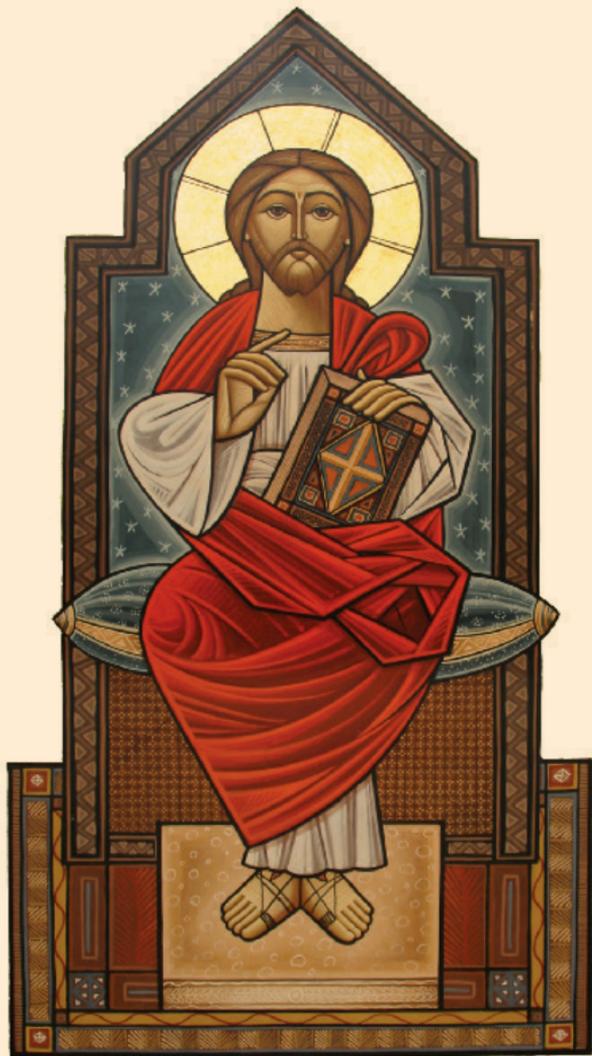


Fasting and Prayer  
Program



## A Christ-like Life

*Daily meditations  
to help us apply the  
characteristics of Christ in  
our lives.*

The Holy Great Fast  
2024

*“Perfection in this life according to Orthodox theology and spirituality is not the state of “I have arrived. I have made it. I am saved.” Rather, it is the state of “I am on the way. I am moving, I am on a journey. I am growing.” Man’s life is never complete... we shall always be “on the way.” Our very perfection is always to grow more perfect, more like unto Christ. And this is a never-ending process.”\**

- Anthony M. Coniaris

\*Excerpt from *Philokalia: The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality* pg 76

## PREFACE

The Fasting and Prayer Program of the Holy Great Fast 2024 focuses on a number of questions:

Do I live a Christ-like life?

Do I need to?

Did the saints live this life?

The answers may vary from one person to another.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has called us to be holy and perfect. In His incarnation, He Himself has shown us, how we can attain this life **through** Him.

St Paul has said:

*“For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal 3:27)*

*“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” (Col 2:6)*

*“...among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.” (Rom 1:6)*

So everyone who has received Christ, put on Christ and is the called of Christ, should therefore walk in Christ.

The program will take us on a journey, with great depth, into the characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in the words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, has a perfect and well balanced personality.

Many saints have meditated day and night on His name, His salvation, His divinity, His humanity. It was for them the source of all spiritual power. The program will help us to focus on some of the characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may strive to attain them in the journey of the Holy Great Fast.

The program also contains the sayings of St Isaac the Syrian, whose treasured texts on the spiritual life, show us how the Saints have lived this life through Christ. They truly lived the verse of the apostle St Paul, *“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” (1 Cor 11:1)*

May our Lord Jesus Christ help all of us to live a Christ-like life, through the intercessions of St Mary and St Mina, and through the prayers of H.H. Pope Tawadros II and H.G. Bishop Daniel.

**Glory be to God forever. Amen.**

# AND THEY WERE CALLED CHRISTIANS

*“. . . and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26)*

The name “Christian” was first given to the followers of Jesus in Antioch. The name tells us something very important about the Christian: that there is a resemblance between Christ and the Christian. The Christian is first and foremost a **CHRIST** person.

## A New Name for a New People

The people in Antioch had many names in their resourceful language but they had no name to cover this type of character. These followers of Jesus did things, said things, lived things hitherto unheard of in the history of the world. They lived purity - purity of a new order, purity of thought and feeling. They lived forgiveness - forgiveness of a new kind, forgiveness for friend and foe alike. They lived love - love of a new order, love for those who least deserved it. They lived humility - a new kind of humility the world had not seen before except in Jesus! So they made a new name for these people in whom they saw the purity, the forgiveness, the love, and the humility of Jesus. They called them **CHRISTIANOI**, Christ people! There was something so new about these people, something so refreshingly different, that they coined a new name for them.

## The Early Christians

In 248 A.D. Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, wrote the following to his friend Donatus about Christians:

“This seems to be a cheerful world, Donatus, when I view it from this fair garden under the shadow of these vines. But if I climb some great mountain and look out over the wide lands, you know very well what I would see - brigands on the road, pirates on the seas, in the amphitheaters men murdering each other to please the applauding crowds, and under all roofs I see misery and selfishness. It is really a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. Yet in the midst of it, I have found a quiet and holy people. They have discovered a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of this sinful life. They are despised and persecuted but they care not. These people, Donatus, are Christians and I am one of them.”

They were a different people, those early Christians, conformed not to the world but to Christ. Christ people!

The Athenian orator Aristides, writing to the Emperor Hadrian (117-138 A.D.), described the early Christians as follows:

“The Christians know and trust God ... They do good to their enemies. They love one another . . . They rescue the orphan from him who does him violence ... If anyone among them is poor and needy, and they do not have food to spare, they fast for two or three days, that they may supply him with necessary food. They scrupulously obey the commands of their Messiah. Every morning and every hour they thank and praise God for His loving-kindness toward them.... Because of them there flows forth all the beauty that there is in the world. But the good deeds they do, they do not proclaim in the ears of the multitude, but they take care that no one shall perceive them... Truly, this is a new people and there is something divine in them.”

