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**Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church
Diocese of North America**



Sunday School Curriculum

Grades 6, 7 and 8

**Compiled by the Educational Branch of the
Eritrean Orthodox Church Diocese of North
America.**

**Adopted from the Coptic Orthodox Church, Diocese of
Southern USA.**

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FILLER LESSONS

These lessons are to be used for the fifth Sunday in a month and to fill the empty weeks due to the changing date of the Resurrection Feast.

1- The Philippian Jailer

Objective:

- ❖ The child should learn to trust the Lord, who will care for him in the worst situations and use him to save other people.

Memory Verse:

- ❖ *“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31)*

References:

- ❖ Acts 16:16-34,
- ❖ “I place my soul into Your hands”, “To whom shall I go” – Book of Songs and Praises

Introduction:

- ❖ Ask the children about St. Paul and St. Silas. You may have to introduce St. Silas as a partner to St. Paul in his journey to call people to the true God and stop praying to idols.

Lesson Outlines:

- ❖ St. Paul and his helper St. Silas went to a town called Philippi and were telling people the good news that Jesus came to save them and He was crucified and resurrected after three days. Many believed them and were baptized.
- ❖ Satan didn't like to see the children of God succeed, and tried to stop them by a trick. There was a slave girl in the town who was using the devil to work as a fortuneteller. Her masters earned a great deal of money from the people who came to ask her.
- ❖ When she saw Paul and Silas, the devil in her could not stay calm. So she followed them crying with a loud voice “These men are the servants of the most high God, who proclaimed to us the way of salvation.” Paul and Silas didn't like to hear this coming from a woman that was demon possessed testifying for them then fortune telling against God's orders.

- ❖ Day after day she annoyed them like that. One day Paul could not take it any more and he turned to her and said to the devil in her “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” The devil immediately left her and she could not tell fortunes to the people anymore.
- ❖ When her masters could not get any money from her work they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the judges. They told the judges that these people are foreigners who are teaching people against Rome and Caesar. The judges tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods and threw them in jail. They ordered the jailer to keep them securely.
- ❖ The jailer put them in the basement of the jail where there were no windows and locked their legs on the stock so they can't even move and locked several doors behind him. They were in severe pain. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.
- ❖ Suddenly there was a great earthquake and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed and their legs were free from the stocks. The jailer, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.
- ❖ But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.” It was very dark and the jailer took a torch in his hand and went down and found all the doors opened and all prisoners loose but no one escaped as Paul said. He started thinking quickly how Paul knew that he was about to kill himself even though there were floors, walls, and darkness between them and who Paul knew that none of the prisoner escaped. He fell down trembling before Paul and Silas and brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”
- ❖ So they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” He took them the same hour of the night to his house and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized and he rejoiced, having believed in God with his entire household.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ What is the name of the city Paul and Silas went to?
- ❖ Who was Silas?
- ❖ How did the fortuneteller get her money?
- ❖ How did it help her?
- ❖ What did the fortuneteller do to Paul and Silas?
- ❖ Why did that annoy Paul?

- ❖ What did he do to her?
- ❖ How did her masters punish Paul and Silas?
- ❖ What were Paul and Silas doing in the middle of the night?
- ❖ Does our church have midnight prayer?
- ❖ Did you attend one?
- ❖ What happened to the jail doors?
- ❖ Why do you think the jailer believed in the God of Paul and Silas and asked them what to do?
- ❖ What did he and his family do to become Christians?

Conclusion:

Our behavior and faith attracts non-believers to Christianity. So, we should help others to know Christ through our good attitude and kind behavior. We have to care and show love towards non-believers.

Applications:

- ❖ When I have trouble from other people, I should pray for them to be saved like the jailer. I should thank and praise the Lord in every situation even if it is a bad one and He will turn it to be good for His Glory.

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER

Week 1-2 - David, Solomon and the Building of the Temple

Week -3- Parable of the Soils

Week -4- The Meaning of the Phrase: My Private Life is Mine

Week 1-2 - David, Solomon and the Building of the Temple

Objective

- ❖ To give the children an idea about people's love for God and how their love was so deep and strong that they built a great Temple to worship God.

Memory Verse

"I have sanctified this house which you have built to put My name there forever"
(1 Kings 9:3)

References

- ❖ □ 1 Kings 6,7,14,15,8,30

Introduction

- ❖ Ask the children to hold a discussion about the buildings in their village or town...
- ❖ What makes the building attractive? Mention some of the attractive buildings.
- ❖ Today's lesson is about a building that was built in seven years and cost millions of dollars and the man who built it was the greatest king on earth at that time. "Solomon" means "Peace", Solomon ruled for forty years. He was David's son who ruled after him. He was the greatest king and he was very wise and very rich.

Lesson Outlines

- ❖ **The Temple**

This is the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem. It looked like the Tent of Meetings in its structure and appearance. David had prepared the material for building the temple and Solomon started building it in the fourth year of his reign and the building was complete in the eleventh year. It was the pride of Jerusalem and the most beautiful building in the world at that time.

- ❖ How long did it take Solomon to build the Temple?

❖ How the idea of building the Temple came to Solomon's mind

King David desired to build a temple for the Lord and the Lord was pleased but the Lord said, "Your son Solomon will build the temple". So David designed the building and chose its location. He prepared large amounts of gold, silver, copper, iron, and cedar wood for building the temple. It is difficult to evaluate such materials nowadays as they are worth millions and millions of dollars.

❖ Solomon builds the Temple

When Solomon sat on the throne, he ordered his men to collect and gather building materials. It took them three years to gather the materials and in the fourth year, they started building the Temple. Solomon employed a great number of workers. 70,000 workers carried stones. The building materials were prepared in a place far away from the building itself (1 Kings 6,7). The vessels and instruments used in the temple were covered with gold.

❖ The Designs of the Temple

(The Servant reads 2 Samuel 7; 14-17, 1 Kings 5, 6, 7)

People gave their offerings and took part in building the temple. Think of the things people offered for building the temple and the work they did in order to help and participate in building the temple. The first book of Kings gives us a clear picture of the numerous deeds performed by the people.

❖ Where did the offerings come from?

We also recognize the great love of those people for the Temple, as it is the House of God. All the classes of the people volunteered to do the job. The king, the laborers, the skilled workers, all volunteered to work. This spirit should prevail, as we should offer the church all that she needs.

- ❖ Who of the kings, thought first of building the temple?
- ❖ Who built it?
- ❖ Who took part in building it?
- ❖ How did the people offer their gifts?
- ❖ Where was the temple built?
- ❖ How can you express your love for the church?

- ❖ Do you offer your offerings (your gifts) in the church treasury?

Conclusion:

- ❖ The Servant holds a discussion with the children as to how they should love others.
- ❖ They should offer their gifts to the church so that she may be able to complete her projects.
- ❖ They should give gifts to poor children on feast days especially Christmas and Easter.
- ❖ The Servant encourages the children to save some money to be offered to the church as a sign of love for the House of God.

Applications:

- ❖ Study this verse by heart: “I have sanctified this house which you have built to put My name there forever” (1 Kings 9:3).
- ❖ Cross the wrong words between parenthesis:
 - a. The Temple of God was built in (Cairo -Baghdad -Jerusalem).
 - b. (Solomon -David -Saul) built the Temple.
 - c. The people gave their gifts (sadly -angrily -joyfully).
 - d. Write in your notebook 1 Kings 8:22-53.
 - e. Study the Orthodox creed by heart (the Servant divides it into parts so that it can be easily studied).

Week -3- The Lord Appears In The Temple

Objective

- ❖ To give the children an idea about people's love for God and how their love was so deep and strong that they build a great Temple to worship God.

Memory Verse

“That Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day” (1 Kings 8:29)

References

- ❖ 1 Kings 9
- ❖ “Interpretation of the First Book of Kings” Sporting, Alexandria

Introduction

- ❖ Let us read and learn well Solomon's long prayer with which he dedicated the Temple (1 Kings 8:22-53).

Lesson Outlines

When King Solomon finished building the Temple, he made a great feast that the world had not seen its like. He brought the Ark of the Lord God and put it together with all the vessels used in the service in its new place. Those vessels were in the Tent of Meetings. Then Solomon dedicated the House of God and God was pleased with Solomon for all what he did. The Glory of God came on the Temple in the form of a cloud all the days of the feast. That cloud used to appear over the Tent of Meetings in the wilderness, and it was a proof that the Lord filled the Temple, people felt that the Lord still desired to dwell among his people. The age of Solomon was an age of peace.

- ❖ What did Solomon do after he had finished building the Temple?
- ❖ What does the word “dedicate” mean?
- ❖ How did the Lord show that He was pleased with Solomon?
- ❖ Let us repeat together: “That Your eyes may be open...” This verse is a part of Solomon's prayer when he dedicated the Temple.

When the Ark of the Lord was set in its place in the Temple, Solomon stood before all the people and blessed them in the Name of the Lord then he prayed and said... (The Servant reads a part of Solomon's prayer). Sacrifices then were offered on the altar of the Temple. They offered oxen and sheep. The people were in complete joy and happiness for fourteen days. Then Solomon asked the people to leave, each to go to his house. They all went home and they were happy because of the blessing they received; that blessing which the Lord promised to give to David and Solomon was fulfilled. Then the Lord

appeared to Solomon once more and told him that he heard his prayers and answered them. The Lord said to Solomon, “If you will serve Me in honesty and integrity... If you obey My laws and do everything I have commanded you I will keep the promise I made to your father David when I told him that Israel would always be ruled by his descendants”.

- ❖ Who attended the dedication of the temple?
- ❖ How long did the feasts take?
- ❖ What did the Lord say to Solomon when he appeared to him the second time?
- ❖ Who remembers the verse: “That Your eyes may be open...”

Conclusion

- ❖ Draw the children’s attention to the fact that the Lord dwells in the church so they must enter the church with reverence and awe. They must not speak inside the church because God dwells in it.

Applications

- ❖ Draw your church inside a rectangle. Color the door and the windows of the church, which you have drawn. Give them a brown color.
- ❖ Read 2 Kings 22 at home.

Week -4- The Meaning of the Phrase: My Private Life is Mine

Objective:

- ❖ The Lord gave us liberty and Liberty is to shoulder responsibility.

Memory Verse:

“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify” (1 Corinthians 10:23)

References:

- ❖ “The Life of Joshua” F.B. Mayer

Introduction:

Once I met a person who was smoking heavily. When circumstances were favorable for us to speak together I began to talk to him about the harmful effects of smoking as it is harmful to health and has a bad effect on spiritual life. I was astonished at his reply. He said, “I am fully convinced that what you say is right but this is my life which I own and it is my right to do what I like with it. I never interfere in the life of others and this is enough”. Here I wanted to explain to him the meaning of the phrase “One’s life is one’s own possession and one is free to do what one likes with it”. I gave him an example by saying, “Imagine that your father has bought you a new cassette recorder and gave it to you saying that it is for you and would be yours”. How would your feelings be like if he found that you broke and damaged the set? Would you say that the set was yours and nobody had any right to interfere in your affairs or freedom in doing what you like with the set? Suppose that your father accepted that way of thinking, could he trust you with any other thing or would he give you any other new present? Of course not... as he knows well that you are not responsible enough to keep his presents to you safely.

Are you like that person in that you feel that you own your life and no one has any right to interfere in it?

Lesson Outline:

I. Questions – Answers Scenarios

- ❖ My life is not my own possession; it is a trust: As you know, you are the image of God and you were created out of the breath of His mouth and He gave you the breath of life with which you live. Not only this, but when you deformed this holy

image, He descended from heaven and died for you and bought your precious soul and redeemed you with His precious blood. So your life is not yours but it is your redeemer's who redeemed you with His blood. You may say, "But my life is still mine and Christ has not taken it yet but He leaves it to me to do with it what I like", but I tell you that He left it to you as a trust so He asks you to keep it in good condition. If a friend of yours gave you a sum of money and asked you to keep it with you till he came back from a trip, could you spend that money? Of course not as it is not yours even if it was in your possession. In the same way, your life is not yours even if you live it.

- ❖ I do not live alone: As you know, you are not alone but you are a member of the body of the Lord Jesus and that there are other members in that body; you need them and they need you as each one integrates the other. In the same way, you cannot separate your life from the life of others. For example you cannot play football in the street at anytime without taking into consideration the cars which run in the street and the people passing the street and also the street dwellers as some of them may be sick, some are students who are studying their lessons and others are in need of rest. Another example is a person who smokes in a closed place. We say to him, "If you possess your health and your life and it is your right to do whatever you like with your life and health, this does not mean that you possess the health and life of others that are dangerously affected by the smoke of your cigarettes. Then how can I understand a man who says that he is free to do what he likes with his life? Truly you have that right, but you do what you like with your life for your happiness, joy and perpetual pleasure and this will not be achieved unless you have a goal, which in achieving it you will be happy. So you are free to do what you like in your life but take the following points into consideration:
 - Know your own interest and define your goal: Do not be deceived by any bright goal that may destroy your happiness. For example, it is necessary for you to study hard and get high marks in your exams. Do not say, "But I am free and I do not want to study". Such a person does not understand the true meaning of freedom then. You should also know that your peace of mind, your happiness and joy are in your fellowship with Jesus Christ. Do not say: "but I am free in my decision whether to connect my life with Christ or not; it is I who should decide". This is not right. You have to know where your happiness and peace lie and search for them".
 - Know the true means that will help you achieve your goal: For example you know that your success in mathematics depends on solving as many problems as possible. You are mistaken if you think that you can succeed without solving many problems and say "I am free. It is true that I know my goal, which is success but the means by which I can achieve that goal should be of my own choice, I am free to choose the means". So you have to know your goal well and the means by which you can achieve that goal thus you can guarantee that you will live your life that trust which the Lord entrusted you with honesty and faithfulness. You should thank the Lord who redeemed your life with His

precious blood. You must take into consideration the others who share this life with you.

Joshua the Son of Nun is one of the greatest heroes in history as a leader. His courage was notable when he was young, when Moses sent him to explore the land of Canaan. He was not afraid of the enemy but he said that the Israelites would conquer them as the Lord was with them. He led the people and crossed the Jordan and won victory over Jericho when the walls of the city fell. At last he entered the Land of Canaan and achieved victory. He distributed the land and gave each tribe the part appointed to them by the Lord.

At the end of his life, he stood before the people and said, "The Lord God, your God, fought for you. Whenever I remember the day when we crossed the Red Sea, the day we won victory over the Amalekites and our journey in the Mount of Sinai, when the Lord sent us food from heaven and water from the rock. With all faithfulness and zeal...tell me, do you intend to worship Him with faith or not? You have freedom of choice in that matter". Here Joshua stood up and raised his eyes to heaven and said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord". And the people shouted, "How do you say that our leader Joshua? We shall never leave the Lord. Is it possible for us to leave Him after all those good deeds of His? No. He kept us safe in all roads where we walked. We also serve God because He is our God". But Joshua again said, "Perhaps this will be difficult for you. You know that God is Holy and Jealous. He demands that your life be pure... and your behavior be straight before His eyes. You may not be able to do so". The people said with a great shout, "No... No... We will serve the Lord". Joshua said, "Beware, do not forget the Lord or what He did for you". All the people said, "Amen". Joshua said, "If you do that the blessing will rest upon you and your enemies will be unable to harm you". The people said, "Amen". Joshua said, "If you leave the Lord to serve idols, the Lord will severely punish you". The People said, "Amen". Joshua said: "Jehovah is great and there is no god like Him among the gods of the people of Canaan; those gods demand nothing but offerings". The people replied, "We worship God with faithfulness and truth with all our hearts". Joshua said, "You are your own witnesses to the fact that you have chosen to serve the Lord. You have chosen Him with your own free will so you have become responsible before God for that choice, is not that so?" They said, "We are witnesses, we shall worship God only and obey all His commands... Joshua made a covenant for the people that day and wrote this in the book of Law and set up a stone to be a witness against them. They were loyal to the covenant all the days of Joshua. Who are the people of God?

They are those who believe in God and have great faith in Him. The Jews were the people of God in the past and all the other nations were pagans but now the people of God are those who believe in God the Redeemer. Whenever you read the words 'The Children of Israel' in the Bible, take it with the meaning of 'The Church' now where it is written "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them, He gave the right to become children of God, even to those believe in His name" (John 1:11,12)

Conclusion:

- ❖ Lord forgive us for the time when we chose to regard many things as most

important in our life. Help us to fear and love You and be inclined to You above all things in the name of Christ. Amen.

Applications:

- ❖ Read Genesis Chapter 12 and answer the following questions in the Notes of Activities:
- ❖ Did Abraham know his true interest when he obeyed the Lord's call for him to leave his land and tribe?
- ❖ What was the true goal for which Abraham went out of his land?
- ❖ What was the promise that Abraham received from the Lord that made him leave his country?
- ❖ Do you see, in Abraham's obedience to the Lord, the true means that would enable him to reach his goal and achieve it?
- ❖ Do you see in the Lord's appearance to Abraham, a sign that the means he used to reach his goal was correct?
- ❖ What did Joshua want the Israelites to do?
- ❖ What was the model he set before the people?
- ❖ What should your first choice be as a Christian?
- ❖ a. In His teachings, Jesus gave us freedom and did not force us to do anything. Example: Matthew 16:20.
- ❖ b. He made a new covenant with us to stand firm in His love. Example: Luke 22:20.
- ❖ c. In the story of Jonah the prophet we notice clearly the clarity of the will of God compared with man's thoughts and conscience. We also notice that God allows man to have freedom of choice so that he can disobey the will of God and this results in dangerous consequences but God, out of His love to us, sets hindrances in the way of our wrong will so that we may enjoy the blessings of obeying His will with our full freedom.
- ❖ d. Each freedom has its own responsibility. Fill in the spaces:
Verse Freedom Responsibility
John 6:53 -----
1 Corinthians 10:23 -----
Galatians 5:13 -----
- ❖ e. Discussion the useful and the harmful effects of this opinion: My life is my own possession... I am free... to do what I like...
 - Which of the following behaviors is expedient and which is not?
 - ❖ Going late to attend the weekly holy Mass.
 - ❖ Staying up late watching television, seeing films of violence and sex.
 - ❖ When someone insults me I do not answer him.
 - ❖ Giving excuses saying that there is no time for the Morning Prayer.

- ❖ Obeying parents willingly, being stubborn or insisting on one's opinion.

Raise a hearty prayer to the Lord. Promise the Lord that you will do something in your life and remember your promise to God "Accept my offerings of praise, O Lord and teach me Your ordinances" (Psalm 119:108).

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER

- Week 1** - King Josiah and the Repair of the Temple
- Week 2** - Elijah Restoring the Widow's Son to Life
- Week 3** - The Ark of Covenant
- Week 4** - Peer Pressure

Week -1- King Josiah and the Repair of the Temple

Objective:

- ❖ Let us help the children to understand that they can take part in caring for the House of the Lord.

Memory Verse:

“Blessed are those who dwell in Your House, they will be praising You” (Psalm 84:4)

References:

- ❖ 2 Kings 22:1-24:18
- ❖ “Interpretation of the Second Book of Kings” Sporting, Alexandria

Introduction:

- ❖ The Servant holds a discussion with the children about how a dirty place cannot help people to worship the Lord, and how people sometimes behave in the streets when they throw pieces of paper and other things here and there.

Lesson Outline:

Our lesson today is about Josiah, the good king who was about your age and he loved the House of the Lord and cared for it. The temple was ruined and not clean. The walls were dirty... the covering layer was removed... the stones were broken to pieces and the pieces of wood cracked. When Josiah the king saw the Temple in that sad state, he felt very sad.

- ❖ What is the name of the king?
- ❖ In what state was the House of the Lord?
- ❖ What did Josiah do?

The king consulted the priest about what they should do. The priest brought a closed box with a hole in it (an opening) and he put the box beside the door of the Temple where people used to enter and there they put their gifts in the box till it was full of money. The king and the priest gathered a big sum of money from the people and then the workers and builders came to repair the House of God. They repaired the walls, the doors, and the windows and the Temple became splendid once more.

- ❖ Who of you wants to be like Josiah and cares for the House of the Lord?
- ❖ What can you do to make the House of God clean and beautiful?

- ❖ Write this verse in your notebook: “Blessed are those who dwell...” and study it by heart.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Read Psalm 84. How can we care for the House of the Lord spiritually and materially?

Applications:

- ❖ Sometimes we find that the rooms of Sunday School are not clean and torn pieces are here and there and chairs are not well arranged. Ask the children to clean and beautify the place where we worship God.
- ❖ Mention some of the things that need repair in the church and think out how you can help the children of this age in doing that.
- ❖ Ask a group of children to do the following: cleaning and lighting the church - distributing hymn books -gathering hymn books at the end of the service -opening the windows -sweeping the floor -shutting the doors -lighting the lamps -bringing the priest a cup of water -cleaning the carpets and putting them in their place - turning fans on when it is hot -shutting the windows in winter -Let them do that with activity and pleasure.
- ❖ Divide the class into groups -Some of the children perform these actions for one month then others do the same task next month and so on.
- ❖ Read the first chapter of the Book of Nehemiah.

Week -2- Elijah Restoring the Widow’s Son to Life

Objective :

- ❖ God’s care for his children and people.

Memory Verse:

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find” (Luke 11:9).

References:

- ❖ 1 Kings 17
- ❖ “The Life of Elijah” Translated by Fr. Marcos Daoud
- ❖ “Practical Contemplations on the Life of Elijah of Tishbet” Translated by Wagdi Girgis

Introduction:

- ❖ The picture: The Servant sets the scene by giving some questions about the previous lesson.
- ❖ The Servant then checks the children's notebooks to have a look at the previous week's homework and to encourage the children.

Lesson Outline :

This is an example of one of the men of God whose name is Elijah... a friend of God, he loves the Lord and he obeys Him... During the famine, the Lord sent him food with the ravens, then the Lord said to him, "Now go to the town of Zarephath, near Sidon and stay there". The Lord commanded him to live with a poor widow at Zarephath.

- ❖ Who, of you, prays for the poor?

Elijah stayed with the widow. He stayed at the upper chamber (a small room at the top of the house when Elijah used to rest and to pray). The Lord sent them flour and oil according to their needs... The Lord blessed her home... Elijah told them tales from the Bible.

One day the widow's son was playing outside the house. When he came back he was very ill. The boy was crying because of pain. His mother ran to him... took him and laid him in bed. She hoped that the boy would get better but the days passed and the boy's health did not improve... his illness was serious... his temperature rose up... the boy died... his mother wept bitterly... he was her only son... the verse came to her mind... "Ask and it will be given to you". She stood up... carried the boy and took him to Elijah the prophet and said, "My son has died... I beg you to pray for him and I am sure that the Lord will answer your prayer and restore the boy to life".

Elijah was sad because the boy died. He took the boy from his mother's arms. He carried him to the upper room and laid him on the bed on which Elijah used to sleep. He bowed down to the earth...then he raised his eyes and hands to heaven and prayed "O Lord, you said: Ask and it will be given to you. I implore You to bring this boy back to life".

Elijah stretched himself out on the boy then bowed to the earth in prayer and repeated the same words three times... The child started breathing again and revived... the boy opened his eyes... stood up...wonderful! Who heard of a man who died and then came back to life? No one...God cares for us...and He said: "Ask and it will be given to you, seek, and you will find".

- ❖ What is the name of God's prophet?
- ❖ Who fed Elijah during the famine?
- ❖ Who sent him food?
 - ❖ Who can recite the verse?

Elijah carried the boy to his mother and said to her, look your son is alive... the woman was very happy... she knelt down and worshipped God. She thanked God and said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God. I believe in God". The child chanted, "When I am ill..." Elijah took courage because the Lord performed this miraculous deed by his hands.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Elijah teaches us the following:
 - Satisfaction: He lived on very small resources of a poor widow. Those resources were not enough for the daily needs.
 - Patience and self-control in time of danger: When the widow said to him, "Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?" all he said was, "Give me your son" (1 Kings 17:18-19).
 - Struggling in his solitary place: He took the boy from her arms, carried him upstairs to the room where he was staying, and laid him on the bed. Then he prayed aloud.
 - Modesty: He stretched himself out on the boy three times and he did not lose hope.

Applications:

- ❖ Draw a picture of Elijah in a situation that stimulates your admiration.
- ❖ Read 2 Kings 19

Week -3- The Ark of Covenant

Objective:

- ❖ To know the contents of the Holy of Holies
- ❖ To understand the meaning and the function of the ark of covenant
- ❖ To know some of the history and movements of the ark.

Memory Verse:

"And there, I will meet with you and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat" (Exodus 25:22)

Introduction:

The Holy of Holies was the most sacred part of the tent of meeting. It was separated from the Holy with a curtain. It contained the Ark of Covenant only. The high priest was

the only person allowed to enter the Holy of Holies once a year to spray blood of sacrifice on the ark for the forgiveness of the sins of the people. This was a symbol of our Lord's only sacrifice for us.

Lesson Outline:

❖ The Ark of Covenant

The Ark of Covenant was the most sacred object in the tabernacle. It symbolized God's presence and His covenant with Israel. It was made of acacia wood that was covered with gold from within and without. It contained:

- The two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments written on them with the finger of God. These were a symbol of the word of God.
- The manna as a symbol of the bread of life.
- The rod of Aaron as a symbol of St. Mary's perpetual virginity.

The ark was covered with the mercy seat, which was made of pure gold and on top of it the two cherubim with extended wings. The wings of each cherub touched the wings of the other one and they covered the mercy seat. This is where the voice of God was heard speaking to Moses. It was the throne of God in the tabernacle of meeting.

The Ark of Covenant guided the Israelites in the wilderness to the Promised Land. It was usually carried by the Levites on two wooden sticks covered with gold. No human being was allowed to touch the ark or he would die.

❖ The History of the Ark of Covenant and its Trips

Moses put the two tablets of stone in the ark and placed it in the middle of the Holy of Holies. Then, the cloud of the Lord filled the place. After 7 weeks the cloud lifted and the Israelites started moving again. Whenever, the cloud appeared in the morning and the column of fire at night they settled down and whenever it lifted they started moving. The ark was the leader when they left mount Sinai, crossed the Jordan River and when they turned around Jericho (Joshua 6:1-20).

