

Mahragan El Keraza 2023



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

**English
Edition**

Grades 3-4



"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 Saint 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!

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The City of Joy

Let me introduce myself to you. I am **Patrick**, this is my sister **Jody**, and our friend **Maxwell**. We got to know Maxwell during our adventure last year to reach Mount Island and he came over to tell you about our adventure this year in which we will search for the City of Joy. On this adventure, we will meet **The Governor** of the City, and **Grandpa Happy**. Together with them we will live the best adventure. We would be very happy if you come along with us on this new adventure, and you would also learn the most beautiful stories during our Mahragan this Year, which is titled:

“So that you surely REJOICE”

1-The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

Through this lesson, we will learn the rites of the sacrament, and its importance,

“My joy is coming from God.”

2-The Journey of the Holy Fifty Days

Through this lesson, we will learn the arrangement of the Holy Fifty, and we will understand and live the true meaning of joy.

“My Joy in His House is Spirit and Life”



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3- The Parable of the Sower

Through this lesson we will learn the importance of the Holy Book, and how the word of God is the source of our joy.

4-Deborah the Prophetess

Through this lesson we will learn that our association with our Lord is the reason for our joy,

“My Joy Lasts as Long as I am With Him”

“My joy is When I live His Commandments.”

5- Pope Cyril the First

Through this lesson we will learn the story of a hero of the faith and how he defended the faith of our church; thus, he was a reason for joy for everyone around him. And from him you know the story of a hero of the faith and how he defended the faith of our church, and thus he was a reason for joy for everyone around him,

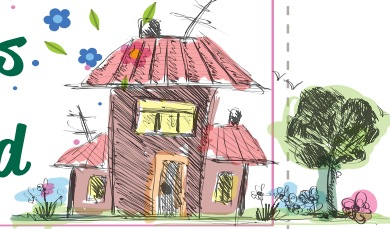
“My Joyful Behavior is Worthy of His Name.”



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

My Joy Comes From The Lord



Patrick: When we arrived at Mount Island, we found Grandpa the Captain waiting for us. There, we found out that many other people arrived at Mount Island before us. The biggest problem was that the place is very small and won't fit all these people. Grandpa the Captain

told us that he heard about a larger city called "The City of Joy". He told us that he heard that all its citizens are rich, powerful and very famous. So, we thought of going there to make a treaty with the governor and live there. Grandpa gave us the direction map for the road to the city. My sister, Jody, my friend Maxwell and I went to the city. When we arrived, we were very surprised at what we saw.



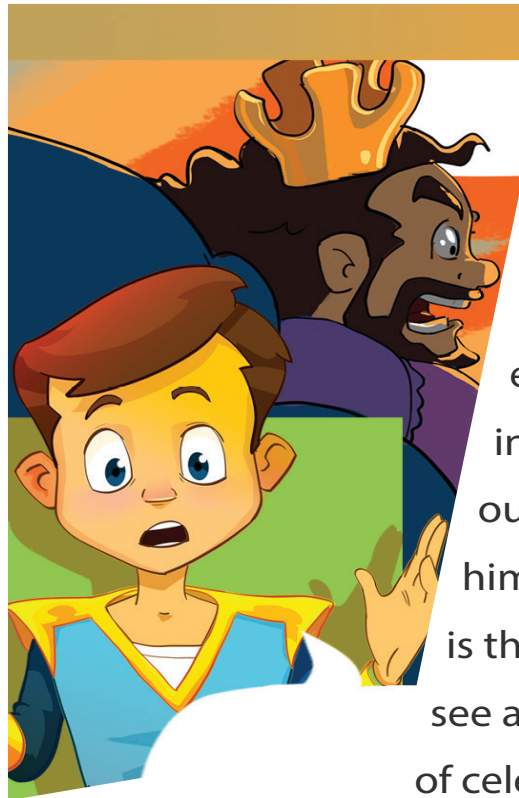
.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Patrick: What is wrong with the people here? They seem unhappy. They are not even smiling.

Maxwell: It is very strange, they are not saying "hello" to each other as if they never met before.

Announcement: The governor's daughter is getting married!



Jody: Of course!
We are in the City of Joy. For sure it will be full of joy. What a great opportunity to meet the governor and introduce ourselves to him. But where is the joy? I don't see any evidence of celebration.

Let's ask those people who are walking there. They are probably going to the wedding.

Patrick: This is such a strange place. The



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people don't seem happy. This doesn't look like a wedding celebration at all.

The Guard: This doesn't look like a wedding celebrations?! What do you mean? How dare you say that about the governor's daughter's wedding? You are arrested since you violated the rules of our city.



The Governor: Not a celebration?! What do you mean? How do you guys celebrate?

Maxwell: Honestly, it does not seem like a celebration at all.

The Governor: Why? What do wedding celebration look like in your town?



Patrick: My apologies, Your Excellence. But weddings are usually joyful not like this at all. Please allow me to tell you how wedding celebrations are like.



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!



Patrick: Marriage in Christianity is a holy sacrament... Marriage is not

just to make a family. It is

a bonding relationship

between God; the

husband; and the wife.

In the beginning, God

created the entire

universe because He

loves us and because he

wants us to have a

joyful life. He created all the things that we could possibly need before He

created man. After God created all things and made it perfect. Everything

was ready for man to enjoy. "So God created man in His own image; in the

image of God, He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen.

1:27). God did that because it makes Him happy when people love one

another and love Him, as He loves us. So God created man in His own

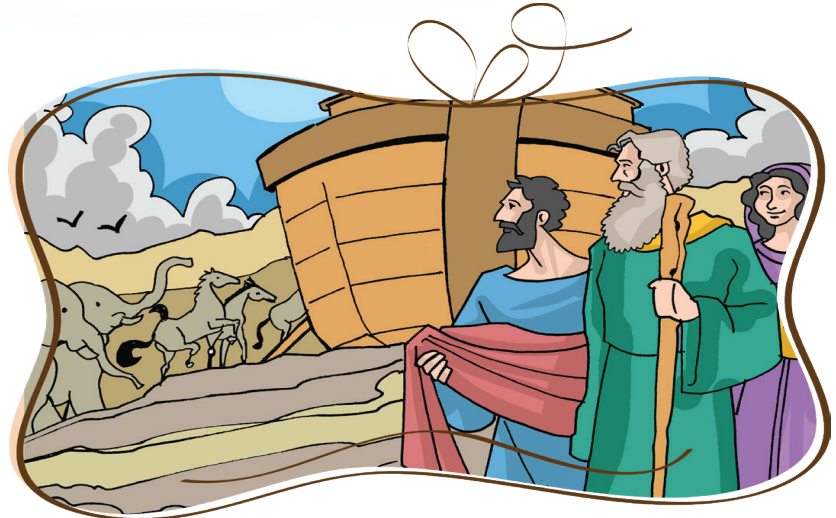


Rejoice!

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image and likeness and gave him the power over all creation, blessed them and told them 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it'" (Gen. 1:28).

More and more people were born, but unfortunately, they left God and did evil things. No one loved God except Noah



and his family. They lived according to His commandments. So, God told Noah that He would flood the earth and asked him to build an ark and to get inside it, him and his family to be saved and to protect them from the flood. Only eight people entered the ark. God told Noah to take with him into the ark two of each kind of bird and animal, a male and a female. And Noah did just as God told him to do. After the flood was over, and the earth dried up, God told Noah to come out of the ark. Noah, his family and all the animals exited the ark to start a new life on earth. Noah came out of the ark and built an altar for the Lord. He offered a thanksgiving offering to God. God smelled the sweet aroma and blessed Noah and his sons. Thus, Noah began a new life on the earth.

Jody: Also in the Old Testament, God blessed our father Abraham and



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our mother Sarah and gave them Isaac (the son of the promise), even though they were very old.

And when Isaac grew



up, God prepared a wife for him, and he married Rebecca, and the Lord blessed them and gave Jacob and Esau.

Also in the New Testament, at the Wedding of Cana, we see our God,

the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, bless the marriage by attending it with the Virgin Mary and His disciples. And the Lord fulfilled their needs and performed His first miracle; He changed the water into wine.

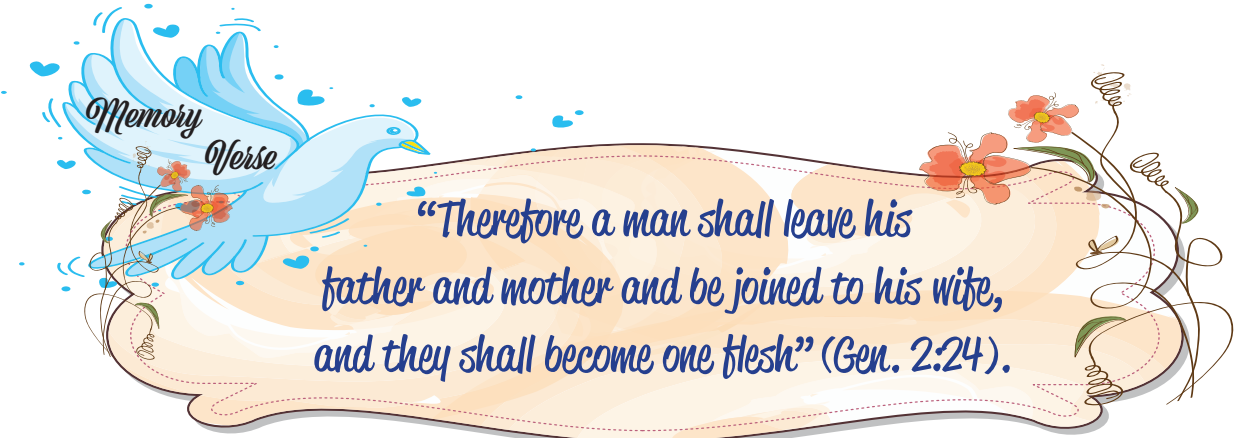
Patrick: Since our joy is from the Lord and is the True Joy, when



