, Cain carried two things: the curse and the mark of his sin. The Fathers saw in this mark a symbol of the Cross because our Lord Christ bore the curse upon the Cross for our sake and our redemption.

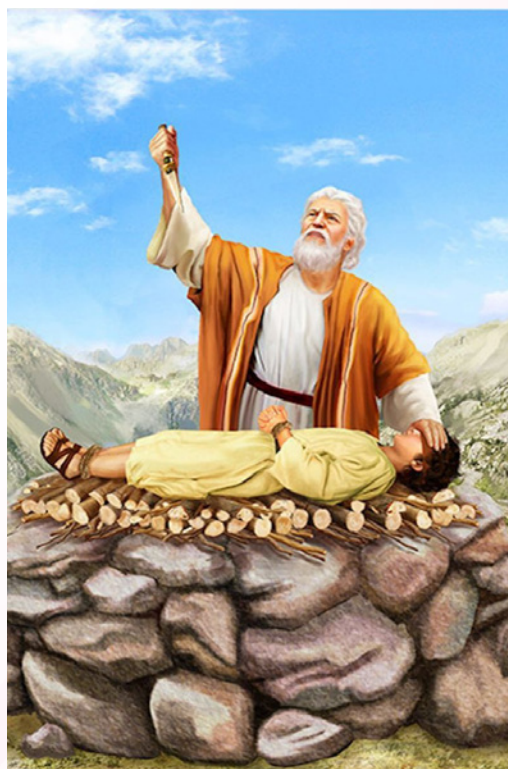
### 2. The Sacrifice of Isaac

Just as Isaac carried the wood for the burnt offering (Genesis 22), and was willing to become a sacrifice, so the wood he carried became a symbol of the Cross.

### 3. Jacob blessing the Sons of Joseph

#### (Manasseh and Ephraim)

Joseph took his two sons: Ephraim on his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh on his left hand toward Israel's right. But Israel crossed his hands in the form of the Cross when he blessed them (Genesis 48:14).





#### 4. Jacob's Ladder

In Genesis 28:12, Jacob saw in a dream a ladder set upon the earth, its top reached to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. This ladder is a symbol of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon which the angels ascend, glorifying God for His sacrifice for mankind, and descend to preach the good news of Christ the Redeemer so that people may believe in Him. This ladder is also **the Cross**, by which *the believers ascend to heaven*.



#### 5. The Rod of Aaron (Exodus 7:8–12)

1. In the story of the rod being turned into a serpent before Pharaoh, it symbolizes the mighty power of the Cross, which is fearful to Satan.
2. When Aaron's rod swallowed the rods of the magicians, this points to the power of the Cross which defeats all the tricks and deceptions of Satan.
3. When **Aaron's rod blossomed and produced almonds**, it became a **symbol of the eternal life** granted by the Cross.
4. Aaron's rod was **kept in the Ark of the Covenant** as a memorial and as a sign of the continual work of the sacrifice of the Cross and the true witness of salvation.

#### 6. The Passover Lamb

On the feast of the Passover, a lamb without blemish was offered and slain, its blood then sprinkled on the two doorposts and the lintel above the door.

The blood sprinkled on the lintel and the two doorposts (in the form of a cross) marked the houses of the Israelites, and they were saved from the angel of death. They also placed the lamb



on two wooden spits in the form of a cross. It was roasted on bitter herbs as our Lord Jesus Christ was placed upon the Cross and endured the dreadful sufferings for our sake.

## 7. The Rod of Moses

During the crossing of the Red Sea God told Moses, *“Lift up your rod and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the children of Israel may go into the midst of the sea on dry ground.”* (Exodus 14:16). The rod was a symbol of the Cross and the salvation of the people of Israel from Pharaoh.