Israel wanted to use the ark to defeat the Palestinians without instructions from God (1 Samuel 4:4). So, they were defeated and the ark was taken from them (1 Samuel 4:3). When the ark was placed in the temple of Dagon, the idol collapsed (1 Samuel 5:2-7). It was then moved to Gath, where the men of Gath struck by strange disease (1 Samuel 5:8,9). Then the ark was moved briefly to Ekron and finally returned to the Hebrews in Beth Shemesh led by two milk cows (1 Samuel 6:13-16). The ark then was taken to Kirjath Jearim at the house of Abinadab where it stayed for many years (1 Samuel 7:1,2). Finally it was taken to Jerusalem in David's time (2 Samuel 6). Subsequently Solomon built the permanent temple of God in Jerusalem and placed the Ark of Covenant in it. It disappeared after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

- Where was the ark of covenant placed in the tent of meeting?
- What was placed inside the ark of covenant?
- Describe the mercy seat? Why is it important?

- Who brought the ark of covenant to Jerusalem?

- ❖ The Importance of Studying the Tabernacle of Meeting
- It is an example of heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 5:15)
- It is an example of the incarnation of Christ (John 1:14)
- The tent was mobile to lead the people in the wilderness as Jesus Christ traveled from one place to another performing miracles and leading people to salvation.
- The outer appearance of the tent of meeting was humble as it was covered with the skin of goats but the inside was full of gold. This is similar to our Lord Jesus Christ who was humble in appearance but he was the holy divine God (Isaiah 53:2-3).
- The tent of meeting was the place where God met with His people.

Conclusion:

If God requested to have a meeting place with us on earth, wouldn't we seek to meet with Him too in prayers and meditations? May our hearts be an ark of covenant to the Lord that He may dwell in them.

Applications:

- ❖ Ask the students to do an Internet search about the Ark of covenant and where could it be now?
- ❖ Compare the building of the church to the structure of the tabernacle of meeting and identify the differences.

Week -4- Peer Pressure

Objective:

- ❖ Peer Pressure: How to avoid it and combat it.

Memory Verse:

“In the world you will have tribulations, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

References:

- ❖ References documented within the text.

Lesson Outline:

❖ Christians And Their Place In The World

It is very clear that Christianity is not and has never been the mainstream style of living in any society in history. It is also very evident that since the beginning, the world has been dominated by evil whether in thought, action, leadership, or even in ministry as with heresies. The Lord Jesus Christ found it necessary to point out these facts many times during His ministry. We find many verses in the four Gospels alliterating the same concept over and over again, never failing to point out that Christians are a unique breed of people that do not belong to any shepherd but to our Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke 10:3, Jesus Christ says *“Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.”* The literary style of the Bible is amazingly beautiful and expressional especially in this last verse. A Christian in the world is compared to a lamb among a pack of wolves and for such a defenseless yet pure creature to survive, it has to follow behind its shepherd closely or else it is just another easy prey to the hungry, savage wolves. We also see in John 15:19 how Jesus once again states where we stand compared to the world when He says *“If you were of the world, the world would love its own, yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”*

Does that imply we should try to achieve total separation from a society that we don't belong to and are rejected by? The answer is no. We see in John 17:15 that Jesus never requested from His Father *“to take them out of the world, but that you [the Father] keep them from the evil one.”* Here on earth, we have a very noble mission, for besides trying to love God with all our hearts and obeying His commandments, we have to also love one another and even, taking it further, love our enemy. That love that Jesus urges us to possess is not a passive love but an active one where it dictates us, Christians, to share our beliefs with the non-believers, our talents with the un-talented, our money with the poor, and our peace with the tortured in heart.

Conclusion:

❖ We, the Christians, are not of the world. But we are needed by the world for we are the light of the world.

❖ Why Christians Are Exposed To Peer Pressure?

Anyone, Christian or not, that does not follow the current (current since morality in this world is relative to time, person, and space) moral views of his society will feel peer pressured to back in line and do what everybody else does.' Since Christians do not belong to the world (refer to discussion above), they will always feel peer pressure in their life.

Peer pressure can be external or internal. External peer pressure is where friends or acquaintances urge you to do something that you do not usually do and would not have done it if they had not urged you to do so. Internal pressure is when you within yourself have an inferiority complex and feel alienated because you do not participate in the activities that people in your immediate surroundings participate in even if your peers do not urge you to participate with them. For example, religious beliefs, peer in this case can stand for one's weakness, thoughts, or devilish mind games.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Since we, the Christians, are not of this world and do not belong to it, we are different, and that in turn causes us subject to peer pressure.

Expectations from a Christian

Does God expect Christians to be perfect? The answer is no. If God expects us to be perfect in our lives, none of us would be worthy of the eternal kingdom for “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 23:3). The beauty of God’s love for us is that He is ready to accept us with our sins and imperfections, but we must accept Him. Jesus Christ conquered the world for us so although we can’t conquer this world ourselves, since we abide in Jesus Christ; we have and will conquer the world through Jesus as it is written “In the world you will have tribulations; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

What does God expect from us? The answer to that question lies in many verses of the four Gospels. Firstly, Jesus Christ expects us to carry our cross and follow Him for “he who does not carry his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:38). When the people standing around Jesus Christ on the cross asked Him to come down from the cross if He was really the Son of God, He did not. He did not come down not because He could not, but because He was the Son of God and He had to taste the torture of the cross to provide us salvation. The people’s reason for Jesus to come down is His reason to stay on the cross. We also as God’s children cannot come down from our cross for we are the sons and daughters of God. Here the cross means any tribulations we have to go through in this world because we are Christians.

Secondly, Jesus Christ expects us to love Him with all our hearts, so much that any other love we have cannot compare with the love we have for Him. He says “he who loves father or mother... son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37).

Thirdly, Jesus expects us, because of our love for Him, to obey Him at all costs. St. Peter says, “we ought to obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29). So the next time we are faced with peer pressure, we should recall this verse, which we should know by heart, to strengthen us in our stand with Christ with our cross that Jesus happily carries for us.

Conclusion: Because of these three points, a Christian will go through tribulations in many forms, one of which is peer pressure “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Always “remember that I said to you, ‘a servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20).

❖ Success stories

The best success story in the Bible relating to peer pressure is that of the lady of us all St. Mary. St. Mary was born in Nazareth, a city in Galilee (Luke 1:26-28). Although Nazareth is the city where Jesus Christ grew up, it might well have been the worst city that ever existed on the face of the earth, even worse than Sodom and Gomorrah. Because of Nazareth’s want of culture, its rude dialect, and its contact with the Gentiles, the Galileans were lightly esteemed by the inhabitants of Judea. To this very day, Nazareth is

regarded in Palestine with some sense of embarrassment (Ray C. Stedman--- The Weakness of the World). Nothing good has ever been associated with Nazareth for when the news about Jesus spread, people could not believe that “anything good can come out of Nazareth” (John 1:46) for “no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.” Nazareth was even so evil that Jesus Christ himself “could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them” (Mark 6:5). Nazareth was also the very first city to be violent toward Christ after He preached in the synagogue when they “rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the Hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff” (Luke 4:29).

The greatest unnoticed miracle that Jesus performed is how He brought about a pure virgin from such a city and found her deserving of being His mother, the Mother of God the Theotokos. The woman that found grace in the eyes of God, the woman who gave birth to Him, came from one of the worst cities in the region. If peer pressure can play any role in corrupting anyone, it would have been the peer pressure that St. Mary survived as she was growing up. Growing up in the temple helped St. Mary avoid some external pressures and endure temptations. If growing up sheltered in God’s Holy temple and altar protected St. Mary, it will definitely protect us in our struggles against peer pressure in this world. So let us learn to grow up in Christ and in His Church sheltered by Him when the enemy rages against our souls. He is the true shepherd and we are His flock. So let us follow Him very closely lest we lose sight of His glory and be an easy catch to the devil.

Another biblical story relating to peer pressure is that of Joseph. Joseph was “handsome in form and appearance” (Genesis 39:6). Because of Joseph’s pure heart, God loved him and blessed all his work in Potiphar’s house. But one day, Potiphar’s wife came to Joseph and asked him to commit sin with her. Anyone in Joseph’s place would have been so flattered for the proposal because she was his master’s wife and he was but a slave. One could have also easily accepted the proposal with the excuse that he was just a slave and could not refuse orders or else he would have been severely punished. But putting all those evil thoughts aside, Joseph decided that “we ought to obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29) no matter what the consequences are. It is written in Genesis 39:10 “so it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her.” Joseph held steadfast to his beliefs and said, “how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God” (Genesis 39:9). May we all have the same will power and fear of God to stand steadfast in Christ.

Conclusion:

Always remember we are not of this world. We are different and we should act differently. Be happy when we get persecuted for not bending under the pressure or when we get excluded from gatherings because we do not conform to worldly customs. “Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven” (Luke 6:22-23). Let’s carry our cross to show God how much we love Him.

Lastly always remember, God does not want us to defeat the world for “In the world you will have tribulations, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

All He wants us to do is to use Him as a shelter when the enemy rages against us. Let us stay in His altar forever as St. Mary did and if we are rendered far from it, let's remember how Jesus died for us and the least we can do to show Him that we love Him is to face tribulations and carry the cross.

Applications:

❖ Prevention:

Although God will carry our cross for us when we can no longer carry it, we should not put ourselves in situations that impose on us more crosses than necessary. Placing ourselves in bad environments and around non-God fearing people will definitely bring upon us peer pressure. God will provide us strength to keep our purity when faced with temptations but not with self-imposed temptations. Testing God in that manner will bring upon us nothing but condemnation. When the Church asks us to not go to worldly parties, night clubs, and to stay away from bad company, the Church is not automatically assuming that we are evil and will commit sin when we go there. But she definitely knows that because of our beliefs and our behavior as Christians, which is different from other people, we are aliens to this world and as a rational consequence we will be faced with peer pressure. We might overcome it and we might fall into sin, but why impose on ourselves more trials and tribulation than necessary. The devil is doing his best to tempt us and the closer we get to God, the stronger we become, and the more Satan tempts us.

- ❖ Psalm 1: Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night, i.e. one is blessed if he avoids being close to evilness and cursed if he willingly dwells with evil doers and in evil places.
- ❖ St. Mary: St. Mary, growing up in the temple, protected herself from any form of external temptations or pressure. We should also use God's altar, body and blood as a shelter as long as we live on this earth. Once we become distant of it, we are easy prey to the hungry wolves lurking outside.

Achieving victory over peer pressure:

❖ Contemplating over Christ's wounds:

If we are ever faced with peer pressure or tempted by any sin, we should remember that every sin we commit, we crucify Christ anew; every transgression we commit is yet another nail hammered in Jesus' hands. The Church fathers say that if we always have that picture in our minds, we will be less able to sin.

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER

Week -1- God's Appearances in the Old Testament

Week 2- King Josiah and the Repair of the Temple

Week 3 - Tapers and Incense in the Church

Week 4 - Life of Circumspection

Week -1- God's Appearances in the Old Testament

Meditation:

O Lord ... my heavenly Father ... Please come unto me and change me to be your Holy Temple and allow the Holy Spirit to dwell and work strongly in me. Please God help me to follow Your footsteps and be worthy to see You. Help me Lord to see You in the form of the poor, hungry and thirsty people as I give unto them from Your richly hands. Help me to see You in the form of the sick people and prisoners I am visiting as unto You. I see You Lord wherever I go in the very perfect creatures You made and created. Open my eye O Lord to see You wherever I go ... Amen.

Objective:

- ❖ To learn about God's appearances in the Old Testament and how the Lord Jesus Christ was symbolized by different characters in the Old Testament.

References:

- ❖ The Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, by the Youth Service in the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch.

Memory Verse:

- ❖ "But," He said, "you cannot see my face; for man shall not see Me and live" (Exodus 33:20).
- ❖ "Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:9).

Introduction:

- ❖ Can anybody see God? Mention three stories from the Old Testament that show the appearances of God? How did God appear? Why? Mention three prophecies and three characters in the Old Testament that referred to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Lesson Outline:

St. Bishoy and all the monks hurried up running to see the Lord Jesus Christ as was declared to them. St. Bishoy preferred to be the last one in order to help carrying another person, who cannot walk, who turned out to be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

❖ Examples of God's Appearances in the Old Testament

God appeared to Adam in the Garden of Eden and He was calling him and talking to him *"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden"* (Genesis 3:8).

God and two angels appeared to Abraham as three men "Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day... And the Lord said to Abraham, *"Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' 'Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied it, saying, 'I did not laugh,' for she was afraid. And He said, 'No, but you did laugh!'"* Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. And the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing" (Genesis 18:1, 13-17).

God appeared and fought with Jacob till the morning light and then blessed him and gave him the promises "Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" So He said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Genesis 32:24-30).

God appeared to Moses in the clouds walking on it and all the Israelites saw Him "Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank" (Exodus 24:9-11).

The Lord appeared to a man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah and to his wife giving them a promise that they will have a son called Samson "And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. "Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean ... And the Angel of the Lord said to Manoah, "Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the Lord. For Manoah did not know He was the Angel of the Lord. Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, "What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?" And the Angel of the Lord said to him, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?" (Judges 13:3,4,16-18).

The Lord appeared to Daniel in the shape of an old man "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was

given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13,14).

God appeared to the three men in the fire as the son of man “Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king” (Daniel 3:24).

❖ Prophecies in the Old Testament

God appeared in the form of a man in many occasions. Also He declared Himself on the mouths of His saints and prophets before the incarnation through prophecies.

The prophecies declared the details of the life of Lord Jesus Christ from birth to Ascension. More than 300 prophecies are found in the Old Testament.

❖ Characters from the Old Testament

Adam: The head of the old mankind representing the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the new mankind

Abel: The sacrifice with no reason or guilt representing the Lord, the great sacrifice, for our sins.

Isaac: The only beloved son, who presented himself a sacrifice and his father presented him joyfully and came back alive, represented the Lord who presented Himself as a pure lamb and He resurrected from death.

Joseph: Who was called the savior of the world saving his people from hunger representing the Lord Jesus who saved us from eternal death through His body. As the brothers of Joseph sold him, Judas sold his master.

Jonah: On his hands, the gentiles believed and spent three days inside the fish as the Lord spent three days inside the earth.

Applications:

- ❖ Let us train ourselves to see God in His creatures and glorify Him. Let us experience seeing Him when dealing with everyone in need of any kind of help.

Conclusion:

God manifested Himself to mankind at all ages since the beginning of creation. God loves to manifest Himself to us and He is dwelling in us through His Holy Spirit, guiding us, comforting us and leading us into His kingdom. Are we willing to submit ourselves to Him under His mighty hands to shape us and mold us into His image?

Week -2- King Josiah and the Repair of the Temple

Objective:

- ❖ Let us help the children to understand that they can take part in caring for the House of the Lord.

Memory Verse:

“Blessed are those who dwell in Your House, they will be praising You” (Psalm 84:4)

References

- ❖ 2 Kings 22:1-24:18
- ❖ “Interpretation of the Second Book of Kings” Sporting, Alexandria

Introduction

- □ The Servant holds a discussion with the children about how a dirty place cannot help people to worship the Lord, and how people sometimes behave in the streets when they throw pieces of paper and other things here and there.

Lesson Outline:

Our lesson today is about Josiah, the good king who was about your age and he loved the House of the Lord and cared for it. The temple was ruined and not clean. The walls were dirty... the covering layer was removed... the stones were broken to pieces and the pieces of wood cracked. When Josiah the king saw the Temple in that sad state, he felt very sad.

- ❖ What is the name of the king?
- ❖ In what state was the House of the Lord?
- ❖ What did Josiah do?

The king consulted the priest about what they should do. The priest brought a closed box with a hole in it (an opening) and he put the box beside the door of the Temple where people used to enter and there they put their gifts in the box till it was full of money. The king and the priest gathered a big sum of money from the people and then the workers and builders came to repair the House of God. They repaired the walls, the doors, and the windows and the Temple became splendid once more.

- ❖ Who of you wants to be like Josiah and cares for the House of the Lord?
- ❖ What can you do to make the House of God clean and beautiful?

- ❖ Write this verse in your notebook: “Blessed are those who dwell...” and study it by heart.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Read Psalm 84. How can we care for the House of the Lord spiritually and materially?

Applications:

- ❖ Sometimes we find that the rooms of Sunday School are not clean and torn pieces are here and there and chairs are not well arranged. Ask the children to clean and beautify the place where we worship God.
- ❖ Mention some of the things that need repair in the church and think out how you can help the children of this age in doing that.
- ❖ Ask a group of children to do the following: cleaning and lighting the church - distributing hymn books -gathering hymn books at the end of the service -opening the windows -sweeping the floor -shutting the doors -lighting the lamps -bringing the priest a cup of water -cleaning the carpets and putting them in their place - turning fans on when it is hot -shutting the windows in winter -Let them do that with activity and pleasure.
- ❖ Divide the class into groups -Some of the children perform these actions for one month then others do the same task next month and so on.
- ❖ Read the first chapter of the Book of Nehemiah.

Week -3- Tapers and Incense in the Church

Objective:

- ❖ The church rites help us to offer sincere worship.

References:

- ❖ The life of the Orthodox Prayer.

Memory Verse:

“Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Revelation 4:5).

Introduction:

The candle is a precise image of a worshipper standing in the presence of God. It is calm in appearance but it is burning in heart with burning fire that burns its cool body and melts it and pours it as tears that flow leaving a circle of light behind it, that pleases anyone who contemplates in it or walks under its guidance.

Its nature without the work of fire is trifle and useless the same way as the nature of man without the work of grace.

One candle lit in the House of God is an invitation to quiet, burning and shining worship. The candle is like the worshipper. It does not give light by itself but when it is lit, it burns and shines and in this case it lightens the darkness around it and gives forth heat and warmth to those who surround it.

Lesson Outline:

❖ What Does The Use Of Candles Mean?

In the early church candles were not used for merely giving light as they were used during day time especially on feast days on different occasions... On those occasions the altar appeared bright and beautiful especially on the following occasions.

When celebrating the Holy Saturday and there was a special rite performed for the candles of the Passover Day where all the people participated joyfully in celebrating the light of the resurrection. Believers still bring the light from the Holy Tomb in Jerusalem on that night every year and take it to all parts of the world.

Candles were lit by the baptism font as a sign of enlightenment and the new shining nature worn, by the baptized person. The new baptized persons used to go around inside the church after the liturgy and after receiving the Holy Communion. They put golden crowns on their heads and gird them with girdles. Candles were in their hands as a sign of rejoice and joy for the new birth.

Also when the Holy Bible is read, we see a candle in the hand of the deacon as a sign that the Gospel's light fills the universe and that the Gospel is man's lamp and the light of his way and that he who lives according to the (Bible) Gospel lives in light, walks in light and becomes the son of light and the son of resurrection.

Also on the Saints days candles are lit before their icons indicating that they "Shine like the brightness of the firmament" in the kingdom of God... This honor urges others to follow the example of those saints and imitate them till the end.

As for martyrs, people used to light a lampadae before their icons, and each lampadae was lit day and night. The remaining oil in them caused several miracles. We hear about a lame man who entered the church of St. Stephen and anointed his leg with the oil and was healed immediately. The man lit a candle and left his crutch as a present to the saint and it became as a shrine for people to visit.

Candles were used in funerals where deacons walked before the departed righteous and pious people and lit candles over their bodies.

In the Liturgy prayers there are two lit candlesticks set on the two sides of the altar referring to the two angels who were by the tomb of Jesus at the time of His resurrection. The lampadae set in the eastern side of the church refers to the star that drew our attention to the child Jesus.

The candle lit before the Icon of Christ declares that Christ is the Light of the World. "That was the true light which lightens every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9).

The candle lit before the Icon of the Virgin declares that this is the Mother of light.

The candle lit before the Icon of the Saint declares that this is the lit decorated lamp that is put in an upper place in the house to give light to all those living in it.

Let us practice this rite and remember that the wise virgins who were ready to meet the Bridegroom had oil in their vessels and they lit their lamps when they met the bridegroom. Let us practice this rite in godliness and submission, and deep contemplation. We should be purified of sin. We should not be defiled. We have to lift up our eyes to the heavenly glory where the dwelling places of Light exist.

The Use Of Incense In The Church

St. Ephraim of Syria says, "I made a church of myself for Christ. The toils of my body burn as incense inside it."

Incense was used in the past in the Old Testament each morning and each evening according to the commandment the Lord gave Moses (Exodus 30).

When the plague spread among the people of Israel, Moses and Aaron took fire from the altar and put it in a censer and poured incense on it. They stood between the living and the dead and made atonement for them (Numbers 16:44-48).

In the Old Testament the Lord demanded that censers should be kept as they were sanctified by raising incense before the Lord.

Its use was mentioned in a wonderful way in the Book of Revelation. The incense is the prayers of the saints. We should honor the fearful Presence of God by offering incense to Him (Revelations 8:3,4)

Many troubled souls entered the church and there they felt calm and comfort when the cloud of the holy incense rising from the censor that is in the priest's hand came to them.

Many worried souls felt comfort when they followed and looked at the circles of incense smoke rising to heaven.

The simple eye sees incense as mere sweet smelling smoke which disappears in the air after a short time, but the eye of the inspired soul sees it going up to heaven carrying with it the prayers of the saints and the holy angels raise it with hymns of praise.

III. An objection and reputation

We have to notice that we offer incense to God only but giving incense to the High Priests is only for attaining their blessings so that they may raise with the prayers of the people who are members of one body. So incense is not offered to them as persons but to God who abides in them as St. Paul the apostle says, "You are the temples of God and the Spirit is dwelling in you."

Some may object saying that offering incense to the Icons of Saints is worship to persons or to pictures and statues but in fact we do all this with the spirit of fellowship. As small grains of incense melt and send forth a sweet smell before God, the priest does the same when he gathers the prayers of the saints whether alive or dead and raises them to God in public worship and deep spiritual significance, thanking God: "Who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere" (2 Corinthians 2:14,15). For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved....

Applications:

- ❖ Light a candle before the Icon of the Virgin or before the Icon of the Patron Saint of the church and ask them to intercede on your behalf to Christ that He may forgive your sins.
- ❖ Send the names of those who departed so that the priest may raise incense for them after the prayer of the Congregation in the Divine Mass.
- ❖ Make a wall magazine and write essays on "Tapers", "Incense", and "Icons" in the Orthodox Church, Make use of your readings and drawings in making this wall magazine.
- ❖ Quote verses from the Holy Bible that proves your sound belief about using candles, incense and icons in the Orthodox Church.

Week -4- Life of Circumspection

Objective:

- ❖ Being faithful to God in word and deed, in small matters before the big ones.

References

- ❖ Life of Circumspection / Fawzy Nimr Mina.

Memory Verse:

“Take thought for what is noble in the sight of all” (Roman 12:17).

Introduction:

- ❖ Circumspection Is An Important Sign On The Road Of Spiritual Life

It shows the seriousness of our will and the type of our struggle. Circumspection means resisting sins even the small ones. It means chastity and abstaining from every form of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

It means that we should hate all forms of defilement whether visible or invisible, as the apostle says: “Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23).

Lesson Outline:

- ❖ Types of Circumspection

A. Suspicion

A man may wash his hands several times and still think that they are dirty. The same is true with a man whose conscience is always bothering him and who confesses his sins to the priest, yet thinks that they have not been forgiven so he relates them several times. This is wrong. It is not circumspection but it is weakness and a disease.

B. Phariseeism

It is the circumspection based on formalities and carrying out the commandments literally such as circumspection in the ritual law as Pharisees used to be careful about outside purification such as washing jars, cups and beds and determining what should and what should not be done on the Sabbath and all such formal matters for which the Lord Christ reproached them many times:

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel” (Matthew 23:23, 24).

II. The Acceptable Circumspection

A. First: In deeds

The spiritual man looks carefully how he walks. He performs his work with great care and according to what the Divine Truth demands. The spiritual man cares for his apparent deeds and concealed ones. He examines every behavior and every deed and asks himself: Is it fit? Is it for the glory of God? The scripture says: “Take thought for what is noble in

the sight of all” (Roman 12:17). Also “We aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of men” (2 Corinthians 8:21).

Thus we perform our deeds to glorify God the Father who art in heaven. Many people behave foolishly and sometimes indifferently and carelessly, without care or circumspection and nowadays we often hear expressions such as: never mind... Don’t worry... etc. Many people are not time minded they lie when they talk, they are cunning in talk and behavior, they are dissemblers and time servers and often dishonest These are dangerous signs indicating that the spiritual life of man is out of control and that evil desires began to play their part even in the life of those who pretend to be spiritual people. We hear of Abba Anthony who listened to the Divine Word “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Matthew 19:21) and sold all his property and obeyed the commandment literally. He left a small portion of wealth for his sister and when he went to church, he said, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow” and sold that small portion too and sent his sister to a nunnery. The commandment to him was a Divine Order that must be carried out and was not for argument or negotiation.

B. Second: In saying

The tongue is a small organ but it is like the boat rudder that moves the boat to the right or to the left. The following are selected scripture verses, which show the danger of careless talk.

i) Lying Words:

- “Idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that bums with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Revelations 21:8).

ii) Revilement:

- “Nor thieves, nor the greedy, not drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:10).
- “And whoever says: ‘You fool’ shall be liable to the hell of fire” (Matthew 5:22).

iii) Silly talk and foul talks:

- “But now put them all away: anger, wrath malice, slander and foul talk from your mouth Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices” (Colossians 3:8).

iv) Do not swear at all:

- “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ anything more than this comes from evil” (Matthew 5:37).

v) Careless words:

- “On the Day of Judgment, men will render account for every careless word they utter” (Matthew 12:36).

- “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits” (Proverbs 18:21).
- “Those who are killed by the tongue are more than those killed by the mouth of the sword” (Sirach 28:18).
- All what we say then should be useful, true, precise and serious... Let us commit ourselves to circumspection in talking and let our talk be as brief as possible as, “When words are many, transgression is not lacking but the who restrains his lips is prudent” (Proverbs 10:19).