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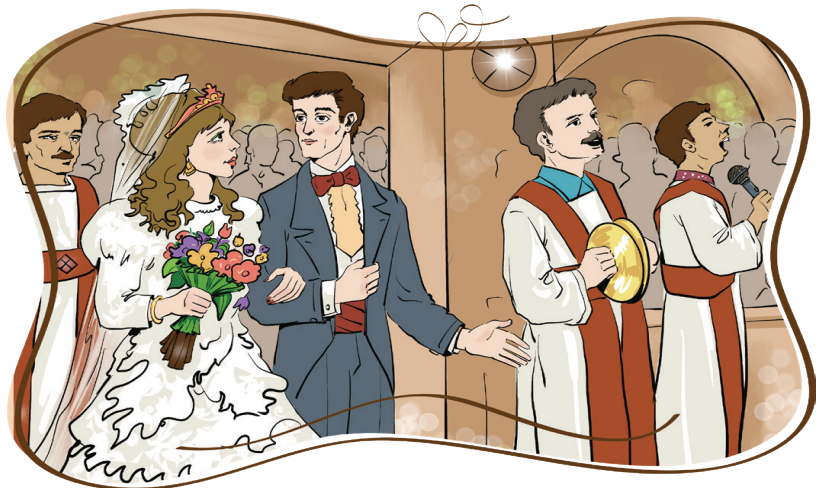
a man and a woman choose each another, the Lord blesses their choice and their love for one another, they get married.



Patrick: As I told you, marriage in Christianity is not only to make a family.

The Governor: I know it is a relationship between three: God; the husband; and the wife.

Patrick: Exactly! That is why the prayers of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is full of love and joy. Our joy is not by how we dress up or celebration. Our joy is by the blessing of the Holy Spirit on the bride and the bridegroom during the wedding ceremony in the Church.



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

explain to you what happens during the Sacrament of the Matrimony:



In the beginning, the bridegroom waits for his bride by the door of the Church. They enter the church with the deacons leading them with joyful hymns until they get

to the altar. When they get to the altar, Abouna takes the wedding rings from them and ties them together with a red silk ribbon (Zinar) to remind us that God is the one who joins them together.

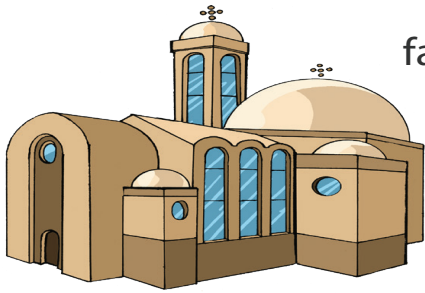
Then Abouna begins the prayer by making the sign of the cross on the rings and the couple three times in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity blesses the Sacrament. With each sign of the cross, Abouna ties a knot in the Zinar as a symbol that Christian marriage cannot be broken. After this, Abouna prays the Thanksgiving Prayer. The deacons sing all the responses in the joyful tune.

Jody: Then, Abouna prays the Prayer of the Vestments and dresses the groom and bride with robes: A royal



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cloak is placed on the groom. He must now lead his family to a spiritual, God-fearing life; he must lead his family in prayer (the family altar). The bride is also dressed in the same as she shares with her husband in leading the family and raising the children of God. While this is happening, the deacons pray beautiful hymns.

Patrick: After this, we read from the Holy Bible: St. Paul: Eph. 5:22-6:3; Psalm 19:5-6, 128:3-4 and, Holy Gospel – Matt. 19:1-6. The readings speak of: The husband's and the wife's role in the family; The bridegroom is to love his bride as the Lord Jesus Christ loves His Church; and, as the Church submits to her Lord, so must the wife to her husband and be obedient to him. Surely, the law in marriage for us is:



*Therefore, what God has joined together,
let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6).*



The couple must learn how to conduct their household in a Christian manner, so that it becomes a small church. As we read the Gospel, "and the two shall become one flesh," Abouna puts the wedding bands on the bride and groom.

Jody: Next, Abouna prays twelve prayers, asking God to bless the couple and to give them grace, as He blessed Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and his Rachel and Leah, Joseph and his wife, and as He attended and blessed the wedding of Cana. At the end of each Prayer the congregation responds: "Lord have mercy."

After the Prayers, Abouna prays over the anointing oil, also asking God for blessings and the work of the Holy Spirit in the couple's new church.

Patrick: Then, Abouna prays over the crowns and places them on the heads of the groom and bride. The groom becomes king over his family, and the bride a queen in her house.

The Governor: Is that why you call the wedding, or the sacrament of matrimony, "the Prayer of Crowning"?

Patrick: Exactly! This is when Abouna says, "'O Lord, set upon Your servants crowns of unvanquished grace. Amen! Crowns of elevated and everlasting glory. Amen!" Since God is in the midst of the family, "the new church," therefore it is glorious.



Rejoice!

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Then comes the most holy, the most important, moment in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony: The Prayer for the Invocation of the Holy Spirit.

We know it when we see Abouna putting his cross on the heads of the couple as he brings their heads together. This is so that they may have unity of thought and body. He then says, "**Crown them with glory, O Father, Amen; Bless them, O only begotten Son,**

Amen;

Sanctify them,

O Holy Spirit,

Amen!" Because

the blessing is that of the Holy Trinity.

After the Holy

Spirit comes upon

the couple, and they are one flesh, the groom is given his bride, and the deacon cries out, "Receive, O groom your bride, for she is yours, as the Lord Jesus Christ has granted her to you!"



.....*So that you surely*

Rejoice!

Then Abouna puts a veil on their hands (a reminder of the importance of their participation in the Eucharist, to be united with the Lord Jesus Christ in one body), then he gives the bride and groom their commandments. Finally, Abouna prays a concluding prayer, supplicating God to bless the couple, and give them unifying love, as they kneel before the altar with the white veil on their hands. This signifies that they will live a life that honors God's commandments. Abouna dismisses them in peace, and the deacons process, as the couple follows, out to the door of the church as they sing joyful hymns.

Patrick: Thus, in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, Abouna prays for the couple - man and woman - and the Holy Spirit dwells in them, and they become one flesh. God unifies them. Their home becomes a holy church where God dwells in the fullness of joy.

The Governor: These are very joyful rites, but completely different from our laws!



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

*My Joy in His House
is Spirit and Life*



The Governor: Wait! Now I remember that I heard about that when I was a child, but I don't remember who said it and why. I am not sure if he is still alive.

The Guard: Yes, your majesty. His name is Gedo Happy. He is still alive, but he is in prison. Your father had put him in jail because he was saying things that are different than what we usually do in our country.



Maxwell: What?!
Prison!

Jody: Can we meet him, please?

Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

Gedo Happy: We're from a nearby city. When we came to your city, we wanted to know why everybody here was frowning, looking down, and why no one greeted each other.

The Governor: Oh no! Imprisoned?
The governor agreed to

let them visit Gedo Happy in prison.



Gedo Happy: So, the story started when a man named "Stranger" came and lived in our town. He gave money to those who wanted to become rich under one condition; they are not allowed to help anyone else. If someone wanted to become beautiful, he would make them beautiful, but he is not allowed to smile at all. And those who wanted to be strong, he would make them strong, but they have to spend the rest of their lives looking down to the ground; and so on. At first, the people thought they'd be happy when he gave them what they wanted and were afraid to disobey his conditions so that they wouldn't lose their money, beauty, power... they thought this would be their source of joy. Eventually, the



whole city came to live in this condition which you see. And Stranger even influenced the governor of the city to change the laws.

Jody: These sure are strange conditions! We have a question, why are you in prison in the first place?

Gedo Happy: Because I was trying to explain to the people that the things which Stranger gave them were not going to make them happy, and one day I decided to tell them a story from the Book of the Joyful Laws over the radio through the city intercom. That was the law their city used to follow from the beginning. And that's when they arrested me; I've been trapped here ever since. I'm sure you want to know the story.



I told them about what joy is and where it comes from.... let me tell you what I said:

Rejoice!

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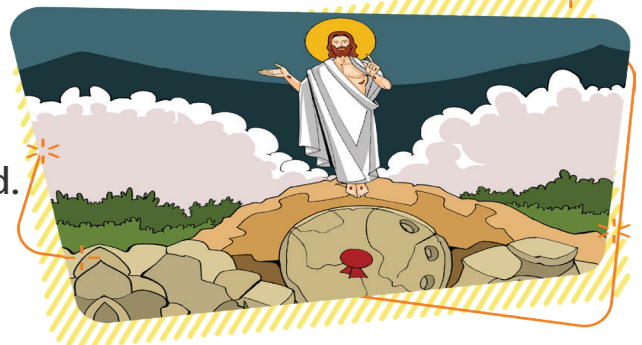
Gedo Happy: Since the beginning of creation, the secret to man's joy has been his presence with God, but because of sin, man was separated from God. Then we all needed someone to save us from sin and its



consequences. God surely achieved His promise when he took flesh from the womb of our mother, St. Mary, and redeemed us by dying on the Cross in our place. After three days, early Sunday morning, He rose from the dead, victori-

ous over death by the power of His Divinity. He continued to appear to many, multiple times, and in various places for forty days, until the day He

Ascended to heaven. All were overjoyed by His resurrection from the dead. And, ten days after His Ascension, He



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

sent us the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, whose fruit includes true, everlasting joy. I told them that in order for us to have everlasting joy, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit; then, I explained to them how we can be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Patrick: By participating in the means of grace, receiving the Holy Mysteries, praying, fasting, giving alms, and reading the Holy Bible, and other works by which one has a good relationship with God.

