



My Church

Grade 7-8

Spirit & Life



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HIS HOLINESS POPE TAWADROS II



**118TH POPE OF ALEXANDRIA AND
PATRIARCH OF THE SEE OF SAINT MARK**



Spirit and Life

| | | Page | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------|--|
| | St. Mark's Festival Anthem- Spirit and Life | 2 | |
| Table of Contents | My Church...Spirit and Life | 3 | |
| | Study of the Book of Acts | 7 | |
| | My Church, A Beacon of Light | 16 | |
| | The Sacrament of Baptism | 20 | |
| | Atheism | 25 | |
| | Daniel the Prophet | 30 | |
| | God Gave You a Talent | 33 | |
| | Memorization | 35 | |
| | Coptic | 37 | |
| | Hymns & Rituals | 43 | |
| | | | |

Visit the St. Mark Festival's website at www.smfsus.org
to find the material for the festival and
for guidelines and information on the tests

Spirit and Life



St. Mark's Festival 2020 Anthem

My precious Church

Heaven on earth

A fortress in the world

A refuge for all. (x2)

Since Adam humanity's fallen

Separated from our calling

But Christ came, died and rose

And through Him we were restored. (x2)

My Church you are my strength

Treasury of heavenly wealth

(Sound doctrine, living rites

Leading us to the light) (x2)

House of God, a fruitful vine

My Church, spirit and life (x3)

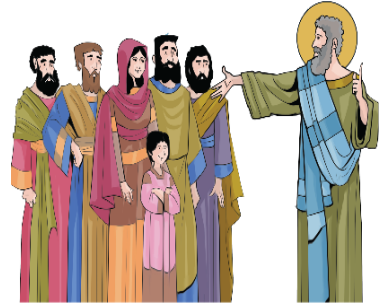
My Church... Spirit and Life

My Church

1- The Coptic Church:

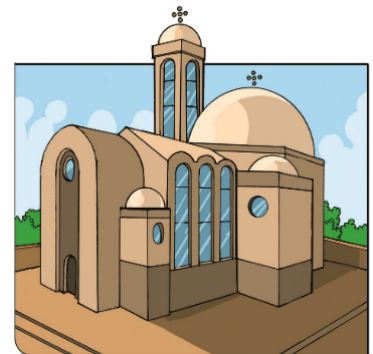
- The Church of saints and martyrs.
- The Church of theologians like, St. Athanasius, St. Dioscorus, and St. Cyril.
- The Church of monks like, St. Anthony, St. Macarius, St. Shenoute, and St. Pachom.
- The Church of martyrs. The Church offered many martyrs throughout the ages and until this day.
- The Church of evangelists. They preached the faith in many parts of the world, like St. Maurice and St. Verena who preached in Europe. The faith continues to spread through Copts all over the world.

We are one Church in rites, doctrine and history.



2- Orthodox:

- In the Liturgy we pray for **“the peace of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic orthodox Church of God.”**
 - It is one Church as God established it from the beginning, the one body of Christ.
 - It is holy because it is sanctified by the Holy Spirit living and working in its members.
 - It is universal – of all nations, peoples, tribes, and tongues. He **“desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4)**
 - It is apostolic built on the teachings of the apostles.
 - It is orthodox in doctrine and faith; we, her children, are living it in our daily lives.
 - It belongs to God who redeemed the Church.
-



3- The Church is the body of Christ

 comprised of the congregation of those who believe in Him, gathered together around the Holy Body and Blood of the Lord on the altar.

- The Eucharist is the foundation of the Church; the Holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ her bridegroom.
- When we partake of the Eucharist, we receive many blessings.



4- Blessings of Eucharist:

- **Abiding in Christ:**

“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” (John 6:56) We become strong by the grace of God when we partake of the Holy Eucharist and defeat the wicked one.



- **Uniting with the heavenly:**

Angels and Saints are present with us during the liturgy and they intercede for us. We are all members in the body of Christ, the Church.



- **Uniting with each other:**

“For we, though many, are one bread and one body: for we all partake of that one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17)

- **Receiving forgiveness:**

If we offer true repentance and confess our sins the Lord Jesus Christ will forgive our sins. “Given for us for salvation, remission of sins, and eternal life to those who partake of Him.”
Confession – Liturgy of the Faithful

- **Receiving salvation:**

We not only receive forgiveness but also salvation from the slavery of sin.

- **Eternal life:**

“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”(John 6:54)

- **Proclaiming the faith:**

When we eat the Body of Christ and drink of the cup, we proclaim the Lord’s Death and Resurrection until He comes. This is our mission!



My Church is Spirit:

Our human spirit is the element that relates us to God. It is how we believe in God.

The Holy Spirit of God is not the same as the human spirit, but He works in us through it.

The body submits to the human spirit that submits to the Holy Spirit.

1- The work of the Holy Spirit in the Church:

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14)

- The Holy Spirit descended on the disciples on the day of **Pentecost** after the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the Church was established, and they preached Christianity all over the world and built churches.
- **The work of the Holy Spirit in the Church Sacraments:**
The Sacraments give us an unseen grace by the work of the Holy Spirit in seen matter.



- a. **Baptism:** It is a second birth by immersion in water three times in the name of the Holy Trinity. It is the door of all the Sacraments for without it, we are not able to partake of the other Sacraments. “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5)
- b. **Chrismation (Confirmation):** We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 36 anointings for our sanctification. “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.” (1 John 2:20)
- c. **Eucharist:** We partake of the Holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and abide in Him and Him in us.
- d. **Repentance and Confession:** A reconciliation with God when a sinner returns to Him and confesses their sins in front of the priest. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)
- e. **Unction of the sick:** The priest anoints the sick and prays to God for the healing of their spiritual and physical sicknesses. “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” (James 5:14-15)
- f. **Matrimony:** God created marriage since Adam and Eve and blessing marriage by attending the wedding in Cana of Galilee. “And the two shall become one flesh. So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matthew 19:5-6)
- g. **Priesthood:** The Holy Spirit descends on the new priest by the laying of the hand of the bishop and gives him the gifts of priesthood. “He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:22)

Our spiritual life and service to others is the reflection of our membership in the body of Christ (the Church) and the work of the Holy Spirit in us in our daily life.

My Church is Life:

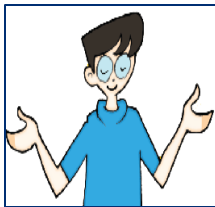
1- Personal life:

The Church arranged for us means by which we can grow spiritually within the Church.

a. **Confession:** Confession should be regular and honest paired with true repentance and obedience of the instructions of the priest, with complete faith that the Spirit of God is working in the Sacrament.

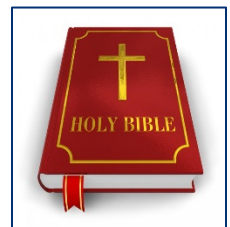


b. **Prayer:** It is our relationship with God through which we are fed spiritually. We have:



- The Divine Liturgy, the peak of all prayers.
- The Agpeya prayers that provide us prayers for every feeling.
- The Jesus Prayer: **“My Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner”**.
- Our own prayers where we can talk freely with God about anything.

c. **The Holy Bible:** The food to our spirits that gives us joy and guides our paths. **“For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light.” (Proverbs 6:23)**



d. **Spiritual gatherings:**

We meet as a congregation to pray and praise God and grow spiritually.

e. **Fasting and asceticism:**

To control the body in order for the spirit to soar.

2- Serving others:

- Leadership and teaching
- Acts of mercy, such as visiting the sick and giving to the poor
- Acts of love and having good relationships with others
- Acts of worship, such as praying for others, etc.



By serving our communities, we become witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants us to be the light of the world and salt to the earth. Service helps us grow and benefits others in our families, church, and communities. **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)**

Study of the Book of Acts

Acts Chapters 1-12

The Book of Acts of the Apostles presents the acts of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, promised by the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples. St. Luke the Evangelist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, presented it to reveal to us the Church in the apostolic era.

It is the Gospel of the Holy Spirit who granted the Church the grace of existence on the day of Pentecost and received the Church of Christ to lead her. St. Luke presented to us the story of how our Church started. Although it is an old story, it will always remain new.

The Book does not end with the word Amen, signifying that the Church continues and is growing until the end of days.

(Acts 1 to 2) - Preparation to set the Church
(Acts 3 to 7) - Testifying in Jerusalem
(Acts 8 to 9) - Testifying in Judea and Samaria
(Acts 10 to 28) - Preaching to the ends of the Earth

Chapter 1

St. Luke the Evangelist presented a living portrait of the preparations for the birth of the Church of the New Testament, through the sermons of the Lord Jesus Christ who rose from the dead, to His twelve disciples, about the kingdom of God. He promises them that they would gain power from the Highest to reach all the nations and preach the living faith.