## 8. The tree which made the bitter water sweet

A symbol of the Cross was seen when God commanded Moses to make the bitter water sweet at Marah. Our Lord showed him a tree, he cast it into the water, and it became sweet. (Exodus 15:25)

## 9. The Battle with Amalek

When Moses stood on the top of the hill praying, he stretched out his hands in the form of a cross, and Israel prevailed. (Exodus 17)

## 10. Moses Striking the Rock

*“And Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock with his rod twice, and abundant water came out, and the congregation and their animal drank.”* (Numbers 20:11)

## 11. The Bronze Serpent

It is a symbol of the crucified Christ. *“And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.”* (Numbers 21:9)

St. John wrote about the Bronze Serpent in his gospel: *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:14–15). Whoever looked at the bronze serpent was healed from the poison of sin. Likewise, when we look with faith to Christ crucified, we are delivered from the poison of lusts, evils, and sins.





## 12. The Floating Wood

When Elisha cut a stick and cast it there, the iron floated. This iron symbolizes our hearts that sank in the mire of the world while the wood symbolizes the Cross of Christ, by which we were lifted up to the heavens. (2 Kings 6:6)



## The Blessings of the Cross

### 1. Forgiveness

*“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.”*

*(Hebrews 9:22)* Here, St. Paul speaks about the

past, no matter how many times you sinned in the

past, the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ forgives all sins. In the Old Testament, the one who sinned brought a sacrifice, laid his hand upon its head, confessing his sins, and **it was slain in his place.**

Now, forgiveness is accomplished through the blood of Christ, *“In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins.”* (Colossians 1:14)

### 2. Purification

*“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7) The blood of Christ not only forgives the past but also purifies the present, cleansing the heart and conscience from within.

### 3. Sanctification

Sanctification is to consecrate and dedicate the human being. In the Coptic Orthodox Church, the baptized child is anointed with 36 anointings of the holy Myron, for the sanctification of the whole person.

*“You are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you.”* (1 Corinthians 3:16) Thus God sanctifies us inwardly and removes from us every evil and impurity.

### 4. Abiding

*“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”* (John 6:56) God dwells in us, and we become strong. *“We are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us”* (Rom 8:37)



Every time I partake the communion of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, He dwells in me and gives me power and victory over sin *"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 15:57)

## 5. Eternal Life

*"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."* (John 6:54) The precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ gives us eternal life in the heavenly Jerusalem.

### Coptic Orthodox Teachings about the Cross

- Instead of carrying a weapon or something that protects you, carry the Cross and imprint its image upon your members and upon your heart.
- Make the sign of the Cross not only with your hand, but let it also be engraved in the mind and in the thoughts. When you lift your eyes to the Crucified One who is hanging above the altar, remember the greatness of the love with which God loved us, even giving His beloved Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- Make the sign of the Cross at all times: When entering and leaving, when sitting and rising, when sleeping, in your work saying "In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."





# Cities & Relationships

There was a king who was generous, giving freely to all around him, and lenient in all matters. He decided not to build walls around his land, but to **leave it open without gates or guards**, available for every visitor and passerby from every place and at any time, to enter as he wished without question or permission. On the contrary, there was another king who loved his land and his people with great love. So, **he decided to build great walls**, whose ends the eyes could not behold because of their great height. He commanded that no gates or windows be made in these walls, except for a very small gate, lest anyone or anything should enter his beloved land, whether good or evil, because of the intensity of his fear for it. Which king acted rightly? And why? Imagine what will happen after a few years?



## 1. What does the word “boundaries” mean?

Boundaries are the rules and principles which a person sets, which determine what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in relationships between people. Boundaries help us mature and form a vision for life. No one can set your life boundaries but you

## 2. What is the importance of boundaries?

Boundaries provide protection and safety;

- Protection **from harm**: psychological, physical, and emotional.
- Protection **from corrupt thoughts**: faith-wise and doctrinally.
- Protection **from slipping** in wrong ways.
- Protection **from the pressures** of other people.
- Protection of my eternity.

