



THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION
WHOM SHALL I FEAR?
"Ps 27:1"

MAHRAGAN EL KERAZA 2024



English Edition
**College &
Young Adult**

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

Ps 27:1



Pope of Alexandria &
Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark



Bishop of the Diocese of New York
and New England



Table of Contents

The Lord is My Light & My Salvation	3
The First Epistle of St. John	20
Is it possible to put the sun out?	46
Very Personal and Confidential	56
Male & Female He Created Them	65
Memorization	75



The Lord is My Light & My Salvation

The Lord is my Light and my Salvation (Psalm 27:1)

God willing, this will be the theme of the 2024 Mahragan of St. Mark. This is the first verse of the 27th Psalm of our teacher David the prophet, who wrote it while he was in distress due to the persecution he endured by king Saul. Despite this, David was filled with **light** and hope this is because. The Lord brought forth **salvation** to David's life, saving him from Saul multiple times.

He who has God as his Light, sees God's strength. That includes watching how God saves him/her from the fears and sorrows of this world, as well as from his/her sins. This Psalm declares that God is our Light, our Salvation, and the Fortress of our lives. He saves the believer from his spiritual enemies; thus, his inner eyes behold the heavenly glories. Therefore, it is a Psalm of trust, of victory, as the Lord is our Light and our Salvation.

We will focus on three important principles moving forward:

1. ***The Lord***
2. ***The Lord is my Light***
3. ***The Lord is my Salvation***



First: Who is the Lord?

We believe in **One God of Three Hypostases**, The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. Meaning, the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, not three gods, but One God. This is our Orthodox faith in the Holy Trinity.

God declared to us that He is One God of Three Hypostases in the Holy Bible (Old and New Testaments - Numbers 6:4, 1 John 5:7). That is, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in Essence, but the Father is not the Son, nor the Holy Spirit. To each Hypostasis belongs a certain characteristic differentiating Him from the Other.



The characteristic differs according to the Hypostasis:

The **Father** is the *Origin*.

The **Son** is *Begotten of the Father*.

The **Holy Spirit** *Proceeds forth from the Father*.

These faithful truths are the teachings of our Coptic Orthodox Church about the Holy Trinity. May the Lord grant us His grace so that we may always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks us a reason for the hope that is in us.

- *"No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared him." (John 1:18).*
- *"Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16).*

Some believe in God Who lives in heaven, others refuse the existence of God, they deny Him because of the **darkness that has blinded** their poor hearts! Our faith in the Incarnation is the solution to all of man's problems. Through the Incarnation, our Omnipotent, loving God, our Wise Teacher, came down to enlighten man's way, to save him from the filth of sin, and ascend him into the eternal heavens. Thus, let us understand Who God is;

God is eternal, immortal and everlasting:

"Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." (Psalm 90:2)

God alone is **eternal – without beginning** and **immortal – without end**. No other being is eternal and immortal because all of God's creation has a beginning and an end. Everything begins the day it is created, when it is founded or born, before which time it **never existed**. This entire universe and everything in it were created, nothing in it is immortal, but God differs from all these,

- *"I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth. When there were no depths, I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth." (Proverbs 8:23-25)*
- *"But You are the same, And Your years will have no end." (Psalm 102:27)*



THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

God is the Creator:

He alone created all things, bringing them forth from non-existence. God created the entire universe with the Word of His Mouth, *"God spoke, and it came about."* Not only did God create material, but He also created the spirit and mind. He created the angels, who are spirits. He created life! As the Creator, He Alone gives life to the spirits He created. **In His Hands are life and death.**

- *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* (Genesis 1:1)

God created all nature and He has the power to annihilate it.

Thus, let us examine the creation from the beginning. God created the heavens, earth, sun, moon, stars, plants, animals, and mankind. This all happened in the past, when God created the heavens and the earth, and everything in it. He who denies God's existence is blind & cannot see.

God brings things into existence:

One of the characteristics of God is that **He alone can bring things into existence.** Thus, it is necessary that He exists. Nothing can come into existence on its own, only God can bring it into existence. God is the essential cause of all that exists. No being, other than God is described as one who brings things into existence, *"For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,"* (John 5:26)

God is limitless and His power is unlimited:

God is limitless, He cannot be contained or limited by time or space: **He exists at all times and everywhere, in heaven, on earth, and all in between.** He is everywhere, no space can hold Him or limit Him. He is ever present, God is all in all. St. Paul speaks of God as *"... Him who fills all in all."* (Ephesians 1:23). God fills all generations, all that have come before and all that come after. He is completely limitless in all things and can do all things. Nothing is like Him in this characteristic, no angel, nor human. *"Then Jacob said to Joseph: "God Almighty" (Genesis 48:3)*





THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

God knows all things - He is Omniscient:

God Alone knows all things of all things, at all times and in every place. He Alone knows all things before they occur – He knows the future, things unknown; He knows the intricacies of all things seen and unseen; He knows the past, present, future; His knowledge of all things is complete, whole, & present; **all things appear before Him simultaneously!** *“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13)*

God is Almighty - He is the Pantocrator:

It is **impossible** that anything should happen in the universe, big or small **without God's permission**. All things that occur in the universe are according to God's plan, His economy, we are told that even *“the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Mathew 10:30)*

God does not change:

God's ways and judgments are steady, as they are, they do not change, He is described as *“The Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” (James 1:17).* **God never changes at all.** God does not increase because there is no increase to Him because **He is infinite**. God is perfect in everything; **He does not lack anything** as deficiency is incompatible with His Divinity. **He does not change** because there is nothing beyond what God is.

God is all Holy:

God's holiness – is **His infallibility**, the impossibility of error. That is absolute Holiness. Infallibility is a word made up of 3 parts – ‘in’ – *negates the ‘ability’ to ‘fall’ - impossible to fall*. This absolute infallibility, infinite holiness, is found in none other than God Alone. We are told by Samuel the prophet that *“No one is holy like the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:2).* This is one of the most important pieces of evidence that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is the Logos appearing in the Flesh, because He was, He *“who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21)*, and He challenged the Jews, saying, *“Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46)*





God was incarnate for our Redemption:

Some say that it is unacceptable to attribute the incarnation to God, but the truth is that the Incarnation:

- Does not contradict the **Holiness of God**.
- Does not conflict with **God's power**.
- Does not conflict with **God's wisdom**.
- Does not conflict with **God's honor**.



The incarnation is the **fulfilment** of God's promise of salvation, which our fathers prophesied in the Old Testament, and which God promised us through the Redeemer.

- *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14)*
- *"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)*

Redemption was necessary and the redeemer must meet the following specifications:

1. He must be a **human being**, to represent fallen humanity.
2. He must **die** because the wage of sin is death.
3. He must be **infinite**, because Adam's sin is infinite, as it was directed to God.
4. The Redeemer must be **infinite** that He may redeem all of humanity across the ages.
5. The Redeemer must be **sinless**, he who lacks something cannot give it.
6. The Redeemer must be the **Creator**, that He may recreate humankind.

The only one who can meet all these specifications is **God Alone**, Who can become Incarnate and take the form of a man susceptible to death, He is infinite, Holy, without sin, the Creator Who is able to renew humankind and restore him to his original form.

The Living God, Who does not die:

He is the Living One. Can Life die? God forbid, for He said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."* (John 11:25) After His death in the flesh, on our behalf, and His Redemption on the Cross, God Arose by Himself, He arose not to die, never to die again, as He is God, *"who lives forever and ever"* (Revelation 4:9, 10:6, 15:7)



THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

God Who abides in us:

- Immanuel = God is with us
- Christian = God in us

This is a mighty transformation for humanity from the most powerful God, Who lives in the highest heaven, Who came down to us in the form of **'Immanuel'** – He is God Who came down, Who is with us, *'who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.'* (Philippians 2:6-7) After this came another transformation, **Immanuel abides in us!** This is the essence of Christianity. The Spirit of God lives in us, and **we have become holy temples** in which the Holy Spirit dwells *"which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27).

The Lord is my Light

God is the True Light; He is the Source of light:

"God Who is Light, and abides in light, Who is praised by the angels of light, The Light shone from Mary" (Monday Theotokia part 9). **God is light, the Creator and source of light**, let us break this down further:

God is the Light: He is the One Who said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life."* (John 8:12) St. John says it again in Revelation saying: *"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."* (1 John 1:5) It was said of the Lord Jesus Christ when He appeared to St. John, *"and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength."* (Revelation 1:16) In the Morning Prayer litany, we proclaim, "O the True Light, Who enlightens every man coming into the world... As the daylight shines upon us, O Christ Our God, the true Light, let the luminous senses and the bright thoughts shine within us "God is the *"Father of light"* (James 1:17), and abides in light *"dwelling in unapproachable light"* (1 Timothy 6:16).

God is the Source of light: He created light when He said, *"Let there be light"; and there was light. "And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness."* (Genesis 1:3-4).

- This was **God's first work for the sake of humankind**, through which they may be able to see, perceive, and take pleasure in what the Loving God had bestowed upon them.



THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

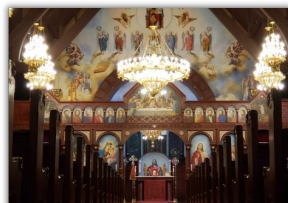
WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

The Church teaches to walk in this Godly light through:

1. The teachings of the Holy Bible:

Our Holy Bible with both of its Testaments, is the **word of God, His commandments and promises**, written by the **inspiration of the Holy Spirit, living words**, received by us through Tradition. Let us memorize It and keep Its commandments as *"The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;"* (Psalm 19:8). *"For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life"* (Proverbs 6:23).

That we may be able to distinguish between the dung and the fat, as the Lord Jesus Christ commanded us, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:16), *"Then Jesus said to them, 'A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.'"* (John 12:35)



2. The Church and its liturgies:

The **Church is a holy, traditional beacon**, resembling the heavens with its stars and angels. It will continuously be a beacon with many lights, like heaven on earth, a reference to the presence of God dwelling in light; *He is the glory and splendor of the Church*. As the lighthouse gives light to all, the Church gives light, especially when reading from the Divine Book; the heavens are never dark, *"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."* (Revelation 21:3), Some examples of this are seen in our liturgical prayers:

The Prayers of Holy Baptism: The Sacrament of enlightenment; when we are **baptized**, we are **enlightened**; and when we are enlightened, we **become the children of God**; and when we become children of God, we **become perfected through Him**.

The father, the priest prays for the baptized, saying, *"Invite Your servants to Your pure light... open the eyes of their hearts, that they may be enlightened by the Gospel of Your Kingdom ... make them pure vessels, children of Light."*





THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

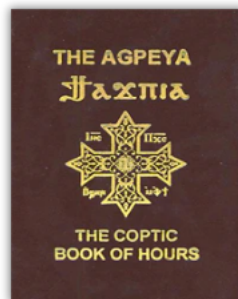
WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

During the Fraction prayers of the Divine Liturgy:

- “God, the begetter of light, and creator of life ... Who **raised us** from the depths to the light ... Who **changed our darkness** of our straying to **become light** through the coming of Your Only Begotten Son in the Flesh...”
- “You are a merciful God, Who gave unto us sinners **Light**”
- “O You Who opened the eyes of the blind, *open the eyes of our hearts*”

In the prayers of the Agpeya:

- During the *Absolution of the Morning Prayer*, we entreat, saying, “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”.
- In the *Absolution of the Midnight Prayer*: “O Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, the Living and Eternal Son of God, *enlighten our minds* to understand Your life-giving words. Raise us up from the darkness of sin which ruins the soul.”



In the glorious history of the Church: The history of the church is also a beacon of light for us throughout the ages. The inheritance of the Fathers – the canons, dogmas, and doctrines - laid out by the Ecumenical Councils may never be changed nor dismissed. The lives and saying of our great Fathers, and their interpretations of the Holy Bible are lights and lamps along the way to Eternal Life. Therefore, the Coptic Orthodox Church struggles to keep the **One True Upright Faith**, the right teachings and the well-established doctrines as we received them from the great Fathers such as St. Pope Athanasius, St. Cyril the Great, St. Dionisius and many others.



In the illuminated lives of the saints:

The Lord Jesus Christ came to enlighten the world, He gave unto His disciples that they may reflect His light, as the moon reflects the light of the sun, and He commanded us to live the life of holiness saying: *"Be holy, for I am holy."* (1 Peter 1:16). Thus, the Church is filled with **saints who are for us lights**, and we read their biographies daily in the **Synaxarion**.

During Holy week, we conclude the reading of the holy Fathers by saying, "Let us conclude the homily of our Father, saint... who **enlightened our hearts and minds** by his beneficial teachings." We use their stories and teachings to walk on their path, in obedience to the command to: *"Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct."* (Hebrews 13:7)

In the lives of the righteous:

The Tasbeha begins: "Arise, children of Light to praise the Lord of hosts" additionally, St. Paul speaks to us saying *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light"* (Ephesians 5:8). This is told to us as a sign of the light which shines from the believer in his talk, his walk, his peace, his actions, and in everything he does. The **light of Christ** shines through the believer, defeating the evil of darkness, attracting those around him. We must be lights shining in the world because the Light of Christ has shone upon us, and we reflect His light as the moon reflects the light of the sun. This is through the dwelling and stability of the light of God within us, so Jesus Christ gave an example of his bride to be **pure as the sun** (Song of Solomon 6:10).

In the light of Eternal Life:

Eternal life with God is full of light! The first thing mentioned in the Holy Bible is God creating light on the first day. The Holy Bible also ends by mentioning the Heavenly Jerusalem full of Light saying, *"The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light."* (Revelation 21:23). And in the resurrection, **the righteous will arise** in their enlightened, spiritual, heavenly, holy bodies unto eternal life with Christ and the saints.

Let us give thanks to the Lord, **Who has made us light unto the world**, as He abides in us and shines through us through His Divine Image. He is able to enlighten our lives internally, and lead our way to His Kingdom.



The Lord is my Salvation:

1. What is the meaning of "my Salvation"?

In our Coptic Orthodox understanding, the meaning of Salvation is found in the Holy Bible and the teachings of the Fathers:

- a. Man sinned and transgressed God's commandment; **the punishment of which is death**. Therefore, man and his sons; all *of humankind was penalized with death and human nature was corrupted*. Thus, mankind was in great need of a Savior so that we may return to Paradise, to live with God.