A new name had to be found for those new people - a name that expressed the Christ Who lived in them and made them “the salt of the earth and the light of the world.”: **CHRISTIANS! CHRIST PEOPLE!** “. . . and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26).



To be a Christian is to be committed to God in Christ. It is to be a living member of His Body, the Church. It is to be under compulsion to live a certain kind of life – the life of Christ.

The privilege of being a Christian bears a responsibility – the responsibility of knowing that I am here not to blow my own horn but to glorify Christ, to be His servant in today’s world, to work for Him and speak for Him, and bear a cross for Him, to deny self, to minister to the sick, the weak, the hungry, the oppressed in His Name.

Does the world today see something of Christ’s love, His forgiveness, His humility in us? Is our lifestyle, our words and deeds, a witness of our faith in Christ?

**Would anyone be able to look at me today and guess that I am a Christian?**

- Anthony M. Coniaris

Excerpt from *Treasures from Paul's Letters Vol II*. pg 83-88

## ST ISAAC THE SYRIAN

The great luminary of the life of stillness, St Isaac, was born in the early seventh century in eastern Arabia, the present day Qatar on the Persian Gulf. Gifted with a keen intellect, he thirsted also for spiritual knowledge, and, when still quite young, entered a monastery with his brother. St. Isaac soon developed a desire for the solitary life, departing the monastery and settling far away from his monastic community in a lonely cell where he was able to devote himself fully to God.

St. Isaac was soon called by God to rule over the Church in Nineveh. He was consecrated Bishop of Nineveh (and is therefore sometimes called St Isaac of Nineveh), but after five months received permission to return to solitude; he spent many years far south of Nineveh in the mountainous region of Beit Huzaye. There he lived as a solitary for many years, in strict asceticism, eating only three loaves a week with some uncooked vegetables. His constant study of the divine writings strained his eyes, and eventually blindness and old age forced him to retire to the monastery of Shabar, where he died and was buried.

He wrote his renowned and God inspired Ascetical Homilies toward the end of his long life of monastic struggle, about the end of the seventh century. The fame of his Homilies grew quickly, and about 100 years after their composition they were translated from Syriac into Greek by two monks of the Monastery of Mar Sabbas in Palestine, from which they spread throughout the monasteries of the Roman Empire and became a guide to generations thereafter. St Isaac's incomparable texts on the spiritual life have served the Church and the faithful well for some fourteen centuries.



*"Why do you increase your bonds?  
Take hold of your life before your  
light grows dark and you seek help  
and do not find it. This life has been  
given to you for repentance; do not  
waste it in vain pursuits."*

# CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST

FASTING	JUDGING NOT
PRAYER	RIGHTEOUSNESS
HUMILITY	COMPASSION
LOVE	KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS
HOLINESS	LIVING THE SCRIPTURES
PEACE	KINDNESS
GENTLENESS	SPREADING THE GOSPEL
PERFECTION	LOVING HIS ENEMIES
SOLITUDE & SILENCE	MERCY
FORGIVENESS	UNITY
RESISTING TEMPTATIONS	WISDOM
PURITY	FLEEING FROM HONOUR
LOVING HIS NEIGHBOURS	POWER & STRENGTH
SUFFERING	SURRENDER
SIMPLICITY	THANKSGIVING
PATIENCE	JUSTICE
OBEDIENCE	SACRIFICE
FAITHFULNESS	STRONG IN SPIRIT
ACCEPTING SINNERS	ENDURING FALSE ACCUSATIONS
SERVICE	VICTORY
LIGHT OF THE WORLD	CARRYING THE CROSS



**My Lord Jesus Christ, You fasted to teach us to struggle against sin; help me Lord to dedicate this fast to overcoming various sins in my life.**

## FASTING

Day 1

Monday, 11 March 2024

### FASTING AND FEASTING

Lent should be more than a time of fasting. It should also be a joyous time of feasting.

Lent is a time to fast from certain things and to feast on others. It is a time in which we should:

FAST from judging others, FEAST on Christ in dwelling in them  
FAST from emphasis on difference, FEAST on the unity of all life  
FAST from apparent darkness, FEAST on the reality of light  
FAST from thoughts of illness, FEAST on the healing power of God  
FAST from words that pollute, FEAST on phrases that are healing and loving  
FAST from discontent, FEAST on gratitude  
FAST from anger, FEAST on patience  
FAST from pessimism, FEAST on optimism  
FAST from worry, FEAST on divine order  
FAST from complaining, FEAST on appreciation  
FAST from negatives, FEAST on affirmatives  
FAST from unrelenting pressures, FEAST on unceasing prayer  
FAST from hostility, FEAST on unresistance  
FAST from self-concern, FEAST on Eternal Truth  
FAST from discouragement, FEAST on hope  
FAST from facts that depress, FEAST on truths that uplift  
FAST from lethargy, FEAST on enthusiasm  
FAST from suspicion, FEAST on trust  
FAST from thoughts that weaken, FEAST on promises that inspire  
FAST from shadows of sorrow, FEAST on the sunlight of serenity  
FAST from idle gossip, FEAST on purposeful silence  
FAST from problems that overwhelm, FEAST on prayer that empowers. <sup>1</sup>

- Author Unknown

**“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.”  
(Matthew 4:1-2)**

#### ***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“Fasting is the champion of every virtue, the beginning of the struggle, the crown of the abstinent, the beauty of virginity and sanctity, the resplendence of chastity, the commencement of the path of Christianity, the mother of prayer, the wellspring of sobriety and prudence, the teacher of stillness, and the precursor of all good works.”*

#### **1st Monday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 2:23-3:5; Is	1:2-18
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 6:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 12:24-34
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 1:26-27
	Catholican	James 2:1-13
	Acts	Acts 14:19-28
	Psalm	Ps 22:26
	Gospel	Mark 9:33-50

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You often withdrew by Yourself and prayed; help me Lord to always turn to You in prayer.**

**PRAYER**

Day 2

Tuesday, 12 March 2024

**TODAY I TALKED WITH GOD**

A comment by Robert A. Cook, president of King's College in New York, renewed my appreciation for the privilege of prayer. Speaking at a meeting, Cook said that the day before, he had been at a gathering in Washington and had talked with Vice President George Bush. Two hours later he spoke briefly with President Ronald Reagan. Then smiling broadly, Cook said, "But that's nothing! Today I talked with God!"

This story reminds me of the youngster who was asked by an atheist, "How do you know there is a God?" The youngster replied, "I know! I just spoke to Him this morning."