For the Holy Spirit to work within us, we need to follow the Apostles example and:

- Stay within the Church, just as the Apostles obeyed the Lord Jesus Christ and stayed in Jerusalem
- Continue in prayers and supplication
- Be with one accord

This chapter clarifies the practical preparation of the birth of the Church on the day of the Pentecost, as a Church led by the Holy Spirit.

- Drawing the disciples toward the Kingdom (Verses 1-3)
- The promise of a Divine Leader (Verses 4-8)
- The ascension of the Lord to Heaven (Verses 9-14)
- Matthias chosen in place of Judas (Verses 15- 26)

Chapter 2

Presenting an amazing scene of the birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples were baptized by the Holy Spirit.

- A Collective Encounter (Verse 1)
- Dwelling of the Holy Spirit (Verses 2-4)
- The Reaction of the Foreign Visitors in Jerusalem (Verses 5-13)
- St. Peter's Sermon (Verses 14-36)
- The Appealing Power of the Holy Spirit (Verses 37-41)
- A Spiritually Rejoicing Church (Verses 42-46)
- A Fertile Church (Verse 47)

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting” (Acts 2.2).

Chapter 3

The work in Jerusalem started according to the command of the Lord Jesus Christ. **“Many wonders and signs were done through the apostles” (Acts 2:43).** Those signs were neither done haphazardly, nor to demonstrate the abilities of the apostles, but to draw every soul to enjoy the greatest sign: the exalted love of God.

Healing the Lame Man in the Name of Jesus Christ

This was one of the many miracles granted by the Holy Spirit to the apostles, to do in the name of Jesus Christ.

A Speech About Faith in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ

St. Peter found it a good opportunity to preach before the people, in the presence of the priests, the scribes, and all the Jewish leaders. St. Peter and St. John gave us an example of how we ought to give the glory to God instead of taking the praise for ourselves.



Chapter 4

This chapter describes the outset of the actual position of the Jewish leaders, who having rejected our Lord Jesus Christ and persisted after His resurrection on opposing Him and His words. It also presents the love and unity of the apostles. **“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4.33).**



St. Peter and St. John Arrested (Verses 1-12)

The two apostles were arrested according to the command of the chief priests and thrown into custody because of their preaching of the word that reached many and turned them into believers, **“And the number of men came to be five thousand.” (Acts 4:40)**

Boldness of St. Peter and St. John (Verses 13-18)

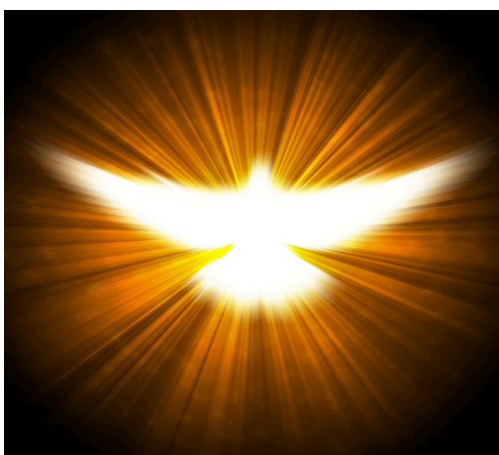
The Sanhedrin was a meeting held by the high priest to discuss religious, civil, and criminal jurisdiction. St. Peter and St. John spoke openly with confidence. This surprised them because they knew that both apostles were uneducated. **“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4.13)** Despite their uneducated background, their words were powerful and effective as they were blessed by the Holy Spirit. After investigating, they realized that these were the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, who followed Him, who were attached to Him, and believed in Him.

Threatening the Two Apostles (Verses 19-22)

The Council leaders came to know the great work of the apostles. They commanded them to never speak of Him again (Verse 18). The apostles answered by exalting God saying they cannot obey man and disobey the Lord Jesus Christ. At the end, they had to dismiss them because they found no way of punishing them, for they were just.

Praying and Seeking (Verses 23-31)

The two apostles prayed asking God for strength to help them preach His word. After they finished their prayer, the place where they were gathered was shaken by the Holy Spirit dwelling amongst them.

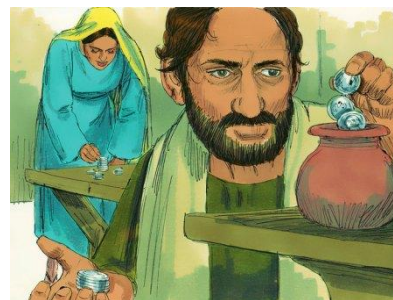


Chapter 5

St. Luke presented a painful portrait of Ananias and Sapphira's family as they sought their glory with the spirit of deceit. Yet, the chapter joyfully ended, as joy always overshadows the life of the persecuted Church.

Ananias and Sapphira (Verses 1 – 11)

Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a piece of land and brought the proceeds to the Apostles. However, they lied about how much the land was sold for and kept back a portion. Both fell dead because they lied to the Holy Spirit. **“And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 5:2)**



The Persistent Growth of the Church (Verses 12 – 16)

God granted support for His Church through many signs and wonders that were done through the hands of the apostles among the people, not for the sake of the believers, but for that of the non-believers to gain them. **“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.” (Acts 5:14)**

Imprisoned Apostles (Verses 17 – 23)

“Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation.” (Acts 5:17)

The high priest and those with him plotted to lay their hands on the apostles. They could not stand to see the believers offering thanksgiving and praise. **“And laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.” (Acts 5:18)**

They arrested the apostles to prevent the people from talking to them. **“But at night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.” (Acts 5:19-20)**

Apostles on Trial Again (Verses 24 – 32)

The chief priests tried to condemn them, but they were fierce and told them **“We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers, raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him, God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.” (Acts 5:29-31)**

Gamaliel's Advice (Verses 33 – 40)

When they heard St. Peter's defense, they had nothing to respond to it, but they were furious and wanted to kill them. The Pharisee Gamaliel, who was a teacher of the law, was present in the council and he felt the presence of God from the words of the two apostles. He stood up to the leaders and said: **“And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it – lest you even be found to fight against God.”** (Acts 5:38-39)

They let the apostles go after beating them and commanded them again not to speak the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. **“So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”** (Acts 5:41)

They gained strength and courage to testify to the truth every day in the temple, and everywhere they can reach. Their life became a continuous journey to teach and preach the word of God.

Chapter 6

Now, as the number of the disciples were multiplying greatly, there appeared to be two groups of them: a group of Hebrew origin, and another group, the Hellenists.

Together with the increase in number and the spreading of ministry, certain inner problems and commitments were more than the apostles could handle alone so they decided to choose seven deacons to help.

Choosing Seven Deacons (Verses 5-8)

They chose seven deacons who were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, as their ministry required a high level of prudence to solve the complaints of the widows. **“And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.”** (Acts 6:5)



The Ministry of the Archdeacon (Verses 9-10)

St. Stephen, who according to the Church Tradition, was the Archdeacon, and the Protomartyr. The name ‘Stephen’ is a Greek name meaning “a crown of flowers”.

Stephen was a member of one of the synagogues before he learned about the true God and believed. He became not only a believer, but also a leader, working to the account of the Church but his ex-fellow members could not bear that, so they accused him of false accusations. **“Then they secretly induced men to say, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’** (Acts 6:11)

St. Stephen before the Sanhedrin (Verses 11-15)

St. Stephen was a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ and he was accused as Him. Disregarding the opposition of the wicked, the Lord’s grace reflected upon St. Stephen, and his face became as the face of an angel. He stood and defended himself in front of the council and his defense left everyone speechless. **“And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.”** (Acts 6:15)

Chapter 7

St. Stephen found the opportunity to defend himself and stand before the chief priests and the council, to present to them the true living faith. He spoke to them from the Scriptures, as though the Holy Book was open before him. He was uttered by the Holy Spirit.

Rebuking the Chief Priests

St. Stephen rebuked them of their resistance of the Holy Spirit, and the persecution of the Holy One, following the lead of their rebellious fathers. He was fierce and fair with his words when he said: **“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit, as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers.”** (Acts 7:51-53)

The Open Heaven

The chief priests having been accused of blasphemy; were unable to respond to St. Stephen. They were unable to control their hatred and rage toward him. They became like vicious beasts thirsty for its blood. Whereas their hearts were full of hatred, his was lifted up with love toward humanity, even toward his own persecutors. He looked up to heaven and saw the Lord Jesus Christ sitting on the right hand of the Father. **“But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”** (Acts 7:55)



The Martyrdom of St. Stephen

The rulers condemned him to be stoned, charging him of blasphemy against the temple. St. Stephen had testified to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, until the last moments before his martyrdom. His death touched so many hearts and among those who witnessed his death was Saul of Tarsus who was still persecuting the Church at that time. **“And they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.”** (Acts 7:58)



Chapter 8

The martyrdom of St. Stephen caused persecution to arise against the Church, forcing a great number of believers to leave Jerusalem and spread everywhere. The ministry spread outside Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria.