Gedo Happy: Good job! I taught them not to let Stranger deceive us by telling us that he can give us joy and that our Coptic Orthodox Church helps us to be filled with the Holy Spirit more and more through Her rites and prayers. Then I told them how our Church has arranged a beautiful journey of joy for the entire Holy Fifty days following the resurrection. Those who understand this journey and live it are always filled with joy.

Maxwell: Would you please tell us about the journey of the Holy Fifty days?



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**Thomas Sunday.
The Faith Sunday
John 20:19-31**

The First Sunday



On the Sunday of the Resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to His disciples as they were gathered in the Upper Room. The Holy Bible tells us,



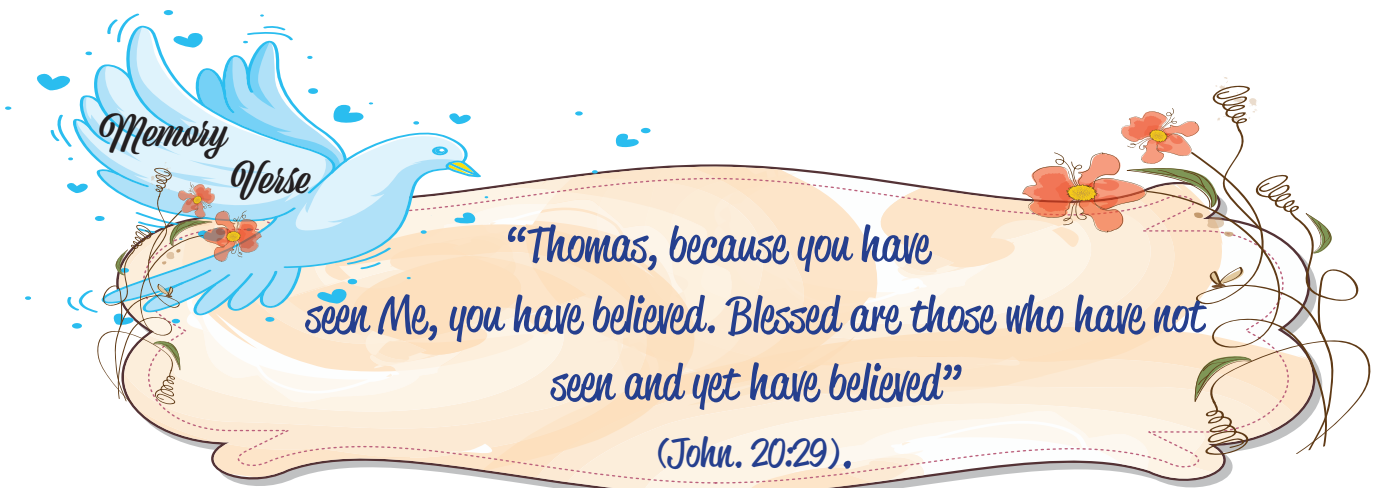
At that time, Thomas was not with them. When the disciples told Thomas that the Lord appeared to them, he did not believe them. Therefore, the First Sunday after Resurrection Sunday, the Lord appeared again to His disciples while Thomas was with them, so that he would be assured of



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

His resurrection. "Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing' And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:28). Jesus said to him,



The Church calls the Sunday after Resurrection Sunday, Thomas Sunday, and "The Sunday of Faith" as we joyfully believe that the Lord Jesus Christ victoriously defeated death; He arose and granted us eternal life—this is true joy!



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15



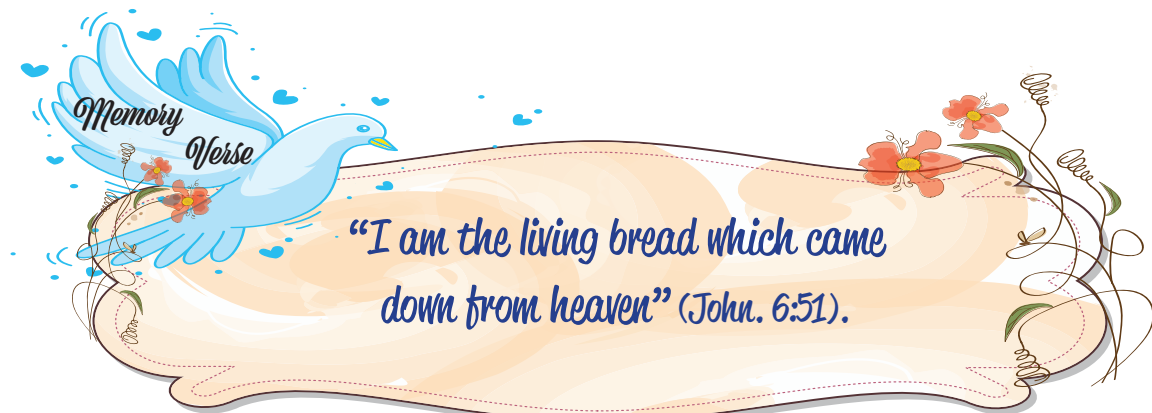
*Christ is the Bread of Life.
The Sunday of Satisfaction
John 6:54-58*

The Second Sunday

During the second Sunday of the Holy Fifty days, we learn how to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ as He is the source of our joy. We do this by receiving His Holy Body and Precious Blood. Therefore, in the Gospel of the second Sunday after the Resurrection, the Lord Jesus tells us, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (Jn. 6:56).

Jody: This means that our joy and our satisfaction is the Lord Jesus.

Gedo Happy: Exactly! And in the readings of the second Sunday, the Lord Jesus reassured us that He is the Bread of Life when He said,



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

*Christ is the Living Water
The Sunday of Watering
John 4: 1- 42*

The Third Sunday

We are satisfied through our Lord Jesus, the Bread of Life, and we are quenched by the Lord Jesus, the Water of Life.

Therefore, the Gospel of the third Sunday in the journey of the Holy Fifty days speaks to us about the Samaritan woman and what the Lord said to her when He explained to her what the true source of joy is, saying, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst" (Jn. 4:13-14). Through the Lord's conversation with the Samaritan woman, she believed and was watered, because she knew the Lord Jesus and told people about Him. So, all who live with the Lord Jesus and are watered by His words will never thirst.



Patrick: And he will definitely always live in joy. What about the Fourth Sunday after the Resurrection? What does our Church teach us then, Gedo Happy?



Rejoice!

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*Christ is the Light of our Life
The Enlightenment Sunday
John 12:35-43*

The Fourth Sunday



Gedo Happy: It tells us that our joy is that the light of our life is the Lord Jesus. After mankind was living in darkness because of sin, when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross and rose from the dead, He forgave us our sins and freed us from the sentence of death over us; and He renewed our nature. Thus, He moved us from darkness to life, from Hades to Paradise. Now the Lord became the light of our life. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ tells us on the Fourth Sunday, "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light" (Jn. 12:36). Resurrection means a life of continuous joy for us, living in the Light, as we are children of God, children of the Light.



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Christ is the Way of Life
The Sunday of the Way
John 14:1-11

The Fifth Sunday



Our ultimate goal during our trip in the Holy Fifty days is to reach a happy eternal life. Real happiness is to live with our Lord Jesus in heaven.



In order to do so, we need to follow the right path. Our Lord Jesus came to earth to teach us that He is the true and the ONLY way, and we have to seek him, as he said: I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

This Sunday precedes Ascension

Thursday. After Jesus's resurrection by 40 days, He ascended to prepare a place for us in the heaven, and thus we can experience eternal joy.



Rejoice!

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*Christ is the Conqueror of the
World. The Sunday of Conquest
John 16:23-33*

The Sixth Sunday



In the Gospel of the sixth Sunday, God said “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Through Jesus’ incarnation, crucifixion, defeating of death and resurrection, He conquered Satan. Once we believe in our Lord Jesus, we gain the power to conquer Satan, and enjoy everlasting happiness. This is exactly what our teacher saint John the apostle explained in his message when he said: “And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith” (1 John 5:4).



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

*The Pentecost Feast
The Descend of the Holy Spirit
John 15:26, 16:1-15*

The Seventh Sunday



Our Lord Jesus promised His disciples that He was not going to leave them alone after His ascension. He would send them the Holy Spirit to comfort them, make them happy, and give them strength to preach the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to the whole world. As He promised and said,

*Memory
Verse*

*"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has
come upon you" (Acts 1:8).*



Rejoice!

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The day of Pentecost is a day of joy because it is the day of the birth of the church. The Holy Spirit continues to descend upon the sacraments and work in the church. He provides us with real joy and makes us happy. This is the journey of our church during the Holy Fifty days, where the church leads us to live the truly joyful life through each of the Sundays.

Gedo Happy: And this is the story that I read to the citizens of my city.

Maxwell: I really enjoyed everything you told us about the journey of the Holy Fifty days. Thank you, Gedo Happy.

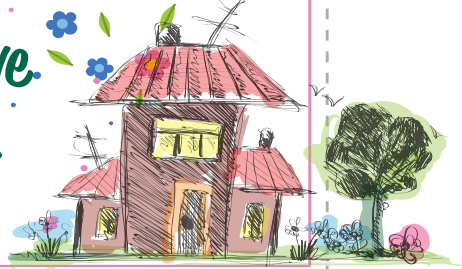
Since we now understand what happened to Gedo Happy and why he was put in jail, let's go and meet the governor again.



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

*My Joy is When I Live
His Commandments*



Patrick: Your Majesty, we have a small request, and we hope that you do not let us down. Would you mind setting Gedo Happy for a retrial, and evaluate whether he was innocent? We are confident of your justice and tenderness in making decisions!



The Governor: Agreed... Go get Gedo Happy from his cell.

Gedo Happy arrived and told the governor everything and started reading the book Constitution of Joy.