This Salvation continues throughout one's entire life. It begins in the church by the partaking of the Sacraments – Baptism, Chrismation, the Eucharist, **being perfected by Repentance & Confession**, and concluded by the changing of the body into a spiritual, heavenly body. This is why we refuse the saying, "I've been saved" and the concept of 'salvation in a moment', not for the sake of arguing about doctrines, but because **this is very distant from the work of Salvation**.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda said, in The Heresy of Salvation in a Moment, "You, my brother were in Adam when he sinned and when he was punished, and when death entered into him, so you inherited all of these from him, and as a part of him, you received through him the judgement of death, and sin entered into your nature. Therefore **you lost your image of God**, thus you became in need of salvation from this original, ancestral sin, and from all of its ramifications, and these, its punishments, of which our teacher St. Paul said, "Therefore, as *through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.*" (Romans 5:18)





THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

The penalty of sin means **we are in need of our Lord Jesus Christ**, Who saves us from:

- The **original, ancestral sin**, which we inherited from our father Adam and our mother Eve
- The **corruption of human nature** which became inclined to sinning after the fall
- **The 4 deaths:**
 - The **death of the body**, through the **resurrection from the dead**
 - The **spiritual death**, by entering into a relationship with Him and **He abides in us**
 - **Eternal death** when we become His children and **partakers of His divine nature**
 - **Everlasting death**, by **entering the Heavenly Kingdom**
- **Personal sins**, which have sway over us because of our frequent falls, the sins of thought, feelings, flesh, relationships, etc. *"In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)
- **The sorrows and burdens of this world** by the work of His Holy Spirit that dwells in us, as He promised saying *"In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33).
- **Our sins of the weak flesh** (which falls even unto the last breath) by the power of the resurrection, unto a glorious body full of light.
- The **devil's temptations and the deceit of the enemy of good** which lead to our perishing. Thus, we are assured that *"the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly."* (Romans 16:20)

Pillars of Salvation (How we are saved):

- Upon the Birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior was born. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Redeemer and the ransom at the same time. There is no Salvation without redemption and no redemption without the Incarnation and no Incarnation without birth!
- The Lord Jesus Christ provided the salvation, which is sufficient for all sinners, all over the world, for all ages, but not everyone was saved. Everyone who believes in Him will be saved, but to obtain Salvation the following conditions must be met:
 - **Faith in Jesus Christ** the Only Savior: Our teacher St. Peter said, *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12) Additionally, St. John tells us *"that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16).



- During the Annunciation of the Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ it was said, "... *she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*" (Mathew 1:21). when the angels announced His Birth they said, "*For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*" (Luke 2:12)
- Therefore, we **cannot be saved** from our sins **by just believing in the existence of God**, even Akhenaten (one of the old Pharaohs) believed in God's existence. Salvation is achieved when we believe that our Great God was Incarnate in the form of a human from the Holy Virgin Mary, was crucified on the cross, died and rose for our salvation, then He ascended with His Body of Light to heaven, and sent to us the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and He founded the Holy Church for us, and established in her the salvific Sacraments, **without which there is no salvation for mankind.**
- The Holy Bible clarifies that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is essential for salvation when it teaches us that, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him** should not perish but have everlasting life.*" (John 3:16) and "***He who believes** and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*" (Mark 16:16) and "*Who is he who overcomes the world, but **he who believes** that Jesus is the Son of God?*" (1 John 5:5)





Practicing the Holy Sacraments:

- The Sacrament of **Baptism**: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5) "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)
- The Sacrament of **Chrismation**: "But you have an anointing from the Holy One," (1 John 2:20) that we may be **holy temples indwelt by the Holy Spirit**.
- The Sacrament of **Repentance and Confession**: "He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'" (John 20:22-23)

The Sacrament of **Holy Communion**: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." (John 6:56)

The aforementioned four Sacraments are necessary for salvation

- The Sacrament of the **Unction of the Sick**: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." (John 5:14-15)
- The Sacrament of **Holy Matrimony**: Holy marriage is unity between **one man and one woman** (as God ordained) in purity and chastity throughout life. One of the goals of marriage is to establish a family. This is a Holy Sacrament, as the Holy Spirit comes upon the bride and groom and unites them, then they become one heart and one flesh. Since the beginning, God created Eve for Adam as "a helper comparable to him." (Genesis 2:18)
 - the Holy Bible says of marriage, "this is a **great mystery**" (Ephesians 5:32). Our Church teaches us the life of purity, therefore we refuse gay (homosexual) marriage, which is contrary to the Holy Bible.
- The Sacrament of the **Priesthood**: Priests are the **servants of the mystery of salvation**. The Church appoints them to shepherd, teach and carry out the Holy Sacraments.
 - "A bishop then must be **blameless** ...hospitable, able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2)
 - "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this **you will save both yourself and those who hear you**." (1 Tim. 4:16)
 - "Let a man so consider us, as **servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God**." (1 Corinthians 4:1)





◦ Good works:

- Faith, without works is **insufficient**. In fact, *"faith without works is **dead**"* (James 2:20), *"But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.**"* (James 2:18)
- *"For **we are His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."* (Ephesians 2:10)
- Righteous works are essential to salvation because they **demonstrate the sincerity of the true faith, as a fruit from fruit.**

◦ Transfiguration of the body:

- These bodies with which we live on earth were tainted by sin, which causes us to transgress. The Christian struggles not to sin, but because of this body of sin by which we live, he is weak; but he quickly rises in regret and returns with repentance, being faithful in confession. Thus, he says to sin, *"**Do not rejoice over me, my enemy;** When I fall, I will arise; When I sit in darkness, The Lord will be a light to me."* (Micah 7:8)
- As long as we are **in the body of sin**, which is liable to fall, disease, and death, **our salvation will not be complete**. We must put off this body of dust, of humiliation & weakness, and put on the luminous, heavenly, glorious body, which is not liable to disease, nor fall, nor death. So, we get rid of this body of sin in the resurrection, the second coming, because we are going to be raised in new celestial bodies, heavenly, luminous, glorious bodies which will be as the Lord Jesus Christ's body, with which He rose from the dead.
 - **'trans' = change** and **'figure' = form.**
 - The form of our body will change into that exactly of the Lord's luminous, spiritual body. This is the body with which we will ascend when the Lord Jesus Christ comes in His Second Glorious Appearing to take us on the clouds. Our teacher St. Paul tells us of this saying *"For **our citizenship is in heaven**, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."* (Philippians 3:20-21) He continues saying *"And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also **bear the image of the heavenly Man.**"* (1 Corinthians 15:49)



THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

To recap, the 4 Pillars of Salvation are:

- [Faith in Christ](#): Let us live to Him with His Incarnation and His Redemption for us .
- [The Holy Sacraments](#): Let us practice them faithfully so that they make us holy.
- [Good works](#): As evidence and fruit of the truth of our faith.
- [The transfiguration of the body](#): Which the Lord will grant us in His Second Coming.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Light of our lives and the Savior of our souls. He gives us strength, hope, comfort, peace; He establishes us therefore:

- We must **never be afraid** of tribulations, no matter what. Throughout the ages, the Church has struggled against warfare, people who caused doubts, various deviations against the faith and doctrine. All these disappeared and **the Church remains strong**, unique, one, holy, established, a beacon of light for the world, a shining sun, a terrible army – from which all the devils tremble, *"and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."* (Matthew 16:18).
- We are not afraid because **we are united with the Lord internally** through partaking of **Holy Communion**, we abide in Him and He in us. Through this union we receive God's grace, Who comforts us and grants us peace, destroying the deception of evil, and lighting our way.
- We are not afraid because **we are the children of God**: *"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God"* (Romans 8:14). He gives us the **power of His cross**, victory, and supremacy and therefore we boast in Him the power of God for our salvation and this is the faith of all the righteous martyrs of the Church over the ages and what the world has seen in the scene of the martyrdom such as the 21 martyrs of Libya. Let us not be afraid because **we hope in eternal life**. *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."* (Revelation 3:21)

May the Lord grant this Mahragan to be fulfilling for our souls, spiritually edifying, and filled with peace that we may become fruitful branches in God's vineyard. May He fill our lives with His goodness so that we may live for Him and be faithful witness to His Holy Name daily.





THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"





The First Epistle of St. John

The Purpose of the Letter:

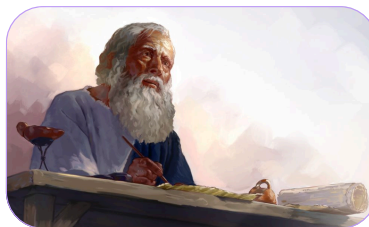
As the first century came to an end and the second century began, some heresies appeared which claimed that the Lord Jesus Christ did not have a true body, but His body was an imagination, because **they believed that material things are evil** so God must not take a body. This is the **heresy of Docetism**. These ideas destroy how humanity looks at material things and the body. St. John wrote this epistle to dispel these ideas.

St. John the Beloved was the last of the holy apostles who lived on the earth. Here he witnesses to the everlasting God who took our body in the fullness of time Whom he saw, heard, touched with the rest of the disciples and the multitudes. **He's an eyewitness** to the Lord Jesus Christ's incarnation, His teachings, His redemption, thus the opening verses of his letter are very powerful as they come from a trusted source whose teachings are correct because he learned them from God, Who humbled Himself and became man to come near unto us in simplicity to teach us His love and bring us back to Him.

Chapter 1

Witnessing to the Lord Jesus Christ (verses 1 to 4):

- Our Lord is the living Word of God and the fountain of life for all humanity.
- He gives life to the creation and renews that which had been corrupted and died.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ came so that we may have spiritual and eternal life.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ took flesh to be united with us so that he may give us life.
 - **"Life was manifested"**: St. John here references the fact that Christ, who is life, appeared in the flesh and we saw Him. The Lord Jesus Christ appeared, took flesh so that we may enjoy the life which He brought unto us. The Son took flesh so that we may see Him and understand that He is life unto our souls and our Savior from spiritual death. He took our bodies to be united with us and give us His eternal life.
 - The goal of the gospel and unity with God is **perfect joy**, that we may be saved from the power of sin and death and rejoice in a continuous relationship with God in this life and forever.





Senses:

What is the difference between hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching? Was it only Saint John, the Beloved, who experienced The Lord Jesus Christ, while He lived on Earth? **Is it possible for us also to touch Him after He ascended to Heaven?**

1. *"We have heard, we have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled."*

a. Saint John's knowledge is experiential, it comes from living with the Lord Jesus Christ for three and a half years. What Saint John means is the Lord Jesus Christ truly took flesh. Especially as he said, *"And our hands have handled."* So that he may **rebut the heretics who said that the body of the Lord Jesus Christ was an imagination**. Saint John's apologetic answer to this was that the body of the Lord Jesus Christ was a **true body**, like our bodies exactly **without sin alone**.

2. *"We have seen and bear witness and declare to you that eternal life."*

a. Everyone who experiences the eternal life of the Lord Jesus Christ, wishes to declare it to all, so that all may experience and live this eternal life. This is what the letter is about. Every day, think about the love the Lord Jesus Christ has for you. Converse with Him and enjoy your relationship with Him. He alone is the **source of life** and **joy** in this world. *He is close to you*, and He wishes to be united with you in His holy sacraments. *He lives in you*. And moves you into love for Him. He **embraces your life, comforts your heart, and supports you** in all your steps.



3. *"That you also may have fellowship with us."*

a. The word **'fellowship'** means friendship, love, unity, all leading to **one goal, Love**. God created Adam first, and from him he made Eve, and from them came the children. The meaning of Adam being first is that Eve and her children came from Adam. They were in Adam, and Adam was in the Son, and the Son was in the Father. What **Adam failed** to do, the **Lord Jesus Christ took flesh to accomplish**, to return the creation to the state the Father willed from the beginning. Adam and Eve and their children were supposed to be in unity of love, but sin entered in and corrupted the creation. The Lord Jesus Christ came to **reestablish this unity**, this fellowship among us human beings and with Him. He is the new Head to this body; thus, **He is the second Adam**.



4. "And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

- a. St. John writes to us all, all who read this letter, so that we may have fellowship with the Father and the Son. It's **impossible to rejoice** in the fruits of this fellowship, which is perfect joy, **outside of the church**. In church we are **born again** through water and the Spirit, and in it we **confess**, and in it we **pray the Holy Liturgy**, where we are united with the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ in **Holy Communion**.

Summary: Without the Lord Jesus Christ, life is boring. Thus, people invent things, which after a while lose their luster and become boring. But the life of the Lord Jesus Christ has a different taste. Even suffering with the Lord Jesus Christ has a different taste. *Fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ is beautiful in its joys and in its sorrows.*

We are one body. Your gift is different than mine. Your personality differs than mine. The church is made perfect as the members of the body act in unity. I cannot live without you, and you cannot live without me. This is the meaning of fellowship and the perfection of the one body.



"That your joy may be full"

- What do you need for your joy to be full, for no sadness to be found in you? You must have fellowship with all people. **There is no perfect joy if there is no love.** **Love God** first, then **love each person**, even our enemies, for he who loves God will love every human being. There are two conditions for our joy to be full;
 - Fellowship with **others**: love for one another.
 - Fellowship with **God**: abiding in him.
- How can we have fellowship with God?
 - We must ask God in all matters of our lives, small or great. This happens through prayer, faith, and an understanding that He is with us in all things and without Him we cannot do anything. There are two ways to face problems:
 - We can **think about solutions**, but if they don't happen, we'll be depressed.
 - **Pray and ask God's guidance.** This will help us rejoice because He who lifts up his heart, trusting in God's fatherhood will hear from God "do not be afraid my son, I am with you." Thus, we will be comforted even before the problem is solved.

Fellowship with God is light (verses 5-7):

If we are to have fellowship with God, we must know the following:

- *Who is the One with Whom we are united with in fellowship? What is His nature?*
 - The first revelation of God is that **He is Light** and in Him there is no darkness at all. Light refers to **perfect righteousness** and **perfect knowledge**. Thus, Light is perfect wisdom. Through Christ who is the True Light, we have received the Holy Spirit Who has descended upon us. Through the Holy Spirit we know the truth. Through Christ who is Light, we know the Father and have seen Him. The Lord Jesus Christ is the True Light who was Born of the Father, **Light of Light**.
 - Darkness refers to sin. He who is in spiritual darkness, living in sin, cannot see God nor know Him and understand the truth, neither does he see himself. We are darkness but *when we come near to God, are enlightened by Him and as we abide in Him, we become lights*. David the Psalmist tells us that "They looked to him and were radiant." (Psalm 34:5).
- *What conditions are set upon us to enter into this fellowship?*
 - The conditions to this fellowship are **walking in the light**. Those who walk in the light will have true perfect joy. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."



