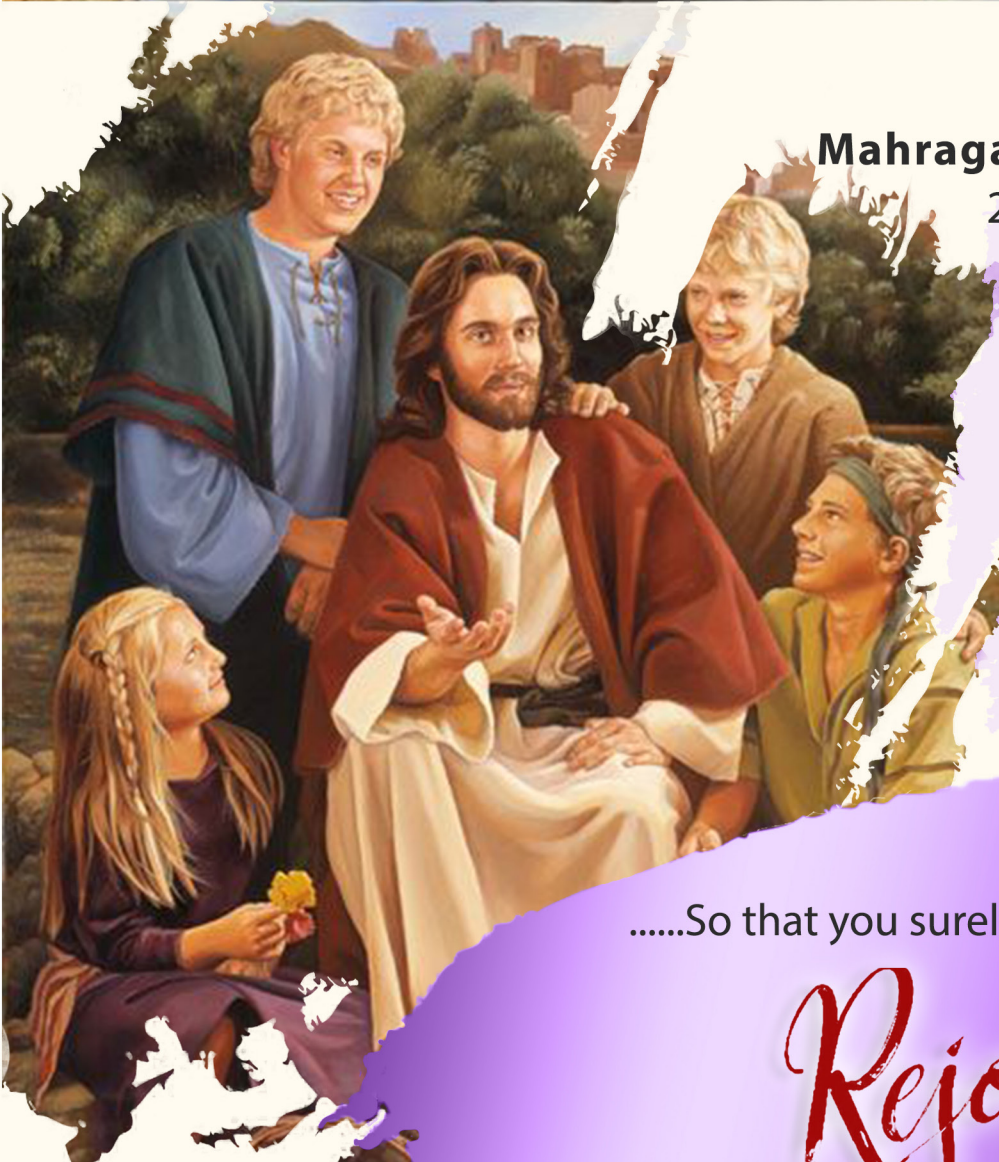


# Mahragan El Keraza 2023



.....So that you surely

# Rejoice!

**English  
Edition**

**Grades 9-12**



“Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.”

**Deuteronomy 16:15**

Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15



**H.H. Pope Tawadros II**

Pope of Alexandria &  
Patriarch of the See of St. Mark



**H.G. Bishop David**

Bishop of the Diocese of New York  
and New England

.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

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Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

## So That You Surely Rejoice

This is the theme for Mahragan El Keraza 2023, chosen by the Mahragan committee. It is important to mention that this the Mahragan's 20th anniversary, established by H.H. Pope Shenouda III and continued by the encouragement of H. H. Pope Tawadros II. God willing, the results will be very joyous!

The Holy Bible calls us to a life filled with continuous joy, saying, "so that you surely rejoice" (Deut. 16:15), but how can we rejoice when we don't truly feel joyful? Some days we're happy, some sad!! So frequently we're unsatisfied, even though we've accomplished so much success. We ask ourselves, "How can I rejoice when the world is full of sorrows, temptations, pain, disease, war, inflation... and I don't know what the future holds???"

Here, Joshua the son of Sirach answers us, "Consider the generations of old and see, Has anyone trusted in the Lord and been disappointed?" (Sir. 2:10) So that you surely rejoice. Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, Who works in us. There are 2 types of joy...

**1. Joy of everyday life** – worldly joy – fake, temporal, temporary. Normal people rejoice over temporal, perishing things, ex. good news, which fades with time, doesn't continue with us. This temporary joy affects the mind, spirit and body, but not the so much the soul.

**2. True Christian joy** – granted to us by the Lord of glory, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is "our peace" (Eph. 2:14) and the Source of our joy, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). The Lord Jesus Christ is the

.....So that you surely

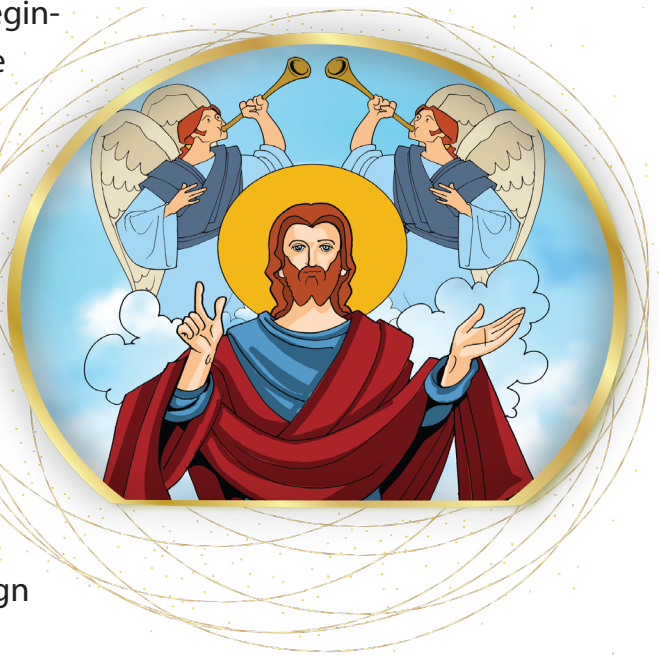
Rejoice!

source of our joy, as He said, "I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." (Jn. 16:22)

This joy is eternal from the eternity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is abiding as we abide in Him!!! It is continuous as we continue to live in Him. It is the joy of the worldwide spread of the word of God, the message of eternal salvation and the eternal victory. This is true and deep-seated joy, it encompasses the entire human being: the spirit encourages, the mind is enlightened, the soul rejoices, the body is made healthy, and all relationships are successful!!!

This joy is that which rejoices in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who for our salvation, and the fulfillment of the His promise, was Incarnate, Born, Died and Redeemed us, Arose and enlivened us, and Ascended to heaven as our First fruit .... To prepare a place for us where He will take us unto Himself at His Second Glorious Appearance, so that we may live in fellowship with Him and all the saints in glory forever. Blessed are those who have the Lord dwelling within them; with Him true joy.

It is well known that since the beginning when Christianity saved the peoples from paganism to worship the Living God, the Egyptians were truly joyful, always smiling to the point that if a pagan saw his friend smiling & happy he would ask him, "What's the matter with you, have you met a Christian today? Because Christians were always happy & rejoicing, people said, "Joy is a sign of Christianity"



## FIRST, THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN JOY

### 1. The Joy of Repentance and Abiding

**What does sin provide, but pain and sorrow?** It is known scientifically & psychologically that after one commits sin, he/she feels a "sense of guilt" – this is a scientific term; the observation is that after the sin is committed one always loses his/her peace, feels the pricks of the conscience, and the groaning of the Holy Spirit on the inside, Whose goal is to bring us to repentance! Repentance **in the Orthodox understanding is:**

**a. A feeling of remorse, "I'm remorseful that I have sinned"**

**b. A feeling of urgency to repent; "I will arise now!"**

**c. The importance of Confession, "I will go to my father"**

**d. Confessing my sin & asking for spiritual guidance. This is the role of the Confessor Father, from whom we receive the absolution, according to the teachings of H.H. Pope Shenouda III. Absolution from sin -- through forgiveness**

**and absolution, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit to understand from where**

**I fell and repent ... through spiritual exercises, a daily curriculum for fellowship – a holy life with God, through many graces, as we pray:**

**The Psalms in the Hourly**

**Prayers of the Agpeya**

**The Arrow Prayers repeatedly,**

**"My Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me", My Lord Jesus**



Christ help me", My Lord Jesus Christ, I praise You"...

Personal Powerful Prayers – expressing our condition moment by moment, calling on God for mercy, help, and forgiveness, as our Church teaches us.

Written Prayers: Which our holy Fathers prayed. They can be found in the Agpeya and Prayers of Tasbeha and Alhhan – the beautiful praises throughout the year

## 2. The joy of fellowship, service, and almsgiving:

One of the most important signs of the spiritual life is the life of fellowship. Human beings are social beings by nature. There is no rest for humans, except in fellowship, in love, in giving! The words of the Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) is not to be preached, but to be experienced. Have we experienced the joy of giving, giving joyfully?! Our only job in this world is to be joyful in the Lord, to give others His joy. God is love; pure, generous, self-giving Love!!!

May you have the fellowship of love, prayer, and service among your family, friends, neighbors, community!

As, "The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself."

(Prov. 11:25)

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom." (Lk. 6:38)

This is an amazing Divine equation, whenever we give, what we have increases,



not decreases! Because “The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it.” (Prov 10:22)

That is, the blessings increase despite the saying, ‘no pain, no gain’. Therefore, it is a beautiful thing to make almsgiving a habit, to teach this to our children also!

### 3. The joy of endurance:

the faithful not only endures joyfully, but is joyful in pain and suffering, as were our fathers the Apostles, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” (Acts 5:41)

#### Notice the following:

They departed rejoicing, not only enduring patiently with thanksgiving, but “rejoicing in hope” (Rom. 12:12).

Counted worthy to suffer shame – their pains were not only physical, but psychological, which is more painful, yet they rejoiced in these pains.

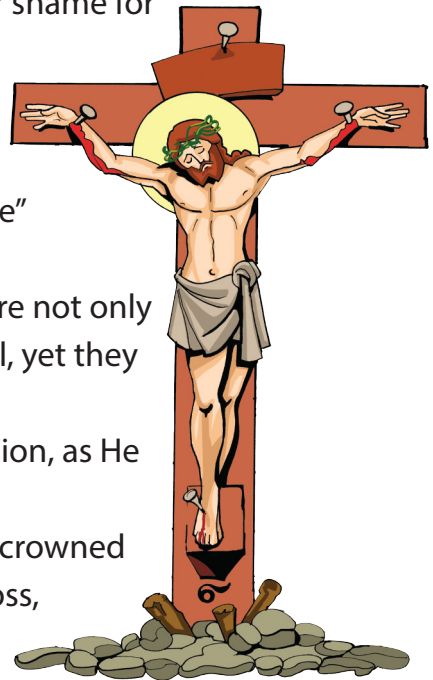
They meditated upon the Lord Jesus Christ’s Passion, as He was crucified for our salvation:

His physical pain: after the painful flogging, they crowned Him with a crown of thorns, nailed Him to the cross, stabbed Him with a spear!