Saul of Tarsus

Saul was glad about the stoning of St. Stephen and he initially thought it to be the beginning of the end of the disciples of the Church, and of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He began persecuting the Church daily, **“As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.” (Acts 8:3)**



The Lord Jesus Christ on His way to the Cross told the disciples, **“You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.” (John 16:20)** The disciples were strong, and they refused to leave the city and continued to preach, and God worked great works on their hands such as:

- Simon the Sorcerer Believes (Verses 9-13)
- The Samaritans Receive the Holy Spirit (Verses 14-25)
- Faith of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Verses 26- 35)
- Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Verses 36- 38)
- St. Philip in Azotus (Verses 39- 40)



Chapter 9

This chapter begins by introducing Saul of Tarsus to the Christian faith and the dedication of all his energies to the edification of the apostolic church, after they were completely directed to persecuting her and opposing the Christian faith. The Lord Jesus Christ dedicated His life to work among the Gentiles, by the power of the Holy Spirit and to establish many churches in the world.

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

The high priest found Saul to do all the evil things he had desired against the people of God. He was allowed by the high priest to arrest any follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and bring them bound to Jerusalem.

In the darkest moments of Saul's life, while going to Damascus to continue his evil ministry, the light of God shone on him, to make him return to enjoy the light of righteousness.



“And as he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.” (Acts 9:3)

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke to him and said, **“Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts 9:4)** and Saul was unable to see light for three full nights.

(Note: By the Lord's admonishment to Saul asking him, “Why do you persecute me?” He reminded Saul of the verse, **‘They hated Me without a cause’.** (Psalm 69:4)

God's mercies touched Saul's heart and turned him from his evil ways. He granted him enlightenment and a realization of the divine Truth.

God sent him Ananias who went to Saul and by the glory of God granted him back his sight and the new journey of Saul began. He arose and was baptized, gained the new birth, and was strengthened by the food of the faith. **“Now the wolf became a lamb” - Father Tadros Yacoub**

Saul Setting Forth to Preach

He immediately started to preach about the true God, not just to confirm his faith, but because his fiery heart that was previously opposing the Truth was converted and he wanted everyone to experience the Truth, just as he did. **“Immediately he preached the Christ in the Synagogues, that He is the Son of God.” (Acts 9:20)**



Chapter 10

This chapter introduces the beginning of a new era in the history of the ministry of the apostles. As the message of the Gospel was no longer confined to the Jews, but extended to the Gentiles, to be proclaimed to all mankind. For several years, even after the Pentecost, the apostles still assumed that the Gentiles would not have a place, but God's mercy is for all human race who call on Him.

Cornelius, who was a Gentile, saw a vision from God and was sent to St. Peter where he and his followers were baptized and joined the faith with the believers. **“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon those who heard the word.” (Acts 10:44)**



Chapter 11

The gate became wide open before the Gentiles to enjoy the Truth, and to gain the divine blessings, on the same level with their Jewish brethren who became Christians. The conversion of Cornelius and his followers caused a great unrest in Judea, both inside the Church and among the unbelieving Jews, who counted the behavior of St. Peter as contradicting all the thoughts and principles of the Jews. **“Saying, ‘You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them.’ (Acts 11:3)**

St. Peter explained to them that he saw a vision from God and acted upon it. He was not trying to defend himself, perhaps he intended to open their hearts with love, to the acceptance of the Gentiles as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. **“If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” (Acts 11:17)**

At the end, those present presented a praise of thanksgiving, glorifying God for the riches of His love for all mankind and they gladly accepted the Gentiles as brethren in the faith. **“When they heard these things they became silent, and they glorified God, saying, ‘then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’ (Acts 11:18)**



Chapter 12

After the great joy of the Gentiles believing, war came from outside, when Herod the king stretched out his hand and killed the apostle St. James. And thinking that he could kill the rest of the apostles too, he put St. Peter in prison during the days of unleavened bread, to kill him after the Feast. But the Lord saved St. Peter through the constant prayers offered for him by the Church; and an angel of the Lord struck the arrogant Herod dead.

“So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, ‘The voice of a god and not of a man!’ Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.” (Acts 12:21-22).

The Book of Acts continues on to show the growth of the Church and the preaching of St. Paul to the Gentiles.

My Church, a Beacon of Light

1. Pope Dioscorus, a hero of Orthodoxy, the Pride of Alexandria

Pope Dioscorus is one of the heroes of faith who suffered to preserve the true orthodox faith. He is the **25th Pope of Alexandria**.

His Upbringing:

- He was born in Alexandria at the beginning of the fifth century A.D.
- He studied and excelled at the Theological School of Alexandria.
- He became a disciple of Pope Cyril, the 24th pope of Alexandria, and accompanied him at the Council of Ephesus (the 3rd Ecumenical Council) in 431 A.D..



The Council of Ephesus – 431 A.D.:

- The Council of Ephesus was assembled to refute the heresy of Nestorius who claimed that the Lord Jesus Christ has 2 natures and therefore St. Mary should not be called the Mother of God.
- The Council also refuted the Heresy of Pelagius who claimed that the sin of Adam was his alone not inherited by other humans; and that humans can reach high levels of righteousness without the need for God's grace.
- It resulted in the excommunication of Nestorius and the Introduction to the Creed was added (**We exalt you the Mother of the true light...**).

Pope Dioscorus became Pope in the year 444 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Theodosius the second. It was a hard time due to the many heresies that existed.

Eutychus:

At that time Eutychus was the head monk of a monastery in Constantinople. Eutychus tried to answer the heresy of Nestorius but he started a heresy himself. He claimed that Christ has one nature, the divine nature; but the human nature was dissolved in the divine. This did not agree with the faith of the Coptic Orthodox Church which was:

We believe that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Logos is fully God and fully human. He made His humanity one with His divinity without mingling, confusion, or alteration. His divinity parted not from His humanity for a single moment nor a twinkling of an eye.

Pope Cyril used the example of forged iron. In this unity between iron and fire, the characteristics of fire as well as the characteristics of iron exist. They were not changed into the other.

Flavian, the Patriarch of Constantinople who was a Nestorian, called for a local Council to excommunicate Eutychus; but Eutychus appealed to Emperor Theodosius the second and to Leo, Pope of Rome.

***Note:** The Coptic Church accepts 3 Ecumenical Councils: **Nicaea, Constantinople, and Ephesus**

Pope Dioscorus Presides the 2nd Council of Ephesus – 449 A.D.:

- Called for by Emperor Theodosius the second to refute the heresy of Eutychus who claimed that the human nature of Christ was dissolved into the divine nature and that He has one mixed nature.
- Pope Dioscorus' intention was to preserve the true Christian faith.
- Eutychus retracted (returned from) his teaching and confessed the true faith in front of the Council.
- Eutychus was vindicated and Flavian was exiled.

Leo's Jealousy:

Leo, the Pope of Rome, tried to hold a Council in Rome to reject the 2nd Council of Ephesus, and he accepted Nestorius' followers whom Pope Cyril had opposed. So, Pope Dioscorus anathematized him.

“Know that I have suffered a great deal in order to preserve the faith of my holy fathers.”

– Pope Dioscorus

Theodosius II dies with no heir for his throne:

His sister Pulcheria married Marcian who leaned towards Nestorian teachings which pleased Leo, so he tried again to hold a Council. Pulcheria feared for the throne from Pope Dioscorus. This fear of Marcian and Pulcheria led to an order to hold the Council of Chalcedon

The Council of Chalcedon – 451 A.D.:

- Pope Leo of Rome did not accept the rulings of the 2nd Council of Ephesus that vindicated Eutychus after he confessed the true faith that Christ has one nature out of 2 united natures and he tried to remove Pope Dioscorus from his office to control the Church of Alexandria.
- Emperor Marcian and Pulcheria called for the Council at the request of Leo, the Pope of Rome.
- The Council was held for about 15 sessions where Pope Dioscorus held fast to the teachings of the fathers. He did not allow the reading of Leo's Tome.

Pope Dioscorus tortured:

When Pulcheria could not convince Pope Dioscorus to sign Leo's Tome she reminded him how another (St. John Chrysostom) was exiled by her father. He answered her reminding her that her mother became ill and was not healed until she went to him asking forgiveness. She was infuriated and punched him breaking 2 of his teeth. Then the people of the palace attacked him and pulled out his beard. He sent the teeth and hair to Egypt telling his children: **“These are the fruit of my strife. Know that I have suffered a great deal in order to preserve the faith of my holy fathers. Do not be afraid, your faith is built on a rock.”**

The rulings of the Council were to anathematize Eutychus and remove Pope Dioscorus from his seat and exile him.

***Leo's Tome** is a letter he sent to the Council stating that Christ has 2 separate natures, a divine and a human nature; and that each has a role and they alternate according to the act He did. This is not what our Orthodox Church believes. This was the reason for the split of the churches after the Council of Chalcedon.