The great importance of prayer can be seen in the life of Jesus. Every major decision in His life was preceded by prayer. He prayed before His baptism. He prayed all night before choosing His apostles. He prayed before His transfiguration. He prayed before His passion. He prayed early in the morning. He prayed late at night.

Let me share with you these words of Henri Nouwen about the prayer life of Jesus: "In the morning, long before dawn, He got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. In the middle of sentences loaded with action - healing suffering people, casting out devils, responding to impatient disciples, travelling from town to town and preaching from synagogue to synagogue - we find these quiet words: 'In the morning, long before dawn, He got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there.' In the centre of breathless activities we hear a restful breathing. Surrounded by hours of moving we find a movement of quiet stillness. In the heart of much involvement there are words of withdrawal. In the midst of action there is contemplation. And after much togetherness there is solitude. The more I read this nearly silent sentence locked in between the loud words of action, the more I have the sense that the secret of Jesus' ministry is hidden in that lonely place where He went to pray, early in the morning, long before dawn."<sup>2</sup>

- Anthony M. Coniaris

**"So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed."  
(Luke 5:16)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"Prayer is: the haven of help, the fountainhead of salvation, a treasury of assurance, a saving anchor in time of storm, an illumination to those in darkness, a staff for the weak, a shelter in time of trials, a source of recovery at the time of sickness, a shield of deliverance in war, an arrow sharpened in face of enemies."*

**1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Is 1:19-2:3;	Zech 8:7-13
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 23:1,3
	Gospel	Matt 9:10-15
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 9:14-29
	Catholican	1 Pet 4:3-11
	Acts	Acts 5:34-42
	Psalm	Ps 25:16-17
	Gospel	Luke 12:41-50

# My Lord Jesus Christ, You humbled Yourself and became Man; help me Lord to live the life of humility.

## HUMILITY

Day 3 Wednesday, 13 March 2024

### HUMILITY

“Humility is not the mere outer appearance of a person, such as dressing in rough clothes, talking with a soft voice, or walking with a bowed head. Also it is not merely expressed by words a person repeats to others saying that he is a sinner, wicked and not worthy. Neither is it expressed by words one repeats to God declaring his triviality, humiliation, and spiritual poverty. Humility is the life one lives between himself and God, in which he feels he is nothing, even less than nothing, and whatever good or righteousness he has, is from God, and without God he is but dust, darkness and evil.”<sup>3</sup>

- The Late Bishop Youannes

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself...”  
(Philippians 2:5-8)

### *St Isaac the Syrian:*

*“Now humility of heart comes about in a person for two causes: either from precise knowledge of his sins, or from recollection of the greatness of God.”*

### 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Is 2:3-11; Joel 2:12-27	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 25:6-7
	Gospel	Luke 6:24-34
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 14:19-15:7
	Catholican	2 Pet 1:4-11
	Acts	Acts 10:9-20
	Psalm	Ps 25:20,16
	Gospel	Luke 6:35-38

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You are the spring of love;  
help me Lord to draw my love from the spring that  
never fails.**

**LOVE**

Day 4 Thursday, 14 March 2024

### **THE PARABLE OF GOD'S ASTONISHING LOVE**

The parable of the Prodigal Son has been called the Parable of the Astonishing Love of the Father. Let me share with you an imaginary letter sent to the father by the prodigal son:

Dad-

I have found your letter to me here on the desk. Perhaps you didn't want me to read it, now that I have come back home. But I'm glad I did. I thank you for your patience - for your understanding and love - for your mercy and forgiveness. I thank you also for the wonderful celebration on my return.

But Father - it was not the best robe clinging about my starven frame;

Father - it was not the ring; nor yet the shoes, nor anything

Your kind, fleet-footed servants brought;

Father - 'twas the thought that you, from your safe righteousness, could run to your unworthy son.

Father - not the dancing nor the singing, the feast, nor those who came, showed me your secret, and in part

Your long sight and your anguished heart.

Your friends and neighbors reverencing your ways, might marvel at the thing -

But I - my father - I, your son, a great way from you, saw you RUN! <sup>4</sup>

- Anthony M. Coniaris

**"As the Father loved Me, I also  
have loved you; abide in My  
love."  
(John 15:9)**

#### ***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"Love which stems from created things is like a small lamp whose light is sustained by being fed with olive-oil. Again, it is like a river fed by rainfall; once the supply that feeds it fails, the surge of its flow abates. But love whose cause is God is like a spring welling up from the depths: its flow never abates, for God alone is that spring of love whose supply never fails."*

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Is 2:11-19; Zech 8:18-23	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 24:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 8:23-25
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 4:16-5:9
	Catholican	1 John 1:8-2:11
	Acts	Acts 8:3-13
	Psalm	Ps 118:14, 18
	Gospel	Mark 4:21-29

# My Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Holy One and have called me to the life of holiness; help me Lord to be a holy dwelling place for You.

HOLINESS

Day 5

Friday, 15 March 2024

## YOU ARE THE DWELLING OF GOD, AND A TEMPLE FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

You my brother, are not only the son of God and a holy breath which proceeded from the mouth of God, but you are also a temple for God and God dwells in you. The apostle says to us: *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are"* (1 Cor 3:16-17).

God's desire from the beginning is to dwell in you and to look at your heart and say: *"This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it"* (Ps 132:14). You will say to Him: 'O Lord you have the churches, temples and altars. You dwell in Heaven and the Heaven of heavens is Your throne'. He will say to you: 'I prefer to live in your heart, rather than in any of these.' *"My son, give me your heart"* (Prov 23:26).

If you are then a house for God and God dwells in you, then remember the saying of the Bible: *"Holiness adorns Your house"* (Ps 93:5). Know that by sin you defile the house of God, which is you.

Jesus Christ searches for a place to live in, and that place is you. When the Lord said about Himself that He: *"has nowhere to lay His head"* (Luke 9:58), He did not just mean materialistic houses, but even more so, the hearts of the people. He wants to live in your heart, and for you to live in His heart, to be confirmed in you and you in Him and for you to become a holy church for Him. If you know this my brother, that you are a temple for the Holy Spirit, then do not sin, in case you grieve the Spirit of God which is in you and extinguish it's fervour.