Psychological pain: they shamed and ridiculed Him, spat on Him; His disciple betrayed Him!

Spiritual pain: as the Holy and Pure One, “bore our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24)

The Lord bore all of this; these sufferings in truth. They were afflicted upon His Body as it was united to His Divinity. The Divinity did not lighten the pain nor





.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

the burden of suffering because it was the Lord's will. The Lord suffered for us by His own free will: "For in that He Himself has suffered, being [a]tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." Heb. 2:18)

Surely, the Lord Jesus Christ is truly the source of our joy!

## SECOND, WHAT DO WE REJOICE OVER

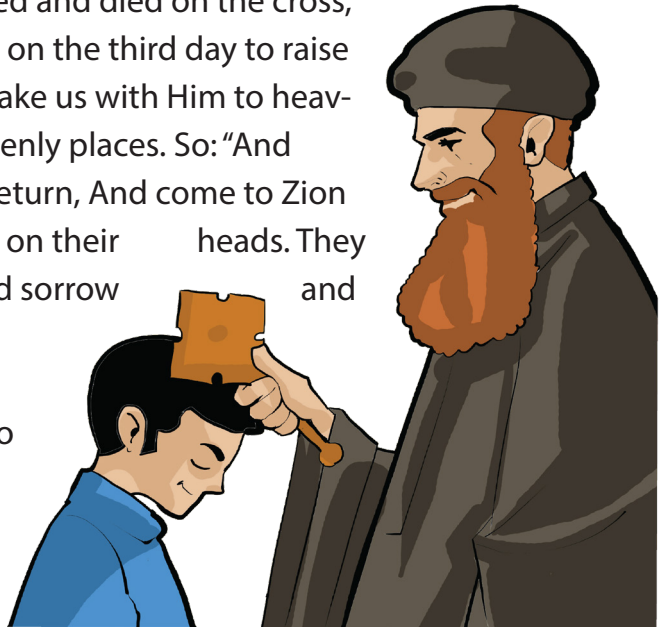
### 1. I Rejoice over my Lord Jesus, my Redeemer and Savior

"Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous" (Ps. 97:12) Our great God ... Great Love!!!

He created us in His image and likeness so that we may enjoy His eternal love and live with Him in Paradise. But we sinned, disobeyed His commandment, and by our free will we fell. Therefore, Lord Jesus Christ incarnated, was born in a manger, from a poor virgin. He lived, not only in poverty but in suffering

rejected by many. Then He suffered and died on the cross, was buried, and arose, as He said, on the third day to raise us up with Him. He ascended to take us with Him to heaven, and sits in His glory in the heavenly places. So: "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Is 35:10)

Surely, this is the joy of salvation, and rejoicing over our Savior, Who through His Cross opened for us eternal life, and through His Precious Blood offered us the grace of redemption!!!



Therefore, now the Blood of Christ:

**A. Forgives our sins** – “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses,” (Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14) “and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” (Heb. 9:22), this applies to the original sin.

**B. Cleanses us from all sin** – “and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 Jn. 1:7), this cleansing applies to the present, every day sins.

**C. Sanctifies us unto the Lord** – “Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood.” (Heb. 13:12) This sanctification applies to becoming His now and in the future through Baptism & Chrismation.

**D. Whereby we abide in the Lord** – “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them.” (Jn. 6:56)

**E. Enlivens us with eternal life** – “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day,” (Jn. 6:54)  
How joyful we are now with this Precious Pure Blood of Christ, which abolished for us the judgment of sin, cleansed us of our corrupt nature, entered us into the kingdom of heaven, of light, of eternity... where we will live with our Lord Jesus forever!

## 2. I Rejoice over the Holy Bible, my life's constitution

“I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” (Jn. 15:11)

Thus, the Holy Bible is a Divine letter addressed to me personally, wherein are love, warning, commandments, promises, teaching, & signs for the way to eternal life. Is it possible

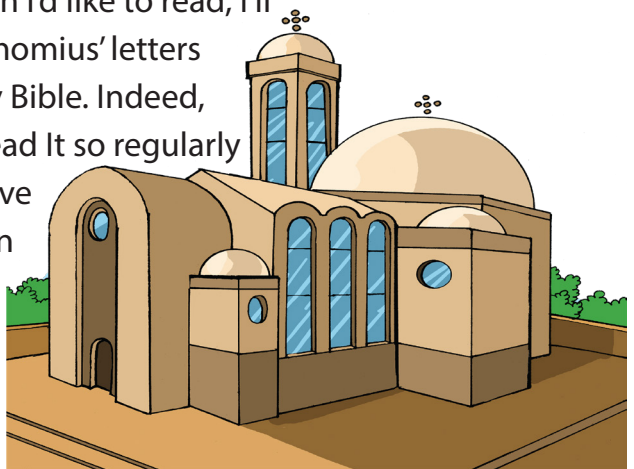


to reach God without His guidance and life-giving words?!

It is critical for Christians to study the word of God on a daily basis, thus accomplishing God's command, "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life" (Jn. 5:39) The Lord describe His words saying, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." (Jn. 6:63). David praised those who meditate on the Law of the Lord day and night and Jeremiah the prophet said, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart" (Jer. 15:16).

The Holy Bible is a vast ocean. It is enough that It is the word of God, the Breath of His Mouth. All of our Doctrines are according to Scripture, the interpretation of the Church Fathers, the laws established by the ecumenical councils, and what we have received according to our holy Orthodox tradition. St. Augustine put it beautifully, "I believe in the Holy Bible, handed down from the Church, explained by the Fathers, alive in the saints."

For our great Church Fathers, Scripture was their life-long inspiration, it encompassed all their deeds, their way of life, their ascetism. Thus, their lives were Biblical & enlightened; their interpretation of Scripture was not scientific, nor according to human understanding, but a practical constitution leading to salvation, edification, and guidance. Therefore, St. Antony the Great said, The Holy Bible is our apt teacher", and "If when I'd like to read, I'll read God's Book." It is said of St. Pachomius' letters that they are a summary of the Holy Bible. Indeed, they loved the Holy Bible, lived It, read It so regularly that they memorized It. Thus their live became shining Bibles in the heaven of the Church.



### 3. I Rejoice with the Church, the House of Joy

My Coptic Orthodox Church, which the Lord bought with His precious Blood, is unique. The Church received the upright faith from the Holy Fathers, the Apostles, thus she is Apostolic; upright in dogma and reputation, steadfast, faithful to the Lord despite all circumstances (persecutions, heresies, etc). It is the house of Joy; it provides us with these Joys:

## a. The joys of membership in the Holy Body of Christ

I receive this membership through the Holy Sacraments. I keep my membership through spiritual struggle. I serve inside the Church and witness to the faith in the community, as each member in the Body of Christ (The Church) has a message to convey to the community. All of these things give us joy, as it is important for one to know who he/she is and what his/her message is: I am a Christian, Coptic, Orthodox, Egyptian.

**1. I receive membership through the Holy Sacraments** – I was renewed in Baptism, consecrated in Chrismation, and abide in Christ, and He in me and am united with Him by receiving His Holy Body and Precious Blood. When I sin, I find the Sacrament of Repentance & Confession, when I am sick, my father the priest prays for me and anoints me with the oil of the Anointing of the sick for the healing of the body, but I must repent & confess before the anointing. During Holy Matrimony, the great crowning ceremony, one man and one woman are united in purity and become one flesh and one spirit in the Body of Christ (the Church); “and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are



no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” (Mk. 10:8-9)

**2. I keep my membership through struggle** – this membership was given to man/woman at the beginning as a gift by God, Who loved us to the end, and Redeemed us with His Precious Blood; but as one grows older and sins, one must repent, struggle and be satiated with God: in prayer, reading Scripture, the Sacraments, spiritual reading, spiritual meetings, fellowship... until one enjoys spiritual strength through which one can be victorious against sin. Thus, we rejoice in the victory by God’s grace.

**3. I express it by serving in the Church** – preceded by attending Pre-ser-vants classes, that we may serve in the Church according to the God-given gift; all have a role.

**4. I express it by witnessing in the community** – we are not isolated from the community, according to the word of our Lord Jesus, “you are the salt of the earth... you are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:13, 14) “A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough.” (Gal. 5:9) “So we are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20). We are witnesses for Christ in the community, in school, at work, etc.

### **b. The Joy of Spiritual fulfillment**

“My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips” (Ps. 63:5). The true Orthodox Christian, the faithful member in the Body of Christ enjoys special joy known by:

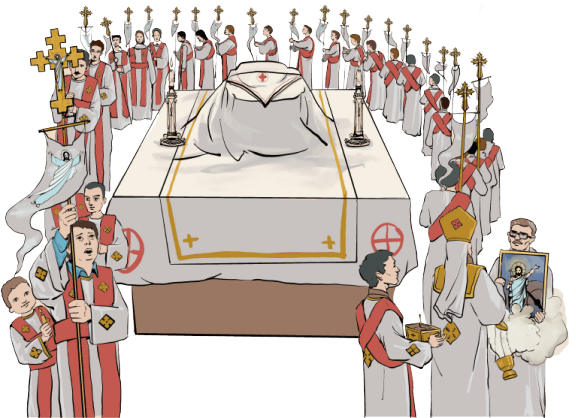
**1. Daily prayer of the Psalms** – the Fathers’ wealth , new petitions, rebuking one’s soul, attachment to important Christian events daily, edifying emotions.

**2. Arrow prayers** – asking for help, mercy; as our Fathers taught us. St. Antony told his disciple to constantly pray, “My Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me; my Lord Jesus Christ help me; I praise you my Lord Jesus Christ”

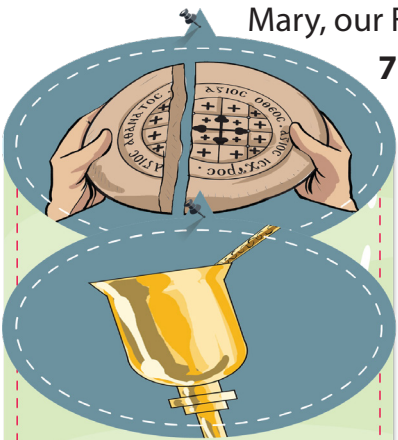
**3. Daily readings** – reading the daily lectionary in the Katamaris – at least 9 chapters in each Divine Liturgy

**4. The Synaxarion** – daily remembrance of the saints, councils, miracles that we may emulate them.

**5. Daily Tasbeha** – the language of the angels taken from Scripture with deep theological meanings, beautiful tunes; praising and singing to Him Who loves us and saves us, Who lives in us with His Holy Spirit. Our Church is the house of the angels, the house of rejoicing, praise and joy. Praise is not emotional, but peaceful, filling the soul with the joy of the Savior, the joy of Salvation.



**6. Holy Fasts** – Wednesdays, Fridays, and the others Fasts wherein we are united with the Birth of our Lord, His Crucifixion, His Resurrection. Fasts to become more like the Lady, the Virgin Mary, our Fathers the Apostles and the Ninevites.



**7. Church events** – Holy Pascha, the praises of Kiahk...

**8. Holy Feasts** – the Major & Minor Dominican Feasts... We are to live these feasts that we may receive their effects on our lives.

**9. The Sacrament of the Eucharist** – the ultimate spiritual satisfaction through daily Liturgies.

10. The sayings of the Fathers – daily studying their saying that we may benefit from them in our lives & service. Thus, we and our youth will abide in the true Orthodox doctrine, praising God and walking strong without prejudice, in love for all without

compromising our doctrines nor our morals; handing them down to the next generations, as we received them.