C. Third: In Thoughts

The scripture says: “Be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Roman 12:2) “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

- ❖ In this domain the following exercises benefit us:
 - Resist evil looks, as they are the material on which the mind feeds.
 - Do not listen to words that do not fit us as children of God as words transform into subconscious images that trouble the mind, and the feeling.
 - Always pray and make use of the name of Jesus as a blessed means for driving away all evil thoughts.
 - In this respect Anba Daniel the Hegomen says: “We cannot prevent birds from hovering over our heads... but we can prevent them from making their nests in our hair”.
 - Always think of useful things, as the head of a lazy person is the devil’s laboratory.
 - Do not resort to excuses such as the power of the devil in your passions and tendencies.
 - Prophet Jeremiah says: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it? I the Lord search the mind and try the heart, to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 17:9,10).
 - There are sins of the heart such as spite, envy, hatred, jealousy, deception, anger and lusts. So we must watch our heart so that it may not deviate, to the right or to the left... For example we should not do good out of our love for appearance, and we must not be lazy in doing our duty because of illness. We must know that there are wrong motivations that may tempt our hearts to sin.
 - It is said that Simon the borer (the shoemaker), while mending a woman’s shoe, looked at the woman and desired her. So he plucked his eye remembering that it was better for him to enter the eternal life as one-eyed man than being thrown into the fire of hell with his two eyes. The Lord rewarded him by performing the miraculous deed of moving the mountain of Mokattam through him.

- He was careful with small things so he could perform a great deed. It is not advisable that you should get rid of your eyes literally but you have to keep them away from evil look and from the stumbling programs on T.V.

III. Dangers of Carelessness

Little foxes spoil vineyards; a small hole may cause a big ship to sink; and a small stone in the traveler's shoe can cause him to stop walking. The same is true if we are careless with small sins.

Lukewarmness, keeping away from prayers, and not having comfort in them is because our thoughts go astray, and the spiritual life is difficult, and we hate to struggle.

There is no growth in grace because the spiritual benefits such as meekness and purity are wasted at a moment of anger or a passing lust. Causing others to stumble when they notice that we are double-faced and in the end the Holy Spirit is grieved and does not support man. He who is not faithful in small situations cannot be faithful in important situations. He who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much as the Scripture says.

Questions:

- ❖ Joseph the Righteous was a model of circumspection and Esau was an opposite example. Explain. How did the Lord correct Jacob's carelessness? What was the price Jacob paid because of his carelessness?
- ❖ Show how one sin in David's life caused many troubles for him and how one mistake in the life of Lot's wife caused her destruction. What was that mistake?

Applications:

- ❖ When an evil thought comes to your mind, remember the fear of God and say: "Be pleased, O God, to deliver me! O Lord, make haste to help me!"
- ❖ When you suffer from the desire of the flesh bow down and make the sign of the cross and say: "The Lord answers you in the day of trouble. The name of the God of Jacob protect you."
- ❖ When you err while talking as when you exaggerate tell the people that you are sorry and the correct words you meant were so and so... In this way you fight the devil of lying, pride and love of appearance.
- ❖ When one of your friends ask you to swear that your words are true do not swear but say to him, "Believe me" and do not swear at all.
- ❖ When you see a group of friends saying inappropriate jokes, keep away from them and remember the words of the Scriptures: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the Law of the Lord and on his Law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1,2).
- ❖ "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3). Get the reflections of the student on this verse.

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

Week 1- Ezekiel the Prophet of Renewal and Unity

Week 2- Daniel, the Prophet of the Messiah

Week 3- Jacob And Esau: Begging For Blessing

Week 4- Jacob Works With His Uncle Laban

Week -1- Ezekiel the Prophet of Renewal and Unity

Objective:

- ❖ □ To learn about the new life in the prophecy of Ezekiel

Memory Verse:

“The name of the city from that day shall be: THE LORD IS THERE” (Ezekiel 48:35)

References:

- ❖ “Ezekiel” Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty
- ❖ “Ezekiel the Prophet” Fr. Bishoy Abdel Messih

Introduction:

Ezekiel is a priest and a prophet, ministered during the darkest days of Judah’s history: The seventy years period of Babylonian captivity. He was carried to Babylon before the final assault on Jerusalem and used prophecies, parables, signs and symbols to dramatize God’s message to His exiled people.

Lesson Outline:

❖ The Defeat of Jerusalem Before the Babylonians

In about 597 BC the Babylonians came under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar and besieged Jerusalem. Jerusalem’s king, Jehoiakim, surrendered and the Babylonians looted the city and took with them Jehoiakim and all the strong men as captives and sent them into exile in Babylon as the Scriptures say: “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon” (Jeremiah 24:1).

❖ Ezekiel the Prophet

In those days there was a great prophet whose name was Ezekiel. He prophesied of the Exile before it took place but the people did not listen to him and were not wise in what they did. Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon and there he prophesied about what would happen in the future. The people went to him and asked about the time of salvation and rescue from that affliction and Ezekiel prophesied saying: “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me: Son of man, can these bones live? So I answered: O Lord God, You know.

Again He said to me: Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.’ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. Also He said to me: Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army” (Ezekiel 37:1-10).

This prophecy had a direct meaning (which was near) and a spiritual meaning. The direct meaning indicates the historical events, which took place fifty years after this prophecy when Cyrus King of Persia gave an order that the Jews would return to Jerusalem from exile and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4). But the remote spiritual meaning is what Ezekiel prophesied about the work of the Holy Spirit and the New Life which is given to men: “Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5).

❖ The Work of the Holy Spirit

1. The Gift of the New Life: We can imagine human beings before Christ. They were sentenced to death because of sins. That was the wide valley which was full of the bones of the dead then Christ the Hope of Gentiles, came and His light shone on those sitting in the valley of darkness and shadows of death and the voice says, “O you who are still asleep, get up rise from the dead and Christ will send light for you. The soul that believes will pass from death to life and will rise with Christ and take, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the new life... and on the day of Pentecost, there was a sound which came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind and the Holy Spirit rested on the early church and all the people were filled with Spiritual power... gifts and miracles according to what the Holy Spirit gave them and the new man who rose with Christ began to live his new life with the Holy Spirit: “We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). In this way the rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit saved us (Titus 3:5).

2. The Source of Unity: Ezekiel prophesied of the Unity of the church in which the Spirit of the Lord works, “Come from the four winds O breath and breathe upon these slain that they may live”. The breathing of the Spirit from the four parts of the world indicates the one church in the whole world which is led and guided by the Spirit of the Lord in the holy unity of all believers as the Lord Jesus desires so that all believers may become one (John 17:21), a new heart and right spirit. St. Augustine said contemplating this saying, “Come with all your sins and with all your faults, come with your heart, with your spiritual desires and in secret take off the works of darkness, take off the sins of humanity...the moment you do this the Spirit renews your senses which have been corrupted by iniquities and sins. In this way our souls will be holy temples for God and

the Spirit of God abides in us... Ezekiel the Prophet wrote: Thus says the Lord... Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

Conclusion:

The Lord appeared to Ezekiel in a heavenly vision so he fell upon his face and the Lord said to him, “Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak to you” (Ezekiel 2:1). This encouraged Ezekiel and the Lord gave him a message to call the captured to repent and ordered him to deliver that message.

Applications:

- ❖ Do a Bible search for the characters that saw a vision.
- ❖ Try to find verses from the New Testament that was actually prophesied in the book of Ezekiel.

Week -2- Daniel, the Prophet of the Messiah

Objective:

- ❖ To Know the Character of the Coming Christ in the Book of Daniel

Memory Verse:

- ❖ *“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2)*

References:

- ❖ “Daniel the friend of angels” Fr. Bishoy Kamel
- ❖ “The Life of Daniel and his prophecy” Fr. Abdel Messih

Introduction:

We see in King David a model indicating a greater king, i.e. the Messiah. He rules over all the world and his kingdom is endless according to the promises given from God and the prophecies uttered in the psalms. After him came prophet Isaiah and through the spirit of prophecy he revealed the personality of the coming Christ and His kingdom, which He would establish. But it was a spiritual kingdom not of this world. Here we meet with Daniel to whom Heaven revealed many secrets through visions and he saw the great events in the life of the Son of man and he prophesied of His coming and the kingdom of saints as he saw it in his vision.

Lesson Outline:

❖ **The Son of Man in Daniel’s Vision**

Daniel saw a dream: “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man’s heart was given to it. And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: ‘Arise, devour much flesh!’ After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and

dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words. I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. I watched then.

Because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:4-14).

II. The Saints and the Kingdom

Here Daniel began to understand the interpretation of this vision. One of those standing began to explain: “Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth...The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (Daniel 7:17-27).

This explanation clarifies the vision to us and gives us its spiritual meaning as follows: The Son of man who Daniel saw is Jesus Christ who took to himself the title of the “Son of man”. This means that Daniel prophesied of His coming down from heaven, His incarnation and becoming man for us, the people and for our salvation. Daniel here reveals the symbols of the Holy Trinity the One God so we see: The Father (the Ancient of Days), the Son (the Son of man) and the Holy Spirit (a river of fire running and coming out from the Father). The saints whom Daniel saw in his vision are the Christians who believed in the Incarnate God and accepted Him and He gave them dominion to

become children of God and made them children of the kingdom of God.

Those saints are from the kingdom of Christ, which begins and is established here on earth. This kingdom is the struggling church which includes a society whose life is characterized by holiness as they made Christ their king; the king of their life and their hearts. They obey the commandments of God and their holy hearts glorify Him. This kingdom extends to heaven which represents the triumphant church represented in the heavenly glories where the righteous inherit the kingdom prepared for them before the establishment of the world and they will attain the crowns of righteousness.

Daniel revealed the fight between the world and the children of God and how the world prevails and succeeds for a limited time (the fourth kingdom refers to the Roman Empire which was in existence when Christ came and how the Romans fought the believers and persecuted them severely). But the King of kings won victory. He went out conquering and to conquer and to give His people triumph and victory. In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37).

III. Seventy Weeks!

Gabriel the angel appeared to Daniel and said to him “I have come to tell you because the Lord loves you... After seventy weeks (70 x 7 which means in the fullness of time... as 7 is a complete number) Christ the Holy of Holies will appear and He shall make a strong covenant with many..and He shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease” (Daniel 9:20-27).

Conclusion:

- ❖ Let us be cautious of those who interpret the prophecies of Daniel in a way that may make people believe that Christ will come on a certain day or that Israel in her present political circumstances is the outcome of ancient prophecies... as Christ will come on a day unknown to.

Applications:

- ❖ Choose from the Second group what responds to the first group and completes the meaning:

First Group

- ❖ The Son of man whom Daniel saw is...
- ❖ The four beasts stand for...
- ❖ The beast, which fights the children, is...
- ❖ The horn, which spoke great things against God stand for...
- ❖ The saints of the Most High to whom the kingdom is given are...

Second Group

- ❖ Four kings that will rule over the world.
- ❖ The rulers who falsely accused the innocent Christians.
- ❖ The Christians who believe in Christ the Son of God.
- ❖ The Lord Jesus in his incarnation and becoming man.
- The Roman Empire, which persecuted Christianity.

Questions:

- ❖ How did Daniel inform us of the Messiah?
- ❖ Do all Christians have to be saints? How?
- ❖ Why is Christ given the title of “Son of man”?
- ❖ Study the following verse: Daniel 7:13,14
- ❖ Review Question: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all” (Psalm 34:19). Explain this in the light of what you studied in the Book of Daniel.
- ❖ Answer: Daniel’s interpretation of the king’s dream... caused him to find favor with the king and grace in his eyes...The three young men and the blazing furnace...Daniel in the den of the lions.

Week -3- Jacob And Esau: Begging For Blessing

Objective:

- ❖ Recognizing the value of the blessing.

Memory Verse:

“Looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God” (Hebrews 12:15)

References:

- ❖ Genesis 25- 27
- ❖ “The Life of Jacob” by F. B. Mayer
- ❖ “Stories of the Fathers and the Prophets: Jacob and Esau” by Fr. Louis Barsoum

Introduction:

The Servant checks the homework and the verse and sets the scene for the new lesson as follows:

- ❖ What is Abraham’s most important characteristic?
- ❖ What is the name of Abraham’s wife?
- ❖ Who is the son of both Abraham and Sarah?

Lesson Outline:

We know that Abraham is Isaac’s father. Isaac married Rebecca. Rebecca became pregnant and then gave birth to twin sons. The second was weak and slim. He was born holding tightly to the heel of Esau, the red son. The first was given the name Esau and the second was given the name of Jacob.

- ❖ What are the names of Isaac’s sons?
- ❖ How were they like?

The two children grew up together but their ways of living were different. Esau became a hunter, but Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home and bred animals. Isaac preferred Esau because he enjoyed eating the animals Esau killed and because Esau was his first-born son. But Rebecca preferred Jacob because he was quiet and dwelt in tents (Concentrate on the concept of birthright and its importance).

- ❖ The first born becomes a leader among his brothers.
- ❖ He inherits the blessing.

- ❖ The Spiritual heritage is his.
- ❖ Christ is descended from the first born..

So the birthright is a very good heritage. Esau did not care for birthright and he did not care for the blessing... He came in from hunting... he was hungry and tired... he asked Jacob to give him a pottage of lentils and declared that he was ready to sell him his birthright. Thus Esau despised his birthright and deprived himself of the blessing.

- ❖ What are the advantages of birthright?
- ❖ Compare between Esau and Jacob.
- ❖ Read Genesis 27
- ❖ What did Jacob's mother do so that Jacob may receive the blessing?
- ❖ Where did Esau go at that time?

Jacob's characteristics and the promise... Jacob deserved the blessing... The story of Jacob and his mother and how he deceived his father... The blessing is Jacob's... We know why Isaac was convinced that Jacob was the son who deserved the blessing. Isaac ate the food Jacob offered him and gave him all the blessings... and then Esau came but there was no blessing left... This is a punishment for his recklessness and carelessness.

- ❖ Why was Jacob accepted and Esau rejected?
- ❖ What will Esau do when he knows what Jacob has done?

Conclusion:

- ❖ You can be blessed like Jacob and you can get rid of Esau's defects when you lift your eyes sincerely and truthfully to the Lord Jesus, with your heart full of faith.
- ❖ Jesus will give you the new nature and the spiritual blessing through the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Do not be in a hurry, be patient as the blessing is coming to you so long as you deserve it.

Applications:

- ❖ In your notebook write the words of blessing with which Isaac blessed his son Jacob (Genesis 27,28,29)
- ❖ Children act this story.
- ❖ Rearrange the words of the following verse and study it: God -so -of -to -grace -it- the -that -no one -obtain -to -fail

Week -4- Jacob Works With His Uncle Laban

Objective:

- ❖ Good work saves its doer.

References:

- ❖ Genesis 29
- ❖ “Studies on the Book of Genesis” Sporting, Alexandria

Memory Verse:

“I am with you and will keep you wherever you go” (Genesis 28:15)

Introduction:

- ❖ Review with the children the previous lesson.
- ❖ How did Jacob receive the blessing and how did he behave when he knew that Esau was angry with him?

Lesson Outline:

On the way ...When Jacob left Beersheba for Haran so that Esau might be calm... and he went on in his way with the help of God and through the blessings of his parents... he went on walking till dark fell and he raised his blessed prayer and promised the holy promise and slept between the hands of God and saw the wonderful dream... the ladder... a stairway from earth to heaven with angels going up and coming down in it.

- ❖ Why did Jacob pray and what did he promise?
- ❖ What was the dream that he saw?

Beside the well at Haran: Jacob arrived at the well and sat there... he watered his uncle's sheep... His uncle Laban knew him through his daughters. They invited him to stay with them.

- ❖ Why couldn't the girls take water from the well?
- ❖ What did Jacob do?
- ❖ How did Laban know that he was his relative?

Jacob the Shepherd: Because of Jacob's wisdom and God's blessing Laban's sheep increased in numbers... Laban asked Jacob to stay with them at Haran. Jacob was a very clever shepherd.

- ❖ How many years did Jacob stay with Laban?
- ❖ Why did Laban love him?

Conclusion:

- ❖ In times of trouble, do not fall into despair but be sure that God is near.
- ❖ How awesome is the church! Do not forget that it is the gate to heaven and the house of angels so always direct your heart to Christ, as the church is his.

Applications:

- ❖ The Servant gives the children questions to be answered in their notebooks.
- ❖ Studying vespers that suit this lesson: “We thank You, O our merciful king...”
- ❖ Children use it in their prayers till the end of this term... Vespers should be distributed either in print or the children could copy it from books and the Servant can run competitions.

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY

Week 1- Nativity and Our Spiritual Life

Week 2- Do Not Worship Men

Week 3- The Holy Family's Flight To Egypt

Week 4- John the Baptist: His Self Denial and His Evangelism

Week -1- Nativity and Our Spiritual Life

Objective:

- ❖ How shall I receive the newborn Baby of Bethlehem?

References:

- ❖ Contemplation on the Nativity of Our Lord / H. H. Pope Shenouda III.
- ❖ Blessings of Incarnation / Anba Gregory.
- ❖ Levels of Teachings Feasts / Anba Bemin.

Memory Verse:

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:17).

Introduction:

We should be happy on the feast day and rejoice when we celebrate the newborn Baby of Bethlehem. It is a great feast on which we remember the coming of the Lord to our world and His incarnation and becoming man to live with us as one of us and to be like us in everything except sin.

The memories of Nativity are very pleasant indeed. Angels in heaven sing hymns of praise, the shepherds and the wise men offer worship to the Lord Jesus, and Jesus, in the manger, makes wonderful peace between those in heaven and those on earth but what is most important is the effect of the Lord’s Nativity on our Spiritual Life.

Lesson Outline:

Our Lord Christ was born of the Virgin and became man like us so that He may be spiritually born in every human soul that opens her heart to Him and receives Him. Jesus wore our flesh and His Spirit protects us. He was born of human flesh and we are spiritually born in Him.

❖ Repentance

The grace of Nativity, then, dwells in us when Jesus comes to us and dwells in us “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:17).

Jesus does not dwell in us if we hold fast the desires of the world, as the Lord is not born in man unless he is born anew because the soul that is born anew is the soul that can be a dwelling place for the Baby of Bethlehem.

We attained the new birth through baptism but we make it perfect through true repentance.

True repentance is the devoted life. It is in the life that always looks up to heaven. It is the life that carries out what St. Peter said, “So put away all malice and insincerity and envy and all slander. Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation” (1 Peter 2:1,2).

Only through this new birth can we meet our Lord Jesus Christ. Nativity has no meaning unless we hear the voice of the feast in our ears saying to us, “You have to be born anew. Be clean and pure as a new babe. Train yourself. Long for the milk of the Divine word. Taste it and enjoy it.”

❖ **Humility**

The Nativity of our Lord changed all concepts. The strong is not necessarily the rich or the master as greatness lies in humility. The Lord has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degrees. So it is necessary for us to deny ourselves and follow the Son, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself. We have to consider ourselves as nothing before God whatever our intelligence, abilities and positions may be. We have to feel that we are in dire need for the Divine help and humbly accept to deal with all people, even the sinners, as if they were far better than we are. We should bravely confess our sins and not to be proud of our talents as the Word of God dwells in the humble heart

The Lord who found comfort in the womb of Virgin Mary who was meek, humble and lowly still finds comfort in the heart of a humble and lowly person who is never haughty and never arrogant.

❖ **Purity**

Without purity no one can see God... as how can Christ abide in a heart that is filled with bad desires and wrong emotions such as anger, lust and defilement. Jesus was born in a manger, and this indicates that He came to purify and sanctify the desires of the flesh. We have to clean our manger so that the Lord Christ may come and dwell in it.

When Nineveh repented, the animals fasted and in the manger the animals received Him. We should control our desires. Look at the Virgin who is the model of purity; such a heart is the only place that deserves Christ to dwell in. She was filled with grace. Her mind was pure. So the Lord chose her and sent His Spirit to give her Divine power for keeping her flesh, self and soul in the fear of God. She was the temple, the bride and the manger.

We have to watch our conduct and behavior especially in keeping the body pure and in abstaining from the desires of the flesh so that we may be worthy of receiving the baby of Bethlehem.

❖ **Singing Hymns**

The hearts which are filled with love deserve to see the Babe. The magi sacrificed and suffered. Simon the Elder waited for a very long time. The Virgin endured the pains and Joseph suffered a lot.

All waited patiently for the coming of Christ. When Jesus was born, the heavens opened and the heavenly hosts showed their happiness through their hymns and praise.

The church receives Christmas through a whole month of preparedness through hymns, worship and fasting in the month of Kiahk) (The praises of Seven and Four).

The entire world rejoices on that day as a new great event occurs in the world and in the life of the children of God.

O thirsty people, Come to the well of water. Let those who are tired rejoice and welcome the birth of the Lamb with hymns. Cast your burden on the Lord. Sing with joy. Praise His holy name forever.

Applications:

Nativity fasting should be accompanied by examining the self, confession, receiving the Holy Communion to take Christ in us, especially on the Feast Eve.

Study the pleasant Nativity hymns and attend the Nativity Eve Hymn of Praise.

You can put on the best clothes but your heart should be humble and show love to the poor. On the feast day, go with your teachers to the orphanages and hospitals to visit the poor and the sick and in this way everyone will rejoice and be merry

When you make the Nativity Cavern, and when you put the animals in it remember that you must sanctify your instincts through grace. When you put the shepherds, remember the Spirit of Vigil. When you put the Virgin, remember her lowliness and humility. Let the Nativity Cavern be an object of contemplation and the new start.

Week -2- : The Angels and the Shepherds

Objective:

- ❖ The Joy of Christmas

Memory Verse:

- ❖ *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14)*

References:

- ❖ Matthew 1; Luke 2:8-14
- ❖ “Explanation of the Gospel of Matthew” Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty
- ❖ “The Child Jesus” Asad Leilah, Beirut
- ❖ “By the Manger” Christian Culture House

Introduction:

- ❖ Review the previous lesson with the students.
- ❖ Prepare audiovisual aids about the Nativity scene.
- ❖ Sing with the students the following songs: O believers come with us... Silent night... Holy night... Start by asking the children:
- ❖ Where was the Lord Christ born?
- ❖ Who remembers the name of a king and prophet who was a shepherd in this city?

Lesson Outlines:

Bethlehem is a small town near Jerusalem. Rocks, valleys and mountains surround it. One winter dark night, this city was crowded with travelers coming from every city and village in the country, as the Roman Emperor Augustus wanted to enroll all citizens. So all went to be enrolled in their own town. The people obeyed the decree. Joseph and Mary came from Nazareth to Bethlehem. When they arrived at the town they were very tired. They did not find a place in the inn but the innkeeper looked at Virgin Mary's face and saw that she was very tired. He tried to help her so he led her to the manger. It was not a good place but it was warm because of the cows' breath and the smell of straw. In that place, the little Child Lord Jesus was born. His mother wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, as there was no place for them in the inn.

- ❖ What was the name of the town?
- ❖ Why was Lord Jesus born in a manger?
- ❖ How did the world know that Christ was born?

- ❖ Who were the first to receive the annunciation?

In that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. Why...So that the wolves and fierce animals might not come near their flock. At midnight something strange happened. What are these sweet songs? The shepherds heard a sweet hymn filling the sky. They heard these words: Glory to God in the Highest... They got up and opened their eyes. The light that came from heaven shone on everything: the mountains, the flock and the people. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. When the bright light disappeared, the shepherds said to one another: Let us go to Bethlehem and see the child Jesus. The shepherds went quickly to the hills of Bethlehem... they arrived... they found the stable... they entered quickly and told Mary and Joseph about what the angels said. They knelt down before Jesus and gave Him their little presents and went out quietly and made for the place where their sheep were and they were glorifying God.

- ❖ Why were the Shepherds out in the fields?
- ❖ What happened at midnight?
- ❖ Let us say together, Glory to God...
- ❖ What did the shepherds do?

Let us sing a hymn together: O Shepherds...

Conclusion:

- ❖ The shepherds were very glad when they heard the news and they rushed to see the Babe and the Savior. We also have heard the good news, let us rejoice and be glad that the Lord has come for us to forgive us our sins and open the doors of paradise for us.

Applications:

The children should cooperate in making the Nativity cavern under the supervision of the Servant. Children like to make caverns and such things elucidate the idea of Nativity.

Encourage them to bring the components and parts such as: small statues of sheep, shepherds, a babe, a manger, straw, candles, etc.

The children can act the events of the story.

- ❖ Write the verse in good handwriting.
- ❖ Read Luke 2

Week -3- Do Not Worship Men

Objective:

- ❖ To understand that God is the focus for worship and not people.
- ❖ To shy away from trying to impress others during worship.

Memory Verse:

“God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

References:

- ❖ “Paradise of the Spirit” by Anba Youanis

Introduction:

We might be completely unfocused in our worship by the people surrounding us. We may even make them the purpose of our worship. Thus we are trying to appear righteous in the eyes of others. Hence we might end up being hypocrites, trying to show off our religious practices while the inner self is full of sin and darkness. The Lord warned us from this kind of worship many times and in many ways during the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:1-8, 6:16-18).

Lesson Outline:

Worshipping men can interfere with our worship to God in many ways and forms. The problem is that it can go unnoticed. We may be convinced and care to convince others that we are worshiping God when we are really worshiping others and through their compliments we are worshiping ourselves in the eyes of others. This kind of apparent warm worship and righteous behavior soon fades away when the people around us disappear. There are many examples of this kind of hypocritical worship that we have to watch for in our spiritual life. These examples are:

❖ In Prayer

Choosing to pray in front of people and in places where we can be seen. The Lord specifically mentions that prayers should be away from the eyes of others *“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly”* (Matthew 6:5-6).

Another form is to try to impress others with your words during prayer. Thus we put a lot of effort to choose and arrange the words so that when people hear us in prayers would be affected with our words and believe that we are very spiritual people. Thus, instead of

focusing on God during prayer, we are focused on people listening to our prayer. In this regard the Lord said: *“And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words”* (Matthew 6:7).

❖ **In Fasting**

Fasting also should be a private spiritual practice to strengthen our spirits. It is not a mean to get people’s praise or sympathy. We should function in a normal or even better state than when we are not fasting. Fasting provides energy to the spirit and this energy proceeds to energize the body as well. The Lord said: *“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But, you when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your father who is the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly”* (Matthew 6:16-18).

It is sad if we fast only when we are surrounded with spiritual people and break our fast when we are alone or with friends who are not fasting. Also, we may fast only when we find fasting food easily but break the fast when fasting food is not easily available.

❖ **In Donations and Tithing**

Giving in front of others is another act of worshiping men. Money is often used to glorify its owner. And men tend to use it to get respect and honor from others. This is particularly true with non-spiritual people. They tend to donate and offer their money to God in a visible manner. This is completely against the teaching of the Lord who said: *“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in Heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly”* (Matthew 6:1-4).