The Governor: Wow... Constitution

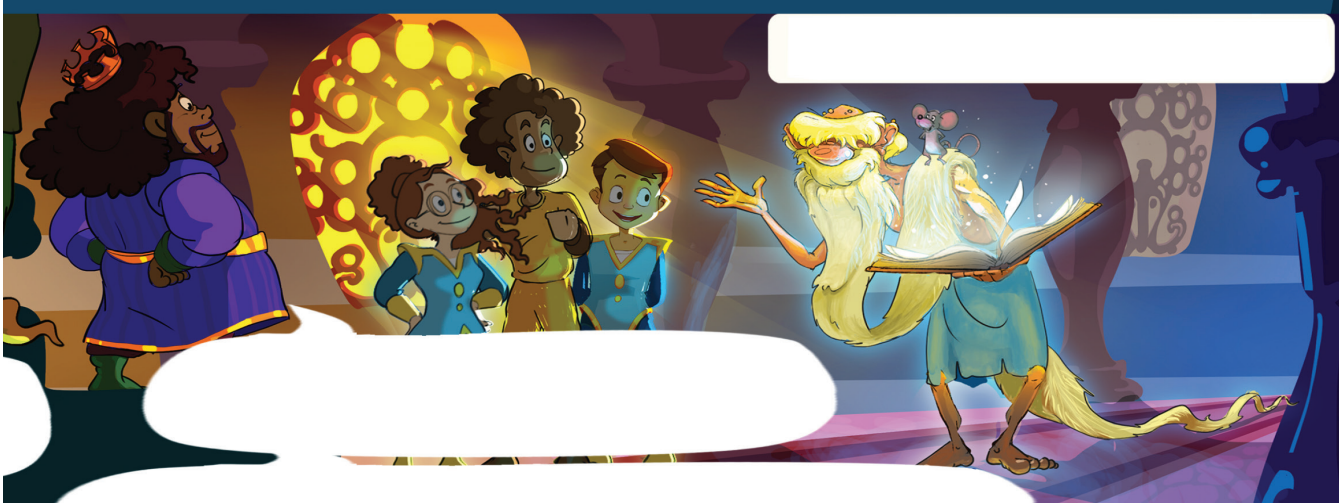
of Joy is a really good and cheerful book. However, based on the current legislation, I cannot change any existing law unless the citizens ask for a change.

Jody: I have an idea, how about having Gedo Happy read the book "Con-



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15



stitution of Joy” on the city’s radio, so everyone in the city will listen to the words of the book and change will definitely take place.

If they listen to the words of the book Constitution of Joy, they will like the ideas in there, and they will want to change the existing law.

So, Gedo Happy started reading the book Constitution of Joy on the city’s radio every day.



Maxwell: Gedo Happy has been reading on the radio for a while now, and only a limited number of people are convinced by what he says and have requested a change to the existing law, but what about the rest of the



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Rejoice!

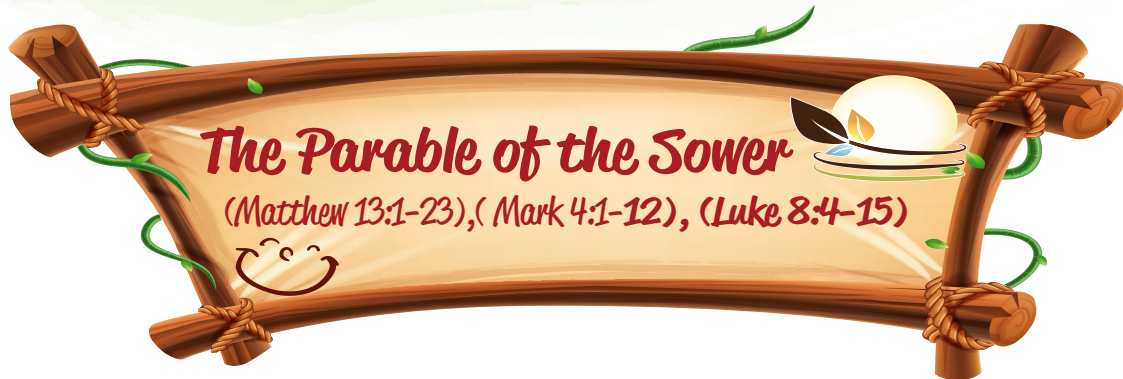
people? The number is extremely limited, and people do not want to listen and change their mentalities. It looks like there is no hope for change.

Patrick: Just wait... What is happening here is completely normal. People are different and they do not react to what they hear by the same degree. Some people would not even listen to what was being broadcasted, others would listen, but would take what is being said superficially. Others really liked what they heard, but are satisfied with the existing law, and finally, a group of people would really listen and implement change. This is exactly like a parable told by our Lord Jesus a long time ago... let me tell you about it.



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15



Patrick: When our Lord Jesus Christ was living with us on earth, he used parables to explain spiritual ideas to the multitudes. These parables are usually extracted from everyday events that occur in their surrounding environment, and by doing so Jesus conveys his message and teachings through stories and parables. The parable that I want to talk about is the "Parable of the Sower;" and, Jesus told it to explain that in order to live in lifelong happiness you need to regularly listen to God's word and implement what you hear without being discouraged by any surrounding obstacles.

Jody: Hey Patrick, should we let them read the parable from the Bible first?

Patrick: That's a good idea, the parable is found in the Gospel of our teacher Saint Matthew 13:1-2).



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Please help the governor and Maxwell understand the parable. Get your own notebook, and write down each of the following points:



1. Difficult words; 2. God's promise or commandment verse that you liked and plan to memorize them.

Patrick: The parable says that one day our Lord Jesus met with the multitudes by the sea and then sat in a boat while the whole multitude stood on the shore, and He spoke many things to them in parables saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow..." Do you know what the sower needs to start sowing?

Maxwell: He needs to place a seed in the ground, and he then needs to water it, and he definitely needs the sun to help the seed to grow.



Patrick: Exactly! The sower, that our Lord Jesus mentions, drops some seed on the



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

wayside, and others on a stony place, and some among the thorns, and finally some on good ground.

Before I explain what happened to the seeds in each of those places, I'll first tell you who the sower represents, and what is meant by the seeds. The sower represents our Lord Jesus, and the seed is His message, and the land is each one of us. Through this parable Jesus wanted to explain to the multitudes that He sends his words/message to every one of us, and for God's message to have an action, each one of us should have a role. Our role is to listen to His words, and then live by them. Because this gets us closer to God and makes us happy all the time. Because his word is spirit and life. His words are our joy.

Maxwell: This means that God wants us to understand that the place where the seeds fell represents groups of people who deal differently with the word of God when they hear it.

Jody: Exactly, Maxwell! I'll explain to you now where the seeds fell, what happened to each place, and what that means.



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

*The First Ground:
The Seeds That Fell on The Wayside*

The Lord said, the birds came and ate them... they stole the seeds. Just like those who hear the word of God, but refuse to do His will, nor remember His commandments in their hearts.

Therefore, the devil easily steals God's word from their hearts.



Patrick: It's like this everyone has the Holy Bible in their homes, and knows they're supposed to read it every day, but they don't.

The Governor: This is like the people of the city who don't want to obey the Book of Joy; they will never be happy.

Jody: Our Lord told us this parable to teach us so that we wouldn't do that. We are to keep the word of God inside us and do His will, this is the only way we'll find joy.



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

*The Second Ground:
The Seeds That Fell on Stony Ground*



Do you think these seeds will be able to grow?

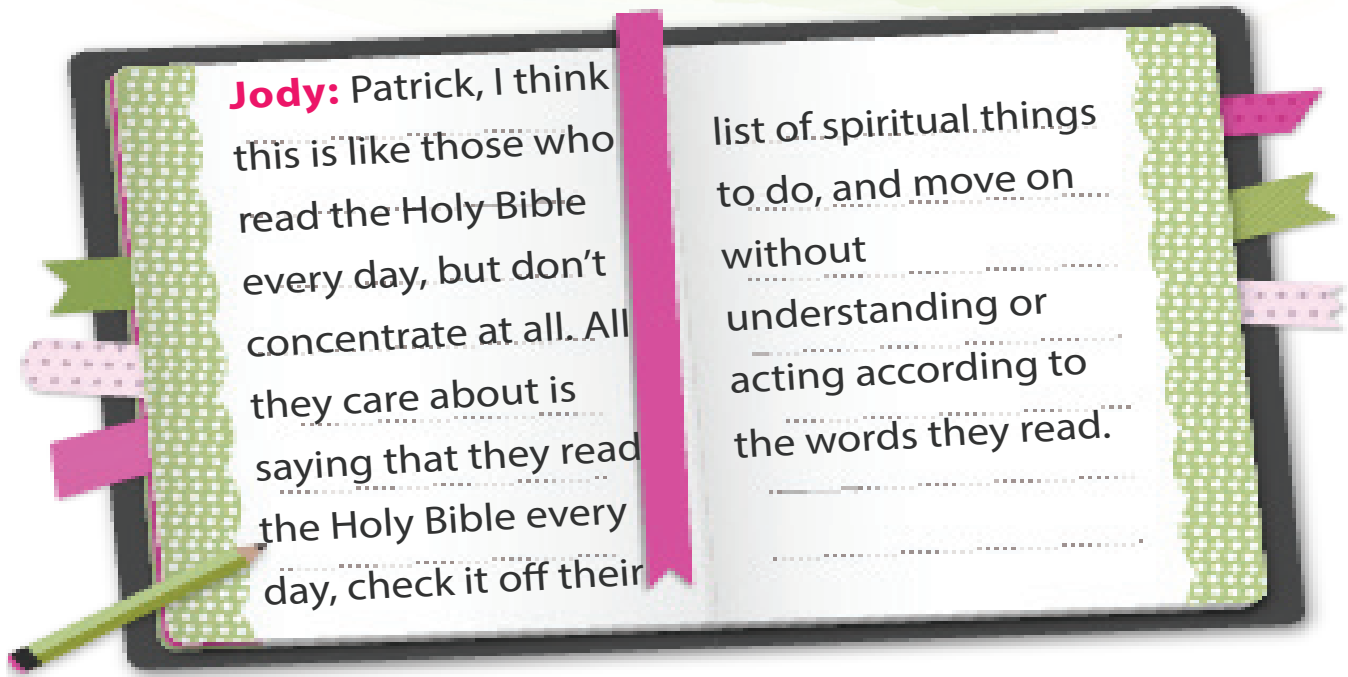
Maxwell: I think, in this case, the seeds will grow quickly and come up, but since there is no soil or depth, being on stones, they'll soon dry up and die.