## 3. Is there a Biblical model for boundaries?

### Boundaries regarding Fasting

*“And the Lord God commanded Adam, saying: ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the*



*tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that you eat of it shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:16–17)*

### **Boundaries regarding family:**

*“Honor thy father and thy mother. that your days may be long upon the land which the lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery .you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor you shall not covet your neighbor 's house you shall not covet your neighbor's wife nor your servant nor his ox nor his donkey nor anything that is your neighbor's anything that is your neighbor's”(Exodus 20:12–17)*

### **Boundaries regarding touch**

*“He said: Who is it that touched me? “When all denied I. Peter and those with him said Master the multitudes throng and press you and say who touched me? (Luke 8:45) and “Do not cling to Me for I have not yet ascended to my father”(John 20:17)*

### **Boundaries regarding violence**

*“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strikes Me?” (John 18:23) “Put thy sword into its place...” (Matthew 26:52)*

### **Obedience to the commandments**

*“It is necessary to obey God rather than men.”(Acts 5:29)*

### **Respect of the law**

*“Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”(Mark 12:17)*



## **4. Boundaries in the Life of St. Paul the Apostle**

### **1. It is necessary to obey God rather than men:**

*“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still please men I would not be a bondservant of Christ ...”(Galatians 1:10)*

### **2. Boundaries in dealing with unbelievers:**

*“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship has righteousness with*





*lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness ?” (2 Corinthians 6:14)*

## 5. What are the different types of boundaries?

### Privacy boundaries

What do I do when I meet a person for the first time? Would this be considered too little, too extreme or appropriate Boundaries?

1. Do I tell him everything about myself and my life (little boundaries).
2. Do stay silent because I trust no one (extreme boundaries).
3. Do I build trust gradually (appropriate boundaries).

If my friend asks me “How much is your allowance?” How should I respond?

- I tell him in detail (little boundaries).
- I tell him it is none of his concern (extreme boundaries).
- I say: it is enough for me, but this is a private matter (appropriate boundaries).

### Boundaries of responsibility

Given my role within my family, how do I support the household?

1. I help in everything, even what I do not understand (little boundaries).
2. I do not help at all and care only for myself (extreme boundaries).
3. I have specific duties at certain times (appropriate boundaries).

### Boundaries in your relationships and helping others:

1. I care for others' needs and neglect my own (little boundaries).
2. I do not help anyone (extreme boundaries).
3. I help as much as I can while also caring for myself (appropriate boundaries).

In relationships we must consider the customs and traditions which are taught to us by the church, our family, and our community.



## **Emotional boundaries**

When I am distressed or upset, how do I expect others around me to act?

1. People must sympathize and share my feelings (little boundaries).
2. I suppress my feelings and speak to no one (extreme boundaries).
3. There is at least one wise person to whom I speak (appropriate boundaries)

## **Boundaries of Love**

1. I fall in love from the first sight, and I imagine stories of love even within myself. (little boundaries)
2. I do not allow myself to feel this emotion at all. (extreme boundaries)
3. Love is a good and wise choice, based upon deep knowledge and mutual understanding between two persons. (appropriate boundaries)

## **Boundaries of Time**

1. I waste my time among friends or through means of social communication. (little boundaries)
2. My time is mine alone. (extreme boundaries)
3. I arrange my time according to my priorities. (appropriate boundaries)





## **Boundaries of the Body**

The body is gift. What do I do regarding any improper advances?

1. I consider them natural things; all touch is innocent, and he likely did not intend to disturb me. (little boundaries)
2. I remain silent because I fear to speak. (extreme boundaries)
3. I object in a polite manner: "Please do not touch me," (appropriate boundaries)

## **Boundaries of Communication**

Who chooses the proper way of communication?

1. Others (little boundaries)
2. I alone (extreme boundaries)
3. By agreement (appropriate boundaries)

## **Which of these boundaries is correct in communication?**

1. I accept a friend request from an account I do not know. (little boundaries)
2. I do not respond to a late phone call from a number I do not know. (appropriate boundaries)
3. I do not open a link from an unknown source. (appropriate boundaries)
4. My friends speak to me at any time for long periods. (little boundaries)
5. I do not respond at all to a phone call from one of my friends. (extreme boundaries)

## **Psychological Boundaries**

**Say: No**

With politeness, clarity, and without violence or offense

## **Intellectual Boundaries**

1. I must be like the people, or they will accuse me of being different. (little boundaries)
2. These things are completely rejected for my personality. (extreme boundaries)
3. I choose what suits me, and I depart from what does not suit me. (appropriate boundaries)