### c. The joy of Ascetism

There is a great difference between the moderate Coptic Orthodox ascetism and that of heroics which puffs one up and causes grief, not joy! We emulate the ascetism of St. Antony & St. Paul. St. Antony lived in his cell for 20 years, when he left, his face was joyful and he was neither very thin nor fat. This is the proper, moderate, spiritual ascetism. Because the body is a talent, a responsibility for us to keep healthy. Ascetism is a sacrifice in moderation, according the Holy Bible, as St. Paul says, "and if I hand over my body so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing." (1 Cor. 13:3) It is a means by which we express our love for our God. It must take place in moderation under the guidance of our spiritual father. It is Biblical ascetism, meaning leading me to become Christian by means and goal – through Christ, I offer this sacrifice for the glory of Christ, not by my own strength, not for my ego!!! Therefore, in our Coptic Orthodox Church we rejoice in ascetism. We fast, we are joyful and full of light despite our ascetism & struggle.

### d. The Joy of Martyrdom – Our Church

is a church of martyrs throughout her great history. Our martyrs always beheld the heavens opened, the Resurrected Lord, and the life everlasting, because martyrdom is a wedding, and the highest form of holiness... "So



you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir through God." (Gal. 4:7) Therefore, St. Moses the Strong said, "Remember the kingdom of

heaven, that you may desire it". our Fathers always had an other-worldly, heavenly outlook. They looked to heaven, thus never were afraid of disease, death, martyrdom because they beheld the Lord Jesus Christ always before their eyes. They saw heaven, with its eternal treasures and truly trusted the proverb, "but the righteous find a refuge in their integrity." (Prov. 14:32).

Surely, this is what we see in the martyrs, and in the recent 21 martyrs in Libya, who challenged death, challenged persecution, challenged human nature for the crowns prepared for them in heaven. The whole world witnessed how they were tortured and tormented, even to the shedding of blood, and how they bore all of this with patience, prayer, power, joy, peace, even unto death. Surely, martyrdom is joy!

#### ***4. I Rejoice in the Glories of Life Eternal***

We all face a very grave danger – swept away with time, concerned about earthly things. But human beings are created in the image & likeness of God, He breathed us into life. We are on earth for a period of time, but soon we will return to our original heavenly, spiritual, godly state, wherein are the glories & joys of eternal life in the heavenly kingdom.

Let us look into the following glories received through our life with God in eternity:

##### **A. The joy of the glory of holiness**

There St. John the Beloved saw them, a great army dressed in white and singing hymns, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 7:14) White robes made pure in





the Blood of Christ, palm branches – a sign of victory; “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” (1 Cor. 15:26). The illuminated body which will be ours in heaven is not subject to fall, sin, disease, temptation, trials, nor sorrows

### **B. The Joy of the glory of happiness**

“enter into the joy of your master.” (Mt. 25:21, 23) – this is what the faithful soul will hear when it enters the other world. And joy will be ours in Paradise, therefore it is called the Paradise of Joy, as we rejoice when we are united with the Lord, the angels, the saints, and our fathers who have preceded us. Our joy is then fulfilled in the Heavenly Jerusalem, the place from which all sorrow and anguish of heart have escaped in the light of His saints, where, “they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.” (Rev. 14.13) “because all must go to their eternal home” (Ecc. 12:5)

### **c. The Joy of the glory of fellowship**

In Heaven, we will live in unity with God and in unity with the household of God (Eph. 2:29), with the angels, and saints.

Let us imagine a conversation with the Lord...How enjoyable, how long, you will be so satisfied with Him and say, ‘Enough’.

What about conversing with the angels, with the Virgin St. Mary, with the Fathers, the prophets, the Apostles, the martyrs & the saints.

Surely, we will enter into a joy without end in the presence of a limitless God.

We will live in a glorious, unspeakable joy... “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9)

### **d. The Joy of the glory of Eternity**

The Lord promised us saying, “because I live, you also will live.” (Jn. 14:19)

the Lord lives forever, thus those who believe in Him will, in Him, live forever...

“And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (Jn. 17:3)

Therefore, our teacher St. Paul the Apostle cried out saying, “For to me, living

*Rejoice!*

*Deuteronomy 16:15*

is Christ and dying is gain. ... but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you."(Phil. 1:21-24)

## *Let us live the life of joy in*

1. Our Lord  
Jesus Christ,  
my beloved  
Savior and  
Redeemer.

2. The Holy  
Bible, the  
constitu-  
tion & light  
of our lives.

3. The  
Church, the  
house of joy  
& praise.

4. Eternal,  
everlasting  
life.

.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

## The Book of Habakkuk

**The writer of the Book:** Habakkuk the prophet – His name means to embrace to God. The consensus is that he was from the tribe of Levi because his prophesy resembles the Book of Psalms.

**When written:** between 612 – 589 B.C., before the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem.

**About the Book:** It is one of the Minor prophesies, one of the 12 whose prophesies were short, as opposed to the major (4), whose were long.

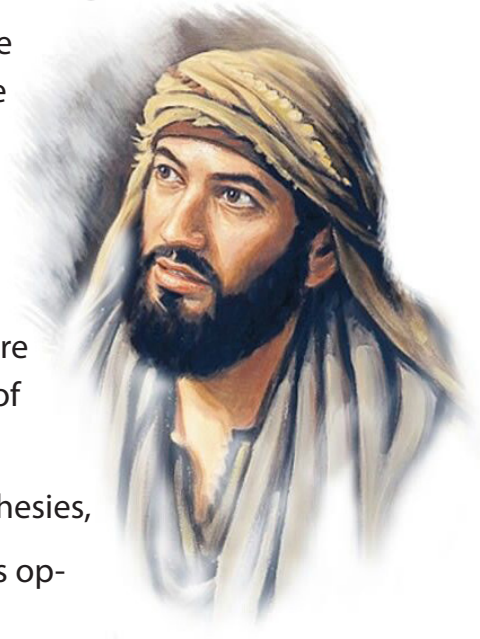
It is distinguished by: being a conversation with God, as in most Minor Prophets. It touches each one of us who suffers from internal or external trials. But with the sorrow, the soul rejoices in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. The Book opens up with the problem of evil and ends with the victory of justice.

### Ask you servant about the goal of the Book

**Chapter 1:** Sorrow due to oppression. God leaves that we may be edified.

**Chapter 2:** God responds and teaches us why this people were oppressed, so that we may not emulate them.

**Chapter 3:** Praise with thanksgiving to God, Whose works are great with us  
Gather all the question which Habakkuk asked God in the 1st chapter

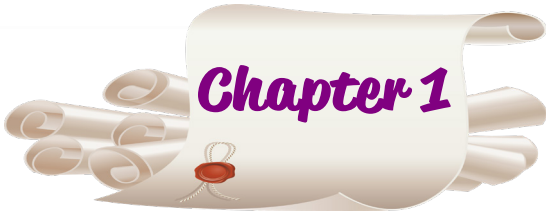


Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

### Verses 1-4 – Habakkuk’s complaint

This cry takes place in every generation, everywhere. The prophet cries out and intercedes for his oppressed people, saddened by the victory of injustice. The oppressed are defeated. His questions are clear, “Why Lord? Lord, how long?”



vs. 3. -- Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. Those who oppress are proud, they encourage fighting and division and thus help the devil enlarge the problem.

vs. 4 -- So the law becomes slack – people are not walking in righteousness. Ex: The Lord commanded us to love our enemies, but people complain that this is not appropriate these days. This there is no justice

The wicked surround the righteous – evil is everywhere victorious

Implementation: Notice how God may delay His response, so that you would continue to pray. Sometimes God misses hearing your voice, He wants to spend more time with you in conversation. God uses oppression to cleanse from sin

### Verses 5-11 God responds

A conversation with the youth – how does the Babylonian empire resemble Satan?

The Babylonian nation was oppressive. God gave His people over to them to edify them, “For a work is being done in your days” (Hab. 1:5) Every nation that defied the people of Israel symbolizes Satan and his evil kingdom, we should take everything that happened to the people of Israel as spiritual insight for our lives.



**Verses 16-17 – Habakkuk’s second complaint --**

The prophet cried out once more when he learned of the strength of God’s edification. It is edification, not annihilation. He cried out saying, “Are you not from of old, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die.” (Hab. 1:12) meaning, You are the Holy God, Who cannot bear evil, how then can You bear the oppression of Your people? But notice how he said, “my Holy One” (Hab. 1:12) understanding that in his sorrow, there is no one to cleave to like his Holy God. “We shall not die” – he understood that God, Who is everlasting gives of His Attributes to His people, thus He will give His people eternity.

+ O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment; this judgment fell on them due to their evil deeds. Even if the Babylonians come, they will not utterly destroy God’s people, all they will do will be to edify them.

+ O Rock, You have marked them for correction – the Babylonians are for correction, but God is the everlasting Rock, Who protects His people. God allows satan to bring tribulation on His people for their correction, but God, in His Holiness does not allow evil to continually oppress His people. No matter how sinful the Jews were, they were still more righteous than the Babylonians. God uses those more wicked than us to correct us.

**Conclusion:** God allows pain & suffering for a time to

correct us, but He never leaves us to destruction. During sorrows, it is beneficial for us to take refuge in Him!

What Attributes of God are mentioned in verses 12, 13? What does this mean to you?

The prophet begins to recount the characteristics of the Babylonians, “They take up all of them with a hook, They catch them in their net, And gather them in their dragnet.” As they are without a king.



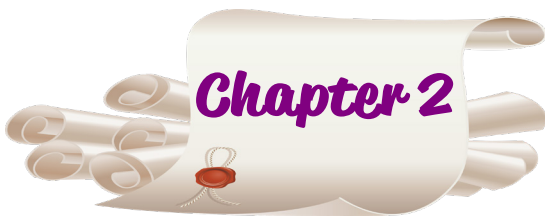
# Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

They treat the nations like insects which they trample underfoot. In verse 15 notice how they use many devices, the hook, net, dragnet. Satan also uses many devices, let us be careful!

Implementation: What is the relationship between this chapter and Ps. 118:18? For a time – Therefore they rejoice and are glad. Satan also rejoices over the fallen. Therefore they sacrifice to their net, vs. 16. People sacrifice to their gods, here they sacrifice to their nets, that is their army. They thought that their strength lies in their army, so they were proud of it and divinized it (Hab. 1:11). Thus do all who glorify in their human strength, who do not give glory to God. Notice when the Chaldeans rejoice, satan rejoices with them, "Because by them their share is sumptuous And their food plentiful." = they rejoice over the great catch—kings, nobles... the devil also rejoices when saints fall.

In verse 17, As the Chaldeans, so is satan; the more they catch the hungrier they become; they empty their nets to catch more, they never quit destroying the nations.



**Verses 1-3:** After Habakkuk finished his prayer, his conversation with God, he went up onto a watchtower awaiting the answer of the Lord, His salvation. Ask your servant, "What resembles a

watch tower in our present time?

"I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart" – he's awaiting an answer from God for his questions. He stands on the 'rampart'- that is on Christ our Rock, in Whom we take refuge. Such that our questions do not lead to weak faith. It is fine to ask questions with faith and trust in our God, not doubting nor complaining. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the source Who manifested to us the love of the Father. The source is also the Holy Spirit, Who declares the Son (Jn. 6:13-15). The Holy Spirit has come upon us, but we must daily enter our

room, away from the world's noise, to hear His soft voice. The Lord responds to those who stand on the rampart, the watchtower in their room, praying. We will not find answers to our questions by being angry with God or objecting to His wisdom; but in deep prayer, supplicating for mercy.

"And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer" -- The Lord responds to His prophet, His people, His prayerful, faithful ones. They, in turn respond to those who ask them.

"when I am corrected" – In humility, the prophet's complaint was full of love and faith. The Lord responded to him, then he to the people.

"2 Then the LORD answered me and said "Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it." – Write everything down very clearly for all, that they may understand and run to repentance. When we decide to repent we must run to it, time is short. The revelation is sure, even if there is delay the righteous will live, while the wicked will perish!

Write down the 5 sins mentioned in the chapter with their reference.

"3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time;" – The vision is not for now, but it will take place according to God's timing. God has prepared a certain time, it may seem to us like He is delaying, but He will answer.

Question: What have we learned from this situation about proper prayer?

### Verses 4-5

The prophet pours out his heart to God, why he's upset about humanity, and the disaster in which it fell in the form the Chaldeans.