- These words St. John the Beloved used to rebut the Gnostics who are **concerned only with knowledge**, not with ways of righteousness, claiming that the body will be discarded, and the works of the body have no importance.
- *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him,"*
 - to have fellowship with Him our old sinful nature must change. And this must be apparent in our lives and in our daily actions. **Truth is not just mental knowledge**, but a *life lived through the life of Christ in him*.
 - The first step is to stay away from anything evil, or anything even resembling evil, because there is no fellowship between light and darkness. If we fall, let us repent immediately and confess, *"and the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us."*
 - Notice that the word **"Blood"** points to:
 - The fact that Christ has a **true body**.
 - The **truth of the sufferings** of the Lord Jesus Christ and His death.
 - The fact that **the Blood of Jesus Christ purifies, cleanses, covers us, forgives us, makes us holy and washes us**.





God offers us forgiveness (Verses 8-10):

1. *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."*

a. He who walks in the Light sees his faults and sins and cannot deny them.

Because we are in the body, we are weak, and we fall. So, he who says he is without sin does not live in the light nor abide in it. But for he in whom dwells the Holy Spirit, **the Spirit of Truth will enlighten and guide him to see his sins inside of him.** This is a sign that the Holy Spirit abides in us, that we see our sins and are grieved by them. This is like someone who turns on the light in a dark, dirty place, and sees all the bugs and is disgusted.

i. *We deceive ourselves.*

1. He who says he is without sin either lies or is blind. The truth is that **there is no one without sin.** A sick person who says he is whole and doesn't go to the physician deceives himself and dies.

ii. *God knows our weaknesses*

1. Therefore, He gave us the solution to receive forgiveness of our sins through the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession. It is for our purification from our sins. Notice that **purification in verse 7 is in the present tense. It's ongoing.** The Lord Jesus Christ does not purify us one time only. His work in us is for our continuous purification and holiness. He forgives our past sins and purifies us in the present and sanctifies our future.

2. He who does not confess his sins not only deprives himself from the forgiveness of God, but **he is deceived** and **strays from the truth** and even **calls God a liar** because the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified to take away the sins of the world. So, someone who says he is without sin declares that the Redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ was unnecessary and calls God a liar because He calls us to repentance.





Chapter 2

Christ, the Intercessor, abiding in Him (verses 1 to 6):

- In the first chapter, St. John said, *"the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin."* (1 John 1:7).
 - Here he says, don't think that this is a ticket to sin. **Do not be careless with sin.** If someone sins, he must not continue in the sin, but arise immediately through repentance and confession. The apostle warns us about taking advantage of the doctrine of salvation through the Blood of Jesus Christ. We must not be careless and say, let us sin, and the Lord will forgive us and cover us through His Blood. **We must struggle not to sin.**
- *"We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus."*
 - Here St. John comforts us, so we don't despair as the Lord Jesus Christ intercedes for us with the Father. The word "Intercessor" or "advocate" in Greek is **Paraclete**, which has two meanings:
 - intercessor, mediator, lawyer.
 - Comforter.

If we're talking about the **Lord Jesus Christ**, it is interpreted as **mediator or intercessor**.

If we're talking about the **Holy Spirit**, it is interpreted as **comforter**.

- "Jesus" means *Savior*. He came through His love for us to make us holy, righteous, and save us. We also call our Lord Jesus Christ the "*Messiah*" for He was anointed for the sake of our salvation. Additionally, Our Lord Jesus Christ is "*Righteous*": for if He was not righteous, how would He die for others? If He had sin, then He died for His own sin, not for ours.
- The Father looks at us in the person of His Righteous Son. **As long as we abide in Him**, He sees us **righteous, without blemish**, even **perfect**. Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ commands us, *"abide in me,"* (John 15:4). We abide in Him if we don't sin or if we quickly arise from our sins in repentance and confession; the Lord intercedes for us, and our sins are forgiven.

The Salvation Our Lord Jesus Christ gives us also gives us, in addition to forgiveness, means by which the Lord Jesus Christ strengthens us so that we may **abide in righteousness and do good works**, which the Holy Spirit convicts us to do.

- *"We have an advocate."* Notice how St. John includes himself in this because **there is no one without sin**. The Blood of Jesus Christ, Who is Uncircumscribed, has the unlimited power to forgive the sins of everyone who comes to Him and believes in Him in every age and place.



The love of Christ is the way to keep the commandments:

- Knowledge is not just superficial knowledge, like someone knowing another person. But **true knowledge is unity with Christ**. He gives us His life. If we are united with Him, we know Him internally through this unity. This, of course, is much more powerful than any external knowledge. This allows us to know Him in truth, and he who knows Him naturally loves Him, as He deserves all our love. **The sign of this love is obeying His commandments**. Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ said, *"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."* (John 15:10).
- Everyone who keeps the commandments **abides in Christ**. And he who abides in Christ is filled with the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are filled with power and grace to obey the commandments. *"The love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."* (Romans 5:5). Thus, love grows and the commandment is made easy to follow.

Keeping the commandments is easier for;

- he who **knows Christ** and **loves Him**,
- he who **struggles** to keep the commandments, **believing and trusting** in the promise of the Christ, that He will fill us with strength and grace.

"But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in Him."

- How could the love of God be perfected? Does it lack anything? **Absolutely not**. The love of God is perfect **but not all accept it**. An example is the telephone company sending out continuous airwaves. For this work to be complete, there must be a telephone in good condition to accept these waves and transform them to sound.
- The love of God is perfected when I:
 - **Understand** how much God loves me.
 - Turn that understanding into a **fiery love in the heart**.
- How do we know that we abide in Him?
 - If *our love grows and our eagerness to perform His commandments grows*.
 - He who abides in Christ, has the life of Christ. This is the life that Christ walked in, and we should walk in it, too. We must cleave unto Christ. Let us continually ask ourselves, *what would He do if He was in my condition?* If you walk as Christ walked, you will abide in Him. When we abide in Him the Lord will give us strength to obey the commandments which is the work of grace.





Loving the Brethren (Vs 7-11):

- Our teacher Saint John the Apostle teaches us that the old and the new commandment is the **commandment of love**.
 - It is old in that man knew this from ancient times. The Holy Bible can be summarized in two commandments: *love the Lord your God* and *love your neighbor*.
 - It is new for the following reason: This love is not possible *except through the Holy Spirit Who pours out God's love in our hearts (Romans 5:5)*. It is a **sacrificial love** as like that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us, "A new commandment I give you that you love one another; as I have loved you." (John 13:34). The new love that was poured out in the New Testament has granted us great power because the Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for sinners. **Love is not emotions and desires but sacrifice even for enemies who hate us.**

"You have heard from the beginning":

- This commandment was received through Moses (Deuteronomy 6:5).

"He who says he is in the light":

- Abiding in Christ and being united with Him means loving others, thus he who hates his brother, cannot truthfully be united with Christ. Because as **the Lord Jesus Christ is light, He is also love**. And **hatred is darkness**. How could one have light and darkness inside him at the same time?

"He who loves his brother":

- The word **brother also includes enemies**, those who are in enmity with me. He who loves all abides in Christ. **There's no unity in Christ except through loving the brethren**. For he who abides in the light, the light of Christ enlightens him, and he will not stumble in the way and will not make anyone stumble. This means:
 - **The person will not stumble** in the way, the light will make his path clear, his decisions will be correct, and he will grow spiritually.
 - **He will not make others stumble**. He who talks about love and does not live in it will make others stumble.





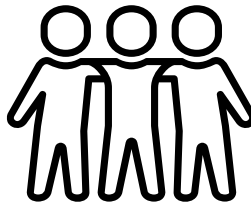
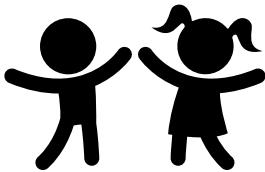
The commandment to the fathers and children (verses 12-14):

Here the apostle writes to three groups:

1. Little children, young in age.
2. Fathers, old in age.
3. Young men, those in their youth.

We can understand these as three stages of the spiritual life:

- **Children:** Beginners in the spiritual life, or beginners in the faith, who became children of God in baptism. In baptism, the sins are forgiven, those who are young in the faith are liable to sin. So, he talks to them about forgiveness of sins through repentance.
- **Fathers:** Those who have experience, depth, and manhood in the spiritual life, advanced in their faith. He speaks to them about the knowledge of Christ, that is, the experience of being united with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Young men:** Who have been in the faith and have some experience, they've experienced the power which God gives them, with which they are victorious over the evil one and his evil. And they're not weak, even though they're young, for God gives them power to overcome the wiles of the devil, to which they're exposed. They're strong because of this youth.



"Do not love the world" (verses 15 – 17):

- "Do not love the world."
 - This does not mean that we are not to love people, because this is against what the Holy Bible teaches us, nor not to love the beautiful nature which praises God and for which we praise God. This beautiful nature declares the glory of God.
- Rather it means;
 - The evil world does not know God, amidst its desires and wrongdoings.
 - **Do not love anyone more than God.** God created the world and everything in it so that we may use them, but he who is attached to these things in the world and becomes devoid of God's love is like a wife who is attached to the gifts and does not love her husband.



- God created the world so that ***we may use it, not worship it.*** The world should not be our goal, where we rejoice if we gain so much of it, become proud, and are upset if we lose. Those who love the world in such a manner do not have room in their heart to love God. As it is said, *"the love of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4).* No one can love the truth, God, and the deception of the world, at the same time, *"If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

Steadfastness in the Face of Heresies (Verses 18-29):

- *"Little children"*: Here, St. John addresses those who have been born in the church **on the foundation of the true faith**. It is important that we do not stray from the church.
 - This is the last hour: our end is near so let us not leave the true faith that we have received. The holy apostle knew from the Lord Jesus Christ that in the end the Antichrist will come, and deception will come therefore *he warns us against heresies which will appear at the end of the ages* as a sign that **the end is coming** and the Second Appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ
- *"They went out from us"*: refers to **those who were baptized** and living in the church
- *"but they were not of us"*: tells us of **those who were deceived** in their hearts and were not steadfast in Christ. But those who left the church for a time and returned in repentance they are of us, ***of the body of the church.***
- He encourages the believers that the Holy Spirit abides in us through the **anointing of the chrism – the Myron**, which we receive from God the Holy One. The Holy Spirit guides us and keeps us steadfast in the upright faith and exposes the deception of heresies so that we may not follow them but obey the teachings of the Holy Spirit.



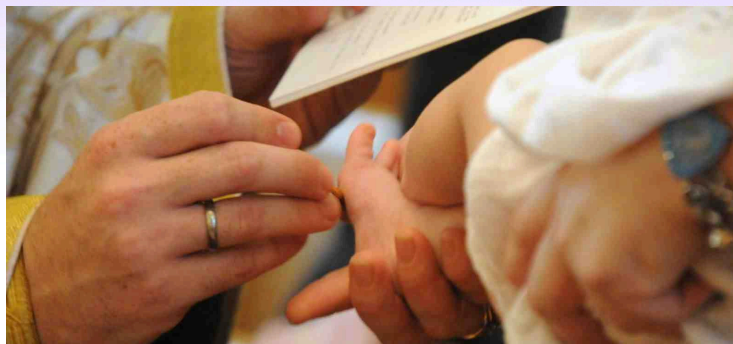


THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

- St. John the apostle says he's not accusing them of not knowing the truth.
 - They know the truth he writes to them so that they may remained steadfast and abide in the truth which they learned. **We don't need to look to new teachings from outside our church, we need the working of the Holy Spirit** Who gives us *discernment to refuse lies and deception* and helps us *accept the truth*.
- The apostle writes against the heresies of the first century which denied the truth of the Incarnation saying:
 - *These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you*
 - *"Who is a liar":* the liar is he who is against the truth, Christ. St. John speaks of the liar Satan who wants to abolish the mystery of the Incarnation because **this is the mystery of godliness without which there is no salvation**. He who brings himself under the power of Satan will speak lies; *he who abides in Christ knows the truth*.
- *"Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either":*
 - The Son is the glorious image of the Father. He who does not know the Son does not know the Father either. He Who denies that God the father gave His Only Son and sent Him to save humanity, he is the Anti-Christ.
 - He who **acknowledges that the Son is the Christ**, believes in Him and in His salvific work, is baptized, united to the Son, and **becomes a child of the Father**.
 - Some say we do not need Christ if we live a moral life and work honestly. This is what Satan encourages people to think, as he wishes to destroy their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not fight against those people because they are spiritually dead. He who does not have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ how can he have eternal life when Christ is life?! **Faith means abiding in God and rejoicing in His work in us**. Through abiding in faith, **we receive the promises of God**.
- When St. John says:
 - *"As you heard"* he references the *message of the gospel generation after generation*.
 - *"So, you will also abide"* he references *strengthening our foundation*.





The Holy Spirit teaches us and enlightens us

- The apostle reminds us of the Holy Spirit Who **abides in us through the Sacrament of Chrismation**. He teaches us the faith and helps us to abide in it. He gives us everything we need for the knowledge of Christ. Thus, we do not need new and strange, deceptive teachings like those spoken by the heretics, because **the anointing of the Holy Spirit is truth** and teaches us the truth, not the lies of the heretics.
- If the children abide in God, in His word, in His faith, they will rejoice in His coming and will be eager to receive Him, that they may rejoice with Him unto eternity. But those who do not abide, *"they will say to the mountains, Fall on us"* (Revelation 6:16).
 - *"When he appears"*: St. John here discusses the fact that we don't know when He is coming, thus we must always be ready.
 - *"He is righteous ... Everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him"*: St. John here refers to the fact that he who is born is like his father. We are born of Him in baptism. Through unity with His Son, we become His children. He who is united with Christ will have eternal life. The Lord Jesus Christ works His righteousness through His children. We are His instruments of righteousness, with which He works righteousness. He who does not abide in righteousness **grieves** the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). He who is weak **will be helped by** the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26).
 - Here he gives us the sign that we are abiding in Him: that **we work righteousness** as He works righteousness. The Lord Jesus Christ gives us the strength to abide in righteousness. He gives everyone who is baptized life, with which we live a life of righteousness; and so, the life of the righteous Christ lives in him. Therefore, one uses his members as instruments of righteousness because Christ is righteous and gives life to many.



Chapter 3:

- This chapter speaks of **two spiritual families** living in this world. One family belongs to God and the other one belongs to the devil. One has children for God and the other one has children for the devil; ***we must not falter between the two***. He who walks according to the children of God is truly a child of God. And the opposite is true. He who does the works of the devil is a child of the devil. Therefore, in every situation I must ask myself, is what I'm about to do **according to what the children of God do?** And how would the Lord act if He was in my place? Then according to what the Lord would do, I should do.
- *"The world does not know us"*: this means that the world does not accept how we act because it does not believe in God.
- *"Purifies himself"*: This verifies our part in the walk. Truly God helps us, but **He helps those who struggle**. And our struggle is one filled with hope in the glory that is to come, not the struggle of a despondent, hopeless person.