## **What hinders you from making your decisions?**

1. The opinion of people is important, and my decisions depend upon them. (little boundaries)
2. I fear to make any decision and to bear responsibility. (extreme boundaries)



3. I seek counsel from those of trust and experience, and I decide according to my personality and circumstances. (appropriate boundaries)

### **Boundaries of Speech**

1. I am open with everyone in every new situation. (little boundaries)
2. I always withdraw, because my speech is heavy and dull. (extreme boundaries)
3. "Let thy speech be always with grace..." (Colossians 4:6) (appropriate boundaries)

### **6. How do we set boundaries?**

1. Clarity
2. Expression of feelings
3. With gentleness
4. With politeness

God respects our boundaries, and He does not impose Himself upon us nor force Himself upon us, though His love for us is great. Thus, it is fitting for us also to respect these boundaries—with God, with ourselves, and with others. With this in mind we must take to heart these verses.

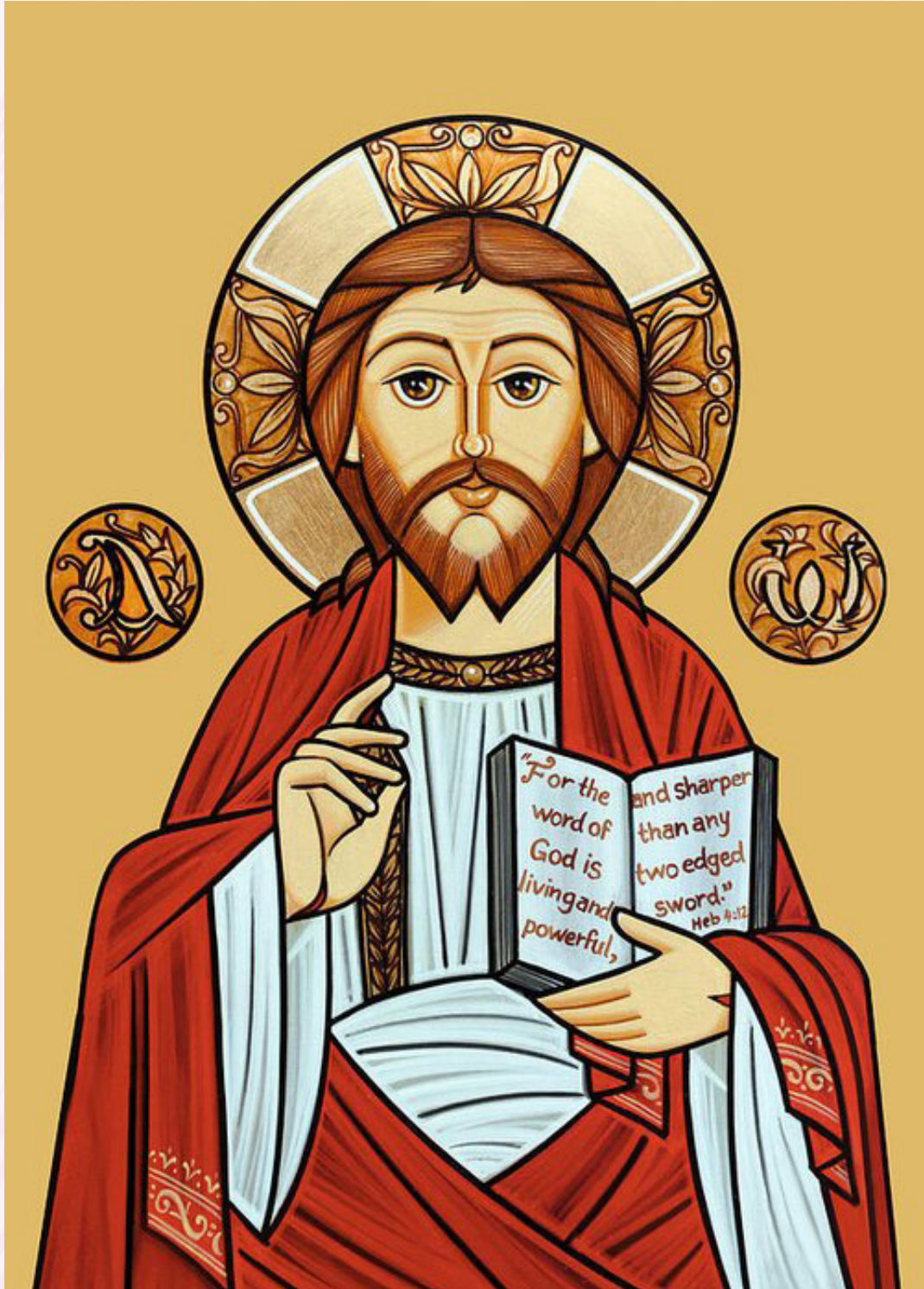
- "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify." (1 Corinthians 10:23)
- "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1 Corinthians 6:12)