Pope Dioscorus anathematizes the Council:

Pope Dioscorus refused to sign Leo's Tome. When he found out the rulings of the Council against him, he felt he had a duty to warn the world about the wrong teachings of the Council. He sent to the bishops asking for the Tome.

When he saw that none of the Egyptian bishops signed it, he wrote on all 4 sides anathematizing the Council and all who accept its doctrine. He anathematized anyone who accepts any Council other than **Nicaea, Constantinople, and Ephesus**. The emperor was infuriated and exiled him to the island of Gangra.

His Departure:

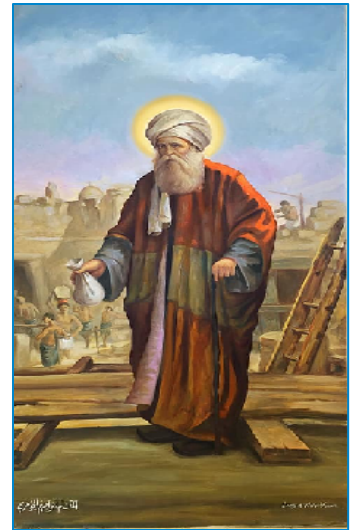
Pope Dioscorus stayed 5 years in exile and departed in the year 457 A.D.. The Church celebrates the feast of his departure on the 7th day of Thout (September 18).

2- Archon Ibrahim El-Gohary

Our Church is alive with all her saints from ascetics and monks to shepherds and the congregation. **Archon Ibrahim El-Gohary** is an example of the great saints of our Church.

His Upbringing:

Archon Ibrahim El-Gohary was born in the 18th century to pious parents. He excelled in writing and arithmetic. He transcribed religious books and brought them to Pope Yoannis XVIII for the churches. He was pleased with his devotion and blessed him. The Pope encouraged him to become a scribe in the government. He continued in this position until he became the chief scribe of all of Egypt, a position equivalent to a prime minister today. This position increased in his humility and piety. He was loved by many.



Distress and Troubles:

He remained in his position until a coup took place in the government and he was forced to flee to Upper Egypt. The new governor took all his possessions and persecuted the Christians and robbed their homes. By the grace of God, circumstances improved later and Archon Ibrahim El-Gohary returned and was able to get orders allowing Copts to reconstruct all the churches that were destroyed.

His piety and spirituality:

- He donated money and paid special attention to transcribing the Church books at his own expense and gave them to the churches and monasteries.
- **Do not overcome evil with evil:** Once his brother Girgis complained to him that some young men insulted him in the street and asked him to do something about it. He promised him that he will shut their mouths. The next day Girgis received great respect from the same young men. When he asked his brother, he replied that he sent them many gifts and provisions that cut their tongues from the evil words. **“Therefore, if your enemy is hungry feed him; if he is thirsty give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:20-21)**

Serving Everyone At All Times: One day, Archon Ibrahim returned home after the Liturgy of the Resurrection Feast, his wife told him that a family of a Coptic prisoner was in need of food and clothes. He went with his wife to Archon Fanous who succeeded in getting him released. Archon Ibrahim got a job for him but the man refused saying “I have a friend who is in need of the job more than me.” Ibrahim rejoiced at his nobility and was able to get a job for both of them.



- **Helping Those in Need:** He found out one day that a man was in need, so he stopped him and asked him how he’s doing and sent all what he needed to his house. He asked him to let him know whenever he needs anything.
- **A Cheerful Giver:** A beggar asked him for money multiple times in one day to test his patience. When he never refused to give him money at any time, the beggar said: “Blessed are you, the Lord is with you.” Archon Ibrahim answered him saying: “Do not be surprised. This money was entrusted to me by God. I am repaying Him.”

Consolation from Heaven:

His son departed to heaven and his wife was unable to be comforted. It was said that St. Anthony the Great appeared to her and comforted her. She told her husband who said he saw the same thing. They were both comforted and thanked God.

His Love for the Church:

He always cared for rebuilding and renovating churches. He used to buy properties and donate it to the Church. It is believed that he had a role in almost every church in Old Cairo, whether it was to transcribe books or any other needs of the Church.

His Love for Prayer:

He wrote a letter to the heads of monasteries encouraging them to pray when a problem relating to the churches occurred. This is kept in El-Syrian Monastery.

His Departure:

He departed in peace in the year 1796 A.D. and was mourned by the governor who participated in his funeral. His eulogy was given by Pope Yoannis. He is buried in a private tomb beside the Church of St. George in Old Cairo.

Archon Ibrahim and his brother Girgis pleased the Lord Jesus Christ with their piety, good works, almsgiving, and their patience in the face of hardships and temptations. They are considered saints because they obeyed the Lord Jesus Christ who commanded us all

“Be holy for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16)

The Sacrament of Baptism

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Sacraments in His church in order to give those who believe gifts of grace that would allow them to go to His heavenly kingdom and support them on their path.

In the Sacrament of Baptism, the believer receives the gift by the work of the Holy Spirit through the prayers and rites practiced by the priest.

The Orthodox Church has 7 sacraments, 4 of which are **Redemptive**, meaning they are necessary for our salvation: **Baptism, Confirmation, Repentance and Confession, and Eucharist.**

The Sacrament of Baptism:

Baptism is called the **Gate of Mysteries** because no other sacrament can be administered without first being baptized. This is why the baptistery is at the entrance of the Church. This is our Orthodox Church: at the entrance there is a baptistery and at the depth there is an altar!

There is no salvation without baptism. **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)** Baptism is what opens the door to Heaven for us, not only by God’s grace but also by our ability to attain this virtue. It is a new birth from water and the Spirit. The new birth is a life in Christ. **“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:27)**

Baptism is done by immersion, as the word baptism comes from the Greek word “Baptismos” which means “dyeing”, which can only happen through immersion.



The Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of Baptism when He was baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan River. He told His disciples to **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)**

The Lord Jesus Christ was baptized before he started His ministry to show us that baptism is the beginning of all the blessings. This is why as Christians (children of God) we start our lives with baptism.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20) How can one be crucified with Christ? Through baptism! How can Christ live in me? Through Myron!

The Rite of the Sacrament of Baptism:

The Sacrament of Baptism is divided into 4 major parts:

1. Absolution of the woman:

The mother is anointed with **Simple Oil** for cure of diseases and absolution of sins.

2. Renouncing Satan:

- The mother holds the child and raises her left arm looking towards the West (symbolizing darkness) and renounces Satan and his evil deeds.
- Then she looks to the East (signifying a new birth as the sun rises from the East) and raises her right hand repeating after the priest confessing Christ and reciting the Orthodox Creed.
- The priest then asks her 3 times: "Do you believe on behalf of this child?" And she responds "I believe" 3 times.
- Then the priest anoints the baptized with the **Oil of Joy (Ghaliloun)** implanting them in the Church.

3. Liturgy of Baptism (Sanctification of Baptismal Water):

- It is a rite similar to the Liturgy of Eucharist.
- Sanctification of the baptismal water, through prayers, is done to prepare for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and pouring the Myron oil into the water causes the water to become living water, capable by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to grant new birth to the soul and body, and become effective in the salvation of the baptized.
- The priest pours the 3 oils into the water: **Simple Oil, Oil of Joy (Ghaliloun), and Myron Oil.**
- The priest stirs the water resembling the angel who stirred the water at the pool of Bethesda to gain the power of healing.



4. Baptism, Confirmation, and Communion:

- The priest holds the baptized, facing him toward the West and immerses the baptized in the water saying "**I baptized you (name)... in the name of the Father**" then takes the baptized out and breathes in their face. He repeats this 2 more times, "**in the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit**".
- Then the priest anoints the baptized with 36 anointings with the Holy Myron Oil on different parts of the body sanctifying the person to become a temple of the Holy Spirit with their body, mind, senses, feelings, deeds, and steps. This is **the Sacrament of Confirmation.**
- The baptized puts on new white clothes signifying the new pure life they received; and a red ribbon as a sign of the covenant with the Lord Jesus Christ who redeemed us with His Blood.
- We have a procession in the Church for the baptized after the Holy Communion because baptism is death and resurrection with the Lord Jesus Christ. We sing "**Worthy, worthy, worthy, (Name) the Christian!**" to celebrate the newly baptized.



Baptism is not only to declare our faith as some denominations claim but it is important for our salvation.

“And the bishop shall lay his hand upon them [the newly baptized], invoking and saying:
‘O Lord God, who did count these worthy of deserving the forgiveness of sins by the laver of regeneration, make them worthy to be filled with your Holy Spirit and send upon them thy grace [in confirmation], that they may serve you according to your will’
(The Apostolic Tradition 22:1 [A.D. 215]).

Why is baptism important for our salvation?