Sin can be committed in ignorance or knowledge. He who sins transgresses God's law and the Voice of the Holy Spirit inside of him. As long as we are in the flesh, we will sin. But the children of God struggle with all their might not to sin. And once, if they sin, they return quickly and repent and confess, **refusing to abide in sin.**

- *"Him"*: that is Christ Who appeared in the flesh and was united with us as He took upon himself a body, so that we may be united and abide in Him and not sin.

The following is a polemic against Gnostics: *"let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous."*

- We take the Lord's life as a branch that lives in us. As He is righteous, we must also live in righteousness. He who does good is righteous, as He is righteous. The death of the old man is not a final death. God gave us the resources of grace, and we must struggle. God does not take away our freedom of choice. As long as we are in the flesh, we are liable to fall. **But the children of God, if they fall, arise quickly.**





- *"Whoever has been born of God does not sin. He who sins has not seen him nor known him."*
 - Here we see a strong and clear relationship between **knowing** and **abiding**. Knowing means **unity with the Lord Jesus Christ, by which we abide** in His life. When he said, *"everyone who sins does not know him"*, this means he does not abide in Him; does not abide in the life which the Lord Jesus Christ gives. The Lord bids us to abide in Him.
- *"And cannot sin because he has been born of God":*
 - When our will is in agreement with God's will, an enormous amount of power is born in us, which enables us not to sin. Thus, we stop sinning, as we are graced by this power, which we have experienced many times, but we will fully experience it in the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - *What are the signs of the children of the devil?* He who does not do righteous works, nor love his brethren. Because God is righteous, and God is love. Thus, **His attributes are also found in His children**, that is, **righteousness** and **love**. The Lord Jesus Christ gave us life, he who abides in Him is a member of the Lord Jesus Christ by which He works righteousness. The sign of the children of God is **love** in the heart. The nature of God is love; thus, **His children are in His Image**. The children of the devil have hatred in their hearts.
- *"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer":*
 - If hatred is death, anyone who has hatred in **his heart is dead**. He has killed himself, judging himself worthy of death. As long as hatred abides in one's soul, that one is dead. He who murders does not have eternal life abiding in him.
- *"But whoever has this world's goods":*
 - Meaning he who is rich but does not have compassion in his heart, does not have the love of God abiding in him. The sign of true love is **exerting oneself in serving others**. What is required is practical love.
- *"We have confidence toward God":*
 - That is, we are **comforted**. Comforted over what? The children of God are always concerned with their salvation. This is the end-goal of our faith. Notice the devil is always complaining against us and telling us that we are rejected. Here the Apostle gives us a sign so that our hearts may be comforted: **The Holy Spirit Who abides in us**, who comforts our hearts and gives us love for all people. The Holy Spirit gives us the taste of the love of Christ firstly, then we're enabled to give to others what the Lord gave us.



-People can be afflicted by despair if they hear the above and ask, *do I **truly love** people or not? Have I **truly been delivered** from death to life or am I still living in death? How could we **comfort** our hearts when they prick us?*

- *"If our heart does not condemn us":* When one stands up to pray before God and is upset with someone else, the Holy Spirit convicts him if he has sinned. But if he has not sinned and the other one truly sinned against him, he would not be convicted inside of him. If this person is truly honest with God, he will force himself and **pray for the one who had sinned against him**. The Holy Spirit changes those ill feelings inside of him to love for the one who had sinned against him. This love is a gift from God, not something man can do on his own. It is the free grace which God gives.



Chapter 4

The Antichrist (verses 1-6):

In this chapter, we are encouraged to **take a stand against heresies**. As for our relationship to the Brethren, we must treat them with all love. In the first verse, the saint advises us to *"test the spirits"* to see if they are from God or false teachers who went out into the world. As we read the following verses, we will be able to discern the truth from the lie.

- *"Do not believe every spirit":* False teachers have their resources in **evil, deceptive spirits**. The holy apostle advises us not to follow or admire people. This can lead us into following heresies. Not everything we hear is correct.
- *"Test the spirits":* Test the words we hear and **compare them with what God said**, with what the Lord and his apostles said, the written word, and with what the Church teaches. We must not be deceived by philosophies and the pride of human rhetoric. The Holy Spirit testifies to us that the **Lord Jesus Christ is the Incarnate God** for our salvation. He takes from Christ and declares unto us. Through this, we learn Christ, His beauty and His fellowship of love.



Here St. John speaks of heresies that **deny the Incarnation**, but now we have tens, even hundreds of heresies. Let us beware. All of these heresies are against God. The apostle encourages them not to be disturbed by heresies. *"For He who is in you,"* that is the **Holy Spirit**, *"is greater than he who is in the world,"* that is the **devil, deception, and evil**. This is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ also did when He said, *"I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33). Even if heresies multiply, we should not be afraid because the Holy Spirit is in the Church and preserves it. Throughout the ages, the Church stood strong against every heresy. Until this very day, the church has been victorious.

- *"They are of the world,"*: That is, the deceived world, because they are moved by gain, materialism, pride, and desires.
- *"The world hears them"*: Their goals align with those of the world. The devil works in their hearts because **his desire is the division of the Church**. He who believes them will follow them and is not honest in asking for the true God.

Love of others (verses 7-11):

In verse 7, until the end of the chapter, the word **"love"** appears many times. How many times did it appear? the amount speaks to its importance.

- Notice St. John's phrase, *"God is love."* He didn't say God loves, because this would be a characteristic, but he said, **"God is love."** This means that in His nature, God is love. He is the fountain of love. There is no source of love besides God. The Father overflows love into the Son, His first beloved, and this is through the way of love that is the Holy Spirit. In baptism, we are born of God and are united to Christ. Thus, the **Holy Spirit pours out in us the love** that is poured out in the Son.
- *"If we love one another"*:
 - St. John says, "Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." *"And knows God"* means that **he is united with God** and has God's life, that is, love.
- *"He who does not love does not know God"*:
 - He who does not love has refused God's gifts and does not abide in God's love. He does not wish to abide in Him because **he does not work to be filled with the Holy Spirit** Who renews our nature.

If love is not found in us, **we have changed the seal** by which we are changed into God's image.

- Notice that love comes from God to those in whom the Holy Spirit abides. And love leads us to God. So, **he who accepts love from God comes closer to him**. This is a circle in which if one enters, he comes closer and closer to God.



- *"In this, the love of God was manifested toward us"*: through the Holy Spirit Who has been poured out on us from God. **Love is not seen** by these fleshy eyes, but it is **internal**.
- *"manifested"*: has **existed for eternity** and **was revealed**, appearing in a visual manner in the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has loved us for eternity. After the salvation, He sent the Holy Spirit unto us Who pours out the love of God in our hearts. He gave us:
 - To know and discover God's love for us.
 - To love God and love everyone.

How was the Holy Spirit poured out on us? How did God's love appear in us? God has sent His Only Begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. **The Holy Spirit has been poured out on us through the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ**, which was shed for us if we are united with the Son of God. Thus, Salvation and the Holy Spirit Who came upon us are the reasons for our life. As well as the recapitulation of the image of God in which He created us. The image of God is love because God is love.

- *"Live through Him"*: The Lord Jesus Christ is our life. **He who unites himself with Him is united to His life**. Life without Christ is depressing. But in Christ it is **peace and joy**. No matter what calamities and tribulations befall us.

It is **not us who began** to love God. But **God manifested His love first** when He sent His Son unto us. He loved us despite our sinfulness and our enmity against him. He loved us even though we do not deserve it because His nature is love.

Abiding in God's love (Verses 16 to 21):

- *"No one has seen God at any time"*: How, then can we declare Him unto people? And how can people love Him if they had not seen Him?
- *"If we love one another"*: the image of God appears in us, that is the image of love. That is love. Because God is love. When love appears in His children, **when His children love one another, people will see in us the image of God, and will love Him**, will be attracted to Him, and believe in Him. Love for God is not through the visual eyes. The Jews saw Him and crucified Him. But love is given to us by the Holy Spirit. This love grows in us but will not grow if we don't love the brethren. Love is poured out in the hearts of those who abide in Christ. Loving God means abiding in Him. And this love is perfected if we love one another. The heart who loves is enabled to see God.



- “He who abides in love abides in God, and God in him”: If we love one another He abides in us. In 1 John 3:24 Saint John also tells us that he who keeps the commandments of God abides in Christ, and Christ in him. The **most important commandment**, the summary of all commandments, is the commandment of **love**.
- “Love has been perfected among us in this”: We all are in the fellowship of His body, stones in the building. The Lord Jesus Christ was incarnated and offered unto us Salvation that He may restore us in unity as one body in which the members are united in love: with the **Lord Jesus Christ as the head of the body**. We are united in Him and have fellowship with one another in love. This is the meaning of love. It was God's desire from the beginning to become one with one another in Christ and in the Father, (John 17:20-23) And the Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfill this Divine purpose.

How can we know that we abide in Him? If the Holy Spirit dwells in us. When the Holy Spirit abides in us, we will be fruitful; the **first fruit is love**.

- **Chapter Notes;**
 - “**God was manifested** in the flesh.” (1 Timothy 3:16.)
 - “The **fear of the Lord** is the beginning of wisdom.” (Psalm 111:10)
 - “By this all we will know that you are my disciples, **if you have love for one another.**” (John 13:35)
 - “No one has seen God at any time. The Only Begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has declared Him.**” (John 1:18)





- *"And we have seen and testify"*: St. John saw the Lord Jesus Christ, heard Him, and touched Him. Thus, he said, we have seen. But this was not superficial. **Many saw** the Lord Jesus Christ and heard Him, **then crucified Him**. But St. John's seeing the Lord was through the Holy Spirit. Thus, he knew the truth of Christ. We also, through the Holy Spirit, are able to understand this faith, and teach the world about our teacher and:
 - about **judgment** and **eternal death**.
 - about **sin, fears, desires, our stubbornness, our old man**.
 - about the **grace** given to those who **live in righteousness** unto a renewed nature and eternal life.
- *"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God"*: Here we receive another condition for abiding in Christ. Firstly, **confession of love openly before all**; despite tribulations and distresses. A love that leads up to martyrdom for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ Who loved us. Faith and love must not abide only in the heart. Because *faith without works is dead*. So how can we say that we love the Lord and fear persecution or deny Him before men? In verse two, the apostle bids us to confess the manhood of Christ, that is, Christ came in the flesh. Here, he bids us to **confess His Divinity**. St. John speaks of the experiential knowledge; that is knowing Him and believing in Him, which is given by the Holy Spirit.
- *"Love has been perfected"*: Love grows. This is what it means **to be perfected, to grow in grace**. The love of Christ is perfect. HIS Love is perfected in those who accept it and live in it and struggle for its sake. Those **who struggle** will **feel love growing in their hearts**, day by day and **thus it is perfected**.
- *"... because as He is"*: God loves the world despite its evil and sent His Son to save us. Thus, we must also walk in love of God and the brethren, even if they hate us. We must be like God in love, in proportion to our spiritual degree, this we can be achieved through the Holy Spirit who abides in us if we set our hearts to it.
- *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love"*: Saint Anthony the Great said to his disciples, "I do not fear God." They said, this is a difficult saying, Father. He replied, because **"I love him, and perfect love casts out fear."**
- *"We love him because he first loved us"*: We love God and the brethren because **God first loved us when we were in our sins**; how do we give thanks for this?
 - We give back this love to God and to His children.



- *"If someone says I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"*: Love for brethren is the **proof of our love for God**. It's impossible to achieve love for God if we do not love the brethren whom we see. We must have compassion on them. **It's easier to develop a relationship to the seen** than to love someone that we cannot.
 - *"And this commandment we have from him that he who loves God must love his brother also."*

Chapter 5

Faith in Christ (verses 1-5):

- What made the apostle change from talking about love to talking about faith? He's trying to explain that **love is not something experienced by the natural man**. But it is **a gift of the Holy Spirit**. To the believer who was baptized, it is a gift that we receive by which we love God and people, even enemies. The love of enemies is not possible for the natural man. It is only given to believers who struggle.
 - Why did the apostle mention faith without mentioning baptism? Is it possible to achieve this new nature without becoming baptized, only believing?
 - *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments."*: As he has said before, **the sign that we love God is by loving the brethren**. Here he says that the sign that we are children of God is that we love God.
- *"And His commandments are not burdensome."* Why not? If we love God, we find that His commandments are easy because;
 - Love facilitates even difficult things. And we will do His commandments without murmuring. Obedience to the Word of God and His commandments is proof of love.
 - God does not command anything without giving the power to do it. **He works in me and through me**; He carries me and walks with me no matter how difficult things are.
 - Everything that the Lord Jesus Christ did in His flesh was **for us**.





THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

- Everyone who is born of God becomes a child of God; he loves His Father and trusts in Him. He trusts in everything He says that it is for his good and his redemption. He who believes and is baptized lives in Christ. Faith is the doorway to life and grace. Christ who abides in us says, *"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33). Christ who abides in us **gives us power to overcome**. This is what we call the grace that aids us in our struggle.
- What type of faith is required of us to be victorious? *"Jesus is the Son of God."* This is equivalent to, *"Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifested in the flesh."* (1 Timothy 3:16). That is faith in the **Mystery of the Incarnation**. That God came to the world and gave me life with which I live and am victorious. But this is not just didactic faith; it is practical faith, walking in the way of Christ beginning with the crucifixion, death, rising and abides in glory.

Witnessing to Christ (verses 6-10):

- *"This is He who came,"*: that is Jesus Christ, **"by water and blood."** This is different from the baptism of St. John the Baptist, which was only for repentance and only by water. Going into the water symbolized repentance, but **Christ came by water and blood**. The water and blood that came out of the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, typifies the Church who came out of His side as the New Eve.
 - Baptism is not just regular water, but water in which the Holy Spirit works through the Blood of the Lord. Water without the power of the blood of Christ is useless. Thus, the baptized are born from water and blood, a new birth, a new creation, able to be **victorious over the world**. This new creation becomes water and blood, Jesus Christ, through baptism.
- *"And it is the Spirit who bears witness"*: Baptism is through water and the Holy Spirit. Here St. John mentions water and blood, by which he means death and life, which happened to the body of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross.
 - Water symbolizes the death of the body, that is the separation of His human soul, from His human body. The Blood that came out of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, denotes life for that body, because blood does not come out of a dead body; life returned to the body of the Lord Jesus Christ because of the unity between His Divinity and His humanity. After the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross, **He had both life and death**. He was dead in His humanity, the separation of his human spirit and body, and alive because of the unity between His Divinity and His Humanity. We too, through baptism, die in our old man and are alive in Christ unto eternal life. The Holy Spirit Who abides in us is a witness to this.



THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

- “*Bear witness*”: we are called to bear witness to the **new life** which was given to us. The Trinity in heaven bears witness to this new life. Not only does the Holy Spirit bear witness, but the Holy Trinity bears witness to the Incarnation of the Son of God and His salvific work in humanity. Every commandment given by the Lord Jesus Christ is life, remember what the Lord said: “*I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.*” (John 10:10)
 - **The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God.**
- “*And these three are one*”: We believe in one God of three Hypostases. He is our Creator and He renews His creation, that it may receive salvation.
- “*And there are three that bear witness on earth*”: This verse is about baptism and witnesses to the fact that we receive new life, new birth, and are **made a new creation through baptism**. The baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan is repeated in the Church with each person who is baptized. The Holy Spirit takes from the grace of the Precious Blood of the Lord and gives the baptized the ability to die in the old nature, born of Adam, by which the old sin is deleted, and to rise reunited with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God as a child of God.
- Baptism is through “*The Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree as one*”: One is the body of Christ from which **water and blood** flowed out. The Holy Spirit came upon the body of the Lord Jesus Christ for the sake of the whole Church when He was baptized in the Jordan River. The Holy Spirit now works in the waters of baptism through the power of the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, baptism produces children for God, a new creation. Baptism would be useless without one of these three: the water, the blood, and the Spirit.
- “*You have been redeemed with ... the precious Blood of Christ*” (1 Peter 1:18-19). The **Blood is the price that Christ paid to grant us salvation**, the water and the Spirit represent baptism. Through which we receive the grace of the Blood. Through baptism **we are born again through water and the Holy Spirit**.





THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

- *"If we receive the witness of men"*: Many have witnessed to the amazing work of baptism in their lives. And many have witnessed to the Lord Jesus Christ beginning with **Nathanael** to **Longinus the soldier**. In general, when court cases are judged, we accept the witness of people.
- *"The witness of God is greater"*: This references the witness of the Holy Trinity about the work of Christ, that **Christ came to give us life**, this witness is much greater. The Holy Trinity witnessed when the Lord was baptized to the fact that through baptism we become children of God. The **witness of the Holy Spirit** inside of us is **greater than any words that can come from people**.
- *"He who does not believe God"*: he who opposes the witness of God inside of him, that is the voice of the Holy Spirit, and he who does not believe the Holy Bible, which was inspired by God, he who opposes the faith, which was given once to the saints, and is established in the church, calls God a liar.





Eternal Life (verses 11 - 12):

- “*And this is the testimony*”: God witnesses to his Son, not because His Son needs witness, but **for our sake**. The Son was incarnated so that we may believe in Him and become united to Him through baptism. Through this we receive eternal life, “*and this life is in His Son*”: This life which was given to us by God who lives in us, and **we bear witness of it internally**.
- “*He who has the Son has life*”: Eternal life is the life of the Son in us, of “*Christ in me*” (Galatians 2:20). Abiding in the Son begins in baptism. We must take good care of this abiding, “*abide in me and I in you*” (John 15:4), by walking in the way of Christ, that is death and life. This life is eternal life because **Christ, Who abides in us, is eternal**.
- “*Continue to believe in the name of the Son of God*”: The name denotes the characteristics. The name of the Son of God denotes His perfect **character**, His **power**, His **love unto salvation**, and unto **redemption**.
- “*Now, this is the confidence that we have in Him*”: We have confidence. Confidence is born through the witness of the Holy Spirit inside of us, that we are children of God, so loved by Him that He gave His Only Begotten Son for our sakes. Through this confidence, we pray knowing that He will answer us as long as what we ask for is not harmful to us.
- “*A sin to death*”: It's not the type of sin, but **disobedience, stubbornness and abiding in sin**. Even murder and adultery can be forgiven if one obeys the voice of the Holy Spirit and repents. The **free will of man** is what determines if a sin is onto death or not.
- “*Sin not leading to death*”: this refers to sins committed due to our human weaknesses, as long as we are in the flesh. But we struggle and wish to change and to do right by God. For these, we **ask for forgiveness**, and we pray to God.
- “*All unrighteousness is sin*”: In Greek, the word **sin** denotes **transgression**. **One taking something from another**. Sin is transgressing against God and/or against others. Sin also denotes opposition to God's will and His commandments, to do what I want, not what God wants. The root of the word sin in Greek is **missing the mark**. He who hits the mark receives rewards, but he who does not loses the reward.



- “He who is born of God does not sin”: meaning his **heart is not hardened**, rebellious, refusing to repent. This is the type of sin that **leads to death**.
 - But who is a child of God? He who, when he falls, **repents** quickly, and **arises** from his fall. The apostle says that the child of God “*keeps himself and the wicked one does not touch him.*” He who abides in his Father, Satan has no control over. But when he forgets his sonship to God and strays for a while from his Father, he falls. Thus, the apostle bids everyone who is born of God to keep himself, meaning to stay **continuously connected to God**.

As long as the children of God live **in His power**, they are **preserved**. The children of the world live under Satan and his desires. Satan twists the truth and darkens his followers and so they fall and become his slaves. How does Satan deceive his followers? He makes sin and the world look pleasurable, desirable, he makes them goals for them to follow; while hiding the pain, the sorrow, and the regret resultant of sin. The world is filled with sin.

As for the believer, God opens his eyes and he understands that the **Lord Jesus Christ is all truth**; he is satiated by Him, believing that **He is the source of life**. Thus, he abides in Him by obeying His commandments and never wants to be separated from Him. We are told: “*You will know the truth and the truth shall set you free*” (John 8.32).





Is it Possible to Put the Sun Out?

A firefighting company put an ad out for courageous volunteers, not to put out fires or gasoline fires, not even forest fires, but to put out the *fire of the sun* so that the earth would become cooler. Each volunteer would receive his own set of tools. What was amazing is that each of these courageous volunteers, after he had finished his work, said, **yes, it is possible to put out a portion of the sun's fire**. A few planned to work continuously, even if they had to use all the waters of the oceans by bringing them up with space shuttles to put out the fire of the sun.

This story seems imaginary, but it happens daily. The devil has many mercenaries who try to put out the truth of the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has given each one a special set of tools appropriate for him. Some work with **doubt**. Some work by **gossip**. Some claim that God cannot take a body saying, how could He be a Trinity if He's one? Some say that the Lord Jesus Christ was not crucified. And some others that He cannot die. Everyone on the internet thinks they can put out the Truth. Will casting all this doubt bring success? Below we will discuss the truth.

1. How can we say that we believe in one God when God is Three Hypostases, Three Persons?

- The Holy Bible reveals to us the Holy Trinity: You cannot understand the oneness of God without having faith in the Holy Trinity. We do not believe in three gods, but **One God with Three Persons**, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God has declared that He is Three in One God and that there is no difference between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, nor division, nor disunity. This revelation is very clear in the Holy Bible.
 - Some verses which reveal the Holy Trinity are; Luke 1:35, John 15:26, John 14:26, Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 2:18, Matthew 3:16-17, Matthew 28:19, Matthew 12:18, John 4:23, and Luke 3:22.





- **The equality of the Holy Trinity:** We believe in one God, with Three Persons, with One Nature. In each Person of the Holy Trinity is found all the blessed characteristics. They are **only distinct in their Personhood**, which is **Fatherhood**, **Sonship**, and **Procession**.
 - The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God in Nature, but the Father is not the Son nor the Holy Spirit in Personhood, and the Son is not the Father nor the Holy Spirit in Personhood, and the Holy Spirit, likewise, is not the Father nor the Son in Personhood. The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are exactly the same in Nature and Divinity. This is all according to the teachings of the Fathers and the conclusions of the ecumenical councils.
 - God is One in the Holy Trinity, equal from eternity, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. **One is not greater than the other**. Thus, the Holy Bible does not mention a certain order so we may not think that the Father is greater than the Son or the Holy Spirit.
- **One Nature, Three Persons:** The word *Ousia* in Greek means **nature** or **essence**. The Nature of our great God, which is greater than any other nature, His Nature is the special Divine Essence of God. Properties of the Essence of our great God include He is ultimate **life**, **omnipotent**, ultimate **wisdom**, the ultimate **mind**, ultimate **understanding**, ultimate **truth**, and ultimate **love**. He is the source of life and the reason for it. He brought forth all things.
 - **The meaning of Person:** The special Divine Nature, is unique and consists of three persons, without these there is no divine nature. Each Person is distinct, but inseparable from the other. The **Father is the fount**. The **Son is begotten**. The **Holy Spirit proceeds**.
 - If God is the ultimate life, then the Father is the Living One, the Fount of life, and the **Son of God is Life, Begotten of the Fount**, and the **Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Life**. And if God is ultimate truth, then the Father is the Truthful One, the Fount of truth, the Son of God is the Truth, Begotten of the Truth, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, Proceeding from the Truthful One.



2. What are the characteristics of the Hypostases and the Essence of God?

- ***The three Hypostases or Persons work together:*** Some imagine that the Father created us, and the Son saved us, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies us. But the truth is that there's no division or separation between the Persons of God in Their work. The Father created us through His Son in the Holy Spirit. We were saved ***through the will of the Father***, Who gave His Only Begotten Son, the ***Sacrifice of Christ saved us***, the ***Holy Spirit brings the blessings of the Salvation*** into our hearts. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us in the will of the Father and the Sacrifice of His Son.
 - Our Lord Jesus Christ has two Births. One of them is everlasting, from eternity, from the Father, *"born of the father before all ages, Begotten, not created, Light of Light, True God of True God."* The other birth is in time, from **Saint Mary the Virgin** when He became Incarnate from her for the sake of our salvation. At this moment, the Divinity united with the humanity in the womb of the Virgin, through the coming of the Holy Spirit upon her, purifying her womb, thus the Lord Jesus Christ is One nature of two.
 - This unity exists **without mixing, mingling, alteration, or change**. Thus, we understand that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God from eternity, Begotten of the Father before all ages, Who became the Son of Man through His birth in time from the Holy Virgin Mary.
- ***We believe in One God:***
 - Some things serve as good analogies to help us understand that God is One in Three. These things help us to understand the doctrine, but they can never be an exact formula for this Mystery.
 - *For example, the sun:* The sun sends its rays which fill and enlighten the entire earth, gives growth to the plants, and animals, and men all benefit from the sun. It resembles the **oneness in Trinity**. The sun is one in three at the same time, how? The sun is **one star**, containing the **actual sun**, the **rays**, and the **heat**. The **rays are born of the actual star**, and the **heat proceeds from the star**, resembling the One God in Three Hypostases, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Son born of the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father. The rays are not different from the sun, neither is the heat another sun. The rays are not separate from the sun, neither is the heat. The rays are the rays of the sun, as is the heat, the heat of the sun. The star, the rays, and the heat are one unit. This resembles the Oneness of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in One God.



- The star is a combination of fiery gases, which man can never see. This is like the **Father**, which **no one can ever see and live**. The rays of the sun are the light, **light of light**, coming out of the actual star onto us on earth without separating from its source. As the Son of God, Who **took flesh** and we saw His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and at the same time was never separated from the Father. The heat of the sun cannot be separated from the rays or the star. Neither can the star be separate from the rays. **Neither can the heat be separate** from either one. As the Father is not separate from the Son nor the **Holy Spirit**.
- If someone asks what came first, the star or the rays or the heat, the answer is that no one came before the other. **As soon as the star was created, it gave forth rays and heat**. There is no one time where the star was without its rays or its heat. Also, there has never been a time where the Father was without His Son or His Holy Spirit.
 - Please note, with all of this, the difference between the sun and God is that no matter how close of a comparison, the sun doesn't provide an exact example of the unique nature of God.

3. How was God Incarnate?

Some of the heretics argue against the Incarnation using the following verses:

"When he had fasted 40 days and 40 nights afterward, He was hungry." (Matthew 4:2)

"If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I'm going to the Father, for my Father is greater than I." (John 14:28)

"But of that day and hour, no one knows. Not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32.)

"And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46.)

"And he went a little farther and fell on his face and prayed, saying, Oh, my father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." Matthew 26:39. "And this is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3.)

Heretics use these verses to plant doubts that the Lord Jesus Christ is less than the Father because He **hungers, suffers, fasts, prays**, etc. How could the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God become man? How could He, Who gives life, die? We will answer these questions below.



- **How was God Incarnate?**

- God, the Divine nature, includes The Hypostasis of the Father, the Hypostasis of the Son, and the Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit.
- The human being contains the Body + soul + spirit.
 - The Logos and the human nature came together;
 - **God-man:** When Divinity united with Human nature in time
 - **Jesus Christ:** perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity. **One nature from 2 natures.**
- The Holy Spirit purified the womb of the virgin so that the Son of God may take from her His body; born of her without sin. This miracle occurred **without the seed of man**. The embryo formed at the moment of the annunciation, when the angel said to the virgin: *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."* (Luke 1.35)
- God can do all things and so God can become man. **Becoming man is one of the works of His power, not a work of weakness.** He entered in the omnipotent and unlimited power of God. His Incarnation did not change His divine Nature as the unity between the Divinity and the humanity was without change, alteration, mixing or mingling; as we say in the Thursday Theotokia: *"He remained God when He came and became man. As he is true God. He came and saved us."* **He only remained without sin.**





- Was Christ alive before He was born of the virgin?
 - Yes. As God, Christ is eternal. **There is no time where He was not.** He was in His Divinity, filling all places without a body like ours. Proof of this is when the Lord Jesus Christ said, *"Before Abraham was I AM"* (John 8:58). *"He came in the flesh from the virgin without the seed of man in order to save us."* (Monday Theotokia)
- While in the womb of the Virgin, did the Lord fill all places, how?
 - The Lord Jesus Christ united His humanity with His Divinity. **His humanity cannot limit His Divinity, which is omnipresent.** An example is the light bulb, which omits light. The light is not only encompassed in the glass (which resembles humanity) similarly, the humanity of the Lord did not limit His Light (that resembles divinity) from spreading everywhere.
 - *"The Father looked from heaven; He saw none like you. He sent his Only Begotten, Who came and took flesh from you."* (Wednesday Theotokia)
- Why was He born without a father?
 - Any living creature on this earth, whether animal, plant, or human being, needs a father and a mother. The plant needs the seed, and the earth. **The only one who exists without a body is God.** He needed a mother to give Him a body, but He did not need a father to exist, because He existed and exists before all ages.
- How did the Divinity unite with the humanity?
 - St. Athanasius the Apostolic says that as fire is united to a piece of coal, that it may become fiery, the **fire** resembles the **divinity**, because it is immaterial, and the **coal** resembles the **humanity**, which is material and seen. The fiery coal then results from the coal being put onto the fire. Similarly, this is what happened with the Lord Jesus Christ, the unity of the Divinity and the humanity. The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the Logos, came into the womb of the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit, and made for Himself a body, perfect, pure, because the **Holy Spirit who came upon her purified her and sanctified her**, He took from her a body just like ours, exactly, except without sin, alone. And He grew little by little, perfectly, for nine months, until he was born in the flesh, without the seed of man, but **from the Holy Spirit**. And He lived on the earth a true man, where He grew in wisdom and grace and stature before God and men, as the Scripture says. He was a perfect man with the Divine nature. **His Divinity never parted from His humanity.** *"He remained God, who became the Son of Man, but He is the true God, He came and saved us."* (Thursday Theotokia)



4. How can Christ die and at the same time give life?

- The amazing thing about the Lord Jesus Christ is that He was alive and dead at the same time. How? **In His humanity, He died**; simultaneously, **He was alive according to His Divinity**. He died truly according to the flesh while He was alive according to the Divinity. **His living Divinity rose His humanity from the dead as it was united to the humanity at all times**, early Sunday morning.
- The devil doubted the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His power to be victorious over death. How can He be God when He says no one knows the day nor the hour and He thirsts and hungers, etc.? So, He accomplished His mission of the crucifixion and the devil forgot that the Lord Jesus Christ spoke about these things according to His humanity, to confirm that He truly lived a man. *"He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."* (Philippians 2:7-8)
 - The Lord Jesus Christ is perfect in His Divinity and perfect in His humanity, which are perfectly united as One nature from two natures without mixing or mingling or change, as the unity of fire and iron.
 - The one nature of the Lord Jesus Christ is:
 - **Complete** with all the characteristics of the Divinity and all the characteristics of humanity, the Son of God is the Son of Man.
 - **Without separation** at the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The human soul separated from the human body, but the divine nature remained united to both.
 - **Born of the Father before all ages**. As the thought is born of the mind. Born of the Virgin in the fullness of time.