Patrick: Exactly, that's what the Lord said, because there is not much soil where the seed can extend its roots, when the sun comes out, it burns the growth, as it did not have depth. Just like people who are superficial, who don't care about what they look like on the inside. They only care about looking good on the outside, looking like good people to others.



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!



Maxwell: They're just going through the motions to get it done.

Patrick: Exactly, our Lord gave us this parable so that we would not be like those people. He wants us to be deeply and strongly rooted in His word, to be well established in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the Lord said, "Launch out into the deep" (Lk. 5:4), meaning, do not be superficial, try to understand every word you read.

Maxwell: But we're kids, we will not be able to understand every word we read.

Patrick: Of course not. What we don't understand, we can ask about.



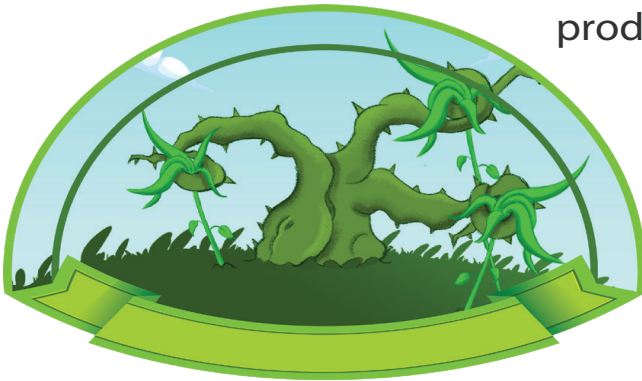
Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

*The Third Ground:
The Seeds That Fell on Thorns*

Jody: We need to sow seeds. For this we will need seeds, soil, water, and sun. We have all of these things, but the soil has thorns. The soil must be good. What do you think the thorns will do to the seed?

Maxwell: The seed will grow surrounded by thorns, which will choke it and absorb all of its water... it'll come up yellow and weak and will not produce fruit.



Jody: Exactly Maxwell, that is what the Lord Jesus Christ said in the parable. He meant that this type of soil is like people who joyfully hear the word of God and eagerly begin

to do it, but when they get busy or face any problem, they forget God's teachings and promises that bring joy and peace.

Patrick: Jody, this is like someone who likes to read the Holy Bible daily with concentration, asking about what he doesn't understand, but after a few days when things get busy, he gets too busy to read the Holy Bible which he loved to read daily.



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Jody: Exactly, Patrick.

The Governor: What's the last type of soil that the Lord spoke about?



Patrick: This is the good ground, fit for farming; ready for the seeds to grow up into beautiful, healthy plants. Then the plants will produce many delicious fruits. With this type of ground, the Lord described those who hear the word of God and act accordingly with all joy. Like those who love to read the Holy Bible every day, they read with focus and do what the Lord says. They also encourage everyone around them to love God and read His word regularly. In this way, the word of God will produce much fruit in



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

them, because they've understood how to read God's word properly.

Maxwell: Ok, please tell me what I must do to be like the good ground which produces much fruit.



1. Begin with prayer

Let us make the sign of the Cross and ask God, "Speak, O Lord, for your servant is listening" so that

the Lord may help us understand every word we read and help us to do His commandments. We should read the Holy Bible in a quiet place so we can concentrate and understand every word.



2. Read the Holy Bible

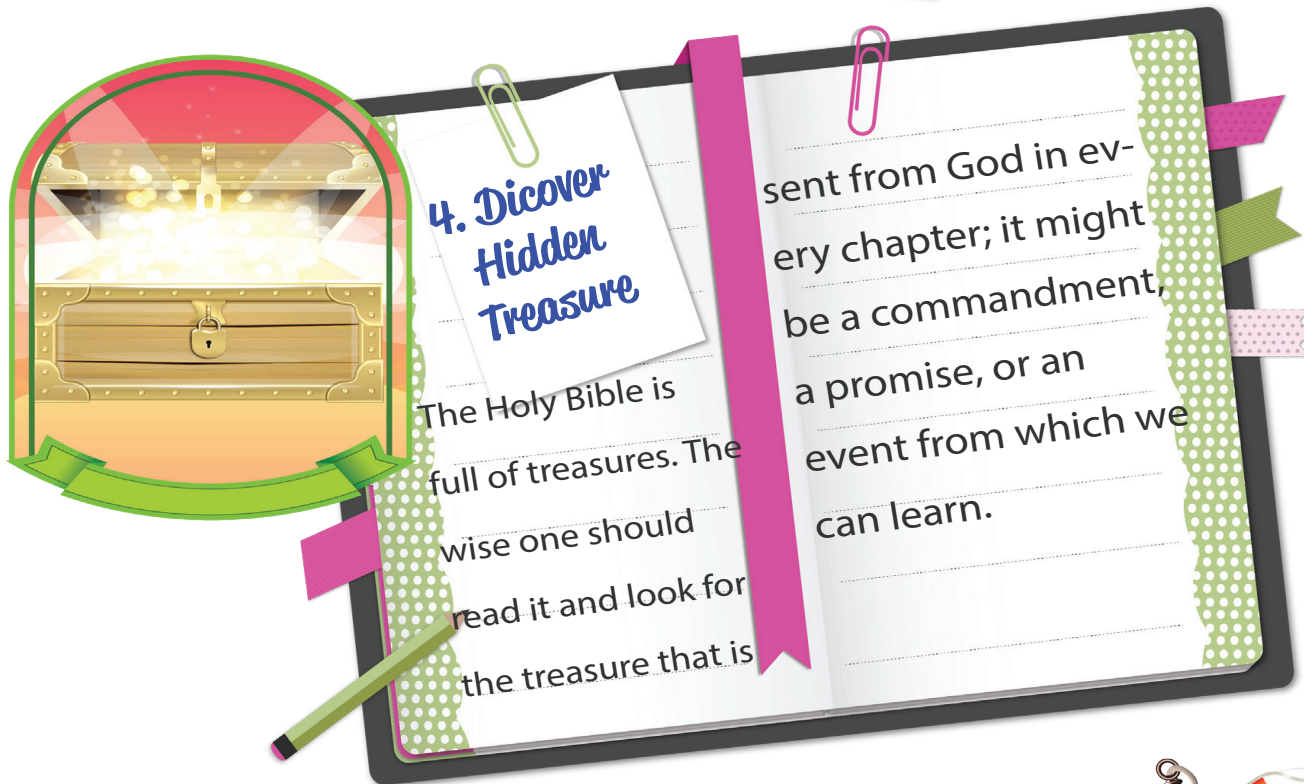
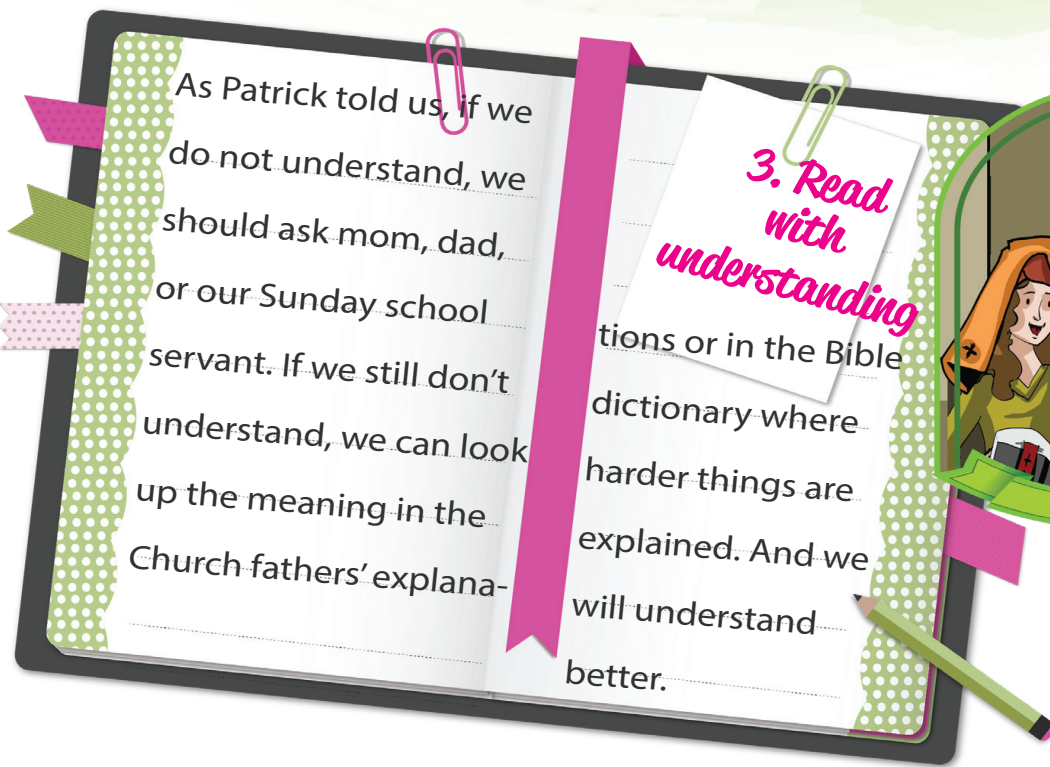
To understand, let us learn to read in order. We cannot read

chapter 2, then chapter 1; we will never understand if we do not read in sequence.