If the devil comes to you one day with a sin, say to him:

- *Go far away from me, I am not for you.*
- *I am the house of God, I am a dwelling for God, I am a holy place for the Lord.*
- *I am the one whom God knocks on his door, for me to open unto Him.*
- *I am a temple for the Holy Spirit, I am a holy church.*
- *I am the one to whom the Father and the Son come to make a dwelling place.*
- *I am a dwelling for the Holy Trinity.*
- *Am I so insignificant that the devil can defile? No, I am a second heaven, a throne for God to reign on.*<sup>5</sup>

- H.H. Pope Shenouda III

**"As He who called you is holy,  
you also be holy in all your  
conduct, because it is written,  
'Be holy, for I am holy.'"  
(1 Peter 1:15-16)**

**St Isaac the Syrian:**  
*"I give praise to Your holy Nature,  
Lord, for You have made my nature  
a sanctuary for Your hiddenness  
and a tabernacle for Your  
mysteries, a place where You can  
dwell, and a holy temple for Your  
divinity."*

### 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 6:3-7:26; Is 3:1-14	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 30:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 5:12-16
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 12:6-21
	Catholican	3 John 1:1-14
	Acts	Acts 2:42-3:9
	Psalm	Ps 13:5-6
	Gospel	Luke 11:1-10

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Prince of Peace;  
grant me Lord Your peace which is everlasting.**

**PEACE**

Day 6

Saturday, 16 March 2024

**PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI**

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light  
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. <sup>6</sup>

- St Francis of Assisi

**“For unto us a Child is born,  
Unto us a Son is given; And the  
government will be upon His  
shoulder. And His name will be  
called Wonderful, Counselor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace.”  
(Isaiah 9:6)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“In all the paths on which people  
journey in this world they will find  
no peace until they draw near to  
the hope which is in God.”*

**1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 119:57-58
	Gospel	Matt 5:25-37
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 12:1-21
	Catholicon	James 1:1-12
	Acts	Acts 21:27-39
	Psalm	Ps 5:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 5:38-48

## Sunday of the Treasures of the Kingdom of Heaven

## CARRYING THE CROSS

Day 7 Sunday, 17 March 2024

Commemoration of Pope Shenouda  
III, 117th Pope of Alexandria's  
departure

**“But seek first the kingdom of  
God and His righteousness, and  
all these things shall be added  
to you.”**

**(Matthew 6:33)**

### THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS (PART I)

“To many the saying, ‘Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me,’ seems hard, but it will be much harder to hear that final word: ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire.’ Those who hear the word of the cross and follow it willingly now, need not fear that they will hear of eternal damnation on the day of judgment. This sign of the cross will be in the heavens when the Lord comes to judge. Then all the servants of the cross, who during life made themselves one with the Crucified, will draw near with great trust to Christ, the judge.

Why, then, do you fear to take up the cross when through it you can win a kingdom? In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection from enemies, in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the cross is strength of mind, in the cross is joy of spirit, in the cross is highest virtue, in the cross is perfect holiness. There is no salvation of soul nor hope of everlasting life but in the cross...”<sup>7</sup>

- Thomas a Kempis

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“The path of God is a daily cross.  
No one has ascended into Heaven  
by means of ease, for we know  
where the way of ease leads and  
how it ends.”*

### 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 17:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 6:34-7:12
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 18:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 7:22-29
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 13:1-14
	Catholican	James 1:13-21
	Acts	Acts 21:40-22:16
	Psalm	Ps 25:1-2,4
	Gospel	Matt 6:19-33

(Note: This is Part 1 in a 7 part series on Carrying the Cross. The series continues on each Sunday of the Holy Great Fast and concludes on Lazarus' Saturday.)

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You are gentle and humble in heart; help me Lord to have a spirit of gentleness in all that I say and do.**

**GENTLENESS**

Day 8

Monday, 18 March 2024

### **A GENTLE AND HUMBLE SPIRIT**

Father Pishoy Kamel was always gentle, and his voice was soft and was never raised. He always used to choose his words with great care so as not to hurt any one he spoke to. His gentle smile was constantly giving hope to all who were sad or depressed.

In the start of building St. Mina's Monastery, a few of the youth went with Father Pishoy for a retreat in the monastery. They took with them tents to stay in, and they had to carry those tents 13 kilometres from the train station to the monastery. Father Pishoy would crowd out the youth so that he could carry the tents.

The humility of Father Pishoy came from his depth and was not just a performance he put on... Once in the middle of the church a person was cursing and swearing at him and used very harsh and upsetting words. He remained silent throughout so that he might not lose one soul for the sake of his honour or his dignity.

He often would receive letters of complaint against him, or letters of complaint would go to others about him. Many evil people would write harsh words against him although he was defending the truth or those who were unable to defend themselves. Despite this with every letter his humility would increase and he would bear the suffering in silence sharing with Christ who was brought as a lamb to the slaughter in silence.<sup>8</sup>

- [www.suscopts.org](http://www.suscopts.org)

**“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”**  
**(Matthew 11:29)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“Conquer evil men by your gentle kindness, and make zealous men wonder at your goodness.”*

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 3:6-14; Is 4:2-5:7	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 40:11
	Gospel	Mark 9:25-29
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 1:18-25
	Catholicon	Jude 1:1-8
	Acts	Acts 4:36-5:11
	Psalm	Ps 29:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 18:1-8

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You are the model of perfection; help me Lord to keep growing, to keep moving towards perfection.**

## THE BEGINNING NOT THE END

[Some] Christians are constantly proclaiming on radio and television that all we have to do to be saved is make a “decision” for Christ and be “born again” by believing in Jesus. They tell us that one becomes a full and complete Christian as soon as this happens. The whole process of growth is thereby omitted. One goes immediately from the cradle to mature spiritual adulthood. Orthodoxy believes that to confess faith in Christ is the beginning not the end. It is a journey, not a bed on which to lie while we wait for the Lord’s return. The moment we become like the Pharisee and say, “I have arrived. I am where I am supposed to be. I thank God I am not like the others” - at that point we become stagnant and stagnation in the spiritual life is condemnation.

Perfection in this life according to Orthodox theology and spirituality is not the state of “I have arrived. I have made it. I am saved.” Rather, it is the state of “I am on the way. I am moving, I am on a journey. I am growing.” Man’s life is never complete...we shall always be “on the way.” It is a constant journey from being the image of God to becoming the likeness of God. Our very perfection is always to grow more perfect, more like unto Christ. And this is a never-ending process.