- **Through baptism we receive forgiveness of sin**, including the original sin of Adam. We declare this in the Orthodox Creed saying, “**We confess one baptism, for the remission of sins**”
- **Through baptism we are born again**. We die with Christ and resurrect with Him and are born into His family. During the baptism, the priest prays : “**Renew their birth a second time by the washing of the new birth and the forgiveness of sins; prepare them to be a temple of Your Holy Spirit**”. The Church teaches us that in baptism we receive a new nature, a new birth. This means that it allows us to live in Heaven. Therefore we cannot go to Heaven without baptism.
- **Through baptism we receive grace and blessing in our life**, which is why the Church baptizes infants and does not wait until they are older. In the Middle Ages, a heresy arose (still until this day) that said that we should not baptize infants but rather wait until they are old enough to declare their faith. But the Church opposed that thought teaching us that just as a mother cares for her children, the Church (our mother) cares for the salvation of her children.
- **Finally, through baptism the faith is declared**; this is why in the Orthodox Church we do not have “walk-in” baptisms! The Catechumens must first learn the faith and declare the faith in order to be baptized. Infants are baptized based on their parent’s faith; this is why the parents must declare their faith and recite the Orthodox Creed during their child’s baptism.



The Holy Bible Confirms the Importance of Baptism

- The Lord Jesus Christ was baptized before he started His ministry. **“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:16-17)**
- The Lord Jesus Christ told Nicodemus, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)**
- The Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19)**
- The Book of Acts shows how the importance of baptism was clear to the early Christians. Let’s take the 3,000 who believed because of St. Peter’s sermon as an example; the people were very concerned for their salvation so they asked, **“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38)**
- In the Book of Acts, almost every story where someone believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is followed by baptism: the 3,000 who believed because of St. Peter’s sermon, the Ethiopian Eunuch, Simon the magician, Cornelius, etc..

During the persecution era, one of the main concerns was what happens when a Catechumen is martyred before they are baptized. The Church believes that one who has the intent of being baptized but dies as a martyr, shedding their blood for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, before receiving this Sacrament has received **Baptism by blood**.

What is my response towards my own baptism?

1. Understand that we are the Lord’s:

The Sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation go hand in hand. After baptism, we are anointed with the Myron Oil and receive the Holy Spirit. This is the **Sacrament of Confirmation**.

Every part of our body is consecrated to the Lord. This means we should only use our body for the glory of God. Our eyes should not watch ungodly things, our ears should not listen to ungodly music, and our legs should not take us to ungodly places.

Just as the utensils for the altar are consecrated by a bishop, anointing them with Myron Oil; they are only used for the altar because they are consecrated for the Lord. They cannot be used for any other reason. We are anointed with the same oil for the same reason: that we become the Lord’s only!



Our lives belong to the Lord. Before I take any step in my life, I need to ask myself, “is this for the glory of God?” Am I going to be a doctor for the glory of God? Am I marrying this person for the glory of God? Am I opening this business for the glory of God?

“For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.” (Romans 14:8)

2. There is no fellowship between light and darkness:

During one's baptism, the person (or his parents) must renounce Satan and all his ways and authorities. This is a covenant we have by being God's children. A covenant is made with the Lord Jesus Christ that I will be His son/daughter. During baptism, the priest prays saying, **"kindle within them a light of knowledge, and persuade their hearts to know the certainty of the words which they have been instructed."** Also, **"For you have called Your servants, who come from darkness into light, from death to life, from error to the knowledge of the truth, from idolatry to the knowledge of You the true God"**.

If God granted me freedom and light, why would I bring darkness into my life?! Why wouldn't I cling to the Lord Jesus Christ and not let Him go? The priest prays asking God to **"Confirm their faith that nothing may separate them from You"**.

During baptism, we ask God to fill us with His knowledge and enlighten us with His grace. My role after my baptism is not to waste this knowledge. I should not fill myself with the ignorance of the world. I should get to know God more through a life of prayer and contemplation. I need to remember my baptism when I am tempted to have a relationship outside the Church or think about experiencing a new form of worship away from the Church.

To maintain His grace, I need to be away from all sources of darkness. I need to continually denounce Satan and all his ways **"For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14)**

St. John Chrysostom explains that our faith is the light in our life and the dark habits is what puts off this light.

3. Our baptism is not just an event that happened in the past:

All the grace that we have in our life is initiated through baptism; our ability to act as children of God, living a life of repentance and fulfill God's commandments. Our baptism is not just an event that happened once in our life and it was over! It is the state that we always need to go back to in order to see the kingdom of Heaven.

Through baptism, **"The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)**. It is our duty to keep this grace going and increasing! This should be reflected in my life of repentance; when I repent, I go back to the original covenant I had during my baptism and every repentance is a return to my baptism.

The grace we received during our baptism is like a battery that needs to be "recharged". We can recharge it with what we call the "means of grace" (prayers, confession, communion, fasting, etc)

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27)
Putting on Christ is what enables us to live a Godly life on earth and to enter the kingdom of Heaven.

Atheism

Introduction

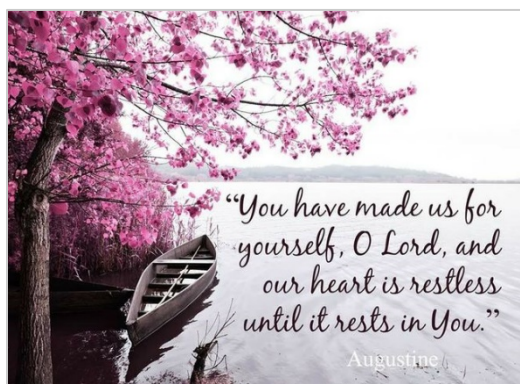
Atheism is the rejection or the lack of the belief that God exists. Atheists believe that God is a man-made myth or legend. The word “atheism” comes from the negative “a” which means “no” and “theos” which means “God”. Hence, atheism in the most basic terms means “no God”. Studies show that there are hundreds of millions who identify as Atheists around the world making Atheism one of the most growing “belief systems” in the modern world.

Brief History

The attempt to deny the truth of Gods existence is an ancient yet modern phenomenon; it existed hundreds of years before Christ. King David mentions in his Psalms those who reject the presence of God, **“The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” (Psalm 14:1)** Modern atheism began as a phenomenon with the beginning of the European Renaissance (14th - 17th centuries). By the 18th century, disbelief in God was getting more popular, and by the end of the century, many philosophers in England, France, and Germany were openly opposing all religious figures and asking to establish laws protecting the right to unbelief.

In the 19th century, in spite of all the scientific development, science was still unable to explain all truths. Man started developing theories that explain the creation of the universe and the existence of human beings such as Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Darwin and those who followed his school of thought spent a great deal of effort to prove that science and religion cannot be reconciled, and that religion is holding back scientific development. By the 20th century, many outspoken Atheists became more popular; authors, politicians, movements, etc. leading more people to become skeptic of God’s existence.

However, scientific progress is not the actual cause of atheism! It is an individual problem that is built on man’s adherence to certain behavior that disturbs the conscience in order to deny God’s existence. It is an attempt to get rid of God’s voice which calls us to repentance. Hence, no one can truly find peace in their life except through God and in living their life in His fellowship as St. Augustine said, **“You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.”**



Atheism arguments

Atheists claim that God does not exist, while Agnostics argue that there is not enough evidence to prove God's existence. Atheists typically rely on some arguments and questions that are unanswered in their minds which make them question the existence of God, for example:

1. Intellectual arguments

- a. Using what seems to be logical questions to support their views, atheists struggle with believing in a god who they cannot see? Forgetting that we believe in many things that we do not see like having Oxygen in the air we breathe; we do not see it yet we never question its existence!
- b. Another argument Atheists use is, "who created God?" And why does He allow suffering and pain? Forgetting that we as humans are a creation and can never fully comprehend our Creator. The same way a robot cannot fully comprehend its builder, or a computer program cannot fully explain its programmer; a god that can be fully comprehended is not God. We learn about God through His revelation to us not through our advanced intelligence.



2. Scientific arguments

- a. Many scientists go out of their way to develop scientific theories regarding the creation of the universe, misunderstanding the Holy Bible, and arguing that Christianity is in conflict with science; forgetting that such theories are only experimental theories subject to flaws and errors and that the Holy Bible is not a science book. It is the word of God for our edification and salvation and is not meant to be taken on trial against scientific theories which are not proven as facts to this day!

3. The flaws of the religious community

- a. Atheists often point out the weaknesses of the believers and religious leaders in an effort to disregard their validity and authority. Forgetting that a true Christian would never claim perfection and holiness of life but rather would admit his weakness and be in constant pursuit of perfection according to God's commandments. St. John Chrysostom said: **"The church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints"**.

4. Other misconceptions about God

- a. Atheists often spread many misconceptions about God as a restrictor of humans' freedom and against human creativity and independent reasoning. Forgetting that God is the one who gave humanity its reasoning accompanied with free will: whether we choose to obey His commandments or not and bear the consequences that follows our behavior.

God's existence is proved by His revelation

The Holy Bible does not ask us to accept the existence of God blindly. Instead, it shows us how God, by His Spirit, has revealed Himself to us, both in the past and in the present.