Briefly, their characteristics: Proud, drunkards, greedy, covetous, cheats, oppressive, violent, terrorizing, they make others stumble, atheists.

4 “Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him” – in their pride, they take credit for everything, their power, strength... Be very careful of pride!!!

satan spoke to St. Macarius saying, “You hold vigils, we don’t sleep; you fast, we don’t eat; but through your humility you have the victory over us!”

As St. John Chrysostom said, “He who thinks he is above all other human beings will be brought lower than the whole creation.”

“But the just shall live by his faith.” – the righteous is to be patient, endure, be steadfast in the faith, and trust in God; trust that all things God allows for are for the good.

The unrighteous: 5 “Indeed, because he transgresses by wine”—you cannot trust wine: it causes one to lose his/her peace, and makes them act wrongfully (remember Noah). Its even more destructive in the proud; who, whenever he/she makes one fall, feels better about his/her self.

The Lord describes the fall of the nation of the Chaldeans through their greed, sinfulness, pride. But as for God’s people, they must hold fast to their faith, to righteousness, trust in God, no matter what the Chaldeans do. Surely, they will live, but the wicked will perish.



### Verses 6-8

**The first woe** – against those who are proud, unsatiable. There is a prophesy here about the tyrant nations, those against whom the subdued nations cry out. “Will not all these take up a proverb against him, And a taunting riddle against him” –



because his sin was pride, his punishment will be shame!

“Woe to him who increases What is not his” — what he gathered was not treasures, but dirt; not silver & gold, but dust; because of their love for the earthly, their souls fell into deep mire.

“7 Will your creditors not rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty.” – When they least expect it, the Chaldeans will awake to find themselves booty to those they oppressed. As they stole from the nations, the nations will take from them; as they shed their blood, their blood will be shed; as they destroyed their lands, their land will be destroyed.

Not only that, but they will also lose what they think they had, they will lose their money & honor. They will hear: “Oh, how you will be cut off!” (Ob. 1:5). He who thinks that sin, in its desire satiates the soul, will soon feel its hunger & depravity; it will increase his thirst and make him lose his life!

### Verses 9-11

**The second woe:** “Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house” – God is not against us being successful, but success must not be the result of evil doing or oppression. He who oppress & ravage others, “That he may set his nest on high” – thinks that his treasures will give him peace & security in uncertain times: “That he may be delivered from the power of disaster!” as they did when they built the tower of Babel, thinking to escape from floods in the future. But, “You give shameful counsel to your house,” – if you think that by stealing from others you make yourself secure, your evil will be returned to you. When the king of Babylon annihilated many nations, he sinned against himself & against his house which he built by oppression, which cried out against him. “For the stone will cry out from the wall,” cry out against the oppression by which they built their houses.

**Verses 12-14**

**The third woe:** "Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, Who establishes a city by iniquity!" Against those who build their wealth or cities by the shedding of blood, where the oppressor becomes a fierce animal. Nebuchadnezzar built his empire by oppressing his captives, shedding their blood; the result: "Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts That the peoples labor [f]to feed the fire" The fire devoured Babylon, left it completely desolate. This is the result of greed. This verse is for all those who hope in earthly matters.

"And nations weary themselves in vain" – the whole world is vain & will perish. This does not mean that we should not work, God created Adam to work in the garden and keep it in order; and He was with Joseph, and Joseph was a successful man. What is meant is not to be enamored by worldliness, as if we will live on earth forever, working all the time, not giving time for God. This also applies to those who have no continence, never thankful to God for what He gives them.

At any rate, the destruction of Babylon was for God's glory. It made it abundantly clear that God does not accept evil. God declared His glory by His judgment of evil Babylon. He does not glorify God by good works, will glorify God when he is edified by Him. "For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" The earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord – this was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ and the kingdom of Heaven on earth.

**Verses 15-17**

**The fourth woe:** against satan who deceives people into getting drunk with worldly pleasures; thus they lose their dignity & their nakedness is revealed. "You will be sated with contempt instead of glory. Drink, you yourself, and stagger!

The cup in the LORD's right hand will come around to you, and shame will come upon your glory!" – the wine will pour out is poisonous wrath. As when Noah & Lot got drunk and lost their dignity. Noah's nakedness was exposed &

his son despised him; Lot committed incest with his daughters. The meaning is that satan allures us with the pleasures of this world which makes us drunk, as does wine; thus, we lose our dignity, & the liberty of the glory of the children of God, which He gave us. This is also true of everyone who teaches others to sin; their shame will be multiplied. Therefore, it is better to hang a millstone around one's neck, than to put a stumbling block before anyone—drink then, the cup of the wrath of God! Their glory will become vomit. St. Paul counted the world as rubbish—this rubbish, according to satan & all sinners is glory. But vomit is a good word to describe this, as those who drink to get drunk will vomit.

“For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you;” – Lebanon, in this context, is used to describe mankind, which God created beautifully like Lebanon. Through sin, satan disfigured this beauty, as the king of Babylon destroyed beautiful Jerusalem and oppressed her people.

“the destruction of the animals will terrify you” – the Babylonian king also stole their animal --the verse points to the fact that satan can only deceive those who walk in life as animals, running after their desires. Satan took humanity captive by deceiving them into following their desires; thus, they lost their beauty.

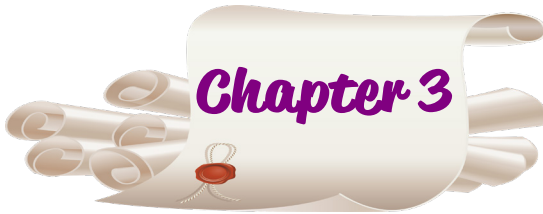
“will terrify you” – satan prepares trials for those who do not follow their earthly desires; but if one is terrified by persecutions, and abandons God, one will perish. “because of human bloodshed and violence to the earth, to cities and all who live in them.” -- God says, woe to satan for his destruction of people!

### **Verses 18-20**

**The fifth woe:** against idol worshippers – how will their idols help them on that Last Day??? Atheistic philosophies, which resemble gold or silver, likewise. As well as technology, which makes man think he is a god, who can do anything; they worship themselves & their strength. Over & against all these false gods, the prophet sees God in His holy temple, as His is Truth. Anything without God is useless; no one, not even the whole earth can stand before His

might and power.

Therefore, the prophet says to all, "let all the earth keep silence before him!" -- in the beginning, the prophet was questioning God's wisdom; his conclusions are that everyone will be silent before God's might and wisdom!



Amen...

**Where were the following mentioned? What does each represent?**

**Verses 1-3**

"A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk"  
-- the prayers of the prophets were

themselves prophecies to be fulfilled.

Shigionoth -- a musical string instrument, may come from a Hebrew word for foolishness -- This prayer is for the foolishness of the people, sung in a sorrowful tone.

"O LORD, I have heard of your renown, and I stand in awe, O LORD, of your work." -- When the prophet learned of the future attack of the Babylonians, he was deeply disturbed.



"In our own time revive it" -- he remembered God's mighty works in the past, and the future salvation, which God showed him. But between these 2 periods of time, as we approach edification, Lord revive Your work, and show Your glory in these painful years coming upon us!

"3 God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise."Teman -- the mountain of Moses in Sinai; Paran -- a mountain in Edom

**Verse 3** begins the prophet's vision which portrays God's response to his

prayer. The prophet remembers God's glorious acts in Sinai; God is showing him that these mighty acts will be repeated, God will save His people – see Deut 33:2, Ex. 19:20, 24:17 – these verses depict God's glory among His people. When God arrives, the heavens are filled with His honor, as He lives in the heavens, which represent those who cleave to God, His faithful ones have become heaven! "God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran" Teman in Sinai, Paran in Edom – God appeared in glory on Teman.

In Deut 33:2 – "The LORD came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran. With him were myriads of holy ones, at his right, a host of his own." Moses is saying that the Lord will reveal His glory, first to His people in Sinai, then, later to Seir, which represents the nations – the spread of Christianity to the nations.

**Verses 4-8:** A description of God, to Whom belongs all glory

"The brightness was like the sun; rays came forth from his hand," -- A description of the Incarnation. The sun represents the Divinity; the hand, the humanity. Meaning, the Divinity never parted from the Humanity.

"where his power lay hidden" -- He hid Himself, taking the form of a servant.

"Before him went pestilence and plague followed close behind" – in His Death, the Lord Jesus trampled over death, death fled before Him.

"He stopped and shook the earth; he looked and made the nations tremble." – The Lord judged and will judge the earth, and shake it. With one look of His eyes, all will fear & flee. Everything high & lifted up (science, money, power) will be brought down to the earth – "The eternal mountains were shattered; along his ancient pathways" God's ways are according to His eternal wisdom.

"I saw the tents of Cushan under affliction; the tent curtains of the land of Midian trembled." "Cushan" -- A city in Palestine (possibly Midian), not a Jewish city, which was a constant rival to the people of God. Any city or person opposed to the children of God will fear His appearance when they see Him and will relent.

“Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD, or your anger against the rivers or your rage against the sea” -- The sea represents the world. The river represents the children of God. Habakkuk is asking if God’s wrath will come upon all, the good & evil. But God will come riding on His chariot and save us – “when you drove your horses, your chariots to victory”

**Veress 9-13** When God came down to the earth, He was victorious over death, trampled upon the head of satan, destroying all of his power & tyranny, and gave us the New Testament. He sent His Holy Apostles to preach to the whole world the Good News of Salvation. Now, each one us is filled with the Holy Spirit.

“You brandished your naked bow; sated were the arrows at your command” -- In ancient times, the soldiers rode horses & carried their bows on their backs. When the enemy approached, they reached for their bows, directing it towards the enemy. Your words, O Lord are sonnets, perfect in their meanings. They enter into the hearts of people like arrows, changing each one, filling them with the Holy Spirit; like a beautiful river which transcends barren lands giving life – “You split the earth with rivers.”

“The mountains saw you and writhed; a torrent of water swept by” -- When the Lord put His feet in the waters, they covered all things, & all rejoiced and praised His glory – “the deep gave forth its voice.” when the Lord came down to the earth; Your glory willed the whole earth, O my God!

**Vs. 12, 13** – wrath upon the evil, salvation for the righteous

**Vs. 14-16** “You pierced with their[g] own arrows the head of his warriors;” -- When satan directed his arrows against the Son of God, he was defeated by the same, as the Cross defeated satan & his kingdom. Where then did these disturbed flee to? they became as nothing – “like a whirlwind”.

“15 You trampled the sea with your horses, churning the mighty waters.” – As the Lord saved His people from the Egyptians, splitting the Red Sea, He will save them this time also from the Chaldeans.

"16 I hear, and I tremble within" – when he learned of the power of the enemy, the prophet feared, trembling. Then he lifted his heart to God, he found out that this was for edification & was comforted. Each one of us, likewise feels alienated in the world, but we rejoice because God is with us, and eternity awaits us finally, "In the world you face persecution, but take courage: I have conquered the world!" (Jn. 16:33)

### Vs. 17-19

A question: What is the difference between 'instead of' & 'because of' A question for discussion: "What are the difficult circumstances mentioned by the prophet in this section? how did he react to them? What is the secret to the joy, as mentioned in vs. 19?

1. A sinner who continues in sin will lose his blessings. When he repents, the blessing may be delayed, but surely, he will receive them once more.

"Though the fig tree does not blossom" – I trust God, I will rejoice in His mercy, His blessings will once more return as long as I repent.

2. Generally, believers rejoice in Christ, even when they don't see the figs (material blessings), as the true believer does not rejoice in material things because knows that he will rejoice in the end, for eternity, even if he faces tribulation here.