### **What happens if one walks on a road without traffic signals?**

1. A greater chance of accidents
2. Harm to myself and to others
3. Absence of order
4. Noise in the streets
5. Lost time and wasted effort in reaching your destination
6. Getting lost

In order for our life to have meaning and be unique, it is necessary that we set boundaries for ourselves and for others, according to our personality and our interests, knowing what we accept and what we do not accept.





## Memorization

### PSALM 112

Praise the Lord, O the servants, praise the name of the Lord. Let the name of the Lord be blessed from now and forever. From the risings of the sun to its settings, praise the name of the Lord. The Lord is high above all the nations; upon the heavens is His glory.

Who is like the Lord our God? Who dwells in the high places, and looks upon the low things in heaven and on the earth, who lifts up a poor person from the earth, and raises up a needy person from the ash heap, to seat him with the princes, even with the princes of his people, who makes a barren woman in a house, rejoicing as a mother of children. ALLELUIA.

### The Gospel of the First Hour

THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN (1:1-17)

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

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

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

Glory be to God forever. Amen





## Litanies of the First Hour

1. O the true Light Who gives light to every man coming into the world, You came into the world through Your love for mankind, and all creation rejoiced in Your coming. You saved our father, Adam, from the deception, and delivered our mother, Eve, from the pangs of death, and gave us the spirit of sonship. Let us, therefore, praise You and bless You saying :

Δοξα Πατρι κε Υιω κε ἁγιω Πνευματι

2. As the daylight shines upon us, O Christ Our God, the true Light, let the luminous senses and the bright thoughts shine within us, and do not let the darkness of passions hover over us, that mindfully we may praise You with David saying, "My eyes hastened to awake before the dawn, that I might meditate on Your sayings." Hear our voices according to your great mercy, and deliver us, O Lord our God, through Your compassion.

Κε νην κε ἁι κε ιϷ τοϷ εϷνας των εϷνων: ἁμην

3. You are the honored Mother of the Light; from the risings of the sun to its settings praises are offered to you, O Theotokos, the second heaven, for you are the bright and unchanging flower, and the ever virgin mother; for the Father chose you, and the Holy Spirit overshadowed you, and the Son condescended and took flesh from you. Therefore, ask Him to give salvation to the world which He created, and to deliver it from all tribulations. Let us praise Him a new praise and bless Him, now and ever and unto the ages of the ages. Amen.



## First Absolution of the First Hour

O Lord, God of hosts, who is existing before all ages and abides forever, who created the sun for daylight, and the night as rest for all men; we thank You, O King of ages, for You have let us pass through the night in peace, and brought us to the daybreak. Therefore, we ask You, O our Master, the King of all ages, to let Your face shine upon us, and the light of Your divine knowledge enlighten us. Grant us, O our Master, to be sons of light and sons of day, to pass this day in righteousness, chastity and good conduct, that we may complete all the rest of the days of our life without offence; through the grace, the compassion and the love of mankind of Your Only-Begotten Son Jesus Christ, and the gift of Your Holy Spirit, now and at all times and forever. Amen.

## Second Absolution of the First Hour

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









# **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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