1. God is revealed through His creation

Clement of Rome said, **“God is manifest even by the operations of the world which He has made, using the evidence of His creation”**

There is no doubt that the universe reveals to us its creator and artist; its complexity and order teaches us about our wonderful God and His amazing work of creation as St. Paul declared, **“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead” (Romans 1:20)** How can anything run in such great order without a perfect Creator who allows it to be and live. King David also shows us how contemplating on nature shows us God's handiwork and increases our knowledge of Him.

“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.” (Psalm 19:1-2)

God Himself declared His power and eternity to Job pointing at His work of creation when He spoke to him from a whirlwind; World's formation (Job:38:4-6) The heavens (v.7) The balance between seas and land (v. 8-11) The dawn (v.12) The seas' depths (v.16) The life-death cycle (v.17) The origin of light (v.19) The winds (v.24) The hydrological cycle (v. 25-30) Animals nurturing their young (v. 39-41)

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” (Hebrews 11:3)



2. God is revealed through His communication

As mentioned earlier, our knowledge of God is through His revelation to us. Since the beginning of time, God revealed Himself. He did not cease to communicate with His most sophisticated creation: mankind. He communicated with mankind both in direct and indirect ways.

He directly spoke with Adam and Eve. Cain heard His voice clearly and answered Him. More Godly men had direct conversations with God like Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. God's existence was obvious to them as they heard from Him in a way that made His existence undeniable.

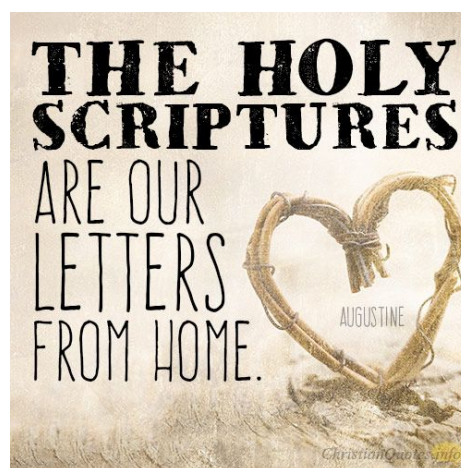
God also spoke to many through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God revealed Himself by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit to 40 authors and prophets over about 1500 years to write a series of books that later were collected which we now call "the Holy Bible"!

"Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21)

Through these scriptures, God revealed to us more and more about Himself, His commandments, His will, His works, and what pleases Him.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

When we look at the Holy Bible, we realize that it is not a mere collection of writing by common people. It is a perfectly orchestrated story woven throughout the books even though there was no way of collaboration between the authors. As St. Augustine put it, "The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed, the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed." The Holy Bible tells us the story of God's love for us and His marvelous economy of our salvation, amazingly preserved through thousands of years leading us to realize how miraculously the Holy Bible has been safeguarded.



3. God is revealed through the incarnation of Christ

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Although God revealed Himself to mankind either by speaking directly or indirectly through His prophets, the ultimate revelation was through the incarnation of the Logos, our Lord Jesus Christ!

During His life on earth, the Lord Jesus Christ revealed the personality and character of God to us. People saw the Lord walking, talking, teaching, healing the sick, and raising the dead and they had a true human experience with God. He was loved and followed by many as He touched their hearts and changed their lives. Hence everywhere He went, He was followed by multitudes. St. John proclaimed this truth in his first epistle **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1)**

Therefore, by looking at our Lord Jesus Christ and learning from His life on earth, we know more about God and His existence.

4. God is revealed through our own consciences

An interesting event took place in the book of Acts, Chapter 17; when St. Paul went to Athens and wanted to preach the One true God to the Athenians. He stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, **“Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:22-23)**

This is no surprise as mankind always had the longing to know its creator. From the beginning of time, man always searched for God. It is in our nature, to long for Him who created us, loved us, and holds the whole world in His hand. We see this longing in the story of St. Moses the Strong when he was enslaved by people who worshipped the sun. In spite of his sinful life, one day he lifted up his eyes and looked towards saying, *“O Sun! If you are God, let me know it.”* Then he said, *“And you O God whom I do not know, let me know you.”* One day, he heard a voice saying to him, *“The monks of Wadi El-Natroun know the real God. Go to them and they will tell you.”* That was the spark of his life of repentance and sainthood.

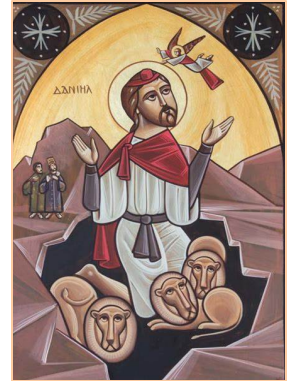
St. Paul explained this truth extensively in his epistle to the Romans, **“because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them” (Romans 1:19)** Meaning that, while all humans were born with a knowledge of God’s existence, some may choose to proclaim it, and some choose to **“suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18).**

Daniel the Prophet

“The man greatly beloved”

Who is Daniel the prophet?

- God called him **“The man greatly beloved.” (Daniel 10:11)**
- He was of the tribe of Judah.
- He was from the royal family.
- He was sent to exile when he was 18 years old.
- Daniel witnessed Ezekiel the prophet in his youth. Ezekiel mentioned his wisdom (Ezekiel 23:8).
- He lived a righteous life from a young age and was a man of prayer.
- Some say that he lived about 84-90 years from 618 to 534 B.C.
- He had many prophecies.
- He is the father of the history of the Gentiles. He recorded many precise prophecies about the kingdoms which follow one another, through God’s plan.
- God granted him wisdom and grace. He served during the times of the kingdoms of Babylon, Medes, and Persia.
- Daniel was faithful to the kings while still being faithful to God.
- He rejected the worship of idols.
- He served his people, not with the spirit of fanaticism, but with the spirit of holiness; humility; and with love to all people.
- He saw the future through the work of the Holy Spirit inside him.
- He is the prophet of dreams and visions, who enjoyed a divine gift; a heavenly wisdom; and a surpassing understanding.
- God granted him many visions. He was courageous in explaining visions and dreams to kings without complimenting them.
- The Book of Daniel is the only book in the Old Testament that prophesied in detail about kings and kingdoms. These kingdoms were declared by name like Persia and Greece.



Daniel and the Three Sainly Youth

Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael were captured as slaves during war and were sent to Babylon, a city in a faraway country, to serve the king of Babylon.

As ordered by the king, they were given new names, related to the false Babylonian gods. **“To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego” (Daniel 1:7)**

| Godly Name | Godly Meaning | New Babylonian Name |
|------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Daniel | The Lord is my judge | Belteshazzar |
| Hananiah | The Lord is kind | Shadrach |
| Azariah | God is my help | Abed-Nego |
| Mishael | Who is like God | Meshach |



The king ordered their names to be changed from names relating to the One God to names referring to the false gods of Babylon. Also, he dismissed them from speaking Hebrew, the language of their forefathers, and made them speak the Chaldean language.

Even with all their struggles, their hearts remained faithful towards their faith. **“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile” (Daniel 1:8)**

The spiritual friendship that Daniel and the three youths shared allowed them to seek the path of righteousness and the will to overcome all emotional struggles and physical desires.

Their fasting was a nourishment for their souls that gave them strength as it is written: **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)**

Nebuchadnezzar and the Dream

King Nebuchadnezzar had a very agonizing dream that none of his wise men nor scholars were able to explain. When Daniel learned about the matter, he discussed it with his three friends and they decided to pray with the hope that God will listen to their tender hearts. They were certain that God will have mercy on them and reveal His glorious work.

As the Lord revealed to Daniel the dream and he was able to interpret it, they all stood up offering praises and thanksgiving to Him.

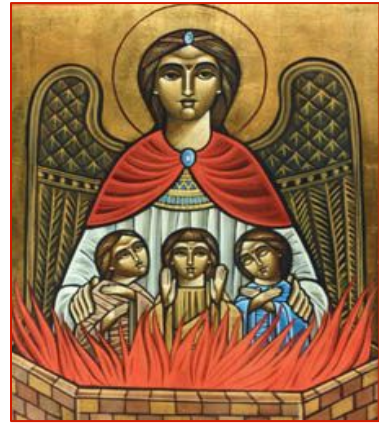
Daniel stood before the king with steadfastness and told him that through the one true God, he can help him. The king marveled and said, **“Truly your God is the God of Gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets.” (Daniel 2:47)**

It is important to work on our needs and not forget that through God, the impossible is possible. Daniel preserved his faith in God and trusted in His limitless love and countless mercies. He was certain that God will not leave him.

Nebuchadnezzar and the Three Youths

The king quickly forgot what God had done for him and put up a statue of himself made of gold. He ordered that all should bow down to it. If they didn't, they will be thrown into a fiery furnace. (Daniel 3:6). Nebuchadnezzar used everything possible to get people to worship the statue.