❖ **In Confession**

We also try to avoid confession because we do not want the priest to know our sins and weaknesses. Again making man as our focus instead of God by forgetting that we are confessing to God in the presence of the priest. It is unbelievable that we are trying to hide our sins from the priest and do not care about the fact that God knows everything. It is even worse that we try to hide from people when we are sinning and forget about God and His presence everywhere and that we cannot hide from Him. Adam did this mistake when he tried to hide from the Lord after he sinned, *“And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden”* (Genesis 3:8-9).

Some people say they can confess to God but not to a priest. They find it easier to confess to God than to confess in the presence of the priest. It is amazing that we have less shame and fear for God than for men. This is clearly a worship of man. Please read about confession and trespass offering in Leviticus (Leviticus 5:1-6).

❖ **In Faith**

There is discrimination based on religion in many countries. One of the forms of discrimination is in maintaining good position of work for non-Christians. Another form is in giving money aid or food aid to people who convert from Christianity to the discriminator's religion. Changing our Christian faith when we are in the middle of non-believers is another form of worshipping men. It is very sad that Christians may change their faith to get money, job or a wife. Almost all the martyrs in the history of the church were martyred because they worshiped God and refused to worship men or idols.

❖ **In Communion**

Many of the hypocrites would not have communion except in the presence of a Bishop or the Patriarch. These individuals have forgotten that they are receiving the body and the blood of the king of kings and that the bishop or the Patriarch is just a mean for receiving the Lord Himself in us. Again we are confusing the value of the unseen with the seen individuals around us.

❖ **In Righteousness**

Many try to wear the clothes of righteousness by words only and not by deeds. They act in humility while the inner self is full of pride and self righteousness, act in virginity while the thoughts are full of adultery and fornication, act in love while the heart is full of hate...etc. We may still simulate the Pharisees who "are like the whitewash tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even, so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:16-29).

Conclusion:

- ❖ Everyone has to ask himself:
- ❖ would I do it differently if I were alone?
- ❖ would I worship God in the same way?
- ❖ What was Anba Paul, the first hermit, doing for 80 years in the wilderness without seeing the face of a single man? Eighty years, he was worshipping God away from any human interference. Let us take the example of St. Paul and stay away from every hypocrisy and self-righteousness.

"Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into the judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil" (Ecclesiastics 12:13-14).

Applications:

- ❖ Pray in your room.
- ❖ Make your charitable deeds in secret.
- ❖ Purify the inner self with confession.

Week -4- John the Baptist: His Self Denial and His Evangelism

Objective:

- ❖ Concentrate on the greatness of the Baptist in his simplicity and self-denial.

Memory Verse:

- ❖ *“He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30)*

References:

- ❖ John 3; Mathew 1

Introduction:

❖ Review last lesson and verse and start discussion by asking the children the following questions: Who was older John the Baptist or Christ? How many months? What is the name of John’s father? What is the name of John’s mother? What did the angel say to the Priest Zechariahs about John?

Lesson Outlines:

John’s task was to prepare the people’s hearts to receive Jesus the Savior when He came. John warned them to keep themselves away from sin. He went to the wilderness (the desert) to prepare himself for this mission and to live with the Lord as we do when we pray.

- ❖ How often do you pray alone?
- ❖ Do you pray with your family?

When he was thirty years old the Lord spoke to him and sent him to preach. John wore prophet’s clothes. He was clothed with camel’s hair. He ate the food eaten by poor people (locusts, and wild honey). In those days the dried locusts were ground and kneaded with honey and baked as cakes... John did not mean to appear as a strange man before people... It is true that his appearance would be strange if he appeared in our churches nowadays but at that time he was preaching poor people who took care of weak slim sheep suffering from lack of food.

- ❖ When did John come to evangelize?
- ❖ What did he wear?
- ❖ What did he eat?
- ❖ Whom did he preach?

Many people gathered by the Jordan River to be baptized and John used to say: Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. The people heard, their numbers increased and they asked themselves: Is John a prophet?

The last prophet to appear among the people came four hundred years ago... but his words are like the words of the prophets. The people followed him... Some of them believed his words and said: The Savior has come. Others did not repent and John said to those: I warn you, repent; He who is coming after me is mightier than I... The people were surprised as John dared to speak to the crowd. So many people asked: Who is he? Where does he come from? Is he the promised Christ? He is a great preacher. They went to him and said: Tell us who you are... Are you the Messiah (Jesus Christ)? He said: No, but I prepare the way for the Messiah. When the people heard about Christ, they gathered around Him and loved Him. Some brothers went to John and said: Christ is there, teaching, baptizing and gathering disciples around Him. John rejoiced and said: I am very happy. He must increase and the kingdom of heaven is at hand because Christ will rescue His people. This is what I aim at. People were surprised at his answer and meekness.

Explain to the students the difference between the Baptism of John and that of Christ.

- ❖ Did John feel sad when he knew that the Lord Christ would work instead of him?
- ❖ What did he say to the people?
- ❖ Let us repeat together... He must... Who can complete?

Conclusion:

It is very important that we put others ahead of us if this is their place and work with them as a team for the good of everyone else, not to try to compete with them and show that we are better than them all.

Applications:

Answer the following questions:

- ❖ What was the mission of John the Baptist?
- ❖ Why was he called the Baptist?
- ❖ How old was he when he came from the wilderness?
- ❖ Read Matthew 14.
- ❖ Memorize the end of each prayer in the Agpia at home for prizes next week

Memory Verse:

“You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts” (1 Samuel 17:45)

References:

- ❖ 1 Samuel 17
- ❖ Stories and Tales from the Bible, Beirut
- ❖ The Dictionary of the Holy Bible
- ❖ “The Life of David” F.B. Mayer

Introduction:

Review the previous lesson and verse with the children. Start by asking the following questions: What did David do to the lion and the bear? Who remembers the verse? Prepare a picture showing David defeating Goliath.

Lesson Outlines:

David had seven brothers; three of them were men of war. These were the older brothers. There was a fight between people of Israel and the people of Palestine.

Who was the king of the people of Israel at that time?

Saul prepared his army and gathered his men to fight. The two armies faced each other. One army stood on a mountain one side and the other army on a mountain on the opposite side. Days passed by and the two armies did not have the courage to fight. One day, Saul’s men trembled in fear when a champion came out from the camp of the Philistines whose name was Goliath. He was very tall and wore bronze armor that weighed about fifteen pounds and a bronze helmet. He carried a bronze javelin slung over his shoulder. A soldier walked in front of him carrying his shield. He was walking proudly (Describe how he walked). Goliath stood and shouted at the Israelites: Who dares to fight me? Choose one of your men to fight me. If he wins and kills me, we will be your slaves; but if I win and kill him, you will be our slaves. Goliath challenged the Israelites every morning and evening for forty days. No one of King Saul’s men dared to challenge him. What then? Is there a way out?

- ❖ With whom was that war?
- ❖ What is the name of that giant?

One day David got up early, left someone else in charge of the sheep, took the food and went to find out how his brothers were doing. He hoped to hear good news about the army, as he loved his people. He saw Goliath speaking rudely and vexing the soldiers. He also made fun of the Israelites and their God. David was not afraid of him. King Saul had promised to give a big reward to the man who would kill Goliath. The king would also give him his daughter to marry and would not require his father’s family to pay taxes. David said: “Who is this heathen Philistine to defy the army of the Living God?” The soldiers gathered around David the brave boy. David’s brothers heard David talking to the men and they were angry with him and said: What are you doing here? Who is taking care of those sheep of yours out there in the wilderness? David said calmly: My father is anxious about you and he has sent me to see if you are well and I have brought you food and I left the sheep with a guard”. One of the soldiers ran to Saul and said: There is a young man in the camp who is not afraid of Goliath. Saul said: Bring him to me. David

came and stood before Saul and this conversation ran between them:

- David: Your Majesty ...No one should be afraid of this Philistine! I will go and fight him.
- Saul: No, how could you fight him? You are just a boy and he has been a soldier all his life!
- David: I am sure of the power of God. The Lord is more powerful than any Amalek. I have killed lions and bears. The Lord has saved me from lions and bears; He will save me from this Philistine. Let me go and fight him and rescue the people.
- Saul: Go, and the Lord be with you, but you have to wear the tools of war... a coat of armor, a helmet, etc.

David wore his armor but he could not walk because he wasn't used to wearing it. So he took it all off and he was sure that the Lord would help him.

- ❖ Why did David go to the camp?
- ❖ What did he see?
- ❖ Was he afraid? Why?
- ❖ Who told Saul about David?

David took his shepherd's stick and then picked up five smooth stones from the stream and put them in his bag. With his catapult ready, he went out to meet Goliath. Saul's soldiers watched David while he was walking towards the Philistine and they were afraid. On the other side the Philistines were laughing. A little boy was coming to fight their hero. David drew near Goliath... Goliath laughed loudly as he saw David without a sword. He said to David: What is that stick for? Do you think I am a dog? Come on and I will give your body to the birds and animals to eat. David steadily and bravely walked towards Goliath and said: You are coming against me with sword, spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the Israelite armies, which you have defied. This very day the Lord will put you in my power. I will defeat you and cut off your head. Then the whole world will know that Israel has a God, and everyone here will see that the Lord does not need swords or spears to save His people. Goliath started walking towards David again and David ran quickly towards him. He put his hand into his bag and took out a stone, which he slung at Goliath. It hit him on the forehead and broke his skull, and Goliath fell face downwards on the ground. And so without a sword, David defeated and killed Goliath with a catapult and a stone. David's men shouted loudly. David ran to him, stood over him, took Goliath's sword out of its sheath, and cut off his head and killed him.

The Philistines were afraid... their hero died... they ran away... Saul's men ran after them and took their belongings... Thus the Lord rescued His people by David's hand. David carried Goliath's weapons to his own tent and carried his head to Jerusalem.

Let the children act the conversation that ran between King Saul and David, and between David and Goliath and recite the verse.

Conclusion:

- ❖ David did not save his people with a sword or a spear but with the power of God as he took refuge in the Lord. With a small sling, David could kill Goliath. Thus by using very simple tools you can win victory with the grace of God.

Applications:

- ❖ Write down the differences between David and Goliath.
- ❖ Encourage the children to pray for the enemies of the church and for her peace and safety.

Week -2- The Feast of the Virgin Mary: Her Departure

Objective:

- ❖ God honors those who love Him.

Memory Verse:

“For, behold, hence forth all generations will call me blessed” (Luke 1:48)

References:

- ❖ “The Virgin Mary” Page 38
- ❖ The Synaxarium, 21st of Tri, 16th of Nehase

Introduction:

Review the previous lesson with the children. Ask the children what they know about St. Mary? If they know that she lived in the temple since she was a little child, ask them what were the names of St. Mary’s parents? Bring a picture of St. Mary and place it in front of the students during the lesson.

Lesson Outlines:

After the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, the virgin was in the house of John the Beloved. We can imagine how the virgin told John about Christ’s life on earth when He was a child, a sweet atmosphere and blessed stories.

When her time to depart was near and she knew it, the disciples and some virgins came. Jesus Christ, together with angels from heaven, came to receive her soul after she had

blessed the disciples.

St. Thomas the apostle was not present when she departed. He came after she had been buried and he heard a voice saying: Hurry up to receive the blessing of the body of the Pure Mary. He saw the body and kissed her. Later, when he met the disciples, they told him that she departed but St. Thomas did not believe this news. They went together to her tomb but they did not find the body and the disciples were astonished. St. Thomas told them how he saw the body rising up to heaven among the hymns of the angels. The disciples asked God to show them that scene which St. Thomas saw. They remained fasting for fifteen days and the Lord showed them the scene on the 16th of Mesra.

After the departure of the Lady Virgin, the Lord answered the prayer of anyone who interceded with her. Moreover, the virgin appeared to many people. On the 2nd of April 1968 the Lady Virgin, the Mother of Light appeared many times in the Church of Zeitoun (Zeitoun means Olives) in Cairo and this appearance was associated with two things:

1. The spirit of faith in God and in the saints, spread and many people repented.
2. Wonders and miracles happened to many people. May her intercession be with us all. Amen.

Conclusion:

- ❖ The Lord Jesus Christ has honored His mother when He was alive and before His death on the cross, He asked St. John to take care of her. He also honored her after her death by taking her body from the earth. We also have to learn to honor our parents as Jesus Christ honored His mother.

Applications:

- ❖ Study: “Through the intercession of the Theotokos...” and recite it in your prayers this week.
- ❖ We must honor Christ’s mother: by keeping her picture at home to remind us of her holy life, by naming the churches after her name, by asking for her intercession at the end of each prayer because her prayers are acceptable, etc.

Week -3- Marriage

Objective:

- ❖ The child should understand that marriage is the way God has selected to start a family, raise children and continue the church until His second coming. God unite two adults into one.

Memory Verse:

“Marriage is honorable among all” (Hebrews 13:4)

References:

- ❖ Scriptures John 2:1-11, Matthew 19:1-6, Ephesians 5:22-6:3
- ❖ “Church Sacraments” Fr. Marcos Daoud
- ❖ “How lovely it is”, “Take my life” from the book of Songs and Praises

Introduction:

Ask the children about the Seven Sacraments of the Church and give gifts to those who can say them all. Ask them about marriage and if anyone attended marriage lately. Why everyone is happy and joyful at the weddings?

Lesson Outlines:

- 1.** In the beginning God created a man and a woman. Male and female He created them. Then God blessed them saying “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth.” So they started producing children and that is why we celebrate our marriages at the church because without marriage there will be no children and no church.
- 2.** Before marriage the couple goes to their father of confession, ask his advice and his blessing to get married. You cannot pick any one, as you watch on TV, and marry him or her. That is not right and end up real bad. But if they consult their families and their father in confession, they will have their love, their support and on top of all God’s blessing in their life.
- 3.** Both must be adults, very responsible because they are going to have children. They must love their children, care for them, give them food and clothes and when they become sick they take care of them.
- 4.** The bride and the groom come to the church two persons but leave as one. Like when the priest prays and the bread and wine turn to the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The priest prays and the Holy Spirit unites the married couple. They both leave their families and start a new family as a new church in town. Everyone is happy for them even their families, although they are leaving them, because they know that they love

their families and have their blessings for that marriage.

5. They come to the church separately and at the door of the church the groom holds his bride in his right hand and the deacons take them with joyful songs to the Altar. If it is during the 50 days after Resurrection the song will be “Christ Has risen” otherwise it will be “O King of peace.” When they reach there, the priest will pray, raise incense, read the Bible, anoint them with oil, dress the groom up with the golden priest’s robe as a king and priest of the house, put golden crowns on both heads like king and queen, pray on top of their heads together and give them instructions on how to treat one another with love and respect. Then they both kneel in front of the Altar and the priest blesses them.

6. From this moment on, they are no longer two but one. They stay married until death. In many countries like here they even carry the same family name (the groom’s because he is representing Christ and the bride representing the church).

7. Then the deacons take them back to the church entrance with songs (“Christ Has risen” or “Hail to Mary”) where they receive the congratulations of all the congregation wishing them a happy life and blessed children.

- ❖ How a man and a woman start a life together?
- ❖ Whom they should consult before marriage?
- ❖ Can two young kids marry?
- ❖ Who can pray to join a man and a woman in marriage?
- ❖ Can I pray to join a man and a woman in marriage?
- ❖ Where does Christian marriage take place?
- ❖ Do the bride and groom arrive together to the church?
- ❖ Do they enter the church separately?
- ❖ How they enter the church?
- ❖ What song is said if it is not in the 50 days following the Resurrection?
- ❖ Where does the bride always stand? Is it to the right or to the left of the groom?
- ❖ What they wear on their heads? Why?
- ❖ What is read in the church?
- ❖ Do they kneel and where?
- ❖ What does the priest do when they kneel?
- ❖ What do they do after that?

Conclusion:

- ❖ Marriage is one of the 7 mysteries of the church by which a new Christian family starts. A Christian family should be built on the love of Christ who is the source of all good things.

Applications:

- ❖ When I attend a wedding of two adults in the church I see the blessing of God in our lives and thank him for my father and my mother who brought me to life, cared for me and still protect me.
- ❖ When I attend a wedding I should go to the bride and the groom to congratulate them and wish them happy life and blessed children.

LESSONS FOR JONAH'S FAST

Jonah's fast comes two weeks before the Great Fast on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. These lessons are for the Sunday before and the Sunday after Jonah's fast.

Week Before Fast: Prophet Jonah and Salvation

Objective:

- ❖ God makes use of everything and all things for the salvation of man.

Memory Verse:

- ❖ "I long for Your salvation, O Lord and Your law is my delight" (Psalm 119:174)

References:

- ❖ "Contemplations on the Book of Jonah" H. H. Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ "The Book of Jonah" Matthew Henry

Introduction:

A long time elapsed during which men kept away from God and people committed so many sins that they forgot themselves and forgot God their Lord but God did not forget them at all. He was always near them because He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. It was not possible for God to come closer to men in a direct way as men invented gods for themselves and their idea about God was deformed so the Lord sent prophets to the children of Israel whom He had chosen to send to the other nations to let them know His holy name. He did not choose them out of prejudice, far be it from God, but He chose them because they were the seed of Abraham who believed in Him and blessed His name. God expected many good things of this people but sorry to say even those people who tasted many tidings worshipped the idols and the people and their prophets needed the Savior. However, when man's sufferings increased and people kept away from God, He insisted on saving them. His love for them remained strong and the Lord's hand was always ready to save them.

Lesson Outline:

- ❖ God saves Jonah

This prophet was characterized by fanaticism, stubbornness and faith heartedness. Like all other people he fled from the Lord when he heard His voice. This reminds us of the verse; "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I

hid myself” (Genesis 3:10). As a prophet of the Jews, he was supposed to be better than others in obeying the commandments of God but if this is the case of the head what will be the case of the other members. Jonah thought that there would be peace for him in Tarshish or at the bottom of the ship although he knew that the Lord fills every place and although he read David’s psalm: “Where can I go from Your Spirit?” (Psalm 139:7).

❖ How the Lord Saved Jonah?

The Lord made use of:

1. Discomfort: the rough sea, the destruction of the gourd (God insisted on fulfilling the message).
2. Tenderness: God was merciful to Jonah when He saved his life and taught him through practical educational examples (such as: the gourd -helping him to complete his mission and finally reproaching him gently).
3. The solid nature: The lesson was for Jonah in:
 - a. Obedience: The storm obeyed the Lord and carried out His purpose and the whale as a ship to carry Jonah to the appointed place and the worm is ordered to devour the tree.
 - b. Ability and Power of God: God is able to do everything and all things obey Him but man is free to obey or disobey.

❖ God saves the sailors

The Gentile sailors were better than the prophet who escaped:

1. They prayed to their gods.
2. They prayed with the spirit of fellowship.
3. They believed that the calamity was because of the sin of one of them.
4. They asked Jonah to pray to his God so they were not fanatic.
5. They had a sensitive conscience. They only made sure that Jonah deserved death but they refused to carry out the sentence even after drawing lots.
6. They prayed for forgiveness before they threw him into the sea: “Lay not on us innocent blood”.
7. In this way justice and mercy filled their hearts.
8. They believed in the miraculous power of God.

❖ God saves Nineveh

At last the Lord found the man who would go to Nineveh. He was kind to them as a father who loves His children. The Lord could have punished and frightened them but He was also ready to turn from His anger. Jonah refused to go to those evil people but the Lord accepted their repentance. The Lord was patient with them. Although they were pagans and sinners, the Lord did not abandon them. The Lord does not abandon His children no matter how sinful they are. Theirs was true repentance. They were afraid and cried to the Lord and believed in what Jonah said. The anointed king covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. All the people fasted and humiliated themselves, even animals. The Lord accepts true repentance and the contrite and submissive hearts.

❖ Jonah is a symbol of Christ

God sent Jonah to the people of Nineveh so that they might repent and be saved. In the same way the Lord, out of love, chose to be incarnated and become man to die for the world then rise from the dead to grant salvation to those who believe in Him. Throwing Jonah into the sea saved all the sailors of the ship from certain death. In the same way the death of Christ on the cross caused the Salvation of those who believed in Him and saved them from eternal death. Jonah remained inside the belly of the whale three days and three nights then he went out and was alive. In the same way, Christ was buried three days and three nights in the tomb then He rose up from the dead. He was alive and granted us the eternal life. In Jonah's prayer we find a clear expression of his success in the test of death and rebirth: "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried... I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet You did bring up my life from the Pit... O Lord my God" (Jonah 2:2-6). Compare this to the death of the Lord Christ and His resurrection as He says to His disciples: "The Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles... and after three days He will rise" (Mark 10:33,34).

Conclusion:

- ❖ God has prepared the humanity with many prophets before Him. He also gave different signs and prophecies for the awaited salvation of the world. Those who were attentive and responsive to the fulfillment of the prophecies (Jesus Christ) were saved.

Applications:

- ❖ What is your opinion of casting lots in our life? (The Spirit abides in us and we do not seek any sign from outside).
- ❖ "The Lord has chastened me severely, But He has not given me over to death" (Psalm 118:18). Apply this verse to the story of Jonah.
- ❖ Resist despair so that you may proceed and correct your way of life.
- ❖ Pray the Lord to receive our life and correct it as he likes.
- ❖ Quick obedience that results from the heart to all that the Lord commands us to do having confidence that he is the Loving Father who desires the Salvation of the souls of men.
- ❖ Mention some situations in the life of the holy men of God with whom God used severe punishments so that they might be saved.
- ❖ Mention some situations in which the Lord was merciful to and patient with men.

LESSONS FOR THE GREAT FAST PERIOD

Week 0: (Preparation week) - I Fast and Pray as Christ Did

Week 1: (Surrender to the Heavenly Father) - Witnessing to the Lord in
Today's World

Week 2: (Sunday of Temptation) - O Lord: Forgive Me

Week 3: (Sunday of the Prodigal Sun) - What is My Goal in Life?

Week 4: (Sunday of the Samaritan Woman) - The Prophet Isaiah

Week -0- I Fast and Pray as Christ Did

Objective:

- ❖ Sound spiritual practice of the acceptable fasting

Memory Verse:

“Give yourselves to fasting and prayer” (1 Corinthians 7:5)

References:

- ❖ “The Paradise of the spirit” Part 2, Anba Youannis
- ❖ “The Lent” Anba Bemim

Introduction:

What does fasting mean? Fasting is abstaining from food for a period of time followed by eating vegetarian food. It is not a commandment for weakening the body but exercising and controlling the body to refresh the soul and test it to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God.

Lesson Outline:

❖ The Position of Fasting in the Spiritual Life

Fasting has an important position in the spiritual life and there are many examples in the Old Testament of the men of God who fasted and did great works. Moses fasted forty days before he spoke to God. Daniel was fasting when the Angel Gabriel appeared to him. Nehemiah fasted when he heard of the sad news about Jerusalem. David was a man of fasting. He said, “I afflicted myself with fasting”. Isaiah spoke about fasting (Isaiah 58:3-12) and king Jehoshaphat called all the people to fast (2 Chronicles 20:3).

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Himself fasted till He felt hungry. The Lord spoke about fasting in His Sermon on the Mountain (Mathew 6:16-18). He also spoke about the importance of fasting when He said about the Devil “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting” (Mark 9:29). In Book of Acts we read about fasting in the church of the apostles (Acts 13:3,4) and (1 Corinthians 7:5). The church fathers also wrote about fasting in their writings and rules, which reached us. The history of the Orthodox Church bears witness to the fact that the believers respected public fasting that have been established since the times of the early church such as Lent, and fasting on Wednesday and Friday.

❖ **How the Lord Christ Fasted and Prayed?**

After Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights and afterwards He was hungry and the devil came and tempted Him three times but the Lord quoted verses from the Scriptures to answer him with. He gave us a practical example of how man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Mathew 4:2-11). The Lord's fasting was accompanied by prayer and spiritual struggle. In the same way we fast and pray with Him and through Him. May our fasting and prayer be acceptable before the Lord.

Fasting is a wonderful rite in the church that goes side by side with receiving the Holy Communion. For example, fasting always precedes every communion. So the church connects our worship of fasting and prayers and unites them with the Divine Sacrifice of the Lord, which is His Body and His Blood so that it may be acceptable before Him and without blame.

❖ **How to Fast Correctly?**

Fasting and Spiritual Growth: Fasting is an exercise to humiliate the desires of the flesh and not an exercise to weaken the body itself. In our physical nature there is a bad tendency which we inherited from Adam and Eve and St. Paul expressed it by saying; "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that you cannot do the things that you would" (Galatians 5; 17). In another place he says: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (Romans 7:24). St. Isaac the Syrian says: "Every struggle against sin and its lusts must begin with fasting especially when the struggle is because of an internal sin. Resisting the desires of the flesh does not mean that we should weaken the body and moderation in fasting is necessary so that physical and spiritual health may not be affected. Abstaining from food should go side by side with internal spiritual growth. This means that physical fasting is connected with the godliness of the heart, the soul's fasting and the purity of the flesh. In this, one of the saints said, "If we are fasting only in the sense of abstaining from food while we are still bound to sin and iniquities, submission of the body will not benefit us so long as the most precious part of us is defiled. So as the outer man fasts, the inner man must also be controlled and be kept away from harmful food as acceptable fasting should be genuine, without evil, insincerity, grudge, hatred or defilement of body and soul".

Inseparableness of fasting and prayer: The saints likened fasting to a stronghold and prayer to a weapon with which man fights inside the stronghold... St. Augustine said, "In the Temple built by Solomon, there were two altars, on the outer altar, burnt offerings are offered and on the inside altar the incense offerings were offered. The same is true with the temple of Spirit which is man where there must be two altars; the inside one which is the heart where he offers the incense of prayers and their aroma and an outer altar where the body is offered as an offering through fasting and types of abstemiousness and devoutness".

Inseparableness of fasting and contemplation: It is necessary for spiritual life to feed on contemplations during fasting. The church sets fasting on important occasions so we must connect fasting with contemplation and remember the occasions of fasting. During the holy Lent we remember our Lord, the Holy righteous Lord when he fasted. On Wednesday we remember the plans of the chief priests to kill him. Ask yourself then “Do I betray him and how much shall I receive to betray him?” Remember that you betray him when you sin... So during each fasting raise your heart to God in the spirit of contemplation to attain spiritual power during fasting. You can get benefit also through reading the Holy Bible and the spiritual books with the spirit of discipleship, prayer and obedience of the commandments.