To be as perfect as God, is impossible for us. But to keep moving toward perfection is always within our possibility with the help of God. It is moving from sin to Christ, from slavery to freedom, from darkness to light, from falsehood to truth, from despair to hope, from death to life. And once we have reached truth, it is moving from truth to greater truth, from wisdom to greater wisdom, from joy to deeper joy, from understanding to deeper understanding, from all-embracing love to more all-embracing love. And this process goes on eternally. We can never reach the point where we can say, “Well, now I’ve made it. I just have to sit around and be perfect.”<sup>9</sup>

- Anthony M. Coniaris

## PERFECTION

Day 9 Tuesday, 19 March 2024

Feast of the Cross

**“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

**(2 Corinthians 5:21)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“There are no bounds to perfection, for even the perfection of the most perfect is naught but imperfection. Hence, until the moment of death neither the time nor the works of repentance can ever be complete.”*

### Readings of the Feast of the Cross

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 4:6-8
	Gospel	John 8:28-42
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 60:4-5
	Gospel	John 12:26-36
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 1:17-31
	Catholicism	1 Pet 2:11-25
	Acts	Acts 10:34-43
	Psalm	Ps 65:1-2
	Gospel	John 10:22-38

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You loved solitude and silence; help me Lord to withdraw from the world so that I can spend some quiet time with You.**

### **THE LOVE OF SOLITUDE AND SILENCE**

Seek a suitable time for leisure and meditate often on the favours of God. Leave curiosities alone. Read such matters as bring sorrow to the heart rather than occupation to the mind. If you withdraw yourself from unnecessary talking and idle running about, from listening to gossip and rumours you will find enough time that is suitable for holy meditation.

Very many great saints avoided the company of men wherever possible and chose to serve God in retirement. "As often as I have been among men," said one writer, "I have returned less a man." We often find this to be true when we take part in long conversations. It is easier to be silent altogether than not to speak too much. To stay at home is easier than to be sufficiently on guard while away. Anyone, then, who aims to live the inner and spiritual life must go apart, with Jesus, from the crowd.

In silence and quiet the devout soul advances in virtue and learns the hidden truths of Scripture. There she finds a flood of tears with which to bathe and cleanse herself nightly, that she may become the more intimate with her Creator the farther she withdraws from all the tumult of the world. For God and His holy angels will draw near to him who withdraws from friends and acquaintances.

It is better for a man to be obscure and to attend to his salvation than to neglect it and work miracles.<sup>10</sup>

- Thomas a Kempis

**"Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there."  
(Matthew 14:22-23)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***  
*"The highest form of prayer is to stand silently in awe before God."*

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 2:11-20; Is 5:17-25;	
	Mal 1:6-3:6	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 18:17-18
	Gospel	Matt 5:17-24
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 3:1-17
	Catholicon	2 John 1:8-13
	Acts	Acts 5:3-11
	Psalm	Ps 18:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 15:32-38

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You showed me what it means to forgive; help me Lord to forgive those who have hurt me.**

**FORGIVENESS**

Day 11 Thursday, 21 March 2024

**“LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU” (MATTHEW 5:44)**

Satan planted hate and envy towards Pope Kyrillos VI in the hearts of twelve important Cairo-based men. The men printed pamphlets which were defamatory to the Pope. They would stay up till 1:30 a.m. every day preparing these pamphlets and distributing them to various churches. This went on for a year and a half. One time while they were printing, the printer did not function. When they fixed it and restarted the printing, they found that a major part of the printer broke. They became quite frightened and felt that God was not supporting their action.

The leader of the group went to visit the Pope and said, “I have sinned, absolve me, your Holiness.” The Pope asked, “What is the matter my son?” The leader responded, “I insulted you too much your Holiness!” The Pope said, “Staying up till 1:30 in the morning every day, printing pamphlets and distributing them from Alexandria to Aswan, until the printer broke . . .” Astonished, the leader then said, “You know all of this, your Holiness!” The Pope listed the names of the men who participated in this activity, leaving the leader amazed at how much he knew. When the leader asked, - “Why didn’t you talk to us?” - Pope Kyrillos responded, “I was praying for you.” The leader said, “I have sinned, please absolve me your Holiness.” The Pope answered, “With all my heart I absolve you my son.” When the leader asked, “Should I bring my colleagues, your Holiness.” The Pope answered, “Why not my son, let them come.” The leader asked, “Do you absolve them your Holiness?” The Pope answered, “With all my heart, I absolve them my son.” The group of men visited the Pope and received his blessing. They all remained his most faithful servants up to the moment of his departure.<sup>11</sup>

- Pope Kyrillos VI Sons

Commemoration of Fr Pishoy  
Kamel's departure

**“And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’”  
(Luke 23:33-34)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“To bear a grudge and pray, means to sow seed on the sea and expect a harvest.”*

**2nd Thursday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 5:15-22; Is 6:1-12; Josh 2:1-6:27	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 28:9
	Gospel	Matt 11:20-30
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 16:17-27
	Catholicon	James 3:1-12
	Acts	Acts 12:12-23
	Psalm	Ps 48:10-11
	Gospel	Matt 19:16-30

**My Lord Jesus Christ, the devil tried to tempt You but You showed me how to resist temptations; help me Lord to resist temptations and to overcome them with Your help.**

Day 12

Friday, 22 March 2024

## RESISTING TEMPTATIONS

### RESISTING TEMPTATIONS

So long as we live in this world we cannot escape suffering and temptation. Whence it is written in Job: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare." Everyone, therefore, must guard against temptation and must watch in prayer lest the devil, who never sleeps but goes about seeking whom he may devour, find occasion to deceive him. No one is so perfect or so holy but he is sometimes tempted; man cannot be altogether free from temptation.

Yet temptations, though troublesome and severe, are often useful to a man, for in them he is humbled, purified, and instructed. The saints all passed through many temptations and trials to profit by them, while those who could not resist became reprobate and fell away. There is no state so holy, no place so secret that temptations and trials will not come.

Many people try to escape temptations, only to fall more deeply. We cannot conquer simply by fleeing, but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies. Little by little, in patience and long-suffering you will overcome them, by the help of God.

Above all, we must be especially alert against the beginnings of temptation, for the enemy is more easily conquered if he is refused admittance to the mind and is met beyond the threshold when he knocks.