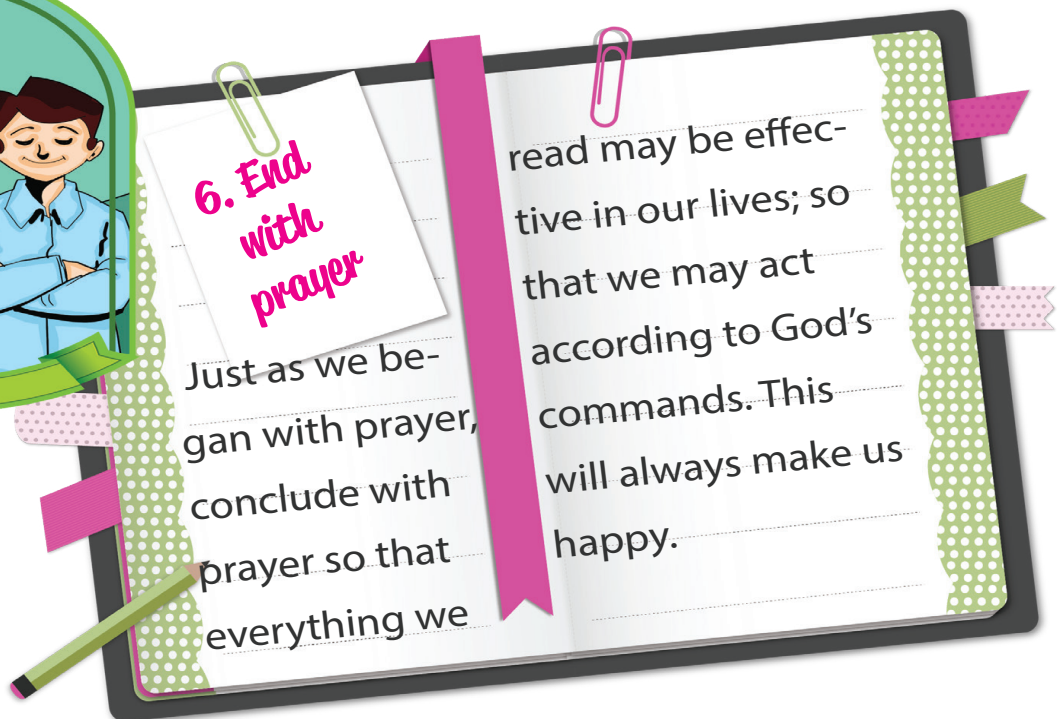
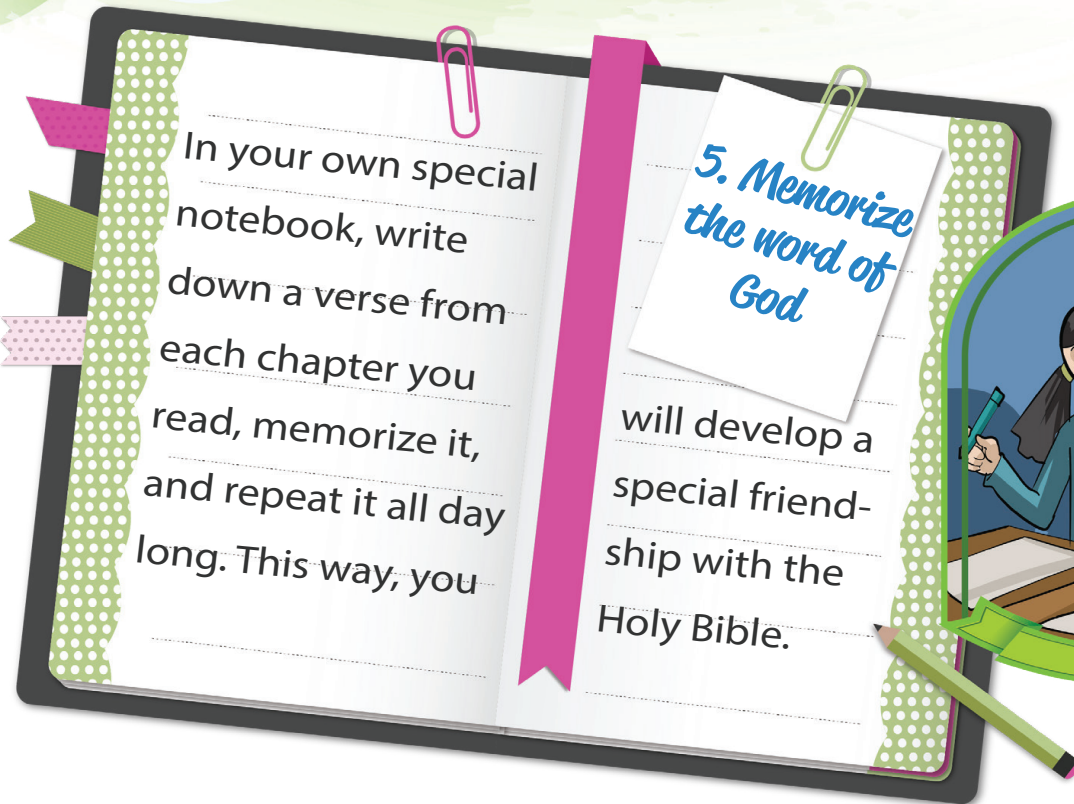
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Rejoice!



Rejoice!

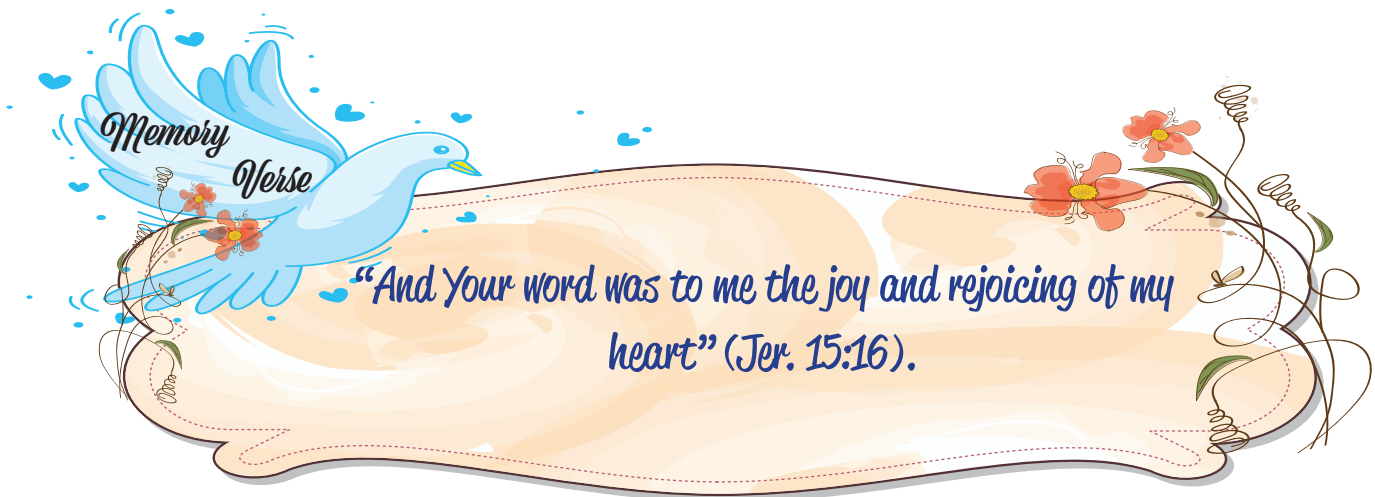
Deuteronomy 16:15



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Jody: I'll tell you what you must do to understand and do God's word:
This is true joy as the verse says:



The Governor: Truly, this parable encouraged me greatly. I'm very eager now and have lots of hope.

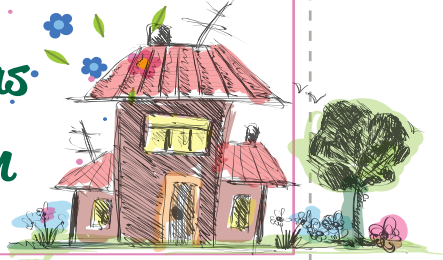
Maxwell: Me too! I have an idea!



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

My Joy Is Everlasting as
Long as I Am With Him



Maxwell: Let us walk through town with everyone who is convinced and persuade the people that they've been deceived by the laws of the man named Stranger. Let us organize ourselves and divide up into groups.

The Governor: But our city is large. How will you convince all the people and change their minds? You're too small of a group.

Jody: Even though we're a small group, we are confident in the Truth and in our goal. This small group will be able to save our people, just like what happened with God's people when Deborah was the Judge.

The Governor: Judge? Gedo Happy, would you tell us her story?



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!



Gedo Happy: This story is about the people of

Israel (God's people) after they left Egypt and settled in the Promised Land. They began to leave God and worship idols. Because they left God, they put themselves in great danger, and lost their peace and joy. That's exactly what happened because their enemies enslaved them and

distressed them greatly. They repented

and cried out to God. So, God had compassion on them and sent them judges to save them from their enemies. But, unfortunately, as soon as they felt safe, they left God again and worshipped idols. They kept repeating this cycle for over four hundred years, during which they were ruled by judges. Our Holy Bible tells us that, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).



Jody: I have a question, what does the word 'judge' mean?



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

Gedo Happy: A judge is someone chosen by God to lead the people, and to save them from slavery. There could've been more than one judge at a time.

God spoke to the people through the judge. I'll tell you one of their stories. Let's start at the beginning. Look at this picture and open your Holy Bibles. Try to answer the following questions from Judges 4:1-17.