Inseparableness of fasting and almsgiving: Fasting is usually accompanied by works of love and mercy, so in his hunger, the fasting man shares the poor and the needy and spends what he has saved of the expenses of his food and other things on his needy brethren... Isaiah emphasizes this fact by saying: “Is not this the fast that I choose... Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house? When you see the naked, to cover him and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?” (Isaiah 58:6,7). Note the Lent hymn: Blessed are those who are kind to the poor....

❖ Discussion

A young man may face a problem, i.e. the family sometimes does not allow him to fast as they believe this would keep him healthy and the suggested cure is the following:

- ❖ He must test himself as his life may not be straight and his behavior may be a stumbling block in the eyes of the family.
- ❖ He must discuss the matter with his father of confession and follow his advice concerning the period he appoints for fasting and if there are any health reasons a doctor should be consulted.
- ❖ He should discuss the matter with his family and explain the importance of fasting and the importance of obeying the commandments of Christ and the church order.
- ❖ He should seek the priest’s advice when necessary and the priest will help him to convince the family to allow him to fast. He could also pray so that the Lord may soften their hearts and allow him to fast.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Fasting is essential for us to develop self-control and to grow spiritually. Jesus Christ Himself fasted and we should follow his example.

Applications:

- ❖ If a young man who does not fast asks you “Why do you fast?” What will you say to him?
- ❖ Of what benefit is fasting for your private inner and outer life?
- ❖ What are the conditions of the acceptable fasting before God?

- ❖ Why do the church and the Holy Bible emphasize the inseparableness of fasting and prayer?
- ❖ Practice fasting with reverence, prayer, contemplation and reading the Holy Bible.

Week -1- Witnessing to the Lord in Today's World

Objective:

- ❖ To help our youth become more proud of following Jesus Christ
- ❖ To identify some ways by which they can witness to Jesus Christ in today's world.

Memory Verse:

“Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:3)

References:

- ❖ Luke 10:1-20
- ❖ “The Book of Jeremiah the prophet” Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Introduction:

Can you imagine if one day while you're praying to God, He sends an angel and asks you to go to school the next day and tell everyone at school that they are on the wrong track, that God is warning them to repent, and that if they do not return to God, He will destroy them? Really, how would you respond? Would you feel worthy of this task? Would you feel capable of this task? Well, I know that this might be difficult to believe considering your age, but you know it has actually happened. God asked Jeremiah the prophet as a teenager to witness to the Israelites when they were sinful and went after other gods (Jeremiah Chapter 1). Jeremiah the prophet felt incapable, but God told him that He will put the words in his mouth as he serves. So could the same thing happen to us? Are we expected to witness in the world? These questions will hopefully be answered through this lesson.

Lesson Outline:

First it is important for us to establish the normal conditions under which service is expected to occur. Christ Himself said to the seventy apostles that He appointed, “Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:3). It is apparent through this verse that God is aware of the world's corruption and that His servants will face lots of problems. Now why do we use the word servants here even though we are talking to teenagers who are being served? Because God said that we are the light of the

world. He did not differentiate the levels. We as true Christians are by default the light of the world. We actually carry the light of Jesus Christ to the world. It is the duty of every Christian to confess the name of Jesus Christ to everyone. We even repeat at least every Sunday, “Amen, Amen, Amen, Your death, O Lord we proclaim.” Have we ever stopped and thought about what that really means? Do we really proclaim and confess Christ’s death and resurrection?

Now that we know that tribulation and hardship come from service and witnessing, it is important for us to know the tools by which we can witness.

- ❖ In Luke 10:2, Christ asks the seventy to pray to the Lord for the sake of service; therefore, prayers are essential for the success of witnessing or carrying the good news to others. Have you ever known a good non-Christian friend, and you were too disappointed that they are not Christians? Well, pray to God and ask Him to lead you in your witnessing. Ask God to help you find the way by which you can introduce your friend to Jesus Christ.
- ❖ The second essential tool for witnessing is humbleness. It is important for us to introduce Christ to others with meekness. We need to start out teaching others about Christ’s love rather than condemning them. It is a shame that some of the people whom we meet at the malls and roads claim to be witnesses by stopping people while shouting and telling them that if they do not believe in Christ they would go to hell. St. Paul said, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:6).
- ❖ The third important tool in service is the Gospel. St. Paul said, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another...” (Colossians 3:16). Also St. Peter said, “always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:13). This is an excellent verse because it explains the importance of knowledge and meekness.

There are few true believers in Jesus Christ in this world and this fact naturally makes us feel odd enough. However, We always have to remember that we are not just governed by natural instincts but by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion:

We need to understand that the least we could do as an appreciation to God’s blessings in our lives is to introduce others to Him. We as Christians are expected to attract others to Christ. Even if we do not have the personality to talk about it, our actions and behaviors should attract others. Do we display the true Christian behavior? When people see our actions, do they form a good or a bad impression about Christianity? Being a true Christian is a serious responsibility; we have to watch our actions and make serving God our focus in life.

Applications:

- ❖ Some of the ways we can build our knowledge include attending as many Sunday School classes, youth meetings and bible studies as we can.
- ❖ Also a close relationship with your father of confession can help guide you into becoming a more active servant to God.
- ❖ If you have extra few months and resources, you might consider serving with the missionary group in Africa. That would build self-confidence in terms of witnessing to others about Christ.

Week -2- O Lord: Forgive Me

Objective:

- ❖ Repentance as a practical technique and the problems of practice.

Memory Verse:

“Against You, You only have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight” (Psalm 51:4)

References:

- ❖ “The Garden of the Soul” Part I, Anba Youannis
- ❖ “A Guide to Confession” Anba Bemim
- ❖ “Turn me My God and I shall be Turned” Fr. Youssef Asaad
- ❖ Many books about Saints who repented (e.g., Anba Moussa the black)

Introduction:

When the Lord Jesus desired to show the love of God for the sinner, He gave the parable of the Prodigal Son who deserted his father’s house and went to a far country and there he spent his money foolishly and led a life of corruption and extravagance. At last he became needy and he repented and decided to return to his father’s house. He at once rose and went to his father who was waiting for him stretching out his hands to receive him. He kissed him and gave him the best garment and slaughtered the fat calf for him. All these things show us how God’s love is great enough to receive any sinner who repents and go back to God.

Lesson Outline:

❖ How to repent

1. The First step in the way of repentance is to test yourself. Sit with yourself and think of the things you did in the same way the Prodigal son did so that you may know your sins and the points of weakness. In this regard, St. John Chrysostom says, “Test yourself. If you remember your sin God will not remember it and if you forget it, God will not forget it”.

2. The Second Step is to repent what you have done. The prodigal son repented leaving his father’s house and his heart was broken. We cannot repent unless our hearts become sorry for what we did. We should be confident of God’s love and be sure that He will accept us. We should never fall into despair.

3. The Third Step is to adopt an attitude against sin. Repentance does not mean that I should repent what I did only but it indicates a positive movement towards the Father. What would have been the benefit if the Prodigal son had sat in his place without doing anything? He rose, walked and went to his father’s house. In the same way, we have to rise and pray and seek God’s help to grant us the power so that we may not sin again. We should give signs of repentance to the Lord as when we say “sorry” to those whom we offend or as we get rid of a bad picture in our library... and so on.

4. The Fourth Step is going to confession. This is a necessary step as he who sins, sins against the Lord and against the church, which is His Body. We should bear in mind that each believer is a member of that Body. That is why our teacher St. James tells us to “Confess your sins to one another” (James 5:16). In the past, believers used to confess their sins in public in the church but the church saw that it was better for the believers to confess in secret to the priest.

❖ Is it Necessary to Confess to the Priest?

Yes, we must confess our sins to our Priest. This Priest should be our spiritual because he receives his authority from God who forgives our sins. He receives this authority through the Sacrament of the Holy Orders. The Lord said to His disciples, “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mathew 18:18). After His resurrection He confirmed that sacrament when He breathed in their faces saying: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22,23). The priest makes me ashamed of myself when I repeat my confession of the same sin in my confession and it is of benefit for the soul to be ashamed and fear the guide, so that the soul in this case tends to fear God only. Pride may lead man to refuse to confess his sins to the Priest.

❖ What are the sins that we should confess?

“Sin is lawlessness. Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4) and it is written that the wages of sin is death. Sin may be in the form of action, saying or thinking. The

more man proceeds spiritually, the more he discovers his wrongdoings. At the beginning of the road he discovers the apparent sins such as insulting people, calling them names, swearing, stealing and telling lies. However when he makes progress, he discovers selfishness, stinginess, self-love, grudge, hatred, etc. (John 3:14-20). We must examine ourselves well before confession to discover our sins, as this is one of the signs of our spiritual progress. The real death is when we think that we are saints and are not in need of the Savior or when we are desperate of the mercies of God.

❖ **The Prayer of Repentance**

- righteous Lord... I know my weakness and the silliness of my mind but I give myself to your grace to save me. With complete trust and confidence I leave myself between your hands to keep me safe till the Day of Judgment. Bless me and grant me Your grace till Your Son comes. Glory and Honor be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit forever and ever, Amen.

❖ **A Test to Examine Yourself**

Ask yourself the following questions and answer them honestly:

- **Pride:** Are you proud of yourself or of your deeds?
- Do you despise others?
- Do you condemn others and judge them?
- **Selfishness:** Do you harden your heart and show no mercy to your brothers?
- Do you prefer yourself to your brothers in choosing the best things?
- Do you refuse to help others and serve them with pleasure?
- **Grudge:** Do you feel sorry when others succeed?
- Do you feel happy when evil befalls one of your relatives?
- Do you think of taking revenge when anyone offends you?
- ❖ **Hatred:** Do you refuse to forgive others and reconcile with them?
- ❖ Do you say bad words about others?
- ❖ Do you put the seeds of hatred between friends?
- **Laziness:** Do you do your homework and studies honestly?
- Do you neglect prayers or spiritual exercises?
- Do you eat much or sleep for a long time?
- ❖ **Disobedience:** Do you refuse to respect or obey your parents?
- ❖ Do you lie to them or cause sadness to them?
- ❖ Do you refuse to eat with them?
- **Dishonesty:** Do you cheat in exams?
- Do you evade paying the price to the shop assistant or to the conductor?
- Do you take other's belongings in secret?
- 1. What is sin? To what extent is it dangerous?

2. What are the steps of true repentance?
3. Why should we confess to our priest?

❖ **A Problem and a Solution**

I am ashamed of confessing my sins to the priest? What shall I do? If you are not ashamed of yourself when you sinned before God you have to be ashamed before the priest during confession. It is of a great benefit to recognize the lowliness of sin. This painful feeling should motivate you to go back to God. Remember that you do not confess your sins to man but to God (read Psalm 51, Luke 15:18,19 or 1 John 1:28,2:3).

Conclusion:

There is no joy in heaven and on earth greater than the joy of the Father with the true repentance of His children. On the other hand, there is no comfort greater than the comfort of the sinners when they rid themselves from the burdens of sin. Do not deprive yourself from that comfort and do not deprive your Father from this joy.

Applications:

- ❖ Examine yourself and be prepared for repentance and then go to confession in the church.
- ❖ Encourage your colleagues to go to confession and to repent. Then receive the Holy Communion.
- ❖ Study the life history of the saints who repented to follow their example.

Week -3- What is My Goal in Life?

Objective:

- ❖ My Life is not for me but for others.

Memory Verse:

“But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you” (Luke 12:31)

References:

- ❖ “God and Money” Clement of Alexandria
- ❖ The Life of St. Anthony and others
- ❖ The life history of the saints who lived to achieve the message of their life

Introduction:

If I ask some of you about the thing that pleases each one of you –One of you will say: I feel very happy when my father buys me a new shirt. Another will say: I feel happy when I play with my friends. A third one will say: I feel happy when I watch television. A fourth one will say: I feel very happy when I have money with which I can do what I want. Another one may say: I feel happy with all these together but I also feel happy when I see my brother or my friend happy too. I feel happy when they put on a new shirt or when they enjoy the pleasure of playing with their friends or others, in general all what pleases them pleases me.

- ❖ Which group do you belong to?
- ❖ Are you of that selfish type who cares only for himself and concentrates on what pleases him personally or are you of that type who is happy when others are happy?
- ❖ But what binds me with the others so that I may be happy for their happiness and sad for their sadness?

Lesson Outline:

- ❖ The Fellowship of Brotherhood

Members of one body: We have to know that we are all members of one body; if one member suffers all the other members of the body suffer. For example, if your leg is wounded, can the body do without this wounded leg and say to it, “you can suffer far away from me?” On the contrary, the whole body suffers when the leg suffers. Because we are members of one body and the head is the Lord Jesus Christ we share one another in joys and sorrows (An example: The Church of the apostles).

Cooperation and Integration: In football matches, the team cannot do without the goal keeper, nor can it do without the forward players or the defenders; all play and each one has his own important place and no one can do without the other. The same is with us; each one of us has a gift and a task to do. We need one another; the thread of love gathers our hearts and combines us together. Can a miller do without the farmer who plants wheat for him or can a baker do without the miller who grinds the wheat for him or can you do without all those people? We are all in need of one another. We integrate one another. No one is self-sufficient. So we must cooperate and integrate.

- ❖ Phases of Practical Fellowship

a) Love and Service: Each time you can do a work of love, do it to please the heart of your brethren. If a blind man wants to cross the street help him cross the street with love. When you hear that a colleague is ill, visit him and so on.

b) Pray for one another: One of the best phases of fellowship is to raise our prayers for one another especially when one of us is in trouble or ill, sad, worried or is traveling. We have to pray for them and plead the Lord to support them (Example: The Church prayed for Peter when he was in prison).

c) The blessing of the Lord’s brothers: To be an active member in the body of the Lord,

you can do good work in secret to the poor and the needy that are the Lord's brothers. If your circumstances are better than those of any of them, it is your duty to help them, in the spirit of love and sacrifice. Give them as much as you can; money, visits, service but in secret (Example: Barnabas sold a field he owned, brought the money and handed it over to the apostles).

d) Endurance: The person in whom Christ dwells and who is considered a member in the body of Christ endures the weakness of others. He does not reproach them or blame them as he knows that his weaknesses and sins are more in number than those of others. Endure your brethren in their anger, endure your colleagues when they sin and pray for them, endure your friends and do not blame them when they do not share your joys or sorrows: you do not know their circumstances. Accept, with love, the instructions of the elders whether they are your parents, your brothers or your Servants (recite the story of Teacher Ibrahim El Gohary and how he treated the person who insulted his brother "Girgis" every day).

- ❖ Why can't money or food or all material matters be considered sufficient to be the goal of life?
- ❖ What is the true meaning of "riches" to God?
- ❖ What are the characteristics that enable you to be an heir to the Kingdom of heaven? And what are the obligations?

Conclusion:

Christianity is the religion of the second mile, which reaches out to others. It is the religion of the living sacrifices, where we sacrifice our comfort, material and time for the sake of others. It takes the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who sacrificed Himself for our sake.

Applications:

- ❖ Read the First Epistle of St. Paul the apostle to the Corinthians and quote the verses, which contain these words: members –body –member.
- ❖ Try to achieve these trends in Sunday School classes and write about points of success and points of failure in achieving this exercise. Try to practice these exercises in your church and in your family to achieve your goal in life.
- ❖ Think out, you and your class, how you can give food to the hungry, find a shelter for the stranger, and visit the sick people.
- ❖ Contemplate the parable of the rich fool... and make a comparison between saints such as St. Paul and Anba Anthony who sold everything for their love of King Christ and the greedy people of this life. What is your situation? Who would like to be your role model?
- ❖ Singing hymns of praise in our life: Hymns help us to be near God with our hearts and thoughts. We rise so that we may not indulge in this world, which is full of greediness and love of money. They establish true rejoicing in our hearts. Through hymns and our love for one another, we shall make heaven of this earth and bring heaven and eternity here and the Kingdom of God will be inside us.

Week 4 - The Prophet Isaiah

Objectives:

- ❖ To have an overview about the book of Isaiah
- ❖ To learn lessons from the book of Isaiah

Memory Verse:

“All flesh shall know, that I, the Lord, am your Savior, and your Redeemer” (Isaiah 49:26)

Reference:

- ❖ The Book of Isaiah, Holy Bible
- ❖ “The Book of Isaiah” Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty
- ❖ Complete guide to the Bible. Readers Digest, 1998, Pleasantville – New York, pp.199-209.

Introduction:

Isaiah is the first of the 4 great prophets “Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel”. He belonged to the family of the kings. He was contemporary with four kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. He lived in their palaces for about half a century. He shared in ruling the kingdom as those kings had confidence in him. He called for comprehensive reform when he recognized the afflictions that people suffered especially the poor classes who suffered from social injustice. In the days of Isaiah, the North Kingdom (Israel) fell into the hands of the king of Babylon and its people were captured and sent into exile...and there they spent a difficult time and they expressed their sufferings in this sad hymn: “By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion... On the willows there we hung up our lyres... for there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth. How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” (Psalm 137)

The book of Isaiah contains 66 chapters and is the second most quoted book after psalms, in the New Testament (about 50 quotations). The four evangelists quoted Isaiah in referring to John the Baptist 40:3 “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

Jesus, Himself, read part of Isaiah 61:1-2 that said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18).

Isaiah began his prophecy in 733 BC and continued for 50-60 years. The evil king Manasseh, who followed Hezekiah, had him sawed into two. His book has several themes. The most prominent is the portrayal of God as king over all creation and His eternal commitment to the descendents of King David.

Lesson Outline:

1. Isaiah's dramatic call to be a prophet occurs in a vision where he saw God sitting grandly on a throne, and the angels called "Seraphs" serve Him and proclaim the essence of God's character "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3).
2. A large section of Isaiah's book contains cracks against foreign nations:
 - ❖ The first of the nations marked for condemnations is Babylon and Isaiah foresaw its fall to the Persians in the 6th century.
 - ❖ The Assyrians were singled out for a condemnation in Isaiah 14:25.
 - ❖ Moab, Israel's neighbor to the east of the Dead Sea, was next on the list of wicked Nations in Isaiah 15:1.
 - ❖ The oracle against Egypt in chapter 19 depicts the Lord in majestic term. The seafaring nation Phoenicia, with its capital Tyre, was told of its dread fate in chapter 23.
3. Condemnation of sin:
 - ❖ The first chapter condemned the sins of Israel "Israel's hands are full of blood" (Isaiah 1:2,15).
 - ❖ God commends Israel "Cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:16-17).
 - ❖ Satan's sin and fall was described in Isaiah 14:12-15 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations. For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit".
 - ❖ Chapters 34 and 35 describe God as the divine judge and is calling all people to listen to God "For the indignation of the Lord is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter" Isaiah 34:2.
4. The coming of the Savior:
 - ❖ The birth of Jesus is prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel".
 - ❖ Also, Isaiah 9:6 "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace".
 - ❖ Jesus is a descendent of King David "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1).

- ❖ Jesus' character "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:1).
- ❖ Isaiah 52:13 and 53:12 provides a sobering sense of the price that must be paid for redemption. The divine servant "Shall be exalted and extolled and be very high" but only after surviving affliction and oppression "He was wounded for our transgression, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). Acts 8:32 echoed the language of Isaiah 53:7 to describe Jesus' suffering and death.

- ❖ Jesus as Savior “The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined” (Isaiah 9:2). Compare with Matthew 4:16 “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned”.

5. Return to God:

- ❖ God expects us to be righteous, repent our sins and worship Him “Thus says the Lord: Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed” Isaiah 56:1.
- ❖ God promises that those who are faithful “Shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31) and “Fear not for I am with you” (Isaiah 41:10).
- ❖ God offers the promise of a joyous future for the righteous. For them, God will create a “new heaven and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17) in which all human infirmities will disappear and there will be continual rejoicing. The divine plan will achieve full realization when “From new moon to another, and from Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before God” (Isaiah 66:23).

Now, the question is: How did Isaiah see Christ? He saw Him through the Spirit of prophecy: First: Incarnate God. Second: A Redeemer who suffered. Third: A king whose kingdom is lasting forever. The following are the images with which Prophet Isaiah expressed what he saw through prophecies.

❖ First: The Messiah the Incarnate God

Isaiah prophesied the conception of the Messiah of a Virgin and the birth of Christ and considered this fact the top of all prophecies as we see in Isaiah (Isaiah 7:10-16). Ahaz requested the Lord to rescue him from the Syrians and the Lord told him to seek a sign of being rescued. However, Ahaz did not ask for a sign and kept silent. Here the prophecy of the Messiah was uttered and it was the glory of all the signs and miracles. This sign and prophecy was repeated once more in chapter nine and it emphasized that He is the true light that shines over the whole world (Read Isaiah 9:1-7).

❖ Second: The Messiah, the Redeemer and Sufferer

The true Son of God is coming to redeem the world. Isaiah saw Him as a person sent by God taking the image of a servant enduring many sufferings, pains and grave (Isaiah 53). Isaiah saw Him bearing the men’s grieves “He has borne our grieves and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4).

Then he saw Him wounded on the cross, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

He saw Him as a lamb that bears all our sins “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

Although He did not sin, yet He was numbered with transgressors and was sentenced to death in place of sinners: “And they made His grave with the wicked-- but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth...

Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:9-12).

The greatness of this personality is shown in the redemptory work, as through His passions He saved men out of love and redemption. He turned sufferings into a fellowship of love and sacrifice for the others. His passions formed the way for achieving triumph and victory to achieve the blessed goals people hoped for... Our Orthodox church recites the prophecies of Isaiah about the passions of the Savior in her Pascha prayers of the Holy Week showing how these prophecies were fulfilled in Christ’s life and passions in the Holy Week.

❖ Third: The Messiah the Spiritual King (Isaiah 11)

He saw Christ, the Son of David as a strong wise king ruling over the peoples of the world: “There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:1).

A kingdom where justice prevails: “But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked” (Isaiah 11:4).

A kingdom where peace prevails: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6).

He saw security and peace fill all the hearts: “The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den” (Isaiah 11:8).

The knowledge of God fills the hearts with holiness so the bad and corrupt things of society will disappear “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). All these prophecies were fulfilled in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, which He established on earth and in the hearts of the believers:

- ❖ King: “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37).
- ❖ A spiritual kingdom not worldly kingdom: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).
- ❖ A kingdom of peace, security and eternal joy “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).
- ❖ A chosen and holy nation: “you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (1 Peter 2:9).

Conclusion:

The first 39 chapters of Isaiah reflect concrete historical events from the eighth century BC. The last chapters depict a future in which God will fashion an entirely new heaven and earth.

Thus, a spanning time period from the eighth century BC to the unrealized future, Isaiah's vision addresses the morbid fears of judgment and fervent hopes for consolation of countless generations past, present and yet to come.

Applications:

- ❖ Open the Holy Bible and read Isaiah chapter 53. You will find that it is full of prophecies of the passions of our Lord Christ. Thank God for these passions, which bring life to us. Pray with the church the prayer of the sixth hour and the ninth hour and say, "You who on the sixth day and at 6 hour were nailed to the cross because of the sin that Adam our father committed, cancel the bond of our sins O Christ our Lord... With the nails with which you were nailed, save our souls from the silly works of the flesh... to remember your heavenly judgment according to your mercy".
- ❖ Choose few verses from the book of Isaiah and meditate on them and show your meditation to the teacher next Sunday.
- ❖ Try to search for some of God's characters from the book of Isaiah and support them with verses from the book.

Week -5 - Resurrection

Objective:

- ❖ The effect of resurrection on the life of the Lord, the life of the church and on our life.

Memory Verse:

"I am the life and the resurrection, he who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25)

References:

- ❖ "Resurrection and our Spiritual Life" Anba Bemin
- ❖ "The Resurrection of Christ in our Life" St. George Church, Sporting

Introduction:

The days of resurrection are days of happiness and joy so the church sings the resurrection hymns that are characterized by their pleasant and joyful tunes for fifty days during which she forbids any sad tunes even in her prayer for those who die. She also forbids fasting and kneeling in worship during these days. May the gratification of resurrection be for the benefit of the soul not for the benefit of the body. May we be filled with joy so that we may test the power and brightness of resurrection.

Lesson Outline:

❖ The Power of Resurrection

The devil won all the rounds before the Resurrection. He could make the authorities sentence Jesus to death as a sinner and evildoer. The Lord neither objected nor protested. The devil could direct all sorts of disgrace such as striking His body with whips and striking Him and spitting on His face, nailing His hands and stabbing Him with the spear...Christ received all these sorts of afflictions on the cross and the devil thought that the Lord was weak and that he could conquer Christ.

The disciples hid in the upper room. They were filled with horror and awe, as they were afraid of the Jews... while the sincere women and the Maries together with John and Peter went to the tomb all night long till dawn to offer the spices to the body of Christ in great sorrow.

Sorrow and despair filled the hearts of some disciples. The two disciples of Emmaus were speaking with the Lord while He was walking with them after His resurrection without knowing Him. "... Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death, and crucified Him... It is now the third day since this happened" (Luke 24: 19-21).

But the truth of resurrection turned sorrow into joy and despair into boldness and courage and fear into courage and preaching... This is the power of resurrection, which filled the church with Joy, and comfort... The Lord Jesus rose with His own power... He rose and the stone was still at the door of the tomb... He rose and His wounds were as they were and His side was open... He rose declaring: "O

death where is your sting? ...O Hades where is your victory?" He rose at the time He appointed and left the shroud and the napkin lying in their place.

❖ The Joys of Resurrection

The church sings hymns that clearly express the joys of resurrection...she sings: "All the heavenly hosts... all heavenly and earthly ranks and orders... all angels and people sing happily as our Lord Jesus Christ, the True Lamb has risen from the dead". Your heart will be filled with joy when you see the deacons decorate the Resurrection Icon while singing: "O all heavenly ranks and orders sing to our Lord with hymns of praise and rejoice with us today as we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Christ... The Lord rose as if He had been asleep or affected by wine and granted us the eternal grace and freed us from severe bondage.

❖ What is the secret of this great joy?

- He bruised the head of the Serpent.
- He broke the sting of death.
- He opened the door of Paradise.

Resurrection had a great effect on the church of the apostles. The Writer of the Book of the Acts (St. Luke) says: "And with great power the apostle gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all". St. Paul, inspired by

the Holy Spirit, considers the resurrection as the basis of Preaching and without resurrection the preaching would be futile. He says: “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:14-17).