5. Why did the Lord Jesus Christ sometimes speak as a man and other times as God?

- Let's look at this example to clarify; A commander of the army, greatly exalted and highly specialized, decided to leave his glory and to live with the soldiers. He ate with them, he lived like them, he trained with them so that he may understand them and understand their needs and treat them with compassion.
 - *Is it possible to tell him that he cannot come down because he is a great commander?* Who can prevent him from humbling himself as **his goal is righteous**, to understand the soldiers' needs and lead them and lead their training? The commander of great stature allowed for a humble soldier to have authority over him for a small amount of time, **according to his will**, because he decided to be like the soldiers in all things, even in obedience, in work, and way of life. He is a humble commander. When he speaks to his commanding officer, he can speak to him in two ways. First, as the commander of the army. Secondly, as a soldier under his authority.
 - We believe that **the Lord Jesus Christ is God manifested in the flesh**. Thus, He has all the characteristics of God Who took our flesh and became man and took our nature except for sin alone. When He says in Mark 13:32, that He does not know the last hour, He speaks in this instance from the human perspective. But as He is wisdom, He knows all things. **In order to portray His human nature**, which does not know, **He said according to the flesh that He does not know**, but **He knows as the Word of God**. Similarly, when He became man, He hungered and thirsted and suffered with people, He prayed, He wept, etc. Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke as a man and as God **according to His will** in each circumstance to accomplish the Divine mission of Salvation for mankind. This way, we can understand why the Lord spoke and dealt with different things in different manners. The Divinity was united with His humanity.



6. Does God have a Son? What is the difference between His Sonship to the Father and our sonship to God?

- Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This does not mean that God took a wife, God forbid, because God is not man like us. But the Holy Bible says that God is spirit. So, the **Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ is a spiritual Sonship**, not a materialistic or bodily sonship.
 - St. Cyril says as there cannot be a mind without thoughts, there also cannot be thoughts without a mind. **The existence of the mind means the existence of thoughts also. One does not supersede the other.** And as thoughts exit the mind without leaving the mind or becoming separated from the mind, the birth of thoughts from the mind is constant. **Thus, the birth of the Word of God from the Father was before all ages**, as He is everlasting like the Father and the Holy Spirit, and not less than Them in Nature. They are completely united, never separated. This is the Sonship of the Son of God to His Father, a Natural Sonship of the same nature and essence as the Father. Thus, **the begetting is as the ray is born of the sun.**
 - As for us, we have been adopted because of the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not naturally children of God, but have been adopted into His Fatherhood, *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).* Thus, we pray in the hymn of Omonogenis on Good Friday, saying, "O, the Only Begotten," as **He is the only One in the same nature and essence as God the Father.** Thus, He is given the title *Only Begotten*. We are children of God by adoption, because of His grace, but not in nature or essence.

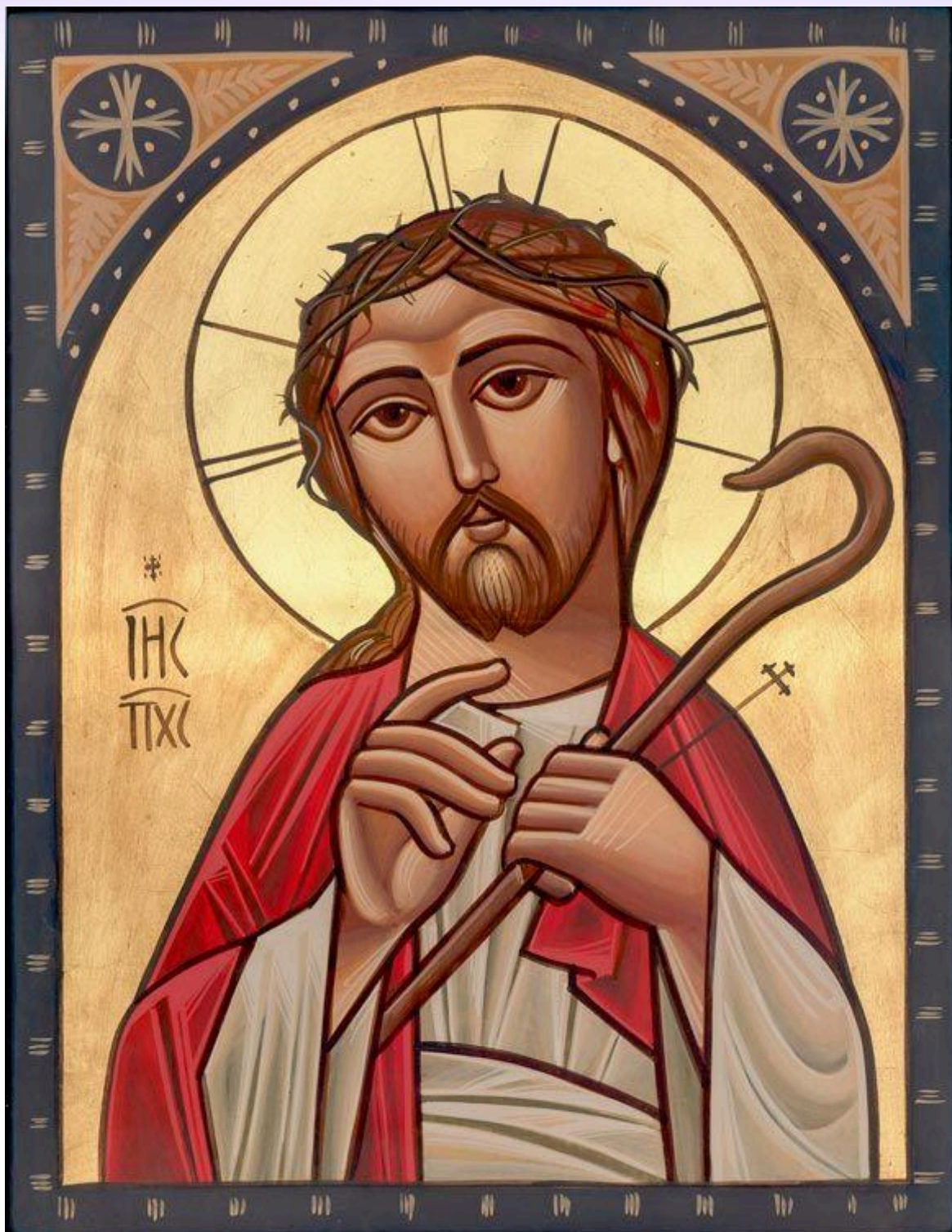
7. Why did the Lord Jesus Christ call Himself, "The Son of Man"? Does that mean He denied His divinity? Why did He not say that He's the son of God? Does that mean that Christ is only man?

- When Christ healed the man born without eyes in John 9:35-37 we are told: *"Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when he had found him, he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of God?' He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe in Him? And Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him, and it is He who is talking with you.' Then he said, 'Lord, I believe, and he worshiped Him.'"* From this it is evidently clear that the **Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God**, but He took on the Son of Man title, it was His favored title, which He gave to himself, not given by any other, He took it on reassuring us always that the Christ is fully God incarnate, fully Divine. He is God in the flesh.



THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"





Very Personal & Confidential

What is the difference between a person & a thing?

Some people think of God as an idea, the originator of creation or the founder of life or an exalted person. As if God is not a person, and they make Him a thing. God is not an idea, but **a Person Who is alive**. He is a Person with Whom we can have a relationship, a personal relationship. We cannot have relationships with rocks, but we have relationships with people. Similarly, we can have a personal relationship with God.

God wants to be a close friend to you.

We don't come to a relationship with God by amassing knowledge from books, it's a **personal knowledge**. By loving Him, obeying Him, following Him, and conversing with Him in prayer. These are the things that are needed to accomplish a personal relationship with our Lord.

How do you know that God loves you? Check out the following verses.

Jeremiah 31:3

Malachi 1:2

Isaiah 43:4

Psalms 32:8

Zechariah 2:8

1 Peter 5:7

1 Timothy 6:17

Matthew 6:31-33

Psalms 103:3

1 Timothy 4:8

1 John 5:11

1 John 3:1

How will you accomplish loving God?

1. **You must understand God's love.**

- As much as possible, one must understand how much God loves him and love Him so in return. Our love for God is a result of knowing how much God loves us. *"We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).* He loved us to the end without a reason. There's nothing in us to be loved but **He loves us out of His grace because we are His children no matter what**. He loved us to death, the **death on the Cross**. Thus, the one who understands what God has done for us will understand how much God loves us. The devil makes us feel that God does not love us. He may tell you that you're just a drop in the ocean and the Cross happened in ancient times, do you really believe that God loves you? What's good about you? These are his **doubtful darts** so that you may lose the **most precious thing in your life, the understanding of God's love for you**.





How do you struggle against sin? How do you struggle to be filled with God's love?

1. *Struggle in a positive manner.*

- Struggling against sin is important but struggling to grow in your love, relationship, and closeness to God is important as well. Remember, **giving thanks will increase your love for God and God gives more to those who give thanks.** If you think God doesn't love you so much, you will not love Him so much either. And if you think God loves you enormously, you will also love Him in the same manner. If you think God does not love you, you will not love Him either. **You formulate an idea of God's love for you by the way you love Him.**
- The enemy of all good wants to create a separation between you and God *so that you complain against God and even take up enmity against Him.* Why did God create us and leave us like this? Why us, etc.
- Imagine that you're riding a bus and you're asked to form a strong relationship with the one sitting next to you. What will you say? You don't know him and he doesn't know you. **How will you converse?** Even if you have a conversation, it'll be superficial because no one tells a stranger his/her secrets. **If you stand before God without having a personal relationship with Him, your conversation will be dry** and without feeling. It will be boring and short. It'll be full of complaining and it'll be all about your hardships. **You will not confide in anyone except to someone who's close to you,** like a close friend who loves you.

2. *The personal relationship with God.*

- Many times, we know the Lord Jesus Christ mentally or familiarly because we are born in Christian families. But what is your true relationship with Christ? **This is what will enable you to love Him.** How do you form a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ as a friend? **Meet** with Him frequently, **converse** with Him a lot, **listen** to Him and **He will listen to you.** **Bring Him a gift** and He will give you a gift. Go **visit Him** and He will visit you. **Love Him,** He will love you. **Open your heart to Him,** He will open His heart to you. This is the relationship with God. It's not a formal relationship. The relationship with God is a lifelong relationship, through a verse, through a hymn, through a personal question, through the Jesus Prayer, and through a prayer in the Agpeya.

What is the difference between believing in God and knowing God?



How can I form a personal relationship with God?

- The Lord Jesus Christ did not come to establish a company or a religion or morals. But **He came to give us Himself, His life, that He may live and abide in our hearts forever.** The personal relationship with Christ is critical, but it will not grow unless you make it your goal. It is born, nourished and grows through a **daily personal relationship in prayer and reading His word.** Through these actions, we will enjoy and taste His beauty daily in our lives.
- It is critical that we establish a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. To **meet Him face to face.** *Nothing and no one can take that away from you. No one can do that for you either.* You come close to God as much as you like. This is the same as a relationship with a friend. You must work to bring the relationship with God to a next level. This does not happen by chance. The problem is that we're always entrapped in a vicious cycle of worldliness. This takes us away. But with God, things are different. **We must give Him enough time.** We must, with all our hearts, want this relationship and struggle for it.
- The one whom Jesus loved, is not only St. John or Lazarus, but **every single one of us.** This deep, strong love relationship is not only for St. John, but for you and me when we grow in our faith and love.





How does retreat/meditation help us to know the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ?

1. *What is retreat?*

- It is to be found in the **presence of God in stillness** so that we may grow in His knowledge, by which we can understand Him. The point of retreat is to meet with God alone in stillness. God created you so that you may enjoy His presence. If you work in the presence of God, He will invite you and help you. Thus, you will see Him and feel His comfort and begin a beautiful relationship, a true relationship with Him in His presence, with His help. You will be able to navigate life.
- In retreat, **God will reveal Himself slowly**, little by little, or something beautiful about Him and your heart will rejoice in His Fatherhood. Retreat happens over time. Every step is a comfort to one's soul and moves one to come closer and closer to God. In retreat, you are alone with Him in stillness and thus you will understand that God is for you, as if you alone embrace Him and He embraces you. In retreat, **one begins to understand and feel Who God is**. New feelings come up. Superficial feelings quickly dissipate, no matter how joyous they are. They will be exterior to you, but the **spiritual feelings will penetrate the depth of the heart and you will feel peace and comfort**; developing a desire to be with God. When God sees this, that you desire to sit with Him in stillness, He will open your heart and work in you through His Holy Spirit, little by little, **enlightening you and helping you understand many things that will change your life**.