1. When did the children of Israel began to do evil in the sight of God.

Judges 4:1

2. What did the children of Israel do? Judges 4:3

3. What is the name of this palm tree?

4. Who is this woman? Who is her husband? Judges 4: 4-5



5. Who is this commander?
What did the woman ask of
him? Judges 4:6-7

6. Did he agree? On what
condition? Judges 4:8-9

7. What is she singing? Judges
4:14

8. Who are these people and
where are they? Judge 4:10



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

9. What did the Lord do for His people? Judges 4:13-15

10. To where did the evil commander escape?

Whose tent is this?

Judges 4:11, 17

Because the Israelites left God, they were enslaved and despised by Jabin king of Canaan (not one of God's people). They were severely distressed. Jabin's

army was commanded by Sisera (which means "joyless"). Sisera was very mighty and powerful. Jabin enslaved the Israelites for 20 years.

Patrick: Surely, they had no peace nor joy because our peace and joy come from God.

Gedo Happy: Exactly, Patrick. Therefore, the only solution to save them from this great distress and slavery, the only thing that could give them joy and peace, was to return to our source of joy: to return to God and repent of their sins. That's exactly what they did. The people of Israel began to repent and cry out to God to save them from slavery to Jabin, king of Canaan and from Sisera, his commander.



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

Maxwell: Did God hear their repentance?

Gedo Happy: He sure did **Maxwell:** ! When they cried out to God, He sent them a savior to lead them and deliver them from slavery. This time, their leader and savior was Deborah the Judge.

Jody: A female judge?

Gedo Happy: Yes, a woman! God works through all of us, men and women. We each have a purpose, and Deborah had an especially important role.

Deborah was Israel's fourth judge. Her name means 'bee.' She used to sit under a certain palm tree, so they called it "Deborah's palm tree." Although the people of Israel left God, Deborah's heart was with Him, she lived for Him and loved Him. Therefore, she always had joy and peace. Deborah was very concerned about the people of God and wanted them to return to Him. The people used to go to her for judgment. When Deb-



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Deborah realized their distress because of Jabin's slavery, she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from the tribe of Naphtali. She told him, through the Spirit of prophecy, to go to Mount Tabor and take ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun. She explained that God would help him be victorious over Sisera and his army, to save His people from their slavery and their separation from God. What do you think Barak did? Do you think Barak agreed to the plan?

Patrick: The Holy Bible states that he did agree under the condition that Deborah would go with him (Judges 4:8-9).

Gedo Happy: Great job Patrick! Even though Barak was very strong, when he compared his army

and weapons of war with that of Sisera's, he felt that he would be defeated unless Deborah went with them. Deborah agreed. She told him that



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

the victory would not be his alone, but a certain woman would help him out, and she wasn't talking about herself. I will tell you about this woman later. Despite the battle, Deborah was not afraid, rather, she was happy because she felt God's hand supporting them. So, with great faith she said to Barak, "This is the day that God will deliver Sisera into your hand." Then she revealed to him that the secret of his victory is that God is fighting for him.

Jody: Truly, Deborah trusted in God and was faithful to Him.

Gedo Happy: Because she had a strong relationship with the Lord and truly lived according to His will, she trusted in the Lord; her life was filled with joy.

The Governor: Please tell us how God helped Barak with his battle against Sisera.

Gedo Happy: Barak, his ten thousand men and Deborah went to fight against Sisera, Jabin's commander and his army. When Sisera found



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

out that Barak was going to attack, he prepared his army, his horsemen, his chariots – nine hundred steel chariots! But, despite the strength of Sisera's army, before whom Barak's army was minimal, God's works are great. As soon as Barak and his army arrived, God confused Sisera's army, they were all afraid and fled on foot leaving their steel chariots which collided with one another. Then God sent strong rains and severe cold (Judge 5:20-22); they lost their strength and were defeated! Even Sisera left his chariot and fled on foot. That's how God was victorious over Sisera's army!

Maxwell: When Sisera fled, where did he go?

Gedo Happy: He went looking for a hideout. He found a woman's tent whose name was Jael and this woman killed him! Thus, Deborah's prophecy that the victory over Sisera would come through a woman, and Israel's army would be victorious over Jabin's army, was fulfilled.



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

Thus, they were freed from slavery and God's promises were fulfilled for His children. Then they began rejoicing over this great victory. How do you think Deborah and Barak rejoiced over God's victory for His people?

All: What did they do?

Gedo Happy: They sang a song of victory praising God, confirming the verse:

Memory Verse

"For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name" (Psalms. 33:21)



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Jody: I love what Deborah and Barak did after their victory. They didn't forget God. Many of us forget to thank and praise God in times of victory and joy.

Patrick: I also liked their determination to fight against all of the things which kept them away from the source of their joy, God.

Maxwell: Not only that, but I also liked their great trust in God; even though their army was small, as long as God was with them, they knew they'd be victorious. With this confidence, they won over their strong enemy.

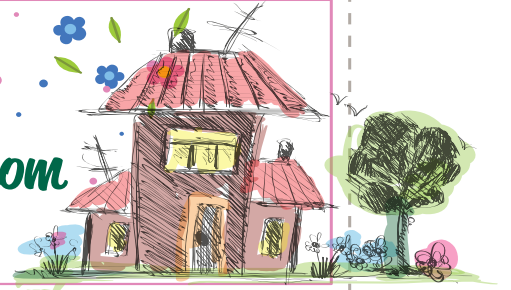
The Governor: Come! Let's encourage the people to listen to the Book of Joy, so that our city may have joy once again!



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

My Joy Is Walking According To His Kingdom



After Gedo Happy finished telling Deborah's story, the governor gathered all of the people who had come from the city. With the help of Patrick, Jody, and Maxwell, they divided them into groups to meet at different times. Gedo Happy read the teachings of the Book of Joy over the city radio so that all could hear. Many people were affected by the words of the Book of Joy and began to gather at the palace. They asked the governor to change the constitution of the city so that they can return to the teachings of the Book of Joy.



The Governor: Welcome everyone! I'm so happy that you're all beginning to understand the importance of the Laws in the Book of Joy, and that you've agreed to adopt the laws of the city and live according to it. Don't ever let anyone change these Laws at all, no matter what happens. Let us imitate all the heroes of the Book of Joy, who kept its teachings



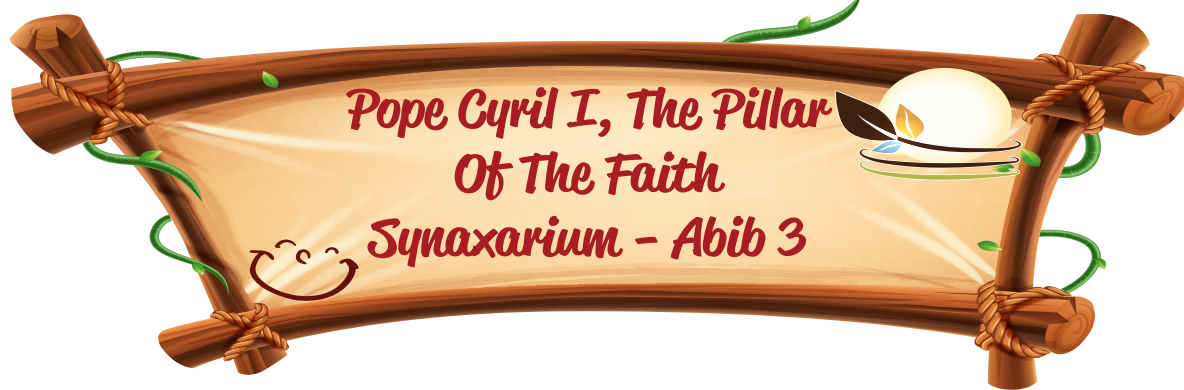
.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

and defended them whenever anyone tried to change them.

The People: Your majesty, who are those heroes?

The Governor: I'll tell you about one of the heroes of the Book of Joy.



The Governor: Pope Cyril I was born to a family who loved God very much. His uncle (his mother's brother) was Pope Theophilus, the twenty-third Pope, who took great care of him. He sent him to study at the Theological School of Alexandria – the greatest center of education at that time. But he didn't stop at that, he then sent him to the Monastery of St. Macarius the Great in Sheheet to be a disciple of Abba Serapion, the disciple of St. Antony the Great. Cyril stayed at the monastery, learning for 5 years, where he delved deeply into the understanding of the Holy Bible and God gave him special grace to understand and memorize it in an amazing way.



Rejoice!

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After he spent some time in the monastery, Pope Theophilus ordained him a deacon, then after some time, a priest. Although he was still young, the Pope entrusted him to preach and teach, so all loved and admired him, including both the priests and the congregation; this is because he was distinguished in how much he understood the Holy Bible and in the beautiful way he taught it. After the departure of Pope Theophilus, most of the people elected Cyril to be the twenty-fourth Pope of Alexandria, the See of St. Mark. Pope Cyril I cared tremendously to shepherd and teach his people.



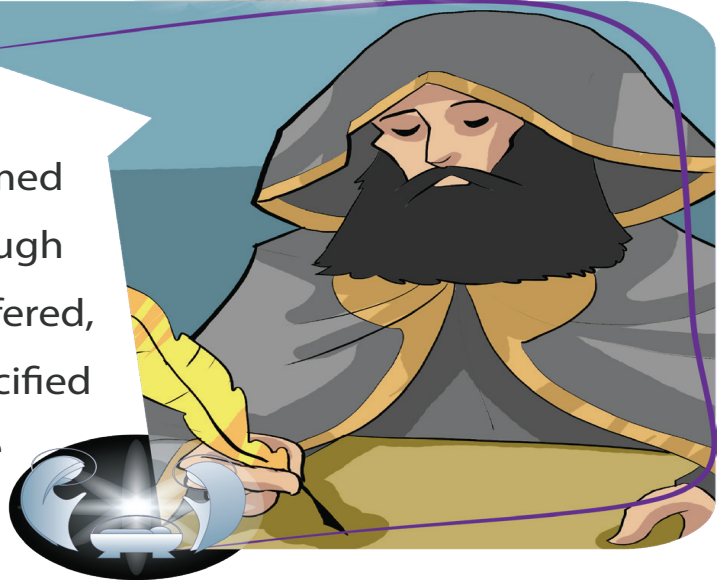
Maxwell: But Your Excellency told us that he was one of the heroes who kept the true faith and the right teachings, and that he was willing to defend the faith against anyone who tried to change it. Would you please explain to us how he did this?