The three youth knew that it is better to obey God than to obey men. The Chaldeans complained to the king and asked that the three youths be cast in the fiery furnace (Acts 5:29). They were thrown in the furnace and by looking into the eternal fire, they did not fear the temporal fire, as they knew that God was with them. The fire did not affect them, and the Lord appeared to glorify them.



In the midst of the fire, the three youths praised God and glorified Him and chanted their famous prayer which we chant in the Third Canticle in the Midnight Praises. The fire changed to dew, and the king ordered his soldiers to get them out.

Although they were amid tribulations, their hearts glorified God knowing that He is always with them and they shouldn't fear anything. Remember during hard times that the Lord our God is powerful and almighty. Let your praises and thanksgiving be constant without hesitation.

St. Basil the Great said: "The three youths have manifested themselves above all the lusts of the flesh and despised the wrath of the king. They were very courageous and did not fear the fire, but proved that the golden image is a worthless god. How did the three youths have victory over the power of fire? By their persistence!"

Daniel in the Lion's Den

Two governors told King Darius that Daniel believed in God not idols. When the king knew of this, he threw Daniel in the pit and he was in agony for he shared great love and respect for Daniel.

Darius said to Daniel, **"Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you."** (Daniel 6:16)

King Darius fasted the night Daniel was inside the den.

"My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you." (Daniel 6:22)

Do not fear evil, and do not give up during adversities. The Lord our God is always protecting us. He promised us that He would not leave us, even to the end of the ages.



God Gave You a Talent

God created each of us and gave us a message or a mission here on earth. Our duty is to figure out our role in order to benefit ourselves, our families, our church, and our communities. **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)**

And in order to fulfill our role, we should say, **“Lord, what do You want me to do?” (Acts 9:6)**

1-Everyone has talents.

Who am I? Why did God create me? What does He want me to do? God gives everyone different talents such as qualifications, abilities, time, etc..., according to our potential. He expects us to use them to benefit ourselves, our communities, and all of humanity until He comes again.

It doesn't matter the number of talents we have; what matters is our faithfulness in using them wisely.

It is your responsibility to find out what your talents are. Otherwise, you would be living without a goal-and will resort to non-edifying means of occupying your time.

2- What is a talent?

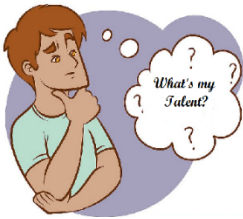
A talent is every gift or every chance given to us from God. We must use it for His glory, the good of others, and for our own benefit. No one can say they do not have any talents; God gave talents to every human being.

3- Types of talents:

| General Talents: a free divine gift given to all people such as... | |
|--|--|
| 1- Life: | “for to me, to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). |
| 2- Time: | We are all given the gift of time, 24 hours a day. We can appreciate it and invest it wisely, or we can neglect and waste it. Be careful- your time is your life; it affects your eternity. |
| 3- The body: | We must care for it and keep it healthy as it is a gift from God. |
| 4- The mind: | Guide it and nurture it with what will edify and enlighten it. |
| 5- Emotions and feelings: | Discipline them to be used in a constructive and useful way. |
| 6- Health: | It is a gift that sometimes is only appreciated by those who lack it. Do you look at your health as a gift from God? Care for your health and use it to serve others. |
| 7- Being a Child of God: | Did you ever think to give thanks for being a member of the church of God and that you are God’s child? The greatest gift is being God’s children. |
| 8- Personal Gifts: | Such as playing music, photography, drawing, acting, sculpture, singing, being sociable, poetry, writing, positivity in life, peacefulness, being active, etc.. |

You must discover your talents and invest them. Hiding the talents is not humility, but it is like the servant who buried his talent in the “parable of the talents.”

4- How to discover your talents?



1. Examine and ask yourself:

You are the most capable of understanding yourself.
So, know yourself and discover what's in you.

What do you like to do? How do people describe you? etc...
Try something new to find out what you can do.

2. Read and research:

Reading opens your eyes to a lot of things; you can find out what fields interest you by reading and researching.

3. Ask others:

People around you can help you discover yourself. Ask those people around you whom you trust; those you know are experienced and who care for your well-being and listen to their guidance. This person can be your father of confession, your servant, your parents, your brothers or sisters, your true and faithful friend, etc..

4. Try new things:

You might find your talent by trying a new activity that you enjoy.

5. Don't compare yourself to others:

Your talents are your very own special and unique talents.
God can use even a small talent for His glory.

6. Develop your talent:

By learning and studying and by continuous practice and exercise.

Be careful... having too much free time that is not invested in useful activities can lead to negative consequences and habits such as addiction. These in turn can affect our spirituality and take us away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, be filled with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Bible, the Sacraments and Church life.

“Do not neglect the gift that is in you.” (1 Timothy 4:14) for “Every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matthew 3:10)

Memorization

1. First Watch of the Midnight Hour of the Agpeya- The Gospel according to St. Matthew (Matthew 25:1-13)

Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins,
who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

Those who were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them.

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

While the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

And at midnight there was a cry made, "Behold, the bridegroom is coming;
arise and go out to meet him." Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said unto the wise, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out."

But the wise answered, saying, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you,
but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves." And while they went to buy,
the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding,

and the door was shut. Afterward, the other virgins came also, saying,

"Lord, Lord, open to us." But he answered and said, "Verily I say unto you,
I do not know you." Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour
in which the Son of Man is coming.

Glory to God forever. Amen.



2. Sayings of the Fathers:

- ❖ "Lord Jesus came that he might save what was lost; He heals those that are willing and does not compel the unwilling" -St. Ambrose of Milan
- ❖ "The body of Christ is not many bodies but one body. For just as the bread, which consists of many grains, is made one to the point that the separate grains are no longer visible, even though they are still there, so we are joined to each other and to Christ." - St. John Chrysostom
- ❖ "One must look deeply into the human heart to see in what direction it is turned and on what point its gaze is fixed." -St. Augustine
- ❖ "It is not strange that one who puts to death the deeds of the flesh will live, since one who has the Spirit of God becomes a son of God." -St. Ambrose of Milan
- ❖ "The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, a name taken from His office, which is not only to relieve the sorrows of the faithful, but to fill them with unspeakable joy. Everlasting gladness is in those hearts, in which the Spirit dwells." -St. Didymus the Blind



Coptic



Our Lord spent about four years in Egypt as a baby. He spoke to the people of Egypt in their language, which was Coptic at that time.

THE COPTIC ALPHABET

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| | Alpha A | Veeta B, V | Gamma G, N, Gh | Delta D, Th (the) | |
| Eyy E | Number 6 So-oo <small>Not a true letter</small> The number 6 | Zeeta Z | Eeta EE | Theeta TH (think), T | Yota I, Y |
| Kappa K | Lavla L | Mey M | Ney N | Eksee KS | O O |
| Pee P | ro R | seema S-Z | tav T | Epsilon V, I, (oo) | Fey F |
| Key K, Kh, Sh | Epssee PS | Oo Oo | Shai SH | Fai F | Khai KH |
| | Hori H | Ganga G, J | Cheema CH | Tee Tee | |

The Coptic Alphabet has 32 letters

- 24 consonants
- 7 vowels (**Α Ε Η Ι Ο Υ Ω**)
- 1 letter used only as a number (**Ϟ**)



First **25** letters from Hieroglyphic through Proto-Sinaitic, Phoenician and **Greek** Alphabets

Last **7** letters from Hieroglyphic through Hieratic and **Demotic**

Pronunciation

The (**ι**) is pronounced “Y”

Pronunciation of the (**ι**) next to another vowel

any other vowel

ια ya **αι** ay **ιε** ye **ει** ey

ιο yo **οι** oy **ιω** yo- **ωι** o-y

ιαλ Mirror

αιαι Grow, Increase

ιε Or

ιω Wash

ιου Sea

(**φιου** The Sea)

ιωτ Father

(**φιωτ** The Father)

ωικ Bread

(**πωικ** The Bread)

Pronunciation when the (**οι**)
is followed by another vowel

οιι (owwi) such as in **μιφιοιι**

οια (owwa) such as in **εθοιαβ**

οιη (owwee) such as in **οιηβ**

ночы

hi

ночы пенннв

Hi Sayedna

ночы пеніωт

Hi Abouna

оуχαι



Bye

оуχαι
δεν π̄βοις

Bye
(in the Lord)

The possessive Pronouns (1)

| | For s.m. nouns e.g. Father (ዐጥ) | For s.f. nouns e.g. Mother (ዐለሃ) | For plural nouns e.g. Books (ጸዐዐ) |
|-----|---|--|---|
| | በ | ገ | ዘ |
| My | በእዐጥ My father | ገእዐለሃ My mother | ዘእጸዐዐ My books |
| Our | በእኩዐጥ Our father | ገእኩዐለሃ Our mother | ዘእኩጸዐዐ Our books |