3. These verses point to the end of time & the great tribulation, of which the Lord says, "And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold." (Mt. 24:12) & "And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Lk. 18:8). This is represented in vs. 17 – the fig tree symbolized the nation of Israel which the Lord cursed, as it lost its love for God. The vine



Though the fig tree should not blossom,  
yet I will rejoice in the LORD

~ Habakkuk 3:17,18

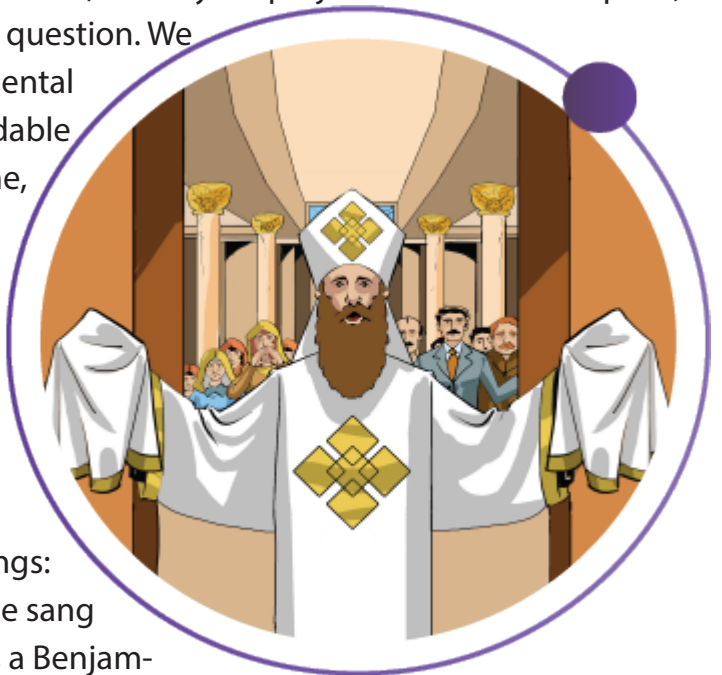
symbolizes the Church, which has been dispersed into multiple weak denominations, as well as spiritual joy, which is almost gone. The failing olive tree symbolizes the foolish virgins, who have no oil in their vessels. The “herd in the stalls” symbolizes the people in the churches that do not have spiritual nourishment. Yet the faithful rejoice – vs. 18 – the secret to my joy is that my God is my strength – “GOD, the Lord, is my strength he makes my feet like the feet of a deer and makes me tread upon the heights.” Like the feet of deer – quickly! Implementation: No matter how difficult, how oppressive circumstances are, God is found caring for you, sorrowful in your sorrow, rejoicing in your joy. God is not far from each one of us, He is beside us, awaiting our refuge in Him. Take refuge in Him, go into His bosom at times of trials, sorrows, then you will go through them in peace & tranquility.

### What life lesson did you learn from the Prophecy?

You decided to enter an art competition which will take place in 2 weeks. How would you feel? (Joy, pain, sorrow...) When your project succeeds at 1st prize, you can ask yourself the same question. We

may go through physical or mental sorrow without an understandable cause (the death of a loved one, oppression, trials...), but having a set over-arching goal – the Kingdom of Heaven, will cause everything to pass in peace as long as we cleave to our Lord Jesus Christ

Implementation: Search in chapter 3 for the same meanings: A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjaminite. Ps. 7





"Let it be according to Your mercy, O Lord, and not according to our sins" (The Divine Liturgy)

"He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave," (Phil. 2:7)

"He was the true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world." (Jn. 1:9)

"Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" (Is. 53:1)

The Incarnation

"The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice;" (Ps. 93:3)

"I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father." (Jn. 16:28)

"The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." (Rom. 16:20)

"Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and wages war." (Rev. 19:20)

"And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses." (Rev. 19:14)

"Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters," (Is 43:16)

"So you have pain now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." (Jn. 16:22)

Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

## The Joy of Salvation

**Why did God create the tree, and why did he not allow Adam to eat from it? Why did he put him through this difficult test?**

The wisdom of the commandment is to allow man to express his love for God & his obedience to Him, not forcefully, but in the spirit of love & freedom...

Respect for man's free will, through which man cleaves to God freely. God offered man so many things; the creature was to offer a sacrifice of simple obedience; which God would accept as

a sweet-smelling aroma. As when a father plants a rare flowering bush in his house for his son. He feeds, & waters it, and commands his son to take care of it and water it. The bush grows and flowers... When the son offers the first flower to his father, how much joy will the father have over his son who obeyed his command, watered & took care of the gift!

The commandment was support to mankind, as St. Athanasius says, "But knowing once more how the will of man could sway to either side, in anticipation He secured the grace given them by a law and by the spot where He placed them. For He brought them into His own garden, and gave them a law: so that, if they kept the grace and remained good, they might still keep the life in paradise without sorrow or pain or care besides having the promise of incorruption in heaven; but that if they transgressed and turned back, and became evil, they



might know that they were incurring that corruption in death which was theirs by nature: no longer to live in paradise, but cast out of it from that time forth to die and to abide in death and in corruption." (Incarnation of the Logos 3.4)

We must take note of the fact that God did not say to Adam, 'the day you eat of the tree, you will die', but, "in the day that you eat of it you shall die." (Gen. 2:17). You hand yourself over to death by your own free will. Disobedience carries the seeds of death.

Why all of this complaint about the commandment, seeing that God changed our punishment into salvation for us???

### **What happened to human nature when Adam fell?**

Eternal spiritual death—separation of man from God, the source of life.

Through disobedience, the image separated from its source, the fellowship between them was made void; sinful man ran away from God as it was impossible for him to be in the presence of Holy God. Can darkness abide in light?

The death of the body—the moment man ate of the forbidden tree, disobeying the commandment, decay began working in him. Adam did not physically die immediately after eating because of God's good will, to save mankind from eternally perishing. He left him to have children, from whom will come the Savior of the world. Also, through disobedience, man gave himself over to the authority of illnesses which lead him to death.

Eternal death – through the fall, man lost the glory of the divine image within him, losing his dignity, honor, & reverence. He was expelled from paradise, with an ashamed face, suffering from the disgrace of sin which left its strong ugly mark in the spirit. Adam & Eve were naked and unashamed because God's grace covered them, after their disobedience, they became aware of their nakedness and were filled with shame and disgrace, "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves." (Gen. 3:7) Adam was filled with

fear, even of his Creator, who was his joy and pleasure, so “He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” (Gen. 3:10) Man continued to live in this eternal death, which lead to physical death.

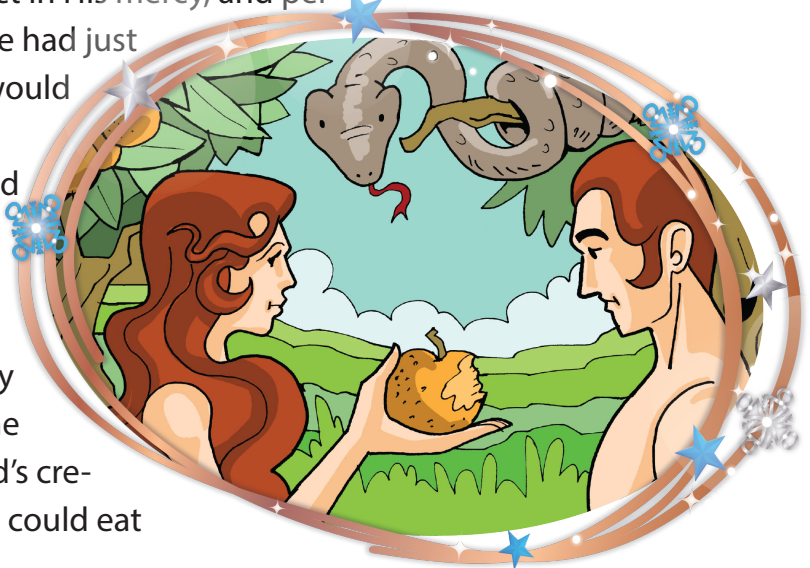
The inheritance of sin, and the corruption of the nature of mankind – sin abided in man’s nature, influencing his whole life. It completely corrupted his nature, so he lived in fear, anxiety, pain disease, it is even said, he lived in death. The effect of sin also extended to nature, so the earth did not give its fruit, but produced thorns & weeds, animals’ nature changed -- wild & ferocious, winds to hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, volcanoes fighting with humanity.

**Question for discussion: Why didn't Adam just repent, God accept his repentance & the problem would've been solved?**

**Why did God not just forgive Adam?**

This is not a good solution for the following reasons:

a. God is perfect in His mercy, and perfect in His justice. If He had just forgiven Adam, this would be opposed to His justice. He had warned Adam from eating of that tree. And He gave him the power to overcome falling by giving him wisdom, he was satiated with God’s creation, spiritual joy; he could eat



from all the trees of paradise except this tree alone. Therefore, if Adam sins & is not punished, which God had promised, this opposes God's justice.

b. If man opposes himself & changes his words, this is considered hypocrisy...

how, then would God change His word? "God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind. Has he promised, and will he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" (Num. 23:19)

c. If an earthly judge frees a criminal, this judge will have transgressed his

justice. How then, would the Judge of the universe free the sinner & break the law of justice?

### **Could God not save Adam by a mere command?**

In the beginning, all things were created merely by God's command. But after the fall, creation existed, and changing its nature required God's intervention to heal what existed through the unity of God, the Word with human nature. As St. Athanasius said, "The Creator, Who created all things with a word, must heal him, who exited, by the appearing of the Physician, Healer & Savior in His existing creature." "Now, if there were merely a misdemeanor in question, and not a consequent corruption, repentance were well enough. But if, when transgression had once gained a start, men became involved in that corruption which was their nature, and were deprived of the grace which they had, being in the image of God, what further step was needed? Or what was required for such grace and such recall, but the Word of God, which had also at the beginning made everything out of nought? 5. For His it was once more both to bring the



corruptible to incorruption, and to maintain intact the just claim of the Father upon all. For being Word of the Father, and above all, He alone of natural fitness was both able to recreate everything, and worthy to suffer on behalf of all and to be ambassador for all with the Father". Man, in general, not just Adam, through disobedience lost his image of God; he lost his excellence and became sinful & dead.

**Now, we come to the famous question, Adam sinned, what's my fault, what's the fault of the rest of creation?**

The whole of human race was in Adam. We were all in him when he was created, when he sinned, died, and became corrupt. We are counted as sinners, dead, & corrupt in him. Through Adam's fall, we inherited sin, death, corruption. Every cell in Adam's body became corrupt, as when an apple tree is blighted, all of its fruit becomes sick. The corrupt tree carries corrupt seeds, which if planted will bring forth sick fruit... The children inherited from their parents the corrupt nature filled with animalistic desires, and corrupt blood runs through the veins of all mankind, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me." (Ps. 51:5) Evidence of the inheritance of sin is that sin came to Eve from outside, from the serpent, and to Adam from Eve, who fell first. But what about Cain, where did sin come to him from? It came from within him, no one compelled him to it, but it was inside him, this is how all fell, even the prophets, "They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." (Rom. 3:12) Even though we did not commit the first sin, we were born with it, in addition to our personal sins. No one, born of woman is



without sin, even if his life is one day on the earth. The inheritance of sin is a fact.