The Governor: The Pope was one of the most excellent teachers of Theology (the divine nature). He wrote in great precision and detail. One of the problems that he defended the faith against was the heresy of Nestorianism.



Jody: What is the heresy of Nestorianism?

1. Nestorius denied the One Nature of Christ... he separated the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ from His humanity. He said that when the Lord Jesus Christ performed miracles, that was God acting through the human Jesus, but when he suffered, or hungered or thirsted or was crucified on the cross and died, that was the human Jesus only, not God who experienced those things.



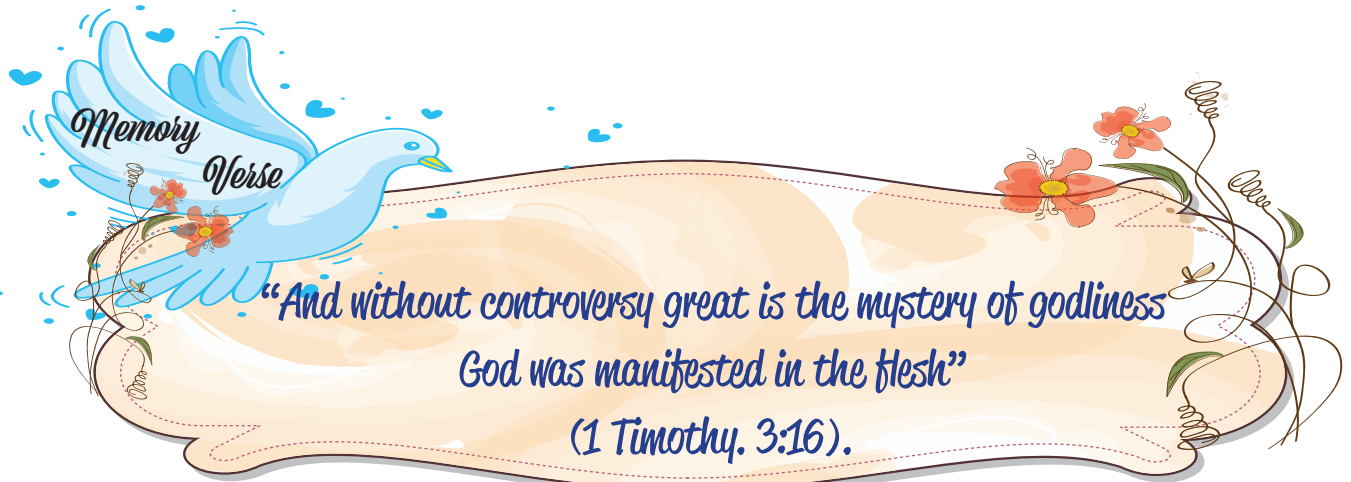
2. Nestorius refused to call our Lady the Virgin Mary, "The Mother of God" "The Theotokos."

Nestorius spread his heretical teachings in Constantinople, but they refused his false teachings and would not change their beliefs which they had received from their fathers. When the people of Constantinople complained about this heresy to Pope Cyril, he was very upset. On Easter, the Pope would send a message to the whole world, so he took this as a chance to explain to all the churches the wrong teachings of Nestorius. He also sent many messages to Nestorius explaining to him the following:

Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

1. The confirmation of the **Divinity of Christ** through verses from the Holy Bible:



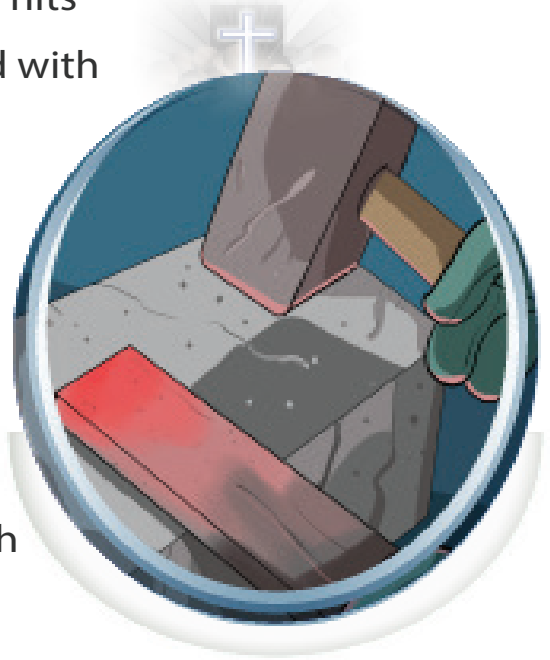
2. The confirmation of the title **"Theotokos"** through the teachings of the Church Fathers who came before him: Pope Athanasius used the word, "Theotokos," as did Pope Theophilus and all of the saintly fathers, to describe our Lady, the Virgin Mary.

3. The confirmation that the **Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ is in unity with his humanity** without mingling or mixing or change.

.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Just as iron unites with fire. When the smith hits the iron to shape it, even though it is united with fire, he is hitting the iron, not the fire, even though the fire is united with the iron without inter-mingling or mixing or changing. The fire keeps all the properties of fire, and the iron keeps all the properties of iron, as is the unity of the Divinity with humanity. This is how Pope Cyril declared the true faith of the orthodox Church to Nestorius: "The Incarnate God has One Nature" His Divine Nature (God the Word/Logos) united with the humanity, which He took from our Lady, the Virgin Mary, through the work of the Holy Spirit, without inter-mingling or mixing or changing. And His Divinity never parted from His humanity, not for a single moment nor the twinkling of an eye NEVER. Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect Man; He has all the properties of God and all the properties of man.



Rejoice!

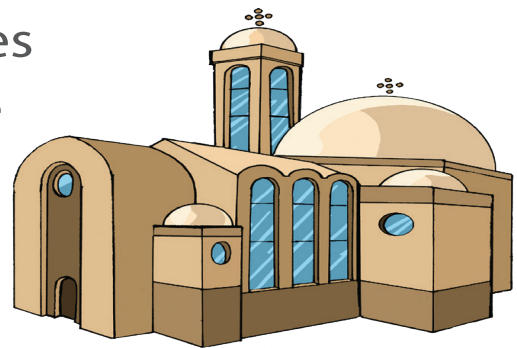
Deuteronomy 16:15

Memorization

PSALM 14

O LORD, WHO SHALL ABIDE IN YOUR DWELLING PLACE?

O Lord, who shall abide in Your dwelling place? And who can rest upon Your holy mountain? It is he who walks blamelessly, doing righteousness, speaking truth in his heart, he who has not spoken deceitfully with his tongue, neither has done evil to his friend, nor taking up a reproach against his neighbors. The evil worker is disdained before him, but he glorifies those who fear the Lord. He gives oath to his friend and does not turn away from him. He has not given his money on usury, and has not received bribes against the godly. He who does these things shall not stumble forever. ALLELUIA.



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Memorization

THE GOSPEL OF THE FIRST HOUR

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

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

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



Rejoice!

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the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

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

Glory be to God forever. Amen



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Memorization

THE FIRST ABSOLUTION OF THE FIRST HOUR

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



Rejoice!

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Memorization

CONCLUSION OF EVERY HOUR

Have mercy on us, O God, and have mercy on us, who, at all times and in every hour, in heaven and on earth, is worshipped and glorified, Christ our God, the good, the long suffering, the abundant in mercy, and the great in compassion, who loves the righteous and has mercy on the sinners of whom I am chief; who does not wish the death of the sinner but rather that he returns and lives, who calls all to salvation for the promise of the good things to come.

Lord receive from us our prayers in this hour and in every hour. Ease our life and guide us to fulfill Your commandments. Sanctify our spirits. Cleanse our bodies. Conduct our thoughts. Purify our intentions. Heal our diseases. Forgive our sins. Deliver us from every evil grief and distress of heart. Surround us by Your holy angels, that, by their camp, we may be guarded and guided, and attain the unity of faith, and the knowledge of Your imperceptible and infinite glory.
For You are blessed forever. Amen.



Rejoice!

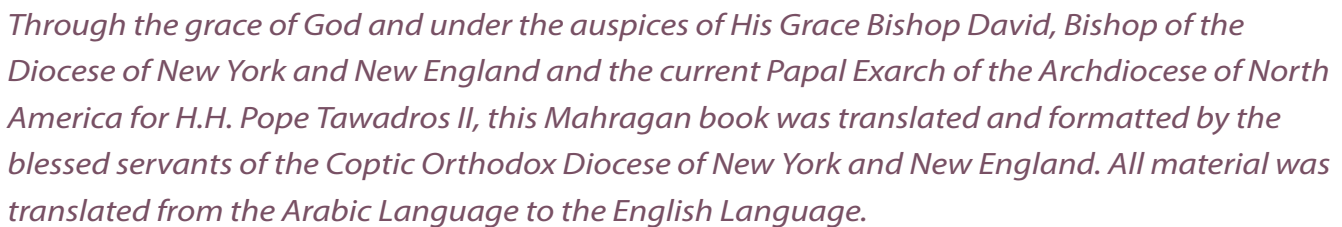
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Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

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Rejoice!





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