Practice with some words **MY OUR**

| Masculine | Feminine | Plural |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| ዐጥ God | ዐለሃ Sister | ዐለሃ Mothers |
| ዐገገ Bread | ጸዐዐ Power | ዐጥ Fathers |
| ጌዐር Lord | ዐየዐ Daughter | እኩዐጥ Brothers |
| ጸዐዐ Book | ጌገገ City | ዐለሃ Sisters |
| ዐር Brother | | |

The possessive Pronouns (2)

| | For s.m. nouns e.g. Father (ዐጥ) | For s.f. nouns e.g. Mother (ዐለሃ) | For plural nouns e.g. Books (ጸዐዐ) |
|-------------|---|--|---|
| | በ | ገ | ዘ |
| Your (s.m.) | በእኩዐጥ Your father | ገእኩዐለሃ Your mother | ዘእኩጸዐዐ Your books |
| Your (s.f.) | በእዐጥ Your father | ገእዐለሃ Your mother | ዘእጸዐዐ Your books |
| Your (pl.) | በእኩዐጥ Your father | ገእኩዐለሃ Your mother | ዘእኩጸዐዐ Your books |

Practice with some words **Your (m) (f) (pl)**

| Masculine | Feminine | Plural |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| ዐጥ God | ዐለሃ Sister | ዐለሃ Mothers |
| ዐገገ Bread | ጸዐዐ Power | ዐጥ Fathers |
| ጌዐር Lord | ዐየዐ Daughter | እኩዐጥ Brothers |
| ጸዐዐ Book | ጌገገ City | ዐለሃ Sisters |
| ዐር Brother | | |

The possessive Pronouns (3)

| | For s.m. nouns e.g. Father (ዐጥ) | For s.f. nouns e.g. Mother (ዐለሃ) | For plural nouns e.g. Books (ጸዐዐ) |
|-------|---|--|---|
| | በ | ገ | ዘ |
| His | በእኩዐጥ His father | ገእኩዐለሃ His mother | ዘእኩጸዐዐ His books |
| Her | በእዐጥ Her father | ገእዐለሃ Her mother | ዘእጸዐዐ Her books |
| Their | በዐሃዐጥ Their father | ገዐሃዐለሃ Their mother | ዘዐሃጸዐዐ Their books |

Practice with some words **His Her Their**

| Masculine | Feminine | Plural |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| ዐጥ God | ዐለሃ Sister | ዐለሃ Mothers |
| ዐገገ Bread | ጸዐዐ Power | ዐጥ Fathers |
| ጌዐር Lord | ዐየዐ Daughter | እኩዐጥ Brothers |
| ጸዐዐ Book | ጌገገ City | ዐለሃ Sisters |
| ዐር Brother | | |

Present Tense

| | 1 st person | 2 nd person | 3 rd person |
|--------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| (s.m.) | † | κ̂(χ̂) you | ὅ̂ he |
| (s.f.) | | τε you | ὀ̂ she |
| (pl) | τεν we | τετεν you | κε they |

Negative of Present Tense

ἄν or ἤ...ἄν

The Verb **ὠ̂λῆλ** (to pray) in the Present Tense

| | 1 st person | 2 nd person | 3 rd person |
|--------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| (s.m.) | †ὠ̂λῆλ I pray | κ̂ὠ̂λῆλ You pray | ὅ̂ὠ̂λῆλ He prays |
| (s.f.) | | τεὠ̂λῆλ You pray | ὀ̂ὠ̂λῆλ She prays |
| (pl) | τενὠ̂λῆλ We pray | τετενὠ̂λῆλ You pray | κεὠ̂λῆλ They pray |

| Present Tense | Negative of the present Tense | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| †ὠ̂λῆλ I pray | †ὠ̂λῆλ ἄν I do not pray | ἠ†ὠ̂λῆλ ἄν I do not pray |
| κεὠ̂λῆλ They pray | κεὠ̂λῆλ ἄν They do not pray | ἠκεὠ̂λῆλ ἄν They do not pray |

| Practice the present tense and the negative of the present tense with these verbs | | | |
|---|------------|--------|-------------|
| κωοῦν | to know | ζεῦαι | to sit down |
| ω̂ | to read | ᾤερᾤερ | to snore |
| ὀ̂δαι | to write | οῦω̂ | to worship |
| †ὠοῦ | to glorify | ναῦ | to look at |

ἸΝ ΤΩ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΙ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΕΡΟΣ

In the Name of the Father

ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ

and the Son

ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ

and the Holy Spirit

ΟΝΟΜΑΤΟΣ ΜΟΝΟΤΕΟΥ ἈΜΗΝ

One God Amen



ΠΑΤΗΡ ὁ ἐν οὐρανοῖς
Our Father who art in Heaven

ἄξιόν ἐστιν ἡμῶν εὐχαριστήσασθαι
Make us worthy to say thankfully

ΠΑΤΗΡ ὁ ἐν οὐρανοῖς
Our father who art in heaven

ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομα σου
Hallowed be Thy name

ἡ βασιλεία σου
Thy kingdom come

ἵνα γένηται
Thy will be done

ὡς ἐστὶν ἐν οὐρανῷ
On earth as it is in heaven

ὡς ἡμεῖς ἡμεῖς
Give us this day our daily bread

καὶ ἄφες ἡμῶν τὰ ἑσθλά
And forgive us our trespasses

ὡς ἡμεῖς ἡμεῖς
As we forgive

τοῖς ἁμαρτωλοῖς ἡμῶν
those who trespass against us

καὶ μὴ ἐλθέσθαι ἡμᾶς
And lead us not into temptation

ἀλλὰ ῥυθίθησθε ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ
But deliver us from the evil one

ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ ἡμῶν
In Christ Jesus our Lord

ὅτι σου τὸ
For Thine is

ἡ βασιλεία, ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα,
the kingdom, the power and the glory,

εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα Ἀμήν
forever, Amen

Hymns & Rituals



Watos Introduction to the Verses of Cymbals

Rite: The Verses of Cymbals are chanted at the beginning of the Vespers and Matins Raising of Incense. The introductory verses are chanted according to the day of the week. On Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday; the Adam verses (consisting of four verses) are chanted. On Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday; the Watos verses (consisting of two verses) are chanted. These are followed by the verses for Saint Mary, the angels, the apostles, the martyrs, the saints, and the conclusion.

| | |
|---|--|
| Lord have mercy. | Κυριε ελεησον. |
| We worship the Father and the son, and the Holy Spirit, the holy and co-essential Trinity. | Τενονωψτ υφιωτ νεμ Πωηρι: νεμ Πιπνευμα εθουαβ: Ψτριας εθουαβ: νομοουσιος. |
| Hail to the Church, the house of the angels, Hail to the Virgin, who gave birth to our Savior. | Χερε τεκκλησια: πιηι ητε νιαστσελοσ: χερε τπαρθενος: ετασμεσ Πενσωτηρ. |
| Hail to you O Mary, the fair dove, who has borne to us, God the Logos. | Χερε νε Μαρια: τβρουπι εθνεσως: θηετασμισι ναν: υφνοντ πιλοσος. |
| Hail to you O Mary, with a holy hail, Hail to you O Mary, the Mother of the Holy One. | Χερε νε Μαρια δεη ονχερε εθουαβ: χερε νε Μαρια: εμαν υφθεθουαβ. |



Group Hymn

The Bread of Life (Four Verses)

Rite: The hymn **Πρωικ** reflects on the Lord Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life and the rational Manna that came down from Heaven to give us life. It is chanted during the Distribution of the Holy Mysteries (Communion).

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>The Bread of Life, who came down for us from heaven, has given life to the world.</p> | <p>Πρωικ ἠτε ἰωνῶ: ἐταρά ἐπεσχητ: ναν ἐβολῶσεν ἴφε: αφτ ἰπωνῶ ἰπικοςμος.</p> |
| <p>And you too, O Mary, have borne in your womb the rational Manna, which came from the Father.</p> | <p>Ἦθο ζωι Ἰαρια: ἀρεταί ῶεν τενεχι: ἰπιμῶννα ἠνοῆτον: ἐταρά ἐβολῶσεν Φιωτ.</p> |
| <p>You have brought Him forth without blemish; He gave us His Body and His precious Blood, and we live forever.</p> | <p>Ἀρεμῶσφ ἄβνε θωλεβ: αφτ ναν ἰπεφωμῶ: νεμ πεφῶσνοφ ετταιηοφτ: ἄνωῶσ ῶῶ ἐνεε.</p> |
| <p>Around You stand the cherubim and the seraphim, and they cannot look at You.</p> | <p>Σετωοφνοφ εἰροκ: ἠχε νιχεροφβιμ: νεμ νισεραφιμ: σεῶῶῶν ἐροκ ἄν.</p> |





Spirit & Life



Visit the St. Mark Festival's website at

www.smfsus.org

to find the material for the festival and for guidelines
and information on the tests