Someone has said very aptly: "Resist the beginnings; remedies come too late, when by long delay the evil has gained strength." First, a mere thought comes to mind, then strong imagination, followed by pleasure, evil delight, and consent. Thus, because he is not resisted in the beginning, Satan gains full entry. And the longer a man delays in resisting, so much the weaker does he become each day, while the strength of the enemy grows against him.

We should not despair, therefore, when we are tempted, but pray to God the more fervently that He may see fit to help us, for according to the word of St Paul, He will make issue with temptation that we may be able to bear it. Let us humble our souls under the hand of God in every trial and temptation for He will save and exalt the humble in spirit.

In temptations and trials the progress of a man is measured; in them opportunity for merit and virtue is made more manifest. When a man is not troubled it is not hard for him to be fervent and devout, but if he bears up patiently in time of adversity, there is hope for great progress.<sup>12</sup>

- Thomas a Kempis

**"Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil." (Luke 4:1-2)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"It is not possible without temptations for a man to grow wise in spiritual warfare, to know his Provider and perceive his God, and to be secretly confirmed in his faith, save by virtue of the experience which he has gained."*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 8:1-9:4; 1 Sam 17:1-18:4;	
	Is 7:1-14; Job 11:1-20	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 116:7-8
	Gospel	Matt 15:39-16:12
Mass:	Pauline	Heb 12:28-13:16
	Catholicon	1 Pet 4:7-16
	Acts	Acts 15:22-31
	Psalm	Ps 29:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 6:39-49

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Pure One and have shown this purity in Your life; help me Lord to be pure in body, in thought and in heart.**

**PURITY**

Day 13      Saturday, 23 March 2024

### THREE MONKS

Three monks met outside their cells, each wearing their black garments, each holding a stick to help him walk; nobody knows what's inside their hearts except the Creator who created them.

The three monks went for a walk at sunset, when they happened to see another monk coming out of his cell, walking towards the village, where other people live in the world.

The first monk thought, "Poor monk! He left his place of worship to go and live in the world to gain some money." He thought thus because he loved money.

The second monk thought, "This monk has left his cell, hiding under cover at night to go to the world and enjoy his desires. How disgraceful he is." He thought thus because he was not clean from inside, and his desires always conquered him.

But the third monk, whose heart was [pure and] full of love, love that never thinks of evil thoughts silently praised him thinking, "O monk, how glorious you are, you have left your cell to be with God in the quietness of the place and the calmness of night. You are so close to your Creator, I hope to be like you."<sup>13</sup>

- H.G. Bishop Andrew

**"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."  
(1 John 3:2-3)**

#### ***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"What is the sign that a man has attained to purity of heart, and when does a man know that his heart has entered into purity? When he sees all men as good and none appears to him to be unclean and defiled, then in truth, his heart is pure."*

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 25:7-8,11
	Gospel	Mark 9:43-50
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 14:1-18
	Catholican	James 1:22-27
	Acts	Acts 22:17-30
	Psalm	Ps 118:19-20
	Gospel	Matt 7:13-21

### THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS (PART II)

“...Take up your cross, therefore, and follow Jesus, and you shall enter eternal life. He Himself opened the way before you in carrying His cross, and upon it He died for you, that you, too, might take up your cross and long to die upon it. If you die with Him, you shall also live with Him, and if you share His suffering, you shall also share His glory.

Behold, in the cross is everything, and upon your dying on the cross everything depends. There is no other way to life and to true inward peace than the way of the holy cross. Go where you will, seek what you will, you will not find a higher way, nor a less exalted but safer way, than the way of the holy cross. Arrange and order everything to suit your will and judgment, and still you will find that some suffering must always be borne, willingly or unwillingly, and thus You will always find the cross.

Either you will experience bodily pain or you will undergo tribulation of spirit in your soul. At times you will be forsaken by God, at times troubled by those about you and, what is worse, you will often grow weary of yourself. You cannot escape, you cannot be relieved by any remedy or comfort but must bear with it as long as God wills. For He wishes you to learn to bear trial without consolation, to submit yourself wholly to Him that you may become more humble through suffering. No one understands the passion of Christ so thoroughly or heartily as the man whose lot it is to suffer the like himself...”<sup>14</sup>

- Thomas a Kempis

“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”  
(Matthew 4:10)

*St Isaac the Syrian:*  
“The knowledge of the Cross is concealed in the sufferings of the Cross.”

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 51:1,9
	Gospel	Mark 1:12-15
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 57:1
	Gospel	Luke 4:1-13
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 14:19-15:7
	Catholican	James 2:1-13
	Acts	Acts 23:1-11
	Psalm	Ps 27:8-9
	Gospel	Matt 4:1-11

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You taught us through Your example to love one another; help me Lord to love my neighbour as myself.**

**LOVING HIS  
NEIGHBOURS**

Day 15

Monday, 25 March 2024

**BELONGING TO CHRIST**

One night during the First World War a chaplain crawled through the trenches. He came upon a dying, agonising soldier. He tried to help him; took his torn, bleeding body into his arms and whispered words of spiritual help and consolation to him. The boy opened his eyes and looked somewhat startled at the priest. "Father," he gasped, "I do not belong to your church." The Chaplain answered, "I know, my lad, but you belong to my God."<sup>15</sup>

- Anthony M. Coniaris

**"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."  
(John 15:12-13)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***  
***"The key to divine gifts is handed to the heart through love for one's neighbour."***

**3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 1:20-33; Is 8:13-9:7	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 32:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 19:11-28
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 5:9-6:5
	Catholican	1 Pet 1:3-12
	Acts	Acts 17:10-14
	Psalm	Ps 32:5
	Gospel	Luke 11:33-36

# My Lord Jesus Christ, You suffered for my sake so that I may be redeemed; help me Lord to share in Your sufferings.

## THE TEA CUP

There was a couple who travelled to England to shop in a beautiful antique store. Spotting an exceptional tea cup, they asked, "May we see that? We've never seen a cup quite so beautiful."

As the lady handed it to them, suddenly the tea cup spoke, "You don't understand." It said, "I have not always been a tea cup. There was a time when I was just a lump of red clay. My master took me & rolled me, pounded & patted me over & over, & I yelled out, 'Don't do that. I don't like it! Let me alone,' but he only smiled, & gently said, 'Not yet!'" Then...WHAM! I was placed on a spinning wheel & suddenly I was spun around & around & around. 'Stop it! I'm getting so dizzy! I'm going to be sick!' I screamed. But the master only nodded & quietly said, 'Not yet.' He spun me & poked & prodded & bent me out of shape to suit himself & then...then he put me in the oven. I never felt such heat.