❖ Resurrection in our own life

When St. John saw the Lord in a vision on the island called Patmos, he fell at His feet as dead. The Lord laid his right hand upon him saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Revelation 1:17,18).

The Lord Jesus; then, is Living in heaven and is living in the hearts of the believers. Through the Holy Spirit, He fills their hearts with the power of His resurrection. In this, St. Paul the apostle says, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 3: 10). As the Resurrection was latent and present in the life of the Lord Jesus, it is also a test that takes place in the hearts of believers with which they attain the power, the glory and the joys of resurrection.

Whenever our hearts are filled with the Divine love and strong will to carry out the commandment, the spirit of resurrection fills us and the ugly sin disappears. Whenever we overcome our grudge, lusts and bad tendencies, the Holy Spirit who raised Christ from the dead fills us and raises us with Him and delivers us from evil. Through the Holy Spirit, we attain the power to rise up from the spiritual death, “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8: 11).

THE GREAT FAST 123 Sunday School Curriculum Grade 7

1. Why is the Resurrection of the Lord Christ considered one of the miracles?
2. What is the difference between the resurrection of Christ and that of Lazarus?
3. What was the effect of resurrection on the church of the apostles?
4. How has resurrection given the church joy and happiness?
5. How can we know that we have tested resurrection in our life?

Conclusion:

If we have been raised with Christ, let us seek what is above where Christ is sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on High. If we have truly been raised with Christ let us search for the lost sheep to attract them as that who rose from the dead said to Peter, “Do you love me? ...attend my sheep” After His resurrection, the Lord used to say and still says to our hearts, “That who loves Me should feed my lambs”.

Applications:

- ❖ Read what is written in the Gospels about Resurrection in the last one or two chapters of each Gospel.
- ❖ Recite the cheering hymns of the Resurrection and take part with the deacons in the Resurrection Icon Procession.
- ❖ Send presents to the orphans and those who mourn especially on Easter.
- ❖ Pray and contemplate the prayer for the sharing of Holy Communion prayed by the priest while breaking the Holy Body. Study some parts of it and recite these parts.
- ❖ Examine yourself to find out any sin and pray so that the Lord may help you to keep away from it and test the power of resurrection from the tomb of the sin.

LESSONS FOR THE PENTECOST PERIOD

Week 1: How to Study?

Week 2: The Effect of Media

Week 3: Who is the Poor Man?

Week 4: How to Benefit from the Holy Bible?

Week 5: The Glories of the Feast of the Holy Ascension

Week 6: The Church after the Apostolic Era

Week 7: God Calls St. Paul

Week -1- How to Study?

Objective:

- ❖ To guide the students to the sound academic habits
- ❖ To help them achieve success in their schools.

Memory Verse:

“But wisdom brings success” (Ecclesiastes 10:10)

References:

- ❖ “Let me grow” Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty (English and Arabic)
- ❖ The story of Joseph as an example of a successful man- Genesis chapters 39-41

Introduction:

We as children of the king should glorify God in our success in school. A Christian person is hard working, responsible and successful with the help and blessings of the Lord.

Lesson Outline:

There are basic important factors that should be understood and followed closely to achieve success. These factors are:

1. It is necessary to clarify the relationship between knowledge and the humanity of man as that who knows well and his knowledge increases and deepens, practices the life of man in the best way. Ignorance is the most dangerous enemy of man. Examples include health of the body, human relationships, practices, knowledge of languages and their benefit in the future.
2. It is necessary to clarify the importance of studies in forming sound mental attitudes of the children so that they may form their career in a good way. Examples include how they think, how they face problems, how they study a certain subject without superficiality, how they apply their studies in the domains of their daily life, how to keep away from partiality in their thoughts and attitudes, how they express their thoughts logically and with concentration and clarity, etc.
3. It is necessary to show the importance of the gifts given by God and that God will ask for account and that those who are honest with few talents will be honest with more talents.
4. It is necessary to show the importance of investigation and study and increasing one’s knowledge and to train oneself to create and invent and to know living languages. All these are very important in social life, as the motherland is greatly in need of good citizens who are efficient and whose talents are fruitful.
5. The Servant explains the essential rules of psychology that help children to study:
 - a. The subject should be clear.

- b. The subject should be well categorized.
- c. It should be read once as a whole then some parts should be read with concentration.
- d. Underline the most important points.
- e. Doing some exercises to inculcate what has been studied.
- f. Reciting the part studied to make sure that it has been inculcated in mind and memory.
- g. Go back to the same subject after a short time for more revision, more exercises, doing model answers for some questions so that information will be deeply inculcated.
- h. Keep away from anything that may cause distraction of thoughts such as evil thoughts, television, and people talking loudly in the room or a radio set that causes noise in the room.
- i. If you wish, begin with the difficult part then go through the easier parts. Complete the easy task during the day or write the easier parts that do not need effort in studying.
- j. Do not leave your study for rest except after spending at least a couple of hours. Take rest for half an hour then go back to complete your study.
- k. Do not study your lessons in bed or on a comfortable chair. Do not eat filling meals lest they should result in relaxation and desire for sleep.
- l. Resort to prayers, reading the Holy Bible, contemplating the life history of saints before starting your study. But be on your guard, do not let other activities or readings take up the time devoted for studying. Work should be well organized and discipline should be the rule of life.
- m. Devote some time each week for rest, sports, social activities, service or family visits.

Conclusion:

- ❖ God will help you and give you support and understanding if you ask for His blessings before you start your studies.

Applications:

- ❖ Start with reading the Bible and/or a prayer every time before starting your studies.
- ❖ Memorize some Psalms to pray them on your way to or from school every day.

Week -2- The Effect of Media

Objective:

- ❖ To understand the effect of media on our life as Christian youth.
- ❖ To learn to be selective in what we expose our senses to.

Memory Verse:

“ All things are lawful for me but all things are not helpful” (1 Corinthians 6:12)

References:

- ❖ “Let me grow” Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty (English and Arabic)
- ❖ “Worshiping the Devil in the present age” Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty
- ❖ The story of Father Youstos El Antoni

Introduction:

The media has a great impact on our mind and behavior. It also influences our morals and personality. Unfortunately, the very basics of Christianity are sometimes completely ignored by the media. The freedom of media and speech in the west is a double-edged sword. Media can be a powerful tool for the devil to manipulate people. On the other hand, it can be efficiently used to glorify the name of the Lord and spread the word.

Lesson Outline:

Discuss with the students the forms of media that affects them most and how much time everyday they spend interacting with one or more forms of media, e.g. TV, Radio, Internet, movies, or music.

- ❖ Media as a Constructive Tool in our Lives
- ❖ Educational, e.g. History channel and discovery channel.
- ❖ Awareness to events around the world e.g. News.
- ❖ Some Christian movies and religious messages are very helpful spiritually.
- ❖ We can take the example of some good characters, e.g. mother Teresa.
- ❖ The Internet can be a source of very good Christian and educational information.
- ❖ Media as a Destructive Tool
- ❖ Exposure to sex and violence which destroys the purity of the mind and heart.
- ❖ Bombarding the hearing with dirty language.
- ❖ Justification of sins as the norms of the society e.g. acceptance of homosexuality, adultery and abortion.

- ❖ Waste of valuable time of our life in non-constructive activity, e.g. talk shows, browsing the Internet without an aim or for immoral web sites.
- ❖ Pre-occupation with celebrities, e.g. actors and singers.
- ❖ Many songs may encourage the youth to stay away from religion and God or actually may push others to commit suicide, e.g. rock and rap music.
- ❖ How do we avoid the destructive impact of the media and the Internet?
- ❖ Fill your free time with God and His word.
- ❖ Watch how much time are you spending with God and how much time are you spending in front of the TV or the Internet. David the king admits clearly that our lives are short so do not delay your meetings with the Lord (Psalm 89:47).
- ❖ We have to realize that every minute of our lives count towards our eternal life. Fr. Youstos El Anthony was famous for frequently asking the question “What is the time?” to remind himself that he is continually getting closer to the last minute in his life and reminding others around him. This will make us appreciate the value of time and help us minimize the time wasted watching TV or the Internet. So we have to manage our time wisely “redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:16-17).
- ❖ We must be selective for what is beneficial to our spiritual and mental growth and what is wasteful and unfruitful (1 Corinthians 6:12).
- ❖ Guard your senses of what they receive and protect your heart, soul and mind of the small offences that gradually build up to ruin our purity.

Conclusion:

May God give us the discerning spirit that we may be able to discriminate between what is constructive and what is destructive to our minds, souls and spirits. Help us Lord to guard our senses from the hidden evils.

Applications:

- ❖ Limit the time you spend in front of the TV as a practice for this week and try to make this a habit.
- ❖ Investigate the effect of violence and media on the rate of crime in the western world.

Week -3- Who is the Poor Man?

Objective:

- ❖ Developing the tendency of almsgiving without limit or fanaticism.

Memory Verse:

“Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me”
(Matthew 25:40)

References:

- ❖ “The Garden of the Soul” Part 2, Anba Youannis
- ❖ “Our love for our poor brethren” Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty
- ❖ “The Garden of the Monks”
- ❖ “The Life of Anba Abraam the Bishop of Fayoum” Al Mahaba Bookstore

Introduction:

A Jewish teacher stood up to put Christ to the test and asked Him: Who is my neighbor? During conversation, Jesus spoke about love for the neighbor (You shall love your neighbor as yourself). The Teacher asked Him, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. Likewise, a Levite when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying: Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back. Which of these three, do you think proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? He said. ‘The one who showed mercy to him’. And Jesus said to him: Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:29-37).

Lesson Outline:

- ❖ Christianity Knows No Fanaticism

Christianity knows no fanaticism as she follows the example of the Good Samaritan in her attitude towards humanity. Anyone who needs my love, mercy and kindness is my brother regardless of race, language, religion or social class. The Lord Jesus considers the poor His brothers and He did not distinguish between a poor man and another and He did not limit His mercy to any race, religion or language. There are many examples, which prove this stated fact in the life of the Lord Jesus. It is He who met the Samaritan woman and talked to her about His wonderful salvation. It is He who praised the faith of the

woman of Canaan and healed her son. St. Paul the apostle says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

❖ How do I Give the Poor?

I give him as a brother as almsgiving is not showing sympathy to people but it is the Christian love that motivates man to give alms and compels the brother to open his heart to his brother: “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (1 John 3:17) As a true Christian he has to share him his feelings, his sorrows and his joys and suffers with him as members of one body; i.e. Christ’s body. Our teacher St. Paul says: “Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body” (Hebrews 13:3).

Give him with love and generosity as almsgiving devoid of inner love is rejected. The Pharisees offering was not acceptable before the Lord. When Ananias and Sapphira gave a part of the price of the field to the apostles and kept a part for themselves, St. Peter the apostle refused to accept their offering. But that who first offers his heart pleases God as the woman who offered two lepta (small coins). She offered her whole heart to God. Also, we see the woman who offered the Lord an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment as a sign of love. St. Paul the apostle says; “If I give away all I have... but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3), and the Lord Himself says: “I want mercy, and not sacrifice” (Mathew 9:13).

A. Give the poor in secret

The Lord in His sermon on the mountain says: “Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and Your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Mathew 6:2-4). John Chrysostom says; “If you reveal your alms, the devil steals them from you as the Pharisee did”.

B. The blessings of almsgiving

(1) Almsgiving makes us like God in His mercy: St. John Chrysostom says: Alms are valuable and have power as they can loose the bonds, lighten the darkness, quenches the raging fire of Hell and its effectiveness qualifies almsgivers to be like God in His mercy and the Lord says; “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful”.

(2) Alms deliver us from judgment: “In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity” (Proverbs 16:6). This does not mean that almsgiving in itself is able to atone for sin; otherwise there will be no need for redemption. Alms reveal a heart filled with love for Christ, a heart that loves the needy and those who suffer. How beautiful the prophet Isaiah’s saying is: “Learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. ‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the Lord, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool’” (Isaiah 1:17,18). That who does not show mercy does not deserve mercy... and the church says in the Agpia prayers that there is no mercy on

the Day of Judgment for those who were merciless on earth (Vigils/Midnight prayer).

(3) We attain the heavenly treasure: The Lord of glory says: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Matthew 19:21). The believer who gives to the poor will have great glory in heaven and the immortal things not mortal things. Pope John II, Patriarch of Alexandria and known as “the Merciful Pope”, told us about the story of Peter the Miser. A poor man begged him to give him something and Peter threw a loaf at his face. Two days later Peter fell ill and he saw in a dream that he was dead and that he was brought before the Lord to be judged. The demons argued that Peter was theirs but the angel found that Peter did one good thing in his life and that was the loaf he had thrown to the beggar so he said to Peter, “Because of this loaf the Lord gives you a chance to repent and He postponed your day of death so repent and give alms”. Peter’s life changed completely and he began to give some of his clothes to the church to give them to the needy. In a vision he saw the Lord putting on the clothes Peter gave the poor so he rejoiced, as he knew that Christ received his alms and kept them for him as heavenly treasure.

1. Give evidence to show that Christianity knows no fanaticism in almsgiving.
2. Who is the poor indeed? What are the types of poverty in the life of man? What is the Christian’s duty towards these types?
3. What is the Christian style in almsgiving? What characterized the true Christian in giving alms?
4. What aspects corrupt the Christian’s almsgiving to the poor? How can we avoid them?
5. Study the life of Anba Abraam, the late Bishop of Fayoum, as a model of Christian almsgiving.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Almsgiving is a great virtue for those who acquire it. It is also a great blessing and God considers it as caring for His brothers and sisters, since He considers the poor and his family.

Applications:

- ❖ Distribute the alms gathered during the previous week by visiting the poor families and charity institutions that are concerned especially with the disabled regardless of any religion or belief.

Week -4- How to Benefit from the Holy Bible?

Objective:

- ❖ To know the effectiveness of the word of God and how to apply it in my life.

Memory Verse:

“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Psalm 119: 103)

References:

- ❖ “The Holy Bible and our Holy Christ” Anba Youannis
- ❖ “The Garden of the Soul” Part 2, Anba Youannis
- ❖ “The Holy Bible is a Miracle” The Diocese of Al Minya
- ❖ “The Tormented Servant” St. George Church, Sporting
- ❖ “The Book of Isaiah” St. George Church, Sporting
- ❖ “Christ in all the Books” A. Hodgkin
- ❖ “Christ in Isaiah” F .B. Mayor

Introduction:

There is an essential difference between the word of man and the word of God. Man’s word echoes in the air and disappears. We may not believe it as it does not have the power to do things although the words of kings and judges have the power of action. However, the word of God is one of the attributes of God and a personal hypostasis coming out of the Lord whose word has the power of action and does not go back without benefit. The word itself is composed of sayings and actions without separation. The word of God is living and active.

Lesson Outline:

- ❖ How Did The Word of God Reach Us?

God sent us His word through the prophets inspired by the Holy Spirit and when men did not listen to the voice of prophecy and kept away from the word of God, He sent His Incarnate Word “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”. The Holy Bible is the Life of Christ on Earth and His sayings come from the Mind of God Himself. The Bible is a precious message sent to us; as for the Old Testament, it composes the whole and all messages of the prophets whom the Lord spoke to through the Holy Spirit.

- ❖ The Word of God is Light
 - God said, “Let there be light”. The word of God lightens darkness, gives light to the thoughts of the heart and the spiritual insight.

- Christ granted the Samaritan woman enlightenment and she recognized her darkness and sinful past. The Word of God is powerful enough to lighten the hearts “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet”.

❖ The Word of God is Life

The word of God has its power in the material creation “My word is Spirit and Life”. God has created living beings from dust and nonexistence. Ezekiel the prophet saw a place full of bones and when he prophesied through the Word of God they became a great army. When Jesus called Lazarus the soul went back to the body, which gave out a vicious smell. The Word has a great authority “He who hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24).

❖ The Word of God is Power

“Praise the Lord O angels who carry out the commands of God when you hear the voice of His Word”. Contemplate what happened on the Mount of Sinai when the Law was received. It was the powerful voice of the Lord...the voice of God with great glory shakes the wilderness and fills the heavens. “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

❖ The Word of God is Food

“Your words were found and I ate them and Your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart” (Jeremiah 15:16). “How sweet are Your words to my taste; sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Psalm 119:103). The body lives on food and the soul lives by every word that comes forth from the Mouth of God.

❖ The Word of God is a Weapon

The Word of God is powerful and effective; it is sharper than any sword that is double-edged. It comforts and reproaches. It rectifies and instructs. It drives away our enemies and judges us. It keeps us safe in time of trouble and saves us from stumbling blocks, which we bring to ourselves.

❖ How do I Read the Holy Bible?

- With the Spirit of Prayer: Contemplate how people stand when they read the Holy Bible in the church and when the priest starts to raise incense while praying so that we may hear, understand and work according to the Holy Gospel and the deacon asks us to pray from the Holy Gospel. Prayer should accompany reading the Bible so we pray before, during and after reading the Gospel. We thank God for His promises and pray Him to give them to us with understanding, not repeating the same words in our private prayers. We pray that He might lighten our insights and touch our hearts and clarify what we do not understand.
- With the Spirit of discipleship: Whatever the degree, of your knowledge or culture may be, read the Bible as a young child who wants to know something about the Absolute Truth. Read it regularly. Use a regular educational method. Start with the simple explanatory series (The key to the Book) and then study the characters and heroes of the Book. Then read it a third time slowly; verse

by verse. Resort to the method of studying by heart. Stay for a long time to enjoy it. We usually spend a long time to achieve the sciences of the world. Begin now and concentrate on the study of the Book of Heaven “Heaven and earth will pass away but My words will not pass away”.

- With the Spirit of Obedience: You also see the priest put the Gospel over his head bowing his head to the voice of God as if he were ready to slaughter every dear and precious thing “And take every thought captive to obey Christ”. “That who hears the word and does not keep it deceives himself and these words will condemn him”.

Conclusion:

- ❖ The word of God is the most important guide to our life to reach the unity with God on earth and eventually in heaven.

Applications:

- ❖ With the help of your Servant or your father of confession, set a program for studying the Holy Bible this month and throughout the year.
- ❖ Pray so that God will help you to commit to it and write down your notes.
- ❖ Take one verse every day and write it down in your notebook. Repeat it during the day, recite it and apply it to your life.

Week -5- The Glories of the Feast of the Holy Ascension

Objective:

- ❖ To understand the priesthood of the Lord in His ascension.

Memory Verse:

“He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9)

References:

- ❖ “The Divine Ascension” Anba Bemin
- ❖ “The Divine Ascension” Fr. Ibrahim
- ❖ “Glory be to You in Your ascension” Samir Kamil

Introduction:

This feast refers to the last glories of the Lord in His life on earth and the beginning of the glories of the church.

Lesson Outline:

❖ The Glories of the Incarnate and Meek Redeemer

The meekness of the Lord in His incarnation and concealing His glory, then His crucifixion and burial causes astonishment to the minds of angels and men, but on the other hand we have to think of His glorious resurrection, His ascension to heaven, and His sitting at the right Hand of God in the Highest.

“No man has ascended into heaven but He that descended from heaven” (John 3:13). “The very one that descended is also the one that ascended far above all the heavens that He might give fullness to all things” (Ephesians 4:10). The ascension of the Lord indicates that He is the Heavenly Being who came from above and that He is above all, and at the same time He fills all beings and no place limits Him. That who descended is He who ascended and that who humbled himself is He who was exalted and that who accepted passions and insults is He who sits on the wings of the cherubim in the clouds of glory. The angels sang; “Lift up your heads, O gates and be lifted up, O ancient doors that the King of Glory may come in” (Psalm 24:9).

❖ On the Cloud

- “He rode on a cherub and flew; He came swiftly upon the wings of the wind” (Psalm 18:10).
- “Who makes the clouds His chariot, who rides on the wings of the wind” (Psalm 104:3).
- “A cloud took Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9).

Since ancient times cloud has been connected with the eternal glory and the Divine Presence. The glory of the Lord appeared on Mount Sinai amid the clouds and the only begotten Son ascended to heaven amid the cloud of glory. The righteous will be taken to Him on the cloud. So “The cloud” is a Biblical symbolic expression that stands for the brighter and greater glory.

❖ At the Father’s Right Hand

“Sitting” here does not mean that the Son was separated from the Father’s Bosom at any moment or that He was separated from heaven at any time. It does not mean the bodily sitting as the Father has neither left nor right and heaven is limitless and endless so it does not have any angles, boundaries or dimensions. What is meant by the Right Hand of the Father is His greatness, ability and Power. The Lord Christ ascended in flesh, the glorified risen body so that He may glorify us with Him in heaven as after completing His ministry and His redemption, He took what is His of ability, power, glory, greatness that fits His Holy Hypostasis that is One with the Hypostasis of the Heavenly Father, as Paul the apostle says; “He is the reflection of His glory and the exact representation of His very being and He sustains all things by the word of His power, and after He had made a purification for our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the majesty in lofty places”

(Hebrews 1:3).

One of the saints explains the meaning of sitting on the right hand by saying “It is the right hand of the fellowship with the Father in luxury, blessings and power”. These He took to give the church. This sitting was emphasized through a vision seen by St. Stephen when he was filled with the Holy Spirit and was ready to give his life as a price for proving this vision: “Look I behold the heavens opened up and the Son of man standing at God’s right hand” (Acts 7:56). Christ was in a state of glory that was reflected on the holy face of Stephen so they saw his face like the face of an angel.

IV. He Made His Enemies His Footstool

“The Lord says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool” (Psalm 110:1). This prophecy has come true. Those who rejected Him and stabbed Him now look at Christ in His glory. They look at Him in sorrow and grief. The devil also and all his powers were conquered and they fell down as lightning.

Conclusion:

All this glory is for us. God raised our nature with Him and took us to His glory. Let us then live as children of Light. Let us not defile ourselves with the lusts of the mortal world “If, however, you were raised up with Christ, go on seeking the things above where the Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1).

Applications:

- ❖ Write an essay on the heaven where the Lord dwells with the saints.
- ❖ Read the story of St. Stephen (Acts 7) and write an essay on the secret of power in his life.
- ❖ What is the relationship between ascension and the second coming of Christ?

Week -6- The Church After the Apostolic Era

Objective:

- ❖ Learning heroism in the life of the fathers who carried faith down to us.

Memory Verse:

“So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:5)

References:

- ❖ “Ignatius and Polycarp” St. George Church, Sporting
- ❖ “The Army of God” Marcos Magazine
- ❖ “St. Clement of Rome” Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Introduction:

The day of Pentecost was a shining day in the history of humanity. A stormy wind shook Jerusalem and tongues came down on the disciples and the Holy Spirit outpoured over them and filled them with all knowledge and kept fear away from them and they went out of their upper room to the world carrying the message of Christ... a message of love and redemption. Years go by and the disciples work hard and the Christians and the churches grow in number. The first century came to its end and all the apostles departed from this world after they had changed the whole world. Before them the world was completely filled with paganism. There were groups of Jews, some were in Palestine and the others were scattered here and there. But now, delightful lights began to shine the lights of the church of Christ, which began to lighten darkness.

Lesson Outline:

- ❖ The Happy Church

The Christians were pleased with the new religion. They shared everything among them. Nobody was poor or needy. They sold their property and divided the price among all according to each one's need. Every day they gather for prayer, singing hymns and listening to the preaching and to the Gospel that the apostle had left them. They used to eat together. On Sunday, they gather to attend prayers of the Holy Mass and receive the Holy Communion. People around them desired to imitate them so the Christians allowed them to attend their meetings and taught them the rules of religion and the Lord brought those who were saved to the church every day.

- ❖ Persecutions

The spread of Christianity was not easy. Many enemies tried to hinder its progress and growth. They fought it by all means but it won victory over them. In spite of persecutions, the Christians were an example of loyalty and sincerity even to their persecutors and their life was a good model for all people to follow. Many non-Christians

believed in Christ when they saw their deeds and they glorified their Father who is in heaven. Through love, sacrifice and martyrdom, Christianity became victorious and the more persecution and torment increased, the more they kept close to Christ. They did not fear death but they sought it and desired it everywhere. They were martyred in Egypt, in Syria, in Rome and their martyrdom astonished the people around them and made them ask themselves “Why do they hold fast to their God?” Many believed because the Christians held fast to their Christ in spite of the cruelty and tormenting they suffered.

A. Ignatius

Ignatius, Peter’s disciple, was the Bishop of Antioch. He cared for his people with power and courage so the people gave him the name of “Theo-Forus” i.e. “that who carries the Lord”. The king urged him to worship the idols. He tempted him with money and glory and threatened that he would torment him and put him to death but all his attempts were in vain and at last he sent him to Rome to be thrown to the fierce animals to devour him. Ignatius was not frightened. All his people wept for him but he encouraged them all and in his epistle to the Romans he says: “At last my brothers I attained what I desired... to die for Christ to declare myself a Christian and deserve the glorious name given to me but my fear is that you, through your love for me might try to save me from death and deprive me of the martyrdom for Christ”.

B. Clement

Clement knew Christ in Rome through St. Paul. He was ordained Bishop of the city and because of his activity to spread Christianity, the Emperor sent him into exile in a far away country. There he met two thousand Christians in exile like him because of their Christian faith and they were tormented with hard work. He encouraged them and helped them in their work and reminded them of the heavenly joy that awaits them. Those banished people endured hardships joyfully and their life changed. Many non-Christian people believed in Christ because of Bishop Clement’s works.

C. Polycarp (69-156 AD)

In Izmir in Asia Minor, the governor arrested Polycarp, John’s disciple. When he saw his white beard and bent back, he showed sympathy for him and advised him to deny Christ but he said to the governor, “Since my childhood, I have been serving Christ for 86 years and during that long time he gave me every love and kindness so how can I reject him?” The governor threatened that he would send him to wild beasts but the saint said, “Let these beasts come to me. I am not afraid of them”. The governor said, “If you despise the beasts I will throw you into a burning fire” and the saint said, “Your majesty, you threaten me to send me to a fire that burns a little then dies away but you do not know the fire of the eternal judgment that the Lord has prepared for non-believers”. Then the saint said, “Why are you slow, your Majesty? Do what you want quickly”. The governor ordered that Polycarp would be burnt alive and when the soldiers wanted to tie him up, he said to them, “there is no need for that. God who gave me power to endure the insult, gives me power to stand amid fire”. He lifted up his eyes to heaven and prayed: “O Lord, I bless you because you have chosen me to be one of your martyrs who die for bearing witness to your name. I have glorified You in my life and I am now glorifying You in my death”. The saint attained the crown of martyrdom and the Christians gathered

his bones and kept them in their church in Izmir.