Therefore, the creation needed a Savior

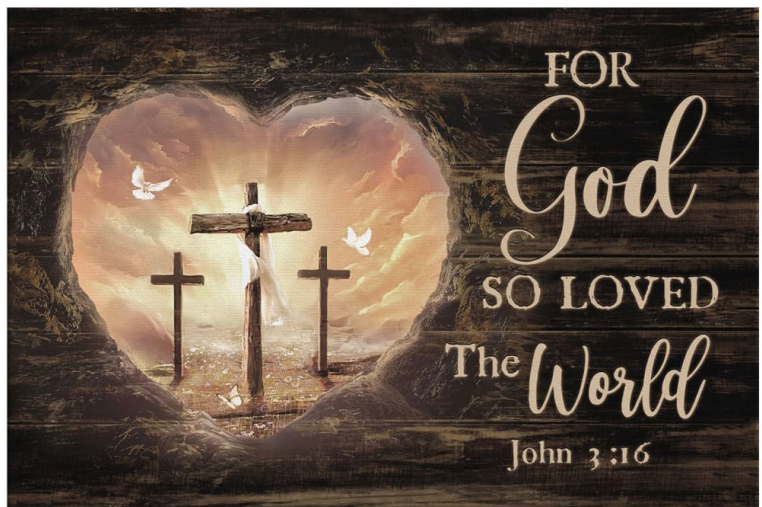
**Q: What strong reason did God have for His Incarnation?**

There are many reasons for the Divine Incarnation, some of which are:

**1. Love** – the strongest reason for the Incarnation is love, “For love is as strong as death,” (Song 8:6) “He took pity on our race, and had mercy on our infirmity, and condescended to our corruption, and, unable to bear that death should have the mastery — lest the creature should perish, and His Father’s handiwork in men be spent for nought — He takes unto Himself a body, and that of no different sort from ours.” St. Athanasius. Have you ever seen a very great man bowing down to the ground, you think, what is this great man doing? He bends down to tie a little boy’s shoes, maybe his grandson... What urged this great man to this but his love

**2. Doing away with death** – as death had gone into the depth of the life of man, life also must have in order to defeat death and give life to corrupt man.

“The Son not only gifts creation by calling it into being, but once it has come into being, he also holds it together through himself. He mixes himself in, so to speak, with those things that do not have eternal being by their own nature, and he becomes life to those things that



exist so that once they have come into being, they may remain and be pre-

served, each one according to the definition of its own nature” (St. Cyril Christ is One 75.1352)

“In what manner therefore can man upon earth, clothed as he is with mortality, return to incorruption? I answer, that this dying flesh must be made partaker of the life-giving power which comes from God. But the life-giving power of God the Father is the Only-begotten Word: and Him He sent to us as a Savior and Deliverer.” (St. Cyril on Luke 22:19)

**3. Unity with God** – The goal of the Incarnation was not only to lift sin, but also for God to be united with mankind. Thus, St. Athanasius the Apostolic says, “However, it is the same Wisdom of God, which through Its own Image in the

creatures, first manifested Itself, and through Itself Its own Father; and afterwards, being Itself the Word, has ‘become flesh” (Against Arians 2.81)

St. Cyril the Great says that God, Himself began the reconciliation, that God may be united with man: “two natures come together with one another, without confusion or change, in an indivisible union”. St. Cyril the Great used this analogy and so did St. Dioscorus.

In the case of ignited iron, we do not say that there are two natures: iron and fire, but we say iron united with fire. Similarly, we speak about the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, and we do not say “God and man”. In the union of iron with fire, the iron is not changed into fire nor fire into iron. Both are united without mingling, confusion or alteration. Although this situation is





not permanent in the case of iron, and here is the point of disagreement, but we only want to say that once iron is ignited with fire, it continues to retain all the properties of iron and all the properties of fire. Likewise, the nature of the Incarnate Logos is One Nature, having all the Divine characteristics and all the human as well."

**4. God's mercy & His justice come together** – When two fight and one would mediate, the mediator must be equal to both; not less than them, lest they despise him, not above them, lest he lord it over them & only figuratively solve their dispute. The mediator must also be loved by both; he must be trustworthy to both, one who fulfills his promises.

If we meditate on what happened in the Incarnation & Redemption, we find that the Lord Jesus Christ solved the enmity between God & man; He fulfilled Job's wish which he cried out saying, "Nor is there any mediator between us, Who may lay his hand on us both." (Job



9:33). If forgiveness & forgoing what man did was against God's perfect justice & and the death of man is against His perfect mercy, and in no way would God forgo His justice, nor His mercy -- truly a very difficult situation, who could solve it except for God Almighty? And, indeed He did solve it through His Incarnation -- mercy and judgment met together in the Person of our generous Redeemer!!!

## What is the meaning of – “He took flesh and became Man”



He took flesh means that the Invisible God took to Himself human flesh, same as our human nature. Became man means that the Invisible God became man and was like us in all things except for sin alone.. the Invisible God was seen in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ Who dwelt among us, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (Jn. 1:14). When He dwelt among us, we

dealt with Him physically, as St. John says, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled” (1 Jn. 1:1). God came down to our physical, comprehensible level & dwelt among us in a form which the natural eye can see, revealing to us the Divinity: “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” (Jn. 1.18)

**Did the Incarnation limit God?**

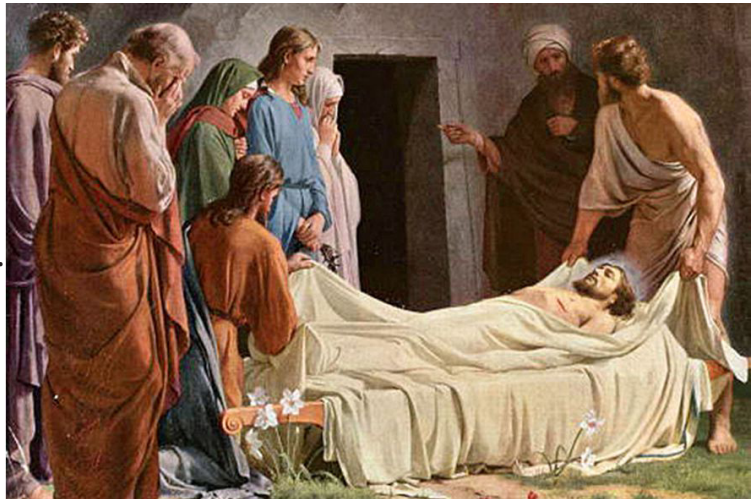
**Did the Incarnation put a limit on**

**God?** God has no limit. The Incarnation does not mean that God was limited to a certain space. God is not limited to space, even when He was in the flesh, He was not limited... ask your servant, how?



## Did the Incarnation demean God's glory?

Can God die? God cannot die according to His Nature. Then how do we pray saying, "Amen, Amen, Amen Your Death, O Lord we proclaim? The death of Christ means the separation of His soul from His body, NOT the separation of His Divinity from His humanity. This death was the death of His humanity alone; a separation of the 2 parts of His humanity, His human soul and His human body, without the separation of His Divinity & humanity. The Syriac Fractionation Prayer which we pray very beautifully explains this: "His soul separated from His body, but His Divinity never separated, neither from His soul, nor from His body. The human soul separated from the human body, but the Divinity never separated from either one, but remained united with them as before death. The divinity was united to Christ's soul & body while they were united. At His death, the Divinity was united to them both, while they separated. The Divinity is always united to the human soul and the human body of Christ after His Incarnation."



Proof of the unity of

Christ's Divinity with His soul is that His soul, united with His Divinity was able to go to Hades and release those who died in hope, the righteous of the Old Testament, placing them in Paradise.

Proof of the unity of Christ's Divinity with His body at His death is that His body did not see corruption and arose on the third day, leaving the sealed tomb in

power & mystery – this the power of the Resurrection.

What happened in His Resurrection?

What happened is that Christ's human soul, united to His Divinity, came to & reunited with His body, which was united to His Divinity. His Divinity never parted from His humanity, not before His death, nor during His death, nor after His death.

Who overlooked the world while the Lord was on the Cross? When He died??? His Divinity was in control of the universe; His Divinity does not die, and can never be affected by the death of the body. His Divinity is in every place, Who is also in heaven (Jn. 3:13). God controls & saves the world simultaneously through His Son. For this we glorify the Son of God, the Logos, not only because He was born of the Virgin, was crucified for us, but also because He is the Living One Who does not die, in the Psalmody of the 3 saintly youths, and "Agios", which we pray in every hour & every Liturgy.



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

## Pope Dioscorus, the Hero of Orthodoxy

### *The Coptic Orthodox Church*

'Coptic' means Egyptian, 'Orthodox' means true view. Our church was evangelized by St Mark the Apostle & Evangelist. The Church continues to hold to the same Holy Traditions, doctrines, rites & rituals delivered to her throughout the ages. Our Church stood firm against heresies which appeared during the first centuries where she led the ecumenical councils. Thanks to her scholarly patriarchs such as saints Athanasius, Timothy, Cyril, & Dioscorus, Orthodoxy was victorious and the original doctrines remained firm despite the violent attempts of the heretics to destroy the Faith. Then began the schisms of the other churches which left the Coptic Orthodox Faith.



**The appearance of heresies, and the ecumenical councils:**

Several heresies appeared in the early centuries of Christianity resultant to wrong interpretation or various Scriptural verses & wrong teachings. The Church called for meeting (councils) to research these heresies and pronounce judgment against them.

**Ecumenical Councils**

world-wide, attended by delegates from the 5 apostolic churches – Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, & Rome.

Local Councils – local bishops & priests met in local dioceses.

Some historians claim 7 ecumenical councils, other, 19, as various churches only confess some, not others.

The Coptic Church believes in the first 4: The Council of Nicaea 325 A. D. The council of Constantinople 381 A. D. The First Council of Ephesus 431 A. D. The 2nd Council of Ephesus 449 A. D.

**The First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea 325 A. D.**

1. The council met because of the heresy of Arius. Arius was a Libyan priest in Alexandria.

2. Summary of the heresy: Arius taught against the Christian Doctrine –



Christianity believes that God is One in His Nature, 3 Hypostases (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, One God). The Son is of the same Nature of God, Born of Him, Born of His Nature, an Eternal begetting; as light is born of fire, homoousios, μοιοῦσιος to the Father in Substance and One with Him (Jn. 10:30), the Son is God appearing

in the flesh.

As for Arius, he called for an opposing heresy, denying the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He falsely claimed that the Son of God, the Logos was not God, but a mere created man. That He was not equal with the Father in substance or nature, but resembled Him, and that He was not eternal. The result of his erroneous teachings was great misunderstandings & divisions that threatened the unity of Christianity.



**3. Council convened by:** Emperor Constantine the Great was the first Roman emperor to believe in Christianity & declare it the official religion of the empire. When these divisions arose, the emperor wished to keep the unity of the Church, so he called all of the Churches world-wide to the meeting.

**4. President of the council:** St. Alexandros, Patriarch of Alexandria



**5. Place & time:** In response to the emperor's call, the council met in the city of Nicaea in Asia Minor in the year 325 A. D.

**6. The number of attendees:** 318 bishops, not counting priests & deacons, who represented all the churches. One of the attendees was the shining star deacon Athanasius, who later became the patriarch of Alexandria & was given the title, the Apostolic Defender of the Faith because of his great defense of the true faith & opposition to Arianism. Patriarch Alexandros of Alexandria, who brought with him his deacon, Athanasius,



also attended the council.

The Decisions of the Council:

**a. Excommunication and anathema of Arius the heretic**, and his erroneous teachings.

**b. The composition of the Creed of Faith** to counteract the Arian heresy. This is the same creed we recite in our Church to this day: "We believe in one God, God the Father the Pantocrator who created heaven and earth, and all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not created, of one essence with the Father... Whose kingdom shall have no end."

### ***The Second Ecumenical Council: The Council of Constantinople 381 A. D.***

**1. The reason** for this council: the advent of a number of heresies, the most dangerous of which is the heresy of Macedonius, who was the Archbishop of Constantinople.

#### **2. Summary of the heresy:**

According to this heresy, the Holy Spirit was created like one of the angels, denying the true doctrine that the Holy Spirit is the Third Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, Who proceeds from the Father.

**3. Convened by:** Emperor Theodosius I.

**4. President of the council:** Pope Timothy, the Patriarch of Alexandria



**5. Place & time:** The council met in Constantinople in the year 381 A. D.

**6. The number of attendees:** 150 bishops, not including priests & deacons from all the churches of the world.

**7. The decisions of the council:**

**a. Excommunication and anathema of Macedonius** & his erroneous teachings.

**B. The addition of the last part of the Creed:** "Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-Giver, Who proceeds from the Father, etc.