I yelled & knocked & pounded at the door. 'Help! Get me out of here!' I could see him through the opening & I could read his lips as he shook his head from side to side, 'Not yet.' When I thought I couldn't bear it another minute, the door opened. He carefully took me out & put me on the shelf, & I began to cool.

Oh, that felt so good! Ah, this is much better, I thought. But, after I cooled, he picked me up & he brushed & painted me all over. The fumes were horrible. I thought I would gag. 'Oh, please, stop it, stop it!!' I cried. He only shook his head & said, 'Not yet!' Then suddenly he put me back in to the oven. Only it was not like the first one. This was twice as hot & I just knew I would suffocate. I begged. I pleaded. I screamed. I cried. I was convinced I would never make it. I was ready to give up. Just then the door opened & he took me out & again placed me on the shelf, where I cooled & waited...& waited...wondering, 'What's he going to do to me next?! An hour later he handed me a mirror & said, 'Look at yourself.' And I did.

I said, 'That's not me. That couldn't be me. It's beautiful. I'm beautiful!' Quietly he spoke: 'I want you to remember back to the beginning,' he said, 'I know it hurt to be rolled & pounded & patted but, had I just left you alone, you'd have dried up. I know it made you dizzy to spin around on the wheel but, if I had stopped, you would have crumbled. I know it hurt, & it was hot & disagreeable in the oven but, if I hadn't put you there, you would have cracked. I know the fumes were bad when I brushed & painted you all over but, if I hadn't done that, you never would have hardened. You would not have had any colour in your life. If I hadn't put you back in that second oven, you wouldn't have survived for long because the hardness would not have held. Now you are a finished product. Now you are what I had in mind when I first began with you.'"

God knows what He is doing with each of us. He is the Potter, & we are His clay. He will mould us & make us, & expose us to just enough pressures – of just the right kinds – so that we may be made into a flawless piece of work to fulfill HIS good, pleasing & perfect will. <sup>16</sup>

- Author unknown

## SUFFERING

Day 16 Tuesday, 26 March 2024

Commemoration of Fr Mikhail Ibrahim's departure

**"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."**  
(1 Peter 2:21-23)

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"The man who follows Christ in solitary mourning is greater than he who praises Christ amid the congregation of men."*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 2:1-15; Is 10:12-20;	
	Josh 7:1-26	
Mats:	Psalm	Ps 32:10
	Gospel	Luke 12:54-59
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 4:1-8
	Catholicon	1 John 2:1-11
	Acts	Acts 27:9-12
	Psalm	Ps 32:2-3
	Gospel	John 8:31-39

**My Lord Jesus Christ, Your life on earth was one of simplicity; help me Lord to live the life of simplicity.**

**SIMPLICITY**

**Day 17 Wednesday, 27 March 2024**

### **A SIMPLE ROOM**

Father Pishoy Kamel was not concerned with material things, and he would always say, "If we have our strength and a single garment that is sufficient."

In the beginning of his ordination he lived with his elderly mother as she was ill and required constant care and attention. After that he moved to a different place, and the woman he was renting from was so happy. He then suggested to her to build more flats to accommodate students and this was fulfilled and two flats were built in the same block for students.

The wife of Father Pishoy was called Angele, and she tells this story about him. One day they were sitting together when he suddenly asked her, "Do you think we are serving the poor as we should?"

She said to him, "You continually visit them... and send to them personally whatever they need to their homes... what more can you do for them?"

So he said, "No, No, we got to live amongst them. What do you think if we sold all we had and we lived in a small room made of corrugated iron like them? We will take a bed and a table and a few chairs and that's all we will need. After all did our Lord preach to us from heaven? No He came amongst us and lived like one of us. Therefore we must live amongst the poor."

However his wife apologised for lacking the ability of fulfilling his desire, and he with great husbandly love respected her wishes.<sup>17</sup>

- [www.suscpts.org](http://www.suscpts.org)

**"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."  
(Luke 2:7)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***  
*"O miserable man, if you want to find life, persevere in faith and humility; so that by them, you may find mercy, aid, and a voice from God in your heart; and if you want to acquire these two (faith and humility), ... walk in front of God in simplicity and not in understanding."*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 4:19-6:13; Joel 2:21-26; Is 9:9-10:4; Job 12:1-14:22	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 27:4
	Gospel	Luke 13:18-22
Mass:	Pauline	2 Thess 2:9-17
	Catholicon	2 Pet 2:9-15
	Acts	Acts 28:7-11
	Psalm	Ps 27:7-8
	Gospel	Luke 4:1-13

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You are always patient with me the sinner; help me Lord to be as patient with others as You are with me.**

**PATIENCE**

Day 18 Thursday, 28 March 2024

### **BEARING WITH THE FAULTS OF OTHERS**

Until God ordains otherwise, a man ought to bear patiently whatever he cannot correct in himself and in others. Consider it better thus - perhaps to try your patience and to test you, for without such patience and trial your merits are of little account. Nevertheless, under such difficulties you should pray that God will consent to help you bear them calmly.

If, after being admonished once or twice, a person does not amend, do not argue with him but commit the whole matter to God that His will and honour may be furthered in all His servants, for God knows well how to turn evil to good. Try to bear patiently with the defects and infirmities of others, whatever they may be, because you also have many a fault which others must endure.

If you cannot make yourself what you would wish to be, how can you bend others to your will? We want them to be perfect, yet we do not correct our own faults. We wish them to be severely corrected, yet we will not correct ourselves. Their great liberty displeases us, yet we would not be denied what we ask. We would have them bound by laws, yet we will allow ourselves to be restrained in nothing. Hence, it is clear how seldom we think of others as we do of ourselves.