2. How do I spend time with God in retreat?

- Retreat is a **decision** before all things. You must make a decision based on a strong desire to sit with the God of glory, the Lord Jesus Christ. **You must have a strong need to come close to Him.** You must be serious in asking Him for a deep relationship. If you have this strong desire within you, it will be easy for you to make this decision to begin a spiritual retreat. We will give you some guidance so that your retreat may be successful and fruitful. **The fruit is a true relationship with the God of glory, Jesus Christ.**

3. What is the best time for the retreat?

- You must **assign a time daily**, either in the morning or in the evening or at midday. This time must be adequate, where **your mind is clear** and not concerned with life's needs, where **your body is not tired but active**. Some of the fathers prefer retreat at the beginning of the day, where you're fresh and clear. And this way you'll begin your day with the Lord of glory, the Lord Jesus Christ, ask Him for guidance and help throughout your day, submit all your day's events to Him that He may guide you. It might be difficult for you to get up early, you'll have to go to sleep a little earlier to get up early and find time for retreat.

4. How long should the retreat be?

- Initially it is important to have a **beneficial** retreat, not so much a long retreat. **Quality is better than quantity.** It's better to have quality time than spend a long time without benefit. The important questions are: *were you able to connect with God? Did you feel His presence truly? Did you hear His voice? Did you speak with Him from your heart?* You can go slowly, begin with a five-minute retreat, and eventually go to 20 minutes and increase time slowly.

5. Where should the place of the retreat be?

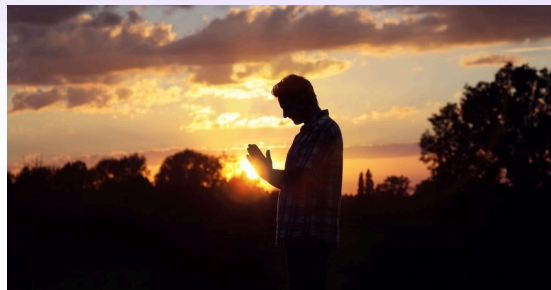
- Some people think that retreat happens in monasteries. Yes, of course. Monasteries are a beautiful place for retreat, where one can spend long periods of time with God and enjoy His presence, meditate, hear, and speak to Him. But if we can't get to the monastery, *should we deprive ourselves of this beautiful time?* Of course not. **You can have retreat with God anywhere**, but there must be some conditions. Flee from crowded places. Retreat must happen in a **quiet place far from noise and crowds**. This place must be constant and well known to you, **easy to get to** so you're not finding yourself in a new place each time. Any quiet room in the house where you can be alone with God, is a good place for retreat. If there's no quiet place in the house, you can go to your nearest church, monastery or garden.



What is the program for the retreat?

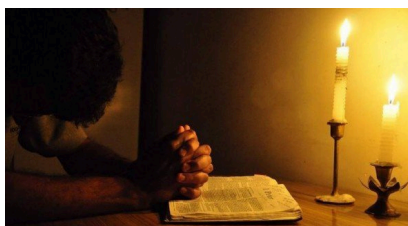
Retreat consists of four parts:

1. Preparing yourself.
2. Listening to His voice.
3. Speaking to Him.
4. Concluding the retreat.



1. *Firstly, prepare yourself. Prepare your heart:*

- You will find that preparing your heart is essential and very beneficial **for the retreat to become the center of your mind** when it is emptied of worldly things, able to understand God's word and converse with Him. In order for you to enter into God's presence, you must prepare yourself and **place yourself in a spiritual atmosphere**. Close your doors. Turn off the internet. Be quiet for a time before you begin your retreat in preparation to be in the presence of God. With all of your feelings, all of your heart and your mind, **converse with God**. Close the doors. Turn off the internet. Put yourself down before you start your retreat to prepare your heart to be in the presence of God. Prepare your feelings and your mind to converse with God. You must not plunge into retreat immediately without preparing yourself. Your thoughts will be distracted.
- It is essential to prepare your heart by **concentrating on the truth of God's presence in your prayer room**. God is present with you without a doubt. Not understanding this will disallow you from benefiting from the retreat. **Pray mindfully** that you will be in the presence of God, that God will see you and hear you. Father Nestorian said, *"be careful to stand daily in the presence of God without sin. Therefore, pray to Him as if He sees you because He's truly present."* So, in order for you to prepare your heart to be in the presence of God, **collect all of your thoughts and center them on the fact that you will be in His presence** in the place where you are. Say in your prayer room with faith, God is with me now, He hears me, He sees me, and He loves me.





- **What things help us to prepare to be in God's presence?**

- The **Holy Bible**, **spiritual readings**, **praises**, **hymns** that you love, which enlighten your heart and ignite it to converse with God, the **Agpeya**, the Jesus prayer, the psalmody of the day, "*I sought after you from the depth of my heart*", reading a part of a spiritual book. You can use any of these to enter into a spiritual atmosphere, which quiets your senses, and commits your mind to God.

2. Secondly, listen to His voice, through the Holy Bible:

- After you prepare your heart and enter into God's presence, the second part of retreat begins. This is **listening to God's voice**. He speaks to you through the Holy Bible. The following steps will clarify this. **Place your heart in prayer**, saying to your heavenly Father Who is with you, my Lord Jesus open my mind, my heart, and my soul so that I may hear Your words, understand, and be a doer of Your commandments; I'm a stranger on this earth, do not hide Your commandments from me. **Reveal and open my eyes so that I may see Your Majesty** in Your commandments. Meditating on the words of the Holy Bible during retreat is not for research or knowledge or interpretation. But for comfort, growth, and spiritual growth. This should not deter your daily Bible reading.
- **What should we read from the Holy Bible during retreat?**
 - We can read a portion of a chapter from the daily readings. **Begin with the four Gospels because they are the doctrine of Christianity**. Understand the main theme of the chapter. Read the verse in which God speaks to you several times. Understand the verse in a new way so that you may clearly understand God's message for you. Then begin meditating on the verse: *Is it a verse about a certain virtue?* Think about how you can acquire this virtue, ask God, who is with you, to help you to acquire it. *Is it a verse that talks about one of your weaknesses?* Ask from the Lord of Glory, Who is with you, to give you strength to change, to heal this weakness that's inside of you. *Is it a verse that's talking about God's love and His work in your life?* This will open up a chance to meditate on God's love, His great work in your life. Ask Him to help you understand the greatness of His love for you, the greatness of the love that He gives you. *Is it a verse about eternal life?* This is a chance to meditate on heaven, the angelic life. This will ignite the heart in desire for heaven.



3. Thirdly, Speak with Him in Prayer:

- After you have listened to the voice of God in meditating on a verse, it's time to **speak to Him**. It is very important to remember that God is with you in retreat and He wishes to hear your voice. **He listens to every word and every feeling that you express through your words**. He awaits time with you to hear everything that's inside of you, truly that **God is awaiting you**. He desires to be with you. As the Shulamite bride says, *"I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me"* (Song of Solomon 7:10).

4. Fourthly, Concluding the retreat:

- **Thank God** that He gave you the chance to sit in His presence and converse with Him. Thank Him for His mercy and for bearing with your weaknesses. Thank Him for the comfort and peace that He gave you during retreat.
- **Ask Him to give you the grace of continuing retreat** and the strength to meet with Him in the following retreat.
- **Strive** against anything that prevents you from having a retreat with God daily. This retreat is the secret to your life.
- At the end of the retreat, only say a few words, **I love you, Lord, and I desire to be in your presence**.
- **Praise** the Lord because He heard my supplications and conclude with a hymn.

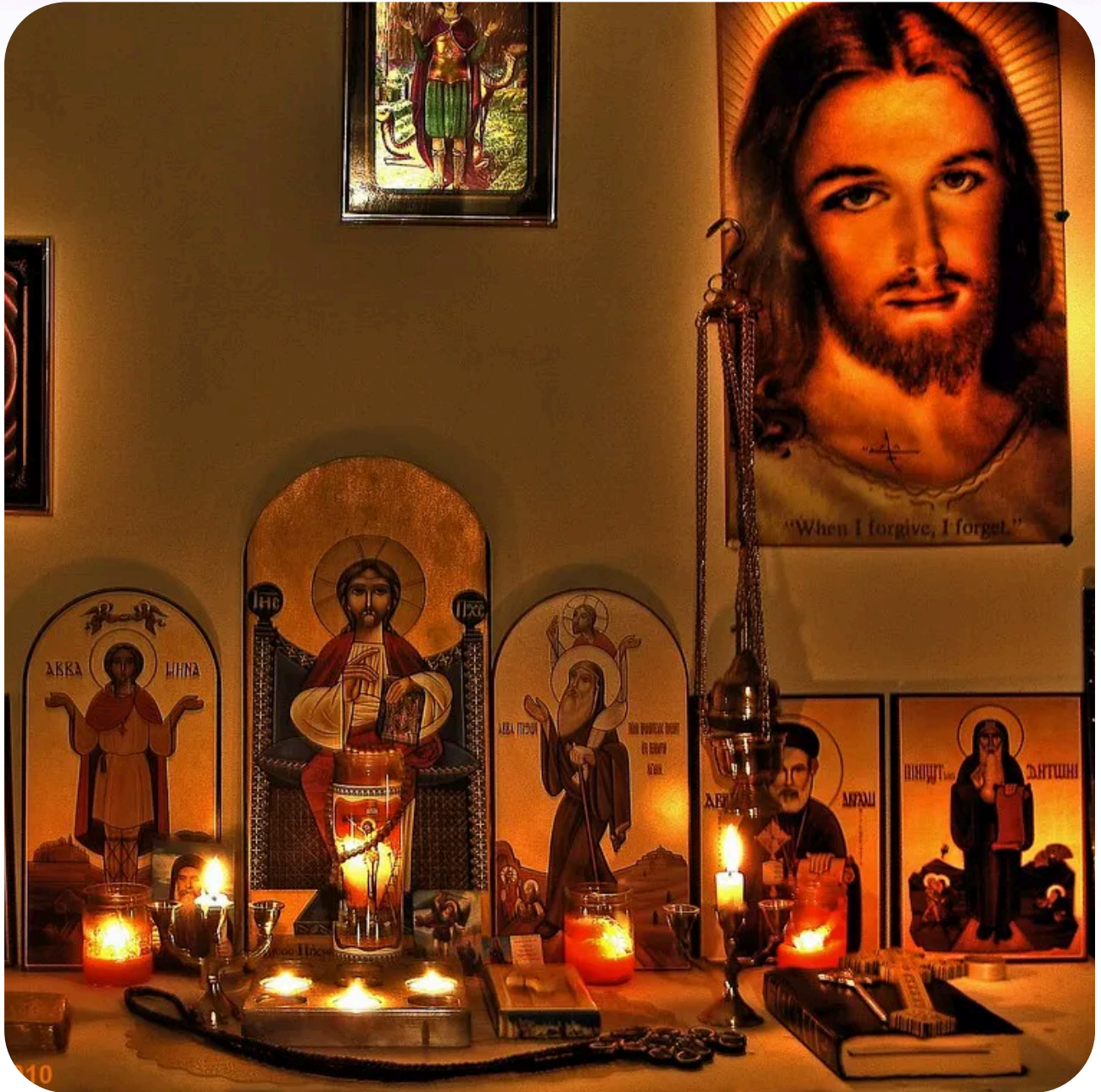
Important observations:

- If you neglect your daily retreat for any outstanding reasons, do not despair. **Arise anew** and begin your journey to deepen your relationship with the Lord of Glory.
- Make sure that you have in your room the Holy Bible, a hymnal, a journal, and a pen to write down your meditation.
- Make sure you **record your meditations** before you leave your prayer room. This will help you concentrate during your retreat and encourage you to continue your daily retreat.
- This **daily journaling** will also help you discover your weaknesses when you do not come in the presence of God in retreat. And thus, you will discover how many days you spent without being in His glory.



THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"





Male and Female He Created Them

1. Why did He create them male and female?

- “So, God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, He created them.” (Genesis 1:27). One might ask why did God create them male and female?
 - Adam was lonely in paradise. **Nothing from the materialistic world that God created for him could fill that gap for Adam.** This is how the Holy Bible put it: “And the Lord God said it is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Genesis 2:18). Because Adam could not find a helper comparable to him, “*The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and he slept, and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man he made into a woman, and he brought her to the man. And Adam said ‘this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.’ Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh*” (Genesis 2:21-24).
- It is God's will that the **female be united in fellowship with the male**. In this unity and perfection life is joyful. Because *in the female the man finds what is lacking in himself*. Therefore, humanity is not a cloning of one male, Adam. But there is male and there is female. Adam understood the benefits of God's creation of Eve, as the Lord gave each differing gifts. Thus, they complement one another, in their unity the complete precious treasure of humanity is found. “*Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*” (Genesis 1:28)





"Blessed them":

- God blessed them saying: **Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. And subdue it.** Have authority over everything on the earth. St. Augustine says, *"To be fruitful and fill the entire earth is a **grace and a blessing from God**. It is a gift to the married couple whom God founded from the beginning before the fall of man, Adam, and Eve, when He created them male and female. Thus, He created them two different genders."* And the scholar Origen says, *"Man cannot be fruitful and multiply without his wife. Thus, God gave him a wife, **so he would not doubt the power of the blessing**."*
- God created them male and female so that they may have children, even if they had not fallen in the transgression. Not as some think that having children was a result of the transgression. Thus St. Augustine points this out saying, *"Having children is not a result of lust, but a **part of the glory of holy matrimony** which God Himself founded."*

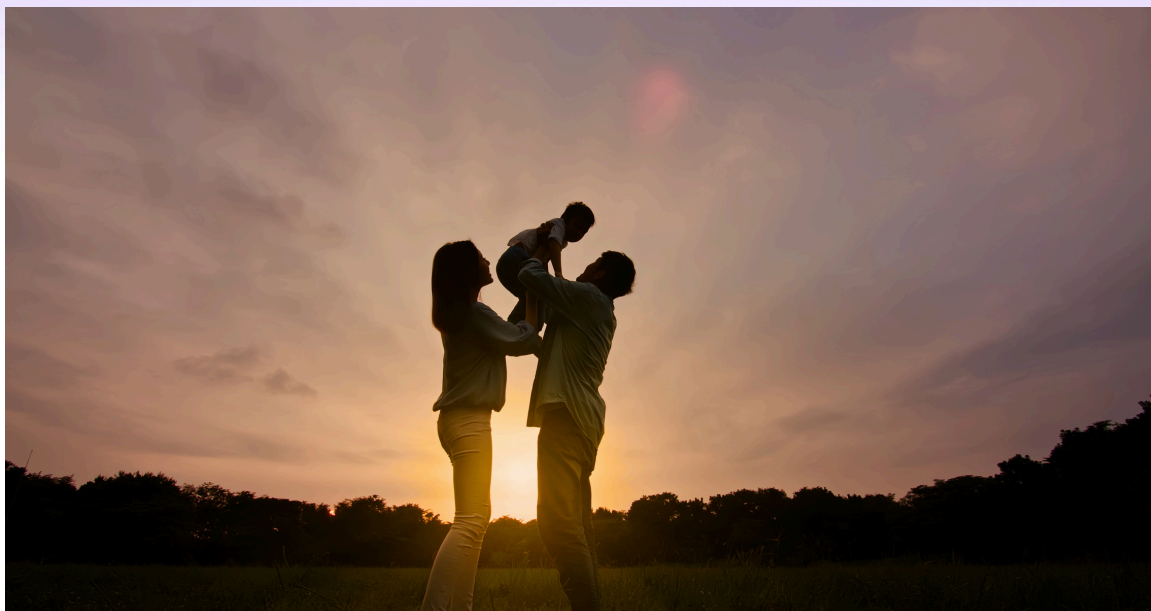
2. A **holy people**:

- You know that in order for a couple to have children, both the man and the woman have to be involved together. Because God gives the **father holy strength**, the mystery of life, which the **father presents to the mother** to help her to **bring new life**. The man meets with his wife, the two bodies unite together, and the precious fruits of life unite. This meeting is the beginning of the new life which God makes in the womb of the mother.
- The Virgin Mary knew about this when Archangel Gabriel announced to her the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, she answered saying, *"How can this be since I do not know a man?"* (Luke 1:34). That means **I don't have a husband to help me bring forth children**. The angel answered and said to her, This newborn is the only One who will come about **without the seed of man**. *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the highest will overshadow you. Therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."* (Luke 1:35).
- If we meditate spiritually about these matters, we glorify God our Creator, Who gave His children the grace to **participate with Him in bringing forth new members**, us working with God in multiplying the one holy universal apostolic church of God. This new human being is known to God **before the foundation of the world**. Out of God's love, He gave the parents the chance to work with Him in the action of creation, to enjoy His children, to **enjoy the exalted and precious characteristics of fatherhood and motherhood**.



THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"



- The unity in spirit and body and soul is found in this act of creation, or bringing forth new life. The body always expresses what's happening inside. This marital love is **an expression of the fact that each person is not pleasing him or herself but works with all of his and her might to please the other**. And each one does not have power over his or her body, but the other does. Thus, the unity between man and wife must be accomplished in **mutual love and respect**, to love the other and make the other happy.
 - We must clarify that this intimate relationship between father and mother is not only for having children or for procreation. Even though the Lord said, "*Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it*" (Genesis 1:28). The goal that differentiates mankind from animals in this relationship is **unity**. That man may accomplish the unity that is the **purpose of his existence**. If having children was the main purpose of marriage, then God would have allowed for a man to divorce his wife if they could not have children.
 - Now, my beloved, that you know the purpose and the exalted nature of this strong desire, be careful to keep this strong desire for procreation inside of you, and the livelihood with which you are blessed. And **do not waste it frivolously, nor freely**. And do not talk about it except with respect and reverence. Remember the words of our teacher, St. Paul, the Apostle, to his disciple, St. Timothy: "*Keep yourself pure*" (1 Timothy 5:22).



3. Sinful desires:

The above discussion is the **icon of God's will for the relationship between a man and a woman**. But the evil of all good always wishes to oppose the matters of God. Since the beginning, God created them male and female and sanctified holy matrimony. The enemy of all good wishes to destroy this relationship **under the pretense of freedom** to spread evil thoughts, sinful, hurtful, and lustful desires to convince humanity that these exist and are acceptable.

- ***What is homosexuality?***

- It is to be attracted to the same sex. Psychologists have found that each gender goes through a stage in childhood where children congregate with the same sex to learn how to be boys, how to be girls, but as they mature, they become attracted to the opposite sex. But in homosexuality, **the same sex attraction overtakes the person**. This can happen due to **psychological** or **social** problems.
- Since the beginning, the enemy of all good has wished to destroy God's will and God's gift to His creation. Specifically, he wishes to destroy the holy and respectable people. Thus, he spreads these unnatural thoughts of homosexuality.
- Children in middle school congregate with the same sex, but as they venture into high school, they begin to have attractions to the opposite sex. If one continues to have attractions to the same sex, this is called homosexuality.

Homosexuality is an unnatural relationship which God does not accept.

- Read the following verses and discover what the Holy Bible says about homosexuality: Genesis 13:13, Deuteronomy 23:17, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:26-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9, Jude 1:7, 2 Peter 2:6-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-10.

Homosexuality is one of the most evil sins, which **God completely condemns**. It is a **defilement** and defiles the whole earth. Thus, God was wrathful against the people of Sodom and Gomorrah because of this sin, and He rained on them fire and brimstone. None of them escaped the fire and the brimstone, except for Lot and his family. History records this account, and **sodomy** is still another name for homosexuality to this day.





- Because of these evil desires, the Holy Bible exhorted us strongly to annihilate this type of sin in the Old Testament and the New. St. Paul the Apostle, in his epistle to the Romans, speaks strongly against the nations who **left the natural and holy use of the woman and went after the same sex**, men with men and women with women. This sin is also listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9 as those who will **not inherit the kingdom of heaven**, *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,"* The local **council of Anchorage** in the year A.D. 314 established a law against homosexual relationships. In law numbers 16 and 17, there are punishments, including **15 years of fasting** for those who carry out sodomy. But unfortunately, in current times, evil ideas have surfaced, and they are calling for acceptance of such, and treating them with honor and respect, even to the point that one of the churches in the West has permitted their marriage.

God purified the earth **three times** in the Old Testament, using different methods such as the flood, fire, and people being lost in the way.

4. Steps taken to accept and to spread these evil ideas:

- Homosexuality is not a new sin. It's been around **since ancient times in the Old Testament**, as we have shown in the previous citations. God, since the beginning, has completely condemned homosexuality. And He has condemned it in the New Testament as well. They try to prove that they are many, and this is an acceptable way of life. At the very least, many try to prove **that this is not sin, but rather who they are**.
 - **Media** encourages the idea of accepting the **sexual revolution**, especially targeting the youth and the young children to try to change their minds against moral standards so that this deviation could become acceptable and natural.
 - Some Western nations and their **governments** have supported the **marriage** of homosexuals and have established **days to celebrate them**. Important personalities in these nations encourage and accompany them.
 - Under the influence of these nations and evil powers, **psychology** now calls it a **way of life** and not a disease, **not a sin** that requires repentance and healing.
 - Unfortunately, some **school curriculums** in the West indoctrinate homosexuality, clarifying that it is a **personal preference** either to choose to be homosexual or not. The new generation encourages that it is each person's right to choose his or her own gender, and some nations and governments help such people to **change their genders**.



- It's come to the point that if someone **opposes homosexuality**, this is considered a **hate crime**.
- The spread of these evil things in our era is a weapon of the evil one **to destroy humanity with something that God does not desire**. He used freedom, **fake freedom**, because truly this is not modernism nor is it freedom, but a **deviation against the original purpose of life and sexuality in the mind of God**. The West has a goal, destructive freedom, but unfortunately these thoughts have reached us also under the pretense of this fake freedom claiming no one is harmed by it, but this is the **destruction of life** which God has given us and the **destruction of the family**, because how could there be a family according to the will of God since the beginning and how could it be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, which was God's thought since the beginning. There's a huge difference between homosexuality and natural marriage between a man and a woman.
 - Holy matrimony is the **virtue of perfection** and the two become one flesh, but in homosexuality **each person only thinks of himself** and his fulfilling his desires and pleasures and does not think of the other.





Clarifying Falsehoods:

- Homosexuals **falsify the numbers**. They say that they comprise of 11% of the population of the world, but they only comprise **2 to 3 percent**.
- They say that homosexual relationships are **stable and long-lasting**. On the contrary, they only last **2 to 5 years**.
- Homosexuals say that they have **no psychological problems**. But on the contrary, they have **3 times the psychological diseases** in comparison to natural people. They all have a tendency for **suicide, depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and addictions** to drugs.
- Homosexuals claim to be **happy in their lives**, but the truth is that their lives are completely **miserable**. Because they always feel that they are **unnatural** and against holy nature, which God created for sexuality. They always live in torment and fear of being refused and fear of God because of their way of life, which is unnatural.
- They claim that homosexuality is **genetic**, but this is a deception. No one has been able to prove or accept this opinion. If this was so, God would not have warned us against homosexuality. Saying, **"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination."** (Leviticus 18:22).
- They claim that tendency towards homosexuality **cannot be changed**. But studies have shown that there have been many who have been changed and been treated and **healed through repentance, confession, prayer, and professional help**.
- Homosexuals **do not understand the family unit**. Society has reached the point where some dating sites post pictures of same-sex parents, Two fathers and children, two mothers and children, a mother and a father and children, to spread the falsity that this is normal/natural and accepted. How could children come out of two of the same-sex parents? This is a lie and deception. This can only come about by adoption or surrogate mother. Therefore, **homosexuality can never fulfill God's purpose to be fruitful**.
 - Do not forget **every tree which does not bear fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire**. Where is the fruit in homosexual marriage? God from the beginning created them male and female because this is the only way and the ideal way for procreation and continuation of life.



- The plan of the homosexuals to spread their lies was about making the word itself acceptable and non-controversial. They tried to **make the word beautiful and the actual topic beautiful**. Instead of calling it **deviation**, let's call it a **natural tendency**, they even now refuse to call it a disease, but a natural tendency. This is untrue. They **falsified scientific data and psychoanalysis of this disease**.
 - And now two men or two women can adopt a child or buy embryos.
- The homosexual has **evidence of psychological disease** which makes him or her unable to live a natural life in a community. Thus, they **form their own communities and separate themselves from normal communities**. This separation increases their deviation and makes them defy the natural communities to the point of enmity. They always feel unsafe and have no trust in their surroundings. Separation leads to more separation and more deviation. Thus, it becomes very difficult to treat and heal these people.
- This sexual deviation leads to their **lack of culture and understanding of natural community**. And they spend great effort **trying to achieve rights** and to establish their way of life in the community.

Reasons for deviation:

- **Lack of morals and religious, spiritual understanding**
 - A study was conducted in which 200 people were studied to try to figure out how they came to be homosexual. **24% did not have a religious background. 9% were raised poorly** -- the boys were raised to be girls and the girls were raised to be boys. **20% were influenced by peers** who taught them homosexuality either by force or by convincing. **17% were influenced by the media. 11% had too much time on their hands.**
- **Parental neglect:**
 - A child's **parents are very influential** in the foundation of the child's masculinity or femininity. They teach the child how to be a boy or a girl. According to this theory, if the parents wanted a girl and had a boy, they would treat him like a girl, dress him like a girl. He learns to speak like a girl and act like a girl, play like a girl. Eventually he learns to play with girls and not boys. And as he goes into puberty... he befriends boys because he was raised to be a girl. This is a disease called **gender dysphoria** and it happens with girls as well.
 - If a man is too harsh with his wife, the daughter can grow up to be more masculine trying to avoid her father's wrath. Eventually, this may lead to homosexuality.



- **Experimentation & evil exposure in childhood.**
 - Some children are exposed to **abuse in their childhood**. This leaves a horrible impression on them and may lead to homosexuality.
 - Some children have a difficult time speaking with their parents have nowhere to go for protection and help.
 - Some people say that homosexuality is genetic or congenital. This is false.
 - Not allowing children to have relationships with the other sex is the opposite of extreme freedom. This is also a problem. As the child thinks **all people of the opposite sex are evil**. This can also lead to homosexuality.
 - **Failure** to be accomplished in work or in education.
 - **Lack of knowledge** - Some communities bless homosexuals, unfortunately. They even have clubs, in the name of freedom and ask for rights, waving a rainbow flag although they're **completely far away from anything heavenly**.

6. Steps toward treatment.

True freedom and human rights do not destroy the human being, nor are they opposed to God's commandments and general morals, or our way of life.

- Our way of life is the **perfection of God and the Holy Bible, the Word of Truth**, which condemns homosexuality, punishes it, and warns against it.
- Homosexual marriage is against God's plan for marriage and His creation. You can find this in the following verses: *Mark 10:6-7. Matthew 9:4-6. Ephesians 5:31.*
- It is very possible to treat homosexuality, this is not a difficult thing for one who walks according to the Holy Bible. Many have received this treatment and were healed. The goal of treatment is to **change the desire from one that is deviant and unfruitful to that which is natural**. It is accomplished by the following:
 - A **strong will for repentance** and returning to God and His natural laws through the help of the church and psychologist at times. This is done in complete secrecy in the bosom of the church. **Spiritual nourishment is 50% of the treatment.**
 - **Teaching and enlightening people** that this way of life is against the natural way God intended for a pure life which glorifies God.
 - **Understanding scriptural verses** which condemn this deviant way of life.
 - **Treating the immorality** and helping the homosexual come away from anything that excites him/her into this deviation.
 - **Severing all friendships** that are evil and deviant.



THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION

WHOM SHALL I FEAR? "Ps 27:1"

- **Treating the addiction** that led to this deviation.
- **Avoiding all kinds of secrecy** and encouraging **open conversation with the father of confession**. This helps one to be healed from this deviation in complete secrecy.
- A complete understanding that any deviation comes from the feelings. One must change their thoughts and feelings so that one can be straight. In the following order:

1. Thoughts

2. Feelings

3. Ways





Memorization

Psalm 2 (Agpeya)

Why did the nations rage, and the peoples meditate on vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ; saying, "Let us break through their bonds, and cast away their yoke from us."

He who dwells in the heavens shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall mock them. Then He shall speak to them in His anger, and in His wrath He shall trouble them.

"But I have been established king by Him on Zion, His holy mountain, proclaiming the ordinance of the Lord: the Lord said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and Your authority to the end of the earth. You shall shepherd them with a rod of iron; You shall crush them as a potter's vessel.'"

Now, understand, O kings: be instructed, all you who judge the earth, serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice in Him with trembling. Take hold of instruction, lest the Lord be angry, and you perish from the way of righteousness, whenever His wrath shall be suddenly kindled. Blessed are all who trust in Him. ALLELUIA.



Gospel of the 1st 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 1st Hour

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 ΑΓΙΩ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ

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 ΠΥΗ ΚΕ ΑΙ ΚΕ ΙΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΕΩΝΑΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΩΝΩΝ. ΑΜΗΝ.

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, as 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 forever and unto the ages of all ages. Amen.



Absolutions of the 1st Hour

FIRST ABSOLUTION

O Lord, God of hosts, who exists 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, 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

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.

THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & SALVATION WHOM SHALL I FEAR?

“Ps 27:1”



COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE
DIOCESE OF NEW YORK & NEW ENGLAND

www.MahraganNYNE.org