### *The Third Ecumenical Council: The Council of Ephesus 431 A. D.*

**1. The reason for the council:** the heresy of Nestorius, another Archbishop of Constantinople

**2. Summary of the heresy:** Nestorius denied the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He began by denying the fact the Holy Lady the Virgin, St. Mary is the Mother of God, the Theotokos. He said, "Mary did not give birth to God, that which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of spirit is spirit. The Virgin gave birth to a human being as an instrument for Divinity."

He even said the Lord Jesus Christ was not Himself God, but a very blessed man, or a man inspired by God, who committed no sin.

This is in opposition to True Christian Doctrine that The Lord Jesus Christ is One Hypostasis with One Nature (from two, the Divinity and the Humanity) after the unity, without mixing or mingling or change, as we pray in the last confession of the Divine Liturgy: "Amen. Amen. Amen. I believe, I believe, I believe and confess to the last breath; that this is the Life-giving Body that Your Only-Be-



gotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ took from our lady, the lady of us all, the holy Mother of God, Saint Mary. He made It One with His divinity without mingling, without confusion, and without alteration.

**3. Convened by:** Emperor Theodosius II

**4. President of the council:** Pope Cyril the Great, of Alexandria, the Pillar of the Faith.

**5. Place & time:** Ephesus 431 A. D.

**6. Number of attendees:** 200 bishops, not including priests & deacons from all churches. One of the attendees was St. Shenouda the Archimandrite.

**7. The decisions of the council:**

**a. Excommunication & anathema of Nestorius** & his heretical teachings.

**b. The establishment of the Introduction to the Creed:** "We exalt you, the Mother of the true Light, and we glorify you, O saint and Theotokos, for you brought forth unto us the Savior of the whole world; He came and saved our souls. Etc.,



***The Fourth Ecumenical Council: The Second Council of Ephesus 449 A. D.***

**1. The reason for the council:** Phillip the Archbishop of Constantinople convened a local council & banned Eutyches, a heretic, from attending.

**2. Summary of the heresy:** Eutyches the heretic was an abbot of a monastery in Constantinople. Because of his great enmity with Arianism, he began responding to this heresy, but he went too far in his explanation of the Mystery of the Incarnation saying, "the body of Christ, because it is the body of God is not like our bodies in nature. His Divine Nature annihilated the human

nature. This meant that the Divinity mingled & mixed with the Humanity. This is against the True Faith, which is that the Divinity united with the Humanity without mingling, without confusion, and without alteration. But Eutychus returned from his erroneous opinion, and confessed the True Faith and the decisions taken in the previous Councils.

**3. Convened by:** Emperor Theodosius II

**4. President of the council:** Pope Dioscorus of Alexandria

**5. Place & time:** Ephesus 449 A. D.

**6. The number of attendees:** 130 bishops, with 2 delegates from the Pope of Rome.

**7. The decisions of the Council:**

**a. Pardon of Eutyches** after he confessed the True Faith in writing, and the validity of the decisions of the previous councils.

**b. Anathema of Philip**, Archbishop of Constantinople because he believed that Christ, after His Incarnation has 2 natures and 2 wills.



### **Implementation:**

Review the previous councils and find out: the hero of each, the heresy for which it was convened, the True Faith explained in each council.

### **Schisms in the churches**

The beginning of schisms: As explained above, whenever a heresy came up,

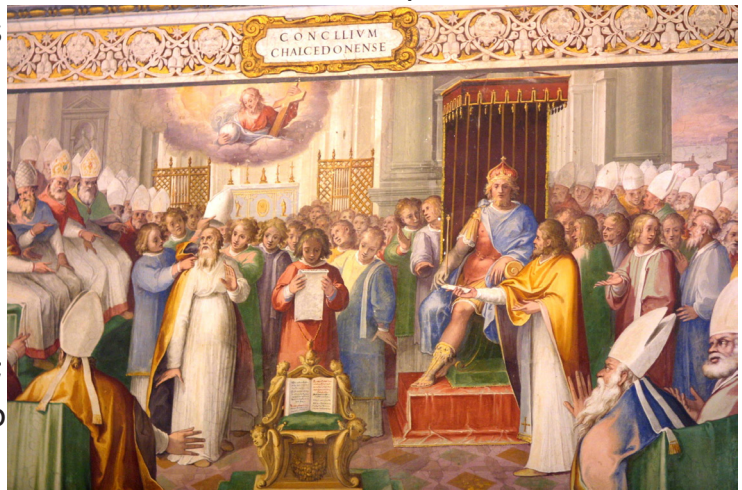
the bishops convened councils and with great effort were very keen on keeping the true faith and the unity of the One, Holy Catholic, Apostolic Church of God.

But, unfortunately, satan continued to attack the Church trying to divide it. The Council of Chalcedon was the first council to cause a schism in the Church.

### ***The Council of Chalcedon 451 A. D.***

**1. The reason for the council:** The Pope of Rome refused to accept the decisions of the Fourth Ecumenical Council (Ephesus 449 A. D., which met to look into Eutyches' appeal, who said that the Lord Jesus Christ had one nature after His Incarnation (which is true), but he went further saying, "The humanity was completely dissolved in His Divinity" (this is heresy). Therefore, Pope Dioscorus of Alexandria put forth the True Faith at the Council of Ephesus, as the Council decided that the Lord Jesus

Christ after His Incarnation is united in His Divinity and His Humanity in One Nature mingling, without confusion, and without alteration. But the Pope of Rome refused this decision; he followed the Archbishop of Constantinople (Phillip, who had anathemized Eu-



tyches). He adopted a new doctrine: The Lord Jesus Christ, after His Incarnation has two natures and two wills – this is in opposition to the True Faith.

**2. Convened by:** Emperor Marcian and Empress Pulcheria, per the Archbishop of Rome

**3. Place & time:** Chalcedon 451 A. D.

**4. Number of attendees:** 330-600 bishops (depending on the historian), Pope Dioscorus of Alexandria, who mightily defended the True Faith to death, but because of deception and trickery his efforts were futile.

**5. The decisions of the council:**

**a. Cancellation of the decisions of the Second Council of Ephesus.**

**b. Exoneration of Phillip**, Archbishop of Constantinople

**c. Anathema of Eutyches** despite his confession of the decisions taken in Nicaea.

**c. Denunciation & exile of Pope Dioscorus**

Pope Dioscorus was condemned as a follower of the heresy of Eutyches.

Comments:

The Coptic Church repudiates this council, and its decisions.

Mrs. Butcher the British historian writes, "The Pope of Rome, himself did not agree with the council of Chalcedon, nor its decisions, but through it he managed to crush his enemy Dioscorus; though, he was unable to gain from it his ultimate end, which was to have primacy over all the worldwide churches."

History of The Coptic Nation (2nd Edition)

Unfortunately, thus it is clear that the hidden reasons for this schism were personal gain, egoism & power.

It is fitting thus to summarize the biography of the Alexandrian Pope Dioscorus:

**Birth place:** Alexandria, Egypt

**His name prior:** Dioscorus

**Departure Date,** Tout 7, 171 A. M. Sep 3, 454 A. D. Place of his Departure, the Island of Gangra

**Papal duration:** 10 years, 1 month, 9 days Where: Alexandria & his exile, Gangra

**Emperors of his time:** Theodosius II, Marcian

After Pope Dioscorus fought the good fight and kept the True Faith, he departed on the Island of Gangra. This is because when he was called to the Chalcedonian council by decree of Emperor Marcian. When he found a very large number of bishops, 630; he said, "What is the issue of faith for which this great company met?" they replied, "This great multitude met by decree of the emperor." He said, "If this is by decree of the Lord Jesus Christ, I will attend and speak the words the Lord puts in my mouth to speak, but if by decree of the emperor, let the emperor manage his meeting as he would." And when he learned that Leo, the Pope of Rome taught that Christ has 2 natures & 2 wills after His unity, he emphatically tried to destroy this new erroneous teaching. He said, "Christ is One, He was invited to the wedding as a human being, and He changed the water to wine as God; neither was He separated in all His works." He referenced the words of Pope Cyril I, "The unity of the Logos of God with the body is as the unity of the soul to the body, and the unity of fire to iron -- Even though they are of two different natures, in their unity they became one." Therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ is One Christ, One God, One Nature, One Will. Thus, none of the council attendees dared to oppose him. Some informed Emperor Marcian & Empress Pulcheria that none other than Dioscorus, the Patriarch of Alexandria opposes them. So, they called him with the prominent members of the council and dispute with them until the end of the day.



# Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

But St. Dioscorus did not back down; he remained steadfast in the faith. This disturbed the sovereigns; Empress Pulcheria ordered the soldiers to slap him on his mouth and pull out his beard; his teeth fell out. St. Dioscorus sent his teeth and beard hair to Alexandria saying, "This is the fruit of



the faith". When the rest of the bishops saw what happened to Dioscorus, they agreed with the emperor in fear, and signed the tome of Leo which stated that Christ is two different, separate natures. When Dioscorus saw this, he asked to see the tome to read it. When he read it, he wrote at the bottom an anathema against everyone who denies the True Faith. The emperor was enraged and ordered his exile to the Island of Gangra.

He was exiled along with St. Macarius, Bishop of Edkow and two others. When St. Dioscorus arrived at the Island, the Nestorian bishop of the Island humiliated him. But God performed many great signs and miracles through him, so they all obeyed, honored and esteemed him because God uplifts those who

fear Him in every place.

As for St. Macarius his companion in exile, St. Dioscorus said to him, "You have a crown in Alexandria" & sent him with a believing merchant there, where he was martyred and received his crown.

St. Dioscorus completed his great





.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

struggle on the Island of Gangra, where he is buried. He departed from this vain life as a hero of the faith and received the crown of eternal life.

Since this great schism of the Council of Chalcedon of 451 A. D., the Church split into two camps, two families – the Chalcedonian Churches (Greek, Eastern European Orthodox & Catholic), & the non-Chalcedonian Church (Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian, Eritrean). From the 5th to the middle of the 20th centuries there was no communication between the two Churches. But since, there has been many ecumenical talks and meetings to discuss the Nature of Christ which have concluded with a common understanding among the leaders. A tome written by H.H. Pope Shenouda III was also signed at a special meeting at the Monastery of St.

Bishoy in 1989. The following is the agreement:

“ We believe that our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word (Logos) is perfect in His Divinity, perfect in His humanity... It is that the one eternal hypostasis of the Second Person of the Trinity has assumed our created human



nature in that act uniting it with His own uncreated divine nature, to form an inseparably and unconfusedly united real divine-human being, the natures being distinguished from each other in contemplation (theoria) only... We agree in condemning the Nestorian and the Eutychian heresies.

This agreement is a witness of the true faithful teaching of Pope Dioscorus, may the blessings of his prayers encompass all, amen

## The Choice is YOURS

### Better of Bitter

#### What is pressure?

To feel pressured is to be over-worked, anxious, bodily, mentally or psychologically. We all, from time to time suffer pain, trials, anxiety... either social, familial physical, economical, psychological or internal... Many are negatively affected and don't know how to deal with such pressures. Thus, we lose our peace and joy, the joy of life given to us by God. Our personalities largely direct the way we deal with pressures.

Some get physically ill, some spiritually or psychologically. Some overwork, become more productive. Stress is inevitable, but not all stress is bad, some pressures are positive, they stimulate a better outcome in us. The most important thing is to learn how to deal with life under stress.

Trials in the Christian life are incumbent on all, no matter what, even prophets and saints. Trials are not just for sinners because of their sins; they encounter all. There is a difference between a sinner who faces a trial because of sins and a righteous person who faces them because of the evil of others or because of things beyond his/her control.

All the righteous went through pain, God did not exempt them from it because



in it they were purified. Pains & suffering come in different forms, "Many are the afflictions of the saints, but out of them all will the Lord deliver them."

Why do we go through pressure, pain, trials?

Although God permits trials, they do not originate from God; they are a result of the misuse of human freedom. That is how our parents Adam & Eve fell, by which sin, pain, & suffering entered into the entire human race. But God's promise to help, keep and shepherd His children is still our source of encouragement, blessings, and victory.