Ignatius, Clement and Polycarp were martyred and gave us the best example of holding fast to Christ. Their life and death were the seeds of faith in the church.

Discussion:

- ❖ As you are one of the children of those martyrs, what are the troubles and sacrifices, which you are ready to endure for the growth and spread of the church?
- ❖ What types of service can you perform to achieve this purpose?

Conclusion:

Those are the word of these saints who loved the Lord from all their heart and were ready to endure all kinds of suffering for His sake: “I desire martyrdom to declare myself Christian not only in words but also in action” (St. Ignatius). “Since my childhood I have been serving Christ and He never harmed me but He showed me every mercy and kindness, how can I leave Him?” (Polycarp)

Applications:

- ❖ On a map, write the names of Ignatius, Clement and Polycarp beside the cities to which they were Bishops.

Week -7- God Calls St. Paul

Objective:

- ❖ Learning the pleasant meeting with the Lord in our life and the possibility of change.

Memory Verse:

“You did not choose Me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit” (John 15:16)

References:

- ❖ “Paul the Apostle” translated by Fr. Marcos Daoud
- ❖ “The Apostle of Struggle” Habib Saeed
- ❖ “St. Paul the Mighty Preacher” Fr. Youssef Asaad
- ❖ “St. Paul the Apostle” Fr. Hareth Kreissa

Introduction:

St Paul was converted from a persecutor of the church to a preacher and a great teacher in Christian. All of this through a meeting with the Lord who was able to change him completely.

Lesson Outline:

- ❖ Saul the Persecutor of the Church (Acts 9:1-31)

A Pharisee young man appeared in Jerusalem. His name was Saul and he was a disciple of Gamaliel the teacher of the Law. He was a great fanatic to Judaism. He heard the Story of Jesus of Nazareth and the appearance of Christianity from the Jews. He was greatly annoyed and began to persecute the believers severely as he believed that in doing so he served God and his religion. He used to destroy and loot the Christian churches. When the Jews planned to stone St. Stephen the pious deacon Saul attended the process of stoning and heard him when he said: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”. He also saw his angelic face when he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice “Lord, do not remember this sin against them” and Saul approved of his murder (Acts 7:4-60). The Book of the Acts of the Apostles says that this fierce lion used to break into the churches and houses and draw men and women and take them to prison. The church endured Saul’s persecutions patiently and the Book of Acts says that those who were scattered because of persecution went about preaching the Word of God and in every house where a murder took place because of this fanatic man’s persecutions, many prayers were raised for him. Nobody thought of hurting him because the Lord says to the believers; “Look, I am sending you forth as lambs among wolves”. The lamb is devoured by the wolf but a lamb cannot devour otherwise it will turn into a wolf.

God never fails the prayers of His children. This moaning and those cries, which rose continually from the catacombs “O Lord, remember Saul” found in the heart of the Lord of the church a wonderful response.

❖ Meeting and a Change

Saul caused Jerusalem’s flock to scatter. His fanaticism led him to take letters from the chief priest to Damascus and to the synagogue of Damascus so that if he should find any of these followers of Christ, he would be able to arrest them, both men and women and bring them back to Jerusalem. He was armed with all the weapons of power, he had the power of the High Priest and strong men and soldiers, he had his zeal and fanaticism which were beyond description, all this was against a humble meek flock that cannot resist because their Lord prevented them from carrying a sword and demanded that they should learn lowliness from Him and leave vengeance to the Lord “Vengeance is Mine”. On his way to Damascus, jealousy and fanaticism filled his heart. As Saul was coming near the city of Damascus, suddenly a light from the sky flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you Lord,” he asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads” (The goads is a piece of iron used for pricking a beast to urge it to run). Saul was frightened and confused. He said, “What shall I do, Lord?” The Lord said to him: “Rise, go your way into Damascus, and there you will be told about everything it is appointed for you to do”. The men who were traveling with Saul had stopped, not saying a word; they heard the voice but could not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground and opened his eyes, but could not see a thing. So they took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. For three days he was not able to see and during that time he did not eat or drink anything.

❖ My Lord and My God

- My Lord and my God, your power is filled with love... the wolf which devours your flock you call it by its name and show him your love.
- My Lord and my God, Your power is filled with might... the lion before whom no one could stand collapsed before your glory and fell to the ground humiliated and asking You humbly “O Lord, What do you want me to do?”
- My Lord and my God... Your power is filled with glory the fiery sharp eyes that devoured the meek lambs, when they met you, they could see nothing... their fanaticism was no more... You brought them back through meekness to enlightenment to see the Divine light.
- My Lord and my God... How great you are and how majestic. Saul the fierce man, becomes Paul, the apostle of struggle and the chosen vessel and the great pillar of the church.
- My Lord and my God... turn me as you turned him, meet me and call me as you called him, O Lord.

❖ In the House of Ananias

There was in Damascus a certain disciple named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision; “Ananias”. He said, “Here I am, Lord”. The Lord said to him; “Rise, go to the

street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look up a man called Saul, from Tarsus. For, look, he is praying, and in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands upon him that he might recover sight". But Ananias answered; "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how many injurious things he did to your holy ones in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to put in bonds all those caning upon your name". The Lord said to him: "Be on your way, because this man is a chosen vessel to me to bear My name in the nations as well as to kings and the sons of Israel. For I shall show him plainly how many things he must suffer for My name". So, Ananias went off and entered into the house, and he laid his hands upon him and said, "Saul, brother, the Lord Jesus that appeared to you on the road over which you were coming, has sent me forth in order that you may recover sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit".

❖ The Persecutor becomes a Preacher

And immediately there fell from his eyes what looked like scales, and he recovered sight and he rose and was baptized and he took nourishment and gained strength. He got to be for some days with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately in the synagogues he began to preach Jesus, that this One is the Son of God. But all those hearing him gave way to astonishment and would say: "Is this not the man that ravaged those in Jerusalem who call upon this name, and that had come here for that very purpose, that he might lead them bound to the chief priests?" But Saul became Paul and he kept on acquiring strength and was confounding the Jews that dwelt in Damascus as he proved logically that this is the Christ.

❖ The Persecutions that the Apostle of the Nations Suffered

As the Lord Jesus Christ suffered in bearing witness to the Heavenly Father, each member bearing witness to the Lord Jesus has to suffer also. Every witness should be persecuted... persecuted by the world, the devil, and men and by the corrupt ancient man that lies in his nature. Thus the life of every faithful witness is composed of persecution forming a sad symphony outside him but inside him it is pleasant and enjoyable as St. Paul said: "For though tribulation is momentary and light, it works out for us a glory which is of more and more surpassing weight and is everlasting" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

❖ Sources of Paul's Troubles

The Jews: They were shocked when they saw Saul change into Paul the preaching apostle so they resisted him severely in every synagogue and in every city. They flogged him five times, struck him many times and they stoned him once and at this time he was about to die.

The false brothers: Those are the Jews who became Christians but kept the Spirit of Judaism in their heart and tried to introduce Jewish beliefs in the Christian faith to dye it with the Jewish life. Those, Paul called "the false brothers". They used to go to every church he established and arouse tribulations and spread rumors so Paul suffered a lot because of their behavior.

The Pagan Priests: Those caused the people to rebel against Paul because they felt that Paul's preaching caused the loss of their resources and income. This happened in the city of Ephesus as an example. Besides, he faced many other troubles in his travels especially the thorn in the flesh and in this he entreated the Lord that it might depart from

him but the Lord said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

❖ Paul the Apostle Explained Some of the Troubles He Faced

A. Lots of Tribulations (2 Corinthians 11:23-33)

- He was obliged to refer to them to confirm his evangelism before the stubborn who resisted him and who wanted to corrupt the service in the church of the Ephesians.
- With far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings.
- I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.
- Three times I have been shipwrecked, a night and a day I have been adrift at sea.
- On frequent journeys.
- In labor and toil, in sleepless nights often.
- In dangers from highwaymen, in dangers from my own race, in dangers from the nations.
- In hunger and thirst... in abstinence from food many times... in cold and nakedness.
- The anxiety for all the congregations.

B. Always faithful to the Lord

- Concerning the message appointed to him and for the souls he loved, listen to him when he says: “Who is stumbled and I am not incensed?” (2 Corinthians 11:29).
- “When being reviled we bless, when being persecuted we bear up, when being defamed, we entreat” (1 Corinthians 4:12,13).
- “Nevertheless, I do not make my soul of any account as dear to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry which I received of the Lord Jesus, to bear thorough witness to the good news of the undeserved kindness of God” (Acts 20:24).
- “Who will separate us from the Love of the Christ. Will tribulation or distress or persecution or hunger or nakedness or danger or sword?” (Romans 8:35).

C. Why does God permit such persecutions to afflict his servants?

In answer to this question St. Theodorus says:

- To protect us from falling in negligence and laziness and to make us always on our alert, on our guard and with open eyes.
- To look all the time to God pleading His mercy and help.
- So that we may not be proud but think humbly of ourselves.
- So that we may show that we are sticking to the glory of God, His love and faith till the end.
- So that continuous distress may give us the power to attain greater crowns.

- So that God may be glorified and the devil may be ashamed through our endless patience.
- So that we may show our faithfulness to God in spite of all tribulations.

Conclusion:

How can I be one of the Lord Jesus' disciples? Christ who directed His call to Saul is still directing it to each one of us. And the Lord who met him is on the way ready to meet with us on the way of our life and call us all to be His disciples... He expects us to respond to Him and answer His call.

Applications:

- ❖ Meditate on the following two verses:
- ❖ “This man is a chosen vessel to me to bear My name to the nations as well as to kings and the sons of Israel. For I shall show him plainly how many things he must suffer for My name” (Acts 9:15,16).
- ❖ “Lord, what will You have me to do?” (Acts 9:6)
- ❖ Spend time in prayer and reading the Bible to be able to meet with the Lord and talk to Him.
- ❖ Write an essay or make a wall magazine on the Call of Saul.

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF JULY

Week 1- The Transfiguration

Week 2- Many Gifts And One Aim

Week 3- St. Stephen

Week 4- Nehemiah the Zealot (I)

Week 5 - Nehemiah The Zealot (II)

Week -1- The Transfiguration

Objectives:

- ❖ To learn about the events and the nature of the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- ❖ To know what kinds of bodies we will have when we depart from this world.

Memory Verse:

“Then human beings will be like angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:30)

References:

- ❖ “The Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ and its Theological Significance”
Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ www.livres-relidieux.com/EngT/Tranfiguration
- ❖ Mark 9: 2-8, Luke 9: 30-32

Introduction:

The Transfiguration, which is one of the Lord’s feasts, and the Church celebrates it on the 13th of the Coptic month Misra, which is the 19th of August. The story of the Transfiguration is mentioned in the Holy Gospels of Mark and Luke (Mark 9: 2-8, Luke 9: 30-32).

As for His divinity, it is evident that in a moment He was transfigured to this illuminating bright-full aspect, whose brightness was magnificent... and about which it was said: “His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them” (Mark 6:2). The Lord willed to show to His disciples that He had put on this human body, simply out of His humility, and His self-abnegation.

Lesson Outline:

❖ Graduation in the Transfiguration

The Lord Christ took steps in the revelation of His nature, even toward His saintly apostles. This Transfiguration on the mount of Tabor was the simplest image of His Transfiguration, in spite of its magnificence and its glory, in its light and in the testimony of the Father from the cloud.

Another kind of the Lord’s transfiguration was in His resurrection and His ascension. That glorious Resurrection in which He rose with a glorious body and was able to come

out of the tomb while it was closed, and was able to enter to the apostles while the doors were closed (John 20:19), in a calm way that would not terrify them.

His ascension to heaven with a body that is over the level of the earth's gravitation is like His transfiguration, "He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight ... while they looked steadfastly toward heaven" (Acts 1: 9-10). Our teacher the apostle saint Mark says about that: "So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).

This transfiguration in the resurrection and the ascension, happened in a manner, which amazed them and made them feel His divinity, but it did not terrify them.

The last transfiguration will be in His second coming when "the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 14), "when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26), He "will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matthew 16:27), "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25: 31-32).

❖ With Moses And Elijah

Moses and Elijah in their transfiguration symbolized the whole human nature. In the same way the Lord gave us His Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah, as a symbol of the transfiguration which the Lord will grant to all human beings in eternity.

1. Elijah represents the virgins (of either sex), and Moses represents the married. Rather Moses married more than once. He married Zipporah the daughter of the priest of Midian (Exodus 2: 19-22). He also married an Ethiopian woman (Numbers 12:1), who was a symbol of the acceptance of the Gentiles. All this is a symbol, because the transfiguration will equally be the destiny of the virgins and the married.
2. Moses represented those who were dead. And Elijah represented the living who have not yet died. That would symbolize, in the second coming of Christ, the dead who will rise, and the living who will be lifted up to the clouds, as saint Paul said in (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).
3. Elijah represents those who have lived a life of ascetism in the mountains, as he was himself on the mountain of Carmel; and Moses represents those who have lived in the world with their families in a social life.
4. One of them represents the life of monks, and the other represents the ministry and the guidance of crowds. One of them is in the style of Miriam, and the other is in the style of Martha, with the difference in measuring ... all of these two kinds will be transfigured with the Lord.
5. Moses represents meekness and Elijah represents the fiery jealousy. The one represents forgiveness, and the other represents punishment ... (Numbers 12:3, 2 Kings 1:10,12).

As if Christ our Lord says: “I shall assemble all of them to Me in the transfiguration”. Him who was married, and him who was a virgin; him who lived the life of meditation, and him who lived the life of service; him who was meek and calm, and him who was firm and strong; him who lived on the mountain, and him who lived in the city. The important thing is that they live a life of righteousness “who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Philippians 3:21).

❖ What is it then that will happen to that human body in the resurrection? The apostle says:

- “So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power ... It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15: 42-44).
- “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man” (1 Corinthians 15:49).
- “For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality”. Death will then be transformed into victory, and we shall say: “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” (1 Corinthians 15: 52-55).

Then human beings will be “like angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:30), as the Lord has said. Our glorified body in the resurrection, will be a body that does not hunger nor thirst, nor get tired nor become ill, nor will die nor will be corrupted; but rather will be elevated upward in the transfiguration of the human nature.

How will be the new nature of our bodies that will become spiritual heavenly bodies? Will they move as the angels who pass on from heaven to earth in the twinkle of an eye? Will they possess the spiritual perception instead of the ordinary vision?

❖ Other Kinds Of Transfiguration

We mentioned before that the human nature obtains a kind of transfiguration in the general resurrection, when it will be clothed with spiritual heavenly incorruptible bodies, and human beings will become like the angels of God in heaven. But there are some kinds of transfiguration which happen here in life on earth such as:

A. The transfiguration of thinking

Sometimes thinking is lucid and bright, bringing out extremely ravishing thoughts. That happens to a poet whose imagination and thinking becomes radiant in writing a poem of verse; or to a writer who composes a story or a novel while he is at the top of his creative capacity, in a state of transfiguration, in the depth of intelligence, and the depth of imagination.

B. Transfiguration in the fields of many arts and gifts

It happens to an artist, or a designer, or a sculptor, or a musician, or a poet, or a novelist. Any one of these gifted people presents a marvelous masterpiece whose author is then described as being in a state of transfiguration in his feelings and senses and thinking, during the production of his artistic work. All these cases may be for a moment, during the production and the fabrication, and may be representing a case of perpetual

transfiguration of gifts, and may appear even in infancy.

Yes, undoubtedly, gifts are transfigurations that God grants to man. Because gifts are extraordinary capabilities that God gives, they are of many kinds, which the apostle St. Paul mentioned, in his first epistle to the Corinthians saying: “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12: 7-11).

C. Transfiguration with regards to certain definite spiritual qualities

In humans, senses have singular characteristics with regards to their realization: in mercy for instance or tenderness or commiseration, or the forgiveness of offenders as we read about these things in some stories about Anba Abram, the bishop of Fayoum, or Anba Sarabamoun, the bishop of Menoufiah, or Anba Rewiss.

This transfiguration may appear in the thoughts or the responses of some saints, as it was mentioned in the words of Anba Antonious or the sayings of many fathers, which were recorded in “the Paradise of the Monks” ... words at which, man stands amazed, and meditates upon their depth, and says: “Undoubtedly, this was a case of transfiguration in which the fathers pronounced what they said, so that the generations have preserved their words”.

D. Transfiguration as of the great works of grace in man

As the apostle St. Paul said: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Extraordinary capabilities and gifts are transfigured in man as a result of the work of grace. His image is granted a form that amazes those who see him as a result of transfiguration. It was said about St. Stephan in the story of his martyrdom, that during his trial before the congregation of the Jews: “All who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15).

Sometimes it happens during certain dreams that we see a person whom we know, in a wonderful image or in a shining form, although we did not see him like that in his earthly life. But he appears to us during the dream in a state of transfiguration.

Conclusion:

Jesus' transfiguration was the first fruits of the transfiguration of our human nature. "Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21).

Applications:

- ❖ Compare between re-incarnation and the appearance of Moses and Elijah with the Lord during the Transfiguration.
- ❖ Write about what our glorious bodies will be able to do that we cannot do with our present earthly bodies.

Week -2- Many Gifts And One Aim

Objective:

- ❖ To be acquainted with my gifts (talents) and my duty.

References:

- ❖ The Gifts of the Church.

Memory Verse:

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Jews or Greeks, slaves or free and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Lesson Outline:

- ❖ Like The Body And Its Members

One day the members of the body felt that they are not satisfied with their work. They do the same work all the time; the feet walk; the eyes see, the ears hear, the arms and hands hold things. All the other members of the body have functions. They all decided not to work and each member wanted to find a different work to do. The leg said: I want to be a hand so that I may have a higher position. I was always low and I always walked on the ground.

The hand said: And I also no more desire to do what I am used to doing. I always hold things and put food into the mouth, and write the homework and letters. I work all the time and I need rest. The ear said: I like to be an eye. I prefer seeing to hearing. I do not desire to hear any more.

All the members of the body began to talk in this way. Each member desired to do another job.

But the hand could not walk and the leg could not write. The ear made an attempt to see and the eye tried to smell flowers and breathe the air, but each member could not perform the others member's function.

Each member realized that he has an important role to do and each member could not live without the help of the other members, so all the members performed their original functions once more and they were all happy with their work (Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26).

❖ **The Body Of Christ**

St. Paul says that we are all members of the one Body of Christ. When we were little children, the priest baptized us and we became members of the One Body of Christ, and each one of us received the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament of Confirmation.

We are then members in the church, which is the Body of Christ, and each member in the church attains certain gifts as there are several kinds of spiritual gifts and we receive these gifts from the Holy Spirit. These gifts are given to us to perform different services in the name of Christ. The Lord gives us special power to serve Him in the church and in the world. When anyone of us makes use of his gifts in his service, he gives evidence to show that the Holy Spirit exists in his life for the benefit of all people.

❖ **Using Gifts In The Church**

The church is responsible for announcing the attributes of Christ and bearing witness to Him by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is at work in the believers through the different gifts they have such as; driving out demons, healing the sick, teaching, caring for building up the Body of Christ and supporting the church to bear true witness to the Lord. These gifts and miraculous deeds do not depend on men's intelligence or his personal abilities, but they are gifts that express the grace of God, his power, his mercy and goodness. The Lord gives them, according to His will, to whom He desires to give so that His name be glorified in His church all the time.

❖ **Kinds Of Gifts**

When we read the epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:4-30), we find many kinds of gifts. These we shall discuss in brief and we shall refer to the function of each:

A. The gift of speaking God's message

This gift encloses the ability to speak in foreign tongues. Speaking in tongues was often accompanied by the gift of translation, which enabled the person to translate the message given to him by the Holy Spirit into other languages.

B. The gift of prophecy and the gift of teaching

These two gifts are concerned with teaching, explaining and elucidating the purpose of God and announcing his Divine sacraments, but these need inspiration and being acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct us for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15).

C. Gifts of administration

Under this title we have the gifts of administrating church affairs. These are given to patriarchs, bishops and priests. The gift of service is given to deacons who are the arms and eyes of bishops.

There are gifts that announce the glory of God to strengthen the believers and raise their spirit such as the gifts of driving out demons (performing miracles) and healing diseases.

St. Paul gathered all these gifts in these words “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit. To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gift of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these works that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will” (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).

❖ To Make Use Of The Gifts Is To Express Love

As all these gifts aim at our serving one another to build up the Body of Christ, these gifts, when they work in harmony, and through their conformity and connection, they play the role performed by the unity of the eye, the hand, the leg and the ear. In this the apostle says: “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplication, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:16).

So the different gifts by which we serve one another are an expression of love and “love” means that each one of us should use his gifts to serve others.

❖ Deviation In Using Gifts

Those who have gifts may be haughty. A believer who has attained a gift may become haughty and proud; this usually happens when man lives for himself and forgets that God has given him that gift not to glorify him but it is God alone that is to be glorified through his gifts. The Holy Spirit often gets the gift back from the haughty whose salvation in this case becomes very difficult unless he humbles himself and serves the believers with complete sincerity and contrition as the Lord Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and He did not pride Himself upon doing that although He is the Holy who deserves all glory and honor.

The second deviation lies in disorder and contradiction, as that who has the gift of teaching is not satisfied with it and desires to have the gift of administration and so on. St. Paul the apostle in his comment on these cases said: “If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body (Inferiority complex), “that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? (Desire for authority and looking down upon the gifts of others). But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a

single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body” (1 Corinthians 12:5-20).

Pessimism, laziness and lack of diligence are examples of these deviations. This happens to those whose talents are few who desire to appear or who envy those who have many talents, although the body has small organs and big organs, hidden organs and visible organs... St. Paul said: “God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part” (1 Corinthians 12:24).

❖ **What Should I Do With My Gifts?**

Each believer should be acquainted with his/her spiritual and personal gifts, which the Lord has granted him/her. So everyone should examine himself so as to define his activities with the help of his father of confession, his spiritual guides and the sincere believers who work with him. He has to thank God for what he has taken and acquired and he must not think of other people’s gifts or of imitating others. He has to thank the Lord and request Him to polish the gifts He has given him however few they are. He has also to make use of his gifts to serve the society and not to be selfish but “that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:35-27).

I know a gifted boy who tries to make use of his gift of drawing. He decided to draw a picture of the Lord Christ and the saints. When you look at the pictures he has drawn, you have deep feelings of reverence for the spiritual meanings that the picture reflects.

Another person who cannot draw but can write, asked his friends in the class to cooperate with him to do something for those boys and girls who keep away from the church. They issued a small magazine one every three months. They wrote about the spiritual blessings of the church and Sunday school. Some wrote essays, some printed them, and others distributed the magazines between the colleagues and friends. One of the girls could not cooperate in writing as she could neither write nor draw but she could play music well. She decided to make use of that gift and she brought her musical instrument and sang hymns and melodies on Sundays. She taught some pupils and after a short time, they formed a band that played and sang the church hymns.

❖ **Know your gifts and use them**

A young friend read the words of St. Paul the apostle about the spiritual gifts, then he asked: “I understood that each one of us has spiritual gifts, but I am not sure that I have any spiritual gifts. I go to Sunday school, but I do not participate in the activities of the boys and girls. I can neither draw nor write. I know nothing about music either. Sometimes I hate myself when I feel that I cannot benefit others.”

You can answer that young friend saying, “Well, my friend, I will try to help you. You will be surprised to know that the things you can do are more than the things your colleagues do. You love your friends and your friends love you. Your decent way of dealing with them helps you to solve the problems that may arouse among them. You give them a good example of Christian life and they try to follow your example. Don’t you know that meekness and love are the most important spiritual gifts? And that we, through love can bring the whole world to Christ? And that when each of us makes use of his individual gifts for serving people, he expresses his love for them in a practical way?

We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us in proportion to our faith: one gives aid with zeal, one does acts of mercy with cheerfulness, etc. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good, and love one another with brotherly affection (Romans 12:6-10).

Questions:

- ❖ What is the function of the gifts in the church, and why is the church called the Body of Christ?
- ❖ What are the different kinds of gifts? Make use of chapter 12 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians and count these gifts.
- ❖ What distinguishes the use of gifts in the church by the holy children of God?
- ❖ How are gifts wrongly made use of?
- ❖ What is my duty towards my gifts? How can I know my gifts?

Applications:

- ❖ I have to know the gifts I possess, thank God for them, and use them honestly to glorify God through my service to others.

Week -3- St. Stephen

Objective:

- ❖ Honoring saints and praising their firm stand in faith.

Memory Verse:

“If we live, we live to the Lord and if we die we die to the Lord” (Romans 14:8)

References:

- ❖ Acts 7:54-60

Introduction:

- ❖ Who was the first martyr in the church?
- ❖ Who knows the meaning of the name “Stephen”.
- ❖ Write it down in your notebook.

Lesson Outline:

The Christian faith spread on the hands of the apostles whom Christ sent. The Christians continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They needed men to devote themselves for the service of widows, orphans and the poor. They chose seven deacons who were known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Stephen was among them. He served the poor and the needy and distributed gifts and alms among them. He also preached in the church and convinced the non-Christians...and the number of believers increased.

- ❖ Who is Stephen?
- ❖ What does the word “deacon” mean?
- ❖ How do Christians live?

One day, a large crowd of Jews gathered and discussed religious matters with Stephen. He answered them quoting texts from the Scriptures. He explained that Christ was the only Savior through whom we can enter heaven. His words did not appeal to them. They took him to the synagogue and prosecuted him.

Jews: What is your name?

Stephen: I am Christian.

Jews: Don't mention that name.

Stephen: I love Christ.

Jews: We will kill you.

Stephen: I do not fear death...if we live we live to the Lord...

Jews: We crucified Christ...

Stephen: You crucified Him and He was buried. He stayed in the grave for three days but then He rose and ascended to heaven and I am going to Him.

- ❖ Who answered him?
- ❖ What will you say if anyone asks you about your Christian religion?
- ❖ Let us repeat together: If we live we live to the Lord...
- ❖ Who can repeat the verse?