***Sin and the fall are the main reasons***

***for pain. Other reasons:***

**1. Pain teaches us patience,** long-suffering & endurance.

**2. Pain teaches to come**

**closer to God.** It teaches us

to cry out to Him, to seek Him, to depend on Him;

He rescues us and gives us joy. Pain purifies, cleanses

us from our sins. Pain for mankind is like fire for gold,

which purifies it and makes it precious.

**3. Through pain, God teaches us lessons** we would never have learned

otherwise. For example, the departure of a beloved teaches us to think more intimately about our eternity, what will we face after death... we may not think of these things normally, unless we go through such pain.

**4. Pain teaches us that God is The Master,** All Powerful, Almighty; it



guides us to experience & understand this.

**5. Pain helps us to discover whether or not our love for God remains strong;** or do we only love Him for His gifts?

**6. Pain helps us to get rid**

**sin** and belittling spiritual things, as our teacher St. Peter teaches us, "for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), 2 so as to live for the rest of your time in the flesh no longer by human desires but by the will of God." (1 Peter 4:1-2)



### *Implementation*

#### **Which of these did not benefit from trials?**

Scriptural personalities who dealt negatively with trials (servants, please explain): Ex. 16:3, Num. 11:11-15, Lk. 10:30, Num. 27:14, 1 Kings 18, 19:4, Jn. 20:19, 21:4

Scriptural personalities who positively learned from pressures & problems: 1 Sam. 1:1-11, Ex. 14:12-24, Dan. 3:24-27, 6:16-24, 2 Kings 4:1-7, 19:35-36, 6:15-17, Dan. 13, Esther 4:15-17, Neh. 1:1-7, 2:1-8

Read the above references and discover the events. Where do you find faithfulness, trust, prayer, positivity... during trials?

How do we deal with trials and problems?

Before we can learn how to deal with problems, we must learn God's wisdom in allowing such things in our lives. Because we often ask why God allows His children to go through pain, unexpected tribulations, for which we have no explanation.

**“Conflicts can make you bitter or better”.**

Which do you chose, bitter or better? Trials can make us live in bitterness, evil sadness, anger, hopelessness, denunciation of life, unending comparisons. Or it can bring us closer to God, this will make us better people. Before you are 2 different ways in dealing with pressures, which all face in life. Some chose to live in a sea of negativity, hating life, envying others until they lose their life. Others become stronger, better, wiser through these trials; this is exactly God’s will for us through these trials.

**BECOME  
better,  
NOT BITTER**

— Ephesians 4:31-32 —

**1. Determine the reasons for the problem:**

a. Control your feelings—write down your negative feelings resultant of the problem. Train yourself to control all those negative feelings so that they do control your life.

Some feelings will not die – sorrow over **JW** people we lose, regret for lost chances; feeling related to events that changed our lives will

not go away. This, though, does not mean that when we have these feelings we are not healed, or that hopelessness has defeated us, not at all! This means that we must deal with these feelings day by day. Do not allow them to live inside of you, consider them as passers-by and exchange them with the present, positive, empowering thoughts. Do not allow them to leave you bitter, as the Lord teaches us, “persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed,” (2 Cor. 4:9). Understand that your pains, your trials are by God’s permission, from Him. If you accept them from His Hands, you will understand that they are for your good. Because God is good, He would never allow for anything

that would harm or hurt you; all things will be for your good at last. Also, God does not allow for anything beyond what you can handle; He will give you the strength to manage if you seek Him, if you ask for His help.

**b. Take responsibility** – accept your responsibility, whether in education, or those toward your family going through a trial, illness, or toward your friends. Listen to them & help them.



## 2. Form good habits:

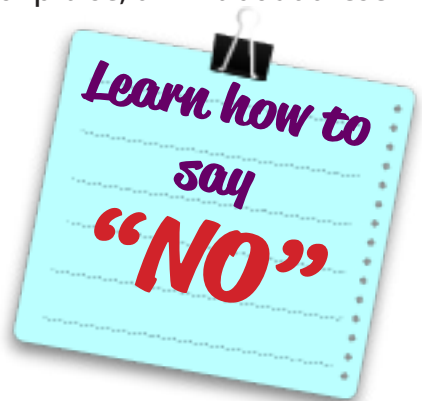
Forming good habits through new thoughts, new good works is a very important step for our lives & growth. Good thoughts will help us manage well and will give us a new outlook. This will enable us to separate ourselves from the past. We have the ability to choose our thoughts. Upon

these thoughts we build our all our habits. The Holy Bible teaches us, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Phil. 4:8)

discuss with your servant: everything that we exercise daily becomes a part of our life. What are your daily spiritual exercises?

**3. The 3 'A's' -- Avoid, Accommodate, Accept.**

**a. How to say, "No".**



Avoid adopting everything presented to you without study; learn how to say, "No" to those who disturb you and cause you grief, such as evil company, offensive places...

**b. Accommodate** – accommodation is not just acceptance of the fact & living in misery, but enduring the trial with a clear outlook on life. Its important for you to know, not only what you want, but what you want to be; not only what you were in the past, but what you want to be. What is your life goal? What is your end goal? Will you allow sufferings to take away your life, or will you use them to gain wisdom & strength by which you can serve yourself & others? Understand the goal of the trials. Pain has other goals – blessings, wisdom, growth, "For our slight, momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure," (2 Cor. 4:17)

**c. Acceptance of trials, pain:** is the first step toward healing. Acceptance of trials, though, never means forgoing what must be done. It is good to be patient, but patience does not mean withdrawing from life. We must await the work of God, but this does not mean that we are not responsible for taking decisions & actions. At times, we must accept things we cannot change and come to terms with things over which we have no control, but this never negates our responsibility to oppose evil when evil would destroy our life.

The Prescription

**+ Thank God in your pain & suffering.** Your thanksgiving is an expression of your love of God, your trust in His goodness, that He is always working for your wellbeing. It will also help you understand God's wisdom and His love in the events. It will remove all bitterness, and will give you the strength to face the problem in trust & strength.

**+ Pray to God, ask Him to declare to you His blessed will,** His intention behind the events you face. If you train yourself to come close to God, you will learn the lesson intended by God for you. You will also discover the goal behind whatever it is God allowed for you.

**+ Surrender your will to God's will,** even if you do not know what that is.

Place your trust in God, believe that He will lead you to restoration. God is very worthy of your trust & dependance; in Him your soul will have peace and you will find the right way. Therefore, be peaceful, take heart in obeying God and in His fear and He will guide you to the good way, "Judgment and justice take hold of you." (Job 36:17)

Implementation:

**What would you do in the following circumstances:**

Situation Feelings Unintentional Thoughts Other Ways of thinking Other Feelings

Someone I love & respect yelled at me

Someone asks about something very private

All my friends are burdened & won't talk

My friends decided on meeting & didn't tell me. I feel that one of my parents loves my brother or sister my sister more than me

**+ We all encounter difficult situations**, difficulties, mistakes... we each react differently. How we handle these situations determines the result. No matter how difficult the situation is, the first point & the healing is The Lord Jesus Christ, Who greatly encourages us, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." (Jn. 14:1) We are in great need of Him in us. We need Him, He is the only One Who can strengthen us in difficulties.

**+ Faith in God is not immunity against trials**, we will still feel pressures in life. But, simply, life without Christ makes dealing with pressures impossible, bitter. When we face difficulties, we may give into anxiety. On the other hand, we can understand that God can use them to strengthen our faith, to form our personalities. Thus, we will find peace in our sorrows, & strength to endure with patience when we concentrate on God.

**+ One of the most beautiful Scriptural verses** about how to deal with stress: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and suppli-



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

cation with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4:6-7)

**+Whatever your fears, anxieties...** surrender them to God in prayer; He is capable of carrying them with you, He will lighten your burden.

**Discuss with your servant:**

**How do you deal with low times,** being ignored, being ridiculed, embarrassment



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

Memorization

## MIDNIGHT PRAYER

Arise, you, O children of the light, to praise the Lord of Hosts, that He may grant us the salvation of our souls. When we stand in the flesh before You, take away from our minds the sleep of forgetfulness, and grant us alertness, in order that we understand how to stand up before You at the time of prayer, and send up to You the appropriate doxology, and win the forgiveness of our many sins.

ΔΟΞΑ ΣΙ ΦΙΛΑΝΘΡΩΠΕ

Behold, bless the Lord, O you the servants of the Lord, who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God. In the nights lift up your hands unto the Holies, and bless the Lord. The Lord shall bless you out of Zion, He who made heaven and earth.

ΔΟΞΑ ΣΙ ΦΙΛΑΝΘΡΩΠΕ

Let my supplication come near before You; give me understanding according to Your word. Let my petition come before You; revive me according to Your word. Let my lips flow with praise, when You have taught me Your ordinances. Let my tongue speak of Your words; for all Your commandments are righteous. Let Your hand be for saving me; for I have desired Your commandments. I have longed for Your salvation, O Lord; and Your law is my meditation. My soul shall live, and praise You; and Your judgments shall help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant; for I have not forgotten Your commandments.

.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of all ages. Amen.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of all ages, Amen.

Glory to You O the good and lover of mankind. Hail to Your mother the Virgin and to all Your Saints. Glory to You, O Holy Trinity; have mercy upon us.

Let God arise, and let His enemies be dispersed; and let all who hate His holy name flee before His face. But let Your people be in blessing, thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousands, doing Your will. O Lord, You shall open my lips; and my mouth shall declare Your praise. Amen. ALLELUIA.



## Memorization

## PSALM 12

How long, O Lord, do You forget me, for ever? How long do You turn Your face away from me? How long do I put these counsels in my soul, and these sorrows in my heart for the whole day? How long does my enemy exalt over me?

Look, hearken to me, O Lord my God: enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep in death; lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him": those who distress me will rejoice if ever I stumble. But I have hoped in Your mercy; my heart will rejoice in Your salvation. I will praise the Lord Who has done good to me, and I will sing to the name of the Lord Most High. ALLELUIA.



Memorization

## THE GOSPEL OF THE FIRST WATCH

Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him." Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out." But the wise answered, saying, "No; lest there should not be enough for us and you: but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves." And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But he answered and said, "Verily I say unto you, I do not know you." Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

**Glory to God forever.  
Amen.**



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

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

## Δοξα Πατρι κε Υιω κε ασιω Πνευματι

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

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

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



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

Memorization

## + The Litanies of the + First Watch

1. Behold, the Bridegroom is coming at midnight, blessed is the servant whom He finds watching. But he whom He finds sleeping is unworthy of going with Him. Therefore, take heed, O my soul, that you may not fall into deep sleep, and then be cast out of the Kingdom. But watch and cry out saying "Holy, Holy, Holy are You, O God; for the sake of the Theotokos, have mercy on us."

### Δοξα Πατρι κε Υιω κε ὰσιω Πνευματι

2. O my soul, be mindful of that awesome day, and wake up and light your lamp with the oil of joy, for you do not know when the voice will call upon you saying: "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming." So, take heed, my soul, not to fall asleep, lest you stand outside knocking like the five foolish virgins. But watch, entreating that you may meet Christ the Lord with rich oil, and He may grant you the wedding of His true and heavenly glory.

### Κε ν̄ην κε ὰι κε ῑς το̄ς ε̄ωνας των ε̄ωνων: ὰωην

3. You are the rampart of our salvation, O Theotokos the Virgin, the mighty and impregnable fortress. Abolish the counsel of the adversaries, and transform the sorrow of your servants into joy. Fortify our city, defend our governors, and intercede for the peace of the world; for you are our hope, O Theotokos.

### Κε ν̄ην κε ὰι κε ῑς το̄ς ε̄ωνας των ε̄ωνων: ὰωην

Rejoice!

*Deuteronomy 16:15*





THE LORD  
YOUR  
**GOD**  
**WILL BLESS YOU**  
IN ALL YOUR PRODUCE  
and in all the work of your hands,  
**SO THAT YOU SURELY**  
*Rejoice*  
DEUTERONOMY 16:15



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