The Jews were angry with him because he told the truth. They wanted to kill him so they accused him of blaspheming against God and Moses. They rushed at him, dragged him in the streets and when they were out of the city the men stopped and stripped him of his clothes. The witnesses left their cloaks in charge of a young man named Saul who approved of his murder. They dug a hole in the ground, threw him in it, picked big stones and threw them at Stephen's head, legs, back, chest and arms. His body was broken. He fell to the ground. The Lord strengthened him. He knelt down and prayed lifting his eyes up to heaven and saw the heavens open and saw Jesus surrounded by angels in great glory and a host of angels dressed in white and shining with bright light. They were coming down saying "Holy, Holy, Holy". Stephen rejoiced on seeing the vision. One of the angels was holding a crown. The people stood in great surprise because Stephen was happy in spite of the stones thrown at him. They asked one another: Why does Stephen look at heaven. What does he see? They threw the stones at his head. The stones were thrown at him but he was happy.

He said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God". They threw the stones at his mouth to prevent him from speaking. Stephen said, "Lord do not hold this sin against them". Stephen could see demons keeping away from him as they could not draw near him. The angels were driving them away. His face shone as the face of an angel, then he fell asleep.

- ❖ Who taught Stephen to forgive those who stoned him?
- ❖ Can you forgive a child who has called you bad names... beats you without reason...or vexes you while you play?
- ❖ Let us repeat the verse together: If we live we live to the Lord...

Conclusion:

- ❖ Show the spirit of love and forgiveness that Stephen showed towards those who stoned him.

Applications:

- ❖ If a person asks you about your religion say: I am Christian.
- ❖ If anyone insults you say, “May the Lord forgive you”.
- ❖ Read Revelation 21 (New Testament).

- ❖ Advise the children not to be afraid of non-Christians when they ask them about their religion.
- ❖ You can use the picture of angels or the wing of an angel to connect martyrdom with heaven.
- ❖ You encourage the young deacons to perform their service in the best way and ask them to attend the hymn lesson and to participate in the service.

Week -4- Nehemiah the Zealot (I)

Objective:

- ❖ Developing the feeling of the holy zeal for the Service.

References:

- ❖ The Book of Nehemiah.
- ❖ Nehemiah / Translated by Fr. Marcos Daoud.

Memory Verse:

“Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer disgrace”
(Nehemiah 2:17).

Lesson Outline:

- ❖ The Suffering Of The People In Exile
 - The people of Israel were in great trouble and shame, the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and its gates were destroyed by fire.
 - When Nehemiah heard this news, he sat down, wept, and mourned for days and he continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.
 - □□ “O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer” (Nehemiah 1:11).
 - (Notice his courage facing troubles of his brethren in spite of his great post and notice also that he resorted to the weapon of prayer and not to the earthy weapons).

- ❖ The Meeting with The King

Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchers, lies waste, and its gates have been destroyed by fire? “For what do you make request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven... “If it pleases the king... send me to Judah, to the city of my father's sepulchers, that I may rebuild it.” The king approved his request and supplied him with letters and timber. (Notice that Nehemiah prayed before he spoke to the King).

- ❖ Grievous Conditions

- When Sanballat, the Horonite and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

- (The minister must face troubles and meet with stubborn people inside the church. Remember the troubles that the Jews aroused in the face of the apostle.)
 - He did not fall into despair in spite of the sad conditions outside (the buildings and the walls) and the sad conditions inside (hearts and people).
 - He took courage and said to them: “Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer disgrace,” and they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work. (Notice that when a man is enthusiastic, jealous and faithful, his followers increase in number).
 - He had trust in God who granted him success when he rose to build. (It is God that grants success. We have to work as hard as we can in our life, in our studies and in the spiritual, ecclesiastical, social and national domains without despair).
 - Contemplate how the enemies resisted Nehemiah and how he stood firm in faith and how he carried out his message bravely (Chapter 4).
- ❖ Facing The Situation
- Do not fear those who resist you.
 - We prayed to our God and sat guards against the enemies day and night.
 - They worked with one hand and carried weapons with the other hand. (These are the attitudes of the children of God. They divide their time between studying and prayers. The Lord heard the prayer and blesses the work.)

Applications:

- ❖ Try to imagine the broken walls of Jerusalem and draw them after Nehemiah started building them.
- ❖ Draw the people who were building the walls: half of them were building and the other half were kept on guard against the enemies.
- ❖ Together with your teacher, make a study of the troubles that faced the following saints and how they overcame them: (1) Paul the apostle. (2) Athanasius the apostolic (3) St. Anthony the Great.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Learn zeal and sincerity to the church.
- ❖ Do not be afraid of troubles and take opposition into consideration.
- ❖ Stand firm in the face of these troubles by prayers and positive work not by disputes division and passive attitude.

Week -5- Nehemiah The Zealot (II)

Objective:

- ❖ Developing the positive attitude towards facing the problems of life.

References:

- ❖ The Book of Nehemiah.
- ❖ Nehemiah / Translated by Fr Marcos Daoud.

Memory Verse:

“For the joy of the Lord is your strength “ (Nehemiah 8: 10).

Introduction:

God did not give us the Spirit of failure but He gave us the spirit of love, power, endurance, patience and guidance.

Lesson Outline:

❖ **Positiveness In Work**

“So it was, from that time on, that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor; and the leaders were behind all the house of Judah. Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon. Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me (Nehemiah 4:16-18). (Notice the persistence and insistence and hard work, which lead to success).

❖ **Rejecting Luxury, Selfishness And Exploiting The Post**

“Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor's provisions” (Nehemiah 5:14). (A model of leadership and shouldering responsibility that should be followed. and not exploiting the post for private interests).

❖ **Plots Against Nehemiah**

- Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem put their heads together and plotted to destroy the great work.
- Nehemiah refused to negotiate with them saying, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?”

- They all wanted to frighten us thinking, “Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands” (Nehemiah 6:9).
 - Should such a man as I flee? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not gain. (A model of true manhood. Manhood does not mean imitating those indifferent corrupt young men but it means determination and holding-fast to principles).
 - He prayed for his enemy. This is the spirit of the Children of God.
 - When the wall had been rebuilt I appointed an honest man who feared God to be in charge of it. (This is the spirit of responsibility. The best man in administration should be chosen).
- ❖ **Prayer, Repentance And Humiliation For The Dedication Of The City Wall**
- Read chapters 9 and 10 and you will find an excellent model of public repentance.
 - On dedicating the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites carried cymbals and harps. The priests and the Levites performed ritual purification for themselves, the people, the gates and the city wall. They offered many sacrifices to the Lord and rejoiced because the Lord made them happy.
 - How happy we are when we achieve spiritual and social success. The psalm says: “May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.”
 - He wanted them to keep away of foreign women and asked them to take Solomon as example of a man whom the foreign women led him to sin.

Applications:

- ❖ Make a wall Chart or write an essay about the virtues and aspects of heroism, which you admire in the life of Nehemiah.
- ❖ Nehemiah was a spiritual leader and an excellent administrator. Give examples to show this.

LESSONS FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST

Week 1- What Can I Do Now?

Week 2- Anger

Week 3- How to Choose My Friends

Week 4- Success in the Christian Concept

Week -1- What Can I Do Now?

Objective:

- ❖ How to practice almsgiving practically at the individual and group levels

Memory Verse:

“Little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18)

References:

- ❖ “The Garden of the Soul” Anba Youannis
- ❖ “The Garden of the Monks”

Introduction:

❖ **Christianity is a Practical Life**

James the apostle says: “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit” (James 2:14-16).

In his first Epistle St. John says, “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:17,18).

Lord Jesus Himself not only gave us commandments about mercy, love and kindness but He also gave us His Body. He gave “Himself” to us as a model to follow His steps. He came down from heaven to become man like us in everything except sin only. He lived as a poor man and worked as a carpenter in Joseph’s house. He visited the poor in their homes. He also entered the houses of sinners and tax collectors. He shared the household of Lazarus with His heart and tears and He shared in the wedding at Cana of Galilee with His love and rejoicing. In this way He gave us a model for practical participation.

Lesson Outline:

❖ **Typical Life Examples**

The following are examples of the people’s problems. We should do something to help those people:

The Orphan: A little boy who lost one of his parents or both of them and he had nobody to support him. He lost the kindness of the mother and the parents’ care so he became needy, vagrant and deviant.

The Widow: A woman whose husband died so she and her children are without

means of support and her responsibility towards her children and her duty to bring them up make her unable to work to support her children.

Unemployment: A young man who is able to work but he does not find a job to help him support himself and his family. He may have a profession or experience but he does not have the money needed for a simple project.

Poverty: A worker whose resources are very few and whose wage is very low and limited and the demands of life are pressing, had to borrow money and the creditors ask for their money back. He dwells in an unsuitable house and his children suffer from malnutrition because of lack of food. He was forced to find work for his children at an early age, so he deprived them of being sent to school.

Addiction: A family supporter who spends a large portion of his limited income on drinking wine, smoking or tea or any other things and what remains does not suffice the necessities of life. His health is dangerously affected and the family atmosphere and home happiness are corrupted.

❖ **Some Domains in which we can Serve Lord Christ**

1. Visiting orphanages and charity institutions to study their spiritual needs and material needs and showing them spiritual and cultural films, making Agapi (love) parties there, and giving children some religious and scientific books.
2. Visiting the widows and the disabled and giving them help and care, caring for old people and the aged ones who have nobody to support them and sending them to institutions.
3. Visiting a family that suffers a severe shock or that is in grief and sorrow, and sitting with those in grief to soften their suffering by reading them texts from the Holy bible.
4. Visiting those in prison after getting permission and offering the prisoners some pamphlets and spiritual guidance and encouraging them to repent and endure affliction if they are not guilty.
5. Giving help to the poor and the unemployed by possibly setting up small projects to support themselves.
6. Finding a dwelling place for sojourners and looking for some sort of make agreements with social and national institutions to make an integrated plan for offering services.
7. Visiting patients in hospitals and comforting them by showing the feelings of love and raising prayers for them.

❖ **Examples of Things Offered in the Previous Domains**

Materials: money -food -sweets -presents -clothes -covering.

Cultural: Holy books -religious and cultural books -magazines -pictures.

Abstracts: Visits -reconciliation -sharing occasions.

Spiritual: prayers -gospel -religious pictures -public masses -visits and individual work.

❖ **Instructions in Social Service**

1. Respect the poor man's feelings and dignity. Do not hurt him by any word but at the same time be on your guard so that you may not be a prey for swindlers. Therefore, a social worker should study each case.
2. Concentrate on prayers and reading the Bible during your visits.
3. Draw the poor people's attention to the Lord Jesus, as He is the source of every good gift and do not tie them to yourself.
4. Try to find a suitable job for each unemployed man for alms may drive people to laziness.

❖ **A Problem and its Solution**

We do not have enough money to meet the needs of the poor and our pocket money is limited. This problem faced the disciples when the Lord Jesus asked them to give food to the multitude and they said to Him. "We do not have enough food". We have to believe that He who blessed the little and filled five thousand people, with five loaves can bless our little money and our gifts and the more we pray and show zeal the more the Lord gives us. Then comes the story of the poor widow who dropped two coins in the treasury chest out of her want and the Lord praised her saying: "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had" (Luke 21:1-4). This emphasizes that the limited potentialities did not hinder the woman to excel over the rich when she gave out of her want. The spirit and the way of almsgiving are more important than its amount. So we have to offer the little that we have and we have to ask loving people to participate in the projects we make for the poor.

Conclusion:

As Christians we show our faith through our acts. We are sensitive to the needs and pains of others. We show them love and mercy as the Lord loves us and is always merciful to us.

Applications:

- ❖ Practical practice of some of the above mentioned domains of service.
- ❖ Memorize verse: 1 John 3:17

Week -2- Anger

Meditation or Prayer:

May the Lord give us the Holy anger and help us control the destructive anger.

Objective:

- ❖ To understand the reasons, roots, and masks of anger.
- ❖ To know the types of anger.
- ❖ To be able to control and handle our anger.

References:

- ❖ Exodus 32:19-20, Nehemiah 5:6, Ephesians 4:26-32, Ecclesiastes 7:9, Proverbs 19:11, Mark 11:15-16
- ❖ An article in “the power of the word” magazine by Joyce Meyer

Memory Verse:

“Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry for anger rests in the bosom of fools”
(Ecclesiastes 7:9).

Introduction:

Everybody has to deal with anger from time to time. But what is the best way to handle it? To answer that question, we first must understand what anger really is. Anger is an emotion often characterized by feelings of great displeasure, indignation, hostility, wrath, and vengeance. Many times, anger is how we express our dissatisfaction with life. It is defined in the Greek language as the strongest of all passions. Anger begins with a feeling that often is expressed in words or actions. We feel something, and it causes us to say or do something

Lesson Outline:

❖ Get To The Root Of The Problem

Anger is the fruit of decayed roots. One of the primary roots of anger probably stems from the family. Angry people come from angry families because they learn from their role models and perpetuate the same behavior in their own lives, eventually passing it on to their children.

❖ Other Roots Of Anger

Injustice—When people mistreat us and we feel there is nothing we can do about it, we get angry because we feel it isn't fair. As much as we would like to change the

situation or the person who is treating us badly, we can't. People can't change people—only God can change people. So it's best to put your energy into praying for the offender.

Strife—which is hidden, repressed anger begins with judgment or gossip, backbiting, and thinking too highly of one's self. Strife is often exhibited in arguing, bickering, heated disagreements, and angry undercurrents.

Impatience—often produces anger when we can't get what we want when we want it. When others impede our progress or slow us down, it is easy to become impatient. Most of us struggle with impatience on a daily basis simply because of today's fast-paced world.

Abuse of any kind—sexual, physical, verbal, emotional, or mental—almost always leads to anger. All of these abuses are injustices, and injustice eventually leaves the abused feeling helpless and angry. Abuse of this kind cannot be ignored. You must deal with it and process it before you can get rid of it.

Unmet needs—can also produce anger. We all have needs that can and should be met by those closest to us. However, others cannot know and understand our needs unless we communicate with them. But even then they may sometimes fail to meet our needs. So the answer is to go to God with your needs and quit looking to other people.

Jealousy—Anger caused by jealousy was one of the first negative emotions mentioned in the Bible. Genesis 4 tells us that Cain killed his brother Abel because he was jealous to the point of being angry. This is one of the more extreme results of jealousy, but it serves to remind us of how dangerous jealousy can be.

Many people are afraid that someone else may get ahead of them. They think their importance in the world depends on their job or their position in the church. Jealousy causes them to try to be important in the eyes of man. If you have this problem, understand that God has you where you are now for a reason. He knows what is in your future, and He may have you in training for it right now. There is a big difference between being able and being ready to do a specific thing. So don't despise the days of small beginnings. Remember that we must answer to God. Our rewards come from obeying the specific callings He has placed on our lives—not from the great things we manage to accomplish as far as the world is concerned.

Other roots that lead to anger include insecurity, fear of confrontation, and a feeling of being controlled by a job or other people and their problems. I used to get mad at people who controlled me until God told me one day, "You are just as guilty as they are because you're letting them do it." We must not put excessive pressure on ourselves by making too many commitments just because we don't want to say no to someone.

❖ **Masks of Anger**

- Sometimes we use masks to cover up something that we don't want anybody to see. If we are harboring anger, we think masking it will keep others from knowing the real us. So we hide behind a variety of masks in an attempt to trick people into thinking we're something or someone that we're not.
- People respect you more if you share your real self with them than if you try to hide everything and act like you've got it all together. After all, people can tell when something is not right. You may think you're hiding your anger, but it

will eventually find a way to come out—either in voice tone, body language, or attitudes.

- Some people use the cold shoulder mask. When someone makes them angry, they may say they have forgiven them—but they become cold and show no warmth or emotion in dealing with that individual. These people live a lonely existence, because they are so afraid of being hurt that they avoid any close and meaningful relationship. This is a classic example of “choosing your pain.” This kind of person chooses the pain of living an isolated, lonely life instead of working through the problem and determining to develop good friendships.
- Other people like to use the silent treatment mask. These are the folks who say they’re not angry with you, yet they refuse to talk to you, or they communicate only when it is absolutely necessary usually with a grunt or nod. When people avoid being with, touching, or doing things for the individual they’re angry at, they’re hiding behind a mask. But this is not the answer.

❖ **Face The Truth...And Choose Your Pain**

- If you want the great and mighty things God has for you, you must get to the root of anger and deal with it. You must get rid of the masks and face the things that happened in your life to make you the way you are today. Admit that you can’t change by yourself.
- Until the root is dealt with and removed, it will continue to produce one kind of bad fruit after another. Too often we spend our lives dealing with the bad fruit in our behavior, but we never dig deep enough to get to the root of the problem. Actually when we’re faced with anger, we must choose our pain. Digging deep to take care of the bad root is painful, but it is the only lasting way to take care of the problem.
- We can either suffer positively, (doing what is right), or we can go with the devil’s plan. But remember, the same devil that tempts you to follow your human feelings will later condemn you for doing it. You must decide if you want the pain that will take you into a new realm of glory, or if you’re going to keep your same old pain, trying to hide it while it’s rotting on the inside of you.
- Peter tells us to be well balanced and temperate, withstanding the devil at his onset (1 Peter 5:8,9). When you begin to feel anger, it’s the perfect time to exercise the fruit of self-control. You may have good reason to be angry, but you must not use it as an excuse to stay that way. Instead of denying or justifying it, ask God to help you deal with it in a positive way.
- Romans 12:21 gives this good advice: Do not let yourself be overcome by evil, but overcome (master) evil with good. When Satan attacks you, instead of getting mad, go bless someone. Responding in a positive way is the direct opposite of what the enemy had planned, and it defeats his plan to keep you upset. It doesn’t come naturally, and it isn’t always easy, but “when we do what we can do, God will do what we can’t do. Do not be quick in spirit to be angry or vexed, for anger and vexation lodge in the bosom of fools” (Ecclesiastes 7:9). If we hang onto anger, we’re just being foolish. We must

turn the anger—and the people who caused it—over to God and let Him take care of it. “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay (requite), says the Lord” (Romans 12:19). Trust God and He will take care of you and protect you. You can’t change your past, but when you give it to God, He will use it to bring you a better future.

❖ **Is Anger a Sin?**

Is all anger sin? No, but some of it is. Even God Himself has righteous anger—anger against sin, injustice, rebellion, and pettiness. Anger sometimes serves a useful purpose, so it isn’t necessarily always a sin. Obviously we are going to have adverse feelings or God would not have needed to provide the fruit of self-control. Just being tempted to do something is not sin—it’s when you don’t resist the temptation but go ahead and do it that it becomes sin.

God sometimes allows us to feel angry so we can recognize when we are being mistreated. But even when we experience true injustices in our lives, we must not vent our anger in an improper way. We must guard against allowing anger to drag us into sin.

Ephesians 4:26,27 tells us, “When angry do not sin; do not ever let your wrath (your exasperation, your fury or indignation) last until the sun goes down. Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil [give no opportunity to him]. Refuse to give the devil an opportunity to get a foothold in your life through anger”.

All anger—regardless of its cause—has the same effect on our lives. It upsets us, causing us to feel pressure. Keeping anger locked inside and pretending it doesn’t exist can even be dangerous to our health. It usually doesn’t bother the person who makes us angry—it just hurts us. So we must take responsibility for our anger and learn to deal with it. Process it and bring closure to it, and that will relieve the pressure.

I have been through some rough times in my life, and for many years those experiences caused me to feel miserable. I was so mad about the abuse in my childhood that it was making me bitter and hateful. I was angry with everybody, but one day God confronted me and said, “Are you going to let that make you bitter or better?” That got my attention, and I eventually had to find a positive way to process my anger. That was a place of new beginnings for me.

When you face your anger and decide to deal with it God’s way you can overcome it. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to be stable and to walk in the fruit of the Spirit. We have the power to forgive those who do injustices in our lives and to love the unlovely.

❖ **Take Steps Toward Freedom**

People are born to be free—it is a gift from God. We are not to be free from responsibility but we are free to be led by the Holy Spirit. Any time our freedom is taken away or given away, we experience anger.

Are you willing to go through whatever it takes to get free...or do you want to stay in the mess you’re in for the rest of your life? If you want to be free, just start doing what God wants you to do—one step at a time—and you will eventually walk out of your messes.

When we battle anger, we must realize that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12). When Satan makes you angry, remember that he's trying to keep you from accomplishing the will of God in your life.

St. Paul advised his disciple Timothy to "be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). This is a good advice for all of us. When we get angry, we should calm down and start doing what God has called us to do.

Applications:

- ❖ Flee from all situations that trigger your anger for the next week.
- ❖ Try to develop strategies to control your anger.

Conclusion:

You can be bitter or better - it's up to you! If you're mad about something, instead of letting it ruin your life, turn it into something good. Overcome evil - and anger - by praying for those who hurt and abuse you. Forgive them and be a blessing to them. It may not be easy at first, but when you make the decision and stick with it, God will take care of the rest.

Week -3- How to Choose My Friends?

Objective:

- ❖ Bad company corrupts good manners. Showing the necessity of bearing witness to Christ in social life.

Memory Verse:

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17)

References:

- ❖ “How to Win Friends and Influence People” by Dell Carnegie
- ❖ “The Story of David and Jonathan” 1 Samuel 18:1-4 and 23:15-18

Introduction:

- ❖ Who is a friend and what are the characteristics of a good friend?
- ❖ A friend differs from a colleague.
- ❖ A colleague is merely a companion at work or in the scientific domain.
- ❖ A true friend is that whom you trust and love in purity, sincerity and internal relief.

Lesson Outline:

- ❖ **How Important is Friendship to Man?**
 - Man was created as a social being in need of another person whom he trusts.
 - Friendship is a domain for achieving true Christian love that is devoid of Unitarianism, personal interests, selfishness and misunderstanding.
 - It is a domain for cooperation in school life, social life and overcoming the problems of everyday life (e.g. David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 18-23).
- ❖ **The Christian Behavior of Friends**
 - What you want him to do to you, do it to him.
 - Do not concentrate on your personal benefits and interests as this attitude is against Christian love.
 - Show respect to him and do not speak about weaknesses but endure them as God endures our weaknesses.
 - Share with him his happy occasions and his sufferings and sorrows (Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep).
 - Do not say your confessions to him as confessions should be said to the father of confession only. But general topics are liable to discussions, dialogues and frankness.

❖ **Whom Should I Choose as a Friend?**

- Those with whom you feel spiritual, psychological, social and mental comfort or relief.
- Those who are NOT indifferent or whose character is bad whose mouths are full of repulsive words, sexual jokes and impure words.
- The family must give agreement to that friendship so that your friendship with them should be within the frame of the family friendship so that all your movements would be in light not in darkness.

❖ **How to Win Others?**

- Show care to them.
- Smile when you see them.
- Be a good listener and give people a chance to talk about themselves.
- Show respect and appreciation to others.
- Talk in things that interest others.

Conclusion:

- ❖ You can win others to Christ by showing them the same love and care as Jesus Christ our Lord showed to you.

Applications:

- ❖ Examine if your friends are good friends and will strengthen your spiritual growth or not.
- ❖ Show love and care to your friends.

Week -4- Success in the Christian Concept

Objective:

- ❖ To learn that spiritual success should be our main goal in life.
- ❖ To understand that any worldly success is granted from God.

Memory Verse:

“The Lord was with Joseph and he was a successful man” (Genesis 39:2)

References:

- ❖ The story of Joseph in Genesis 39: 1-6, 19-23, 41:37-43

Introduction:

The youth period is the peak of human ambition and dreams of a prosperous future. The youth would usually have dreams of being very successful in different forms and aspects of life. Some of them may desire to be very rich, others may want to be very famous or they may have very high academic ambitions of being always the top of the class and having a PhD in the shortest time possible ...etc.

The servant may start the lesson by giving every student a chance to express what would he/she like to do for his/her career.

Lesson Outline:

❖ Spiritual Versus Earthly Success

The story of Joseph is a great example in the Bible that demonstrates the spiritually successful man whom whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper. Joseph was at the top of his spiritual success when he resisted the temptation of his master's wife. However, his reward at that time was to be put in prison. If you think about it, a prisoner would probably not fit the earthly understanding of success. However, that was a great success for Joseph in the eyes of the Lord. Joseph was actually being tested in different hardships and tribulations:

- His brothers were envious of him so they through him in a well.
- He was taken to a foreign land where he was sold as a slave.
- He was tempted by his master's wife
- He was thrown into prison
- The chief butler forgot him after interpreting his dream of restoring his position again in pharaoh's palace (Genesis 40:21-22).

In all these hardships, Joseph held strong to his faith and his purity although he was young and alone in a foreign land.

❖ **The Reward Of Spiritual Success**

Joseph did not ask the Lord for earthly success or seek any high ranks or position in Pharaoh's palace. All what he probably looked for is to be safe in Egypt until he can return back to his father's house. Yet, because he clinked to the Lord during the harsh testing of his spiritual strength, God blessed him with many blessing that he became the second man in Egypt after Pharaoh (Genesis 41:39-43) and he ruled over all the Egyptians. This support what our Lord Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Job is another good example of a spiritually successful man through the severe testing by Satan and he was finally rewarded a multiple times on earth.

Does this mean that every earthly success is the reward of spiritual success and every spiritual success results in earthly success? The answer is NO.

There are many successful men whom do not even know God or believe in Him. Their success is pure earthly success, which may or may not lead them to eternal life. On the other hand, there are many spiritually successful characters who lead a miserable life e.g. the parable of the rich and Lazarus; Lazarus suffered on earth yet he was in the Bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in heaven while the rich man was tortured in hell. Other examples are Anba Rewiss and Anba Paul...etc.

❖ **The Secret Of Joseph's Success**

Since Joseph was such a successful man and probably all of us would like to be like him, then we must ask what was the secret of Joseph's success?

The secret is that God was with him. This is actually repeated multiple times in the story of Joseph (Genesis 39:2,3,21,23 and 41:16,38) to emphasize and confirm the fact that the sole reason for Joseph's success was the presence of God with Joseph and the spirit of God in Joseph. Joseph also in return always felt the presence of God with him; therefore he refused to sin with his master's wife.

Conclusion:

The Christian youth should seek first spiritual success with no compromise for the sake of earthly success or worldly achievement. They should place their career and life in the hand of the Lord who will grant them success according to His will.

Applications:

- ❖ Start with a prayer or Bible reading before studying everyday.
- ❖ Develop the habit of giving the tithes at an early age even from part-time