If all were perfect, what should we have to suffer from others for God's sake? But God has so ordained, that we may learn to bear with one another's burdens, for there is no man without fault, no man without burden, no man sufficient to himself nor wise enough. Hence we must support one another, console one another, mutually help, counsel, and advise, for the measure of every man's virtue is best revealed in time of adversity - adversity that does not weaken a man but rather shows what he is.<sup>18</sup>

- Thomas a Kempis

**"Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ."  
(2 Thessalonians 3:5)**

#### ***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"The beginning of divine wisdom is clemency and gentleness, which arise from greatness of soul and the bearing of infirmities of men....The Apostle [St Paul] numbers peace and patience among the fruits of the Spirit."*

#### **3rd Thursday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 18:17-19:29; Prov 2:16-3:4; Is 11:10-12:2	
Mats:	Psalm	Ps 9:11-12
	Gospel	Luke 20:20-26
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 4:6-11
	Catholicon	James 4:1-10
	Acts	Acts 28:1-6
	Psalm	Ps 9:7-8
	Gospel	John 12:44-50

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You were obedient to the point of death; grant me Lord the virtue of obedience.**

## OBEDIENCE

Day 19

Friday, 29 March 2024

### OBEDIENCE

You might be doing great good somewhere but if you are sent elsewhere, you must be ready to leave. The work belongs to Jesus, not to us. Obedience and humility are the same thing. If you want to know if you are humble, ask yourself, "Do I obey because I see Christ in every command?" You can get used to poverty, but every act of obedience is an act of the will. It gets harder as we get older because we have our own ideas and resent advice and interference. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the [virtue] of obedience.<sup>19</sup>

- Mother Teresa

**"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."  
(Philippians 2:8)**

#### ***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"For the sake of His love for us and in obedience to His Father, Christ joyfully took upon Himself insult and sorrow, as Scripture says, 'For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame.'"*

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 9:7-10:11;	
	1 Sam 23:26-24:22; Job 15:1-35;	
	Is 13:2-13; Sirach* 2:1-3:4	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 16:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 20:27-38
Mass:	Pauline	Heb 11:1-8
	Catholicon	Jude 1:17-25
	Acts	Acts 23:6-11
	Psalm	Ps 16:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 11:14-26

\* Second Canonical Book

# My Lord Jesus Christ, You were faithful in all things; help me Lord to be faithful to You.

## FAITHFULNESS

Day 20 Saturday, 30 March 2024

### FAITHFULNESS OVER A LITTLE

The Bible says, *"You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things."* (Matt. 25:21)

This means that, as you have been faithful in earthly things, I will set you over the heavenly. You have been faithful in this present world, I will set you over eternity...

This principle could be applied in many fields...

+ If you are faithful in loving your relative, God will set you over loving the enemy. He will give you the grace which enables you to love your enemy...

+ If you are faithful in serving God during your leisure time, God may grant you the love to consecrate all your life for Him.

+ If you are faithful in rejecting willful sins, God will deliver you from unwillful sins...

+ If you are faithful in keeping your conscious mind from evil thoughts, God will grant you purity of the subconscious mind and God will also grant you purity of dreams...

+ If you are faithful in childhood, God will grant you faithfulness in your youth, which has more combats.

+ If you are faithful in not judging others by words, God will enable you not to judge by thoughts, which is more difficult.

+ Likewise, if you are faithful in controlling yourself from external anger, then God will grant you freedom from internal anger, freedom from rage, envy and thoughts of anger.

+ If you are faithful in the ordinary spiritualities (the fruits of the Spirit), God may grant you gifts of the Spirit; and without faithfulness in the first, you can never get the second.

God tests you first in the little, and if you prove to be faithful, He will set you over what is more. If you show your failure and faithlessness in the little, God will hardly set you over much...

As the Bible says, *"If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with the horses?"* (Jer 12:5)

It is amazing how many think themselves able to carry out big responsibilities while they are unable to cope with what is lesser. They are unable to use the grace they have, and still ask for more, forgetting God's words, *"You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things,"* this is conditional...<sup>20</sup>

- H.H. Pope Shenouda III

"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house."  
(Hebrews 3:1-2)

#### St Isaac the Syrian:

*"No man has been entrusted with great things without having first been tried in small ones."*

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 130:1-2
	Gospel	Mark 10:17-27
Mass:	Pauline	2 Cor 7:2-11
	Catholican	James 2:14-26
	Acts	Acts 23:12-35
	Psalm	Ps 27:6-8
	Gospel	Matt 18:23-35

## The Holy Cross

## CARRYING THE CROSS

Day 21

Sunday, 31 March 2024

### THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS (PART III)

“...The cross, therefore, is always ready; it awaits you everywhere. No matter where you may go, you cannot escape it, for wherever you go you take yourself with you and shall always find yourself. Turn where You will - above, below, without, or within - you will find a cross in everything, and everywhere you must have patience if you would have peace within and merit an eternal crown.

If you carry the cross willingly, it will carry and lead you to the desired goal where indeed there shall be no more suffering, but here there shall be. If you carry it unwillingly, you create a burden for yourself and increase the load, though still you have to bear it. If you cast away one cross, you will find another and perhaps a heavier one. Do you expect to escape what no mortal man can ever avoid? Which of the saints was without a cross or trial on this earth? Not even Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose every hour on earth knew the pain of His passion. “It was necessary for Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, . . . and so enter into His glory.” How is it that you look for another way than this, the royal way of the holy cross?...”<sup>21</sup>

- Thomas a Kempis

**“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”**  
(John 10:27-28)

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“The sum of all is that God the Lord surrendered His own Son to death on the Cross for the fervent love of creation.”*

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the Holy Fast

Vespers:	Psalm:	88:1-2
	Gospel:	Matt 15:1-20
Prophecies: -		
Matins:	Psalm:	55:1-2,16
	Gospel:	Matt 20:1-16
Mass:	Pauline:	2 Cor 6:2-13
	Catholicon:	James 3:1-12
	Acts:	24:1-23
	Psalm:	79:8-9
	Gospel:	Luke 15:11-32

*“The Christian cannot say that he knows Christ unless he has a sacred unity with and continuous contemplation on Christ’s Cross. So let us start a ten minute daily retreat to contemplate on Him who was crucified for us.” - Fr Pishoy Kamel*

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You opened Your heart and  
Your arms to the sinners; help me Lord to love  
sinners as You loved them and to remember that I,  
too, am a sinner.**

### **SMELLING LIKE BOURBON**

A middle-aged woman had experienced a drinking problem for years. No one paid much attention to her; in fact, people were careful to avoid her. Then one day a friend named Angie invited her to join a small prayer group that met once a week.

“Will you come?” Angie asked her.

The woman hesitated. “But I can’t come to a God-meeting smelling like . . . like . . . bourbon. What would the other ladies think?”

Angie smiled and replied, “Oh, we all smell of something. One of us has a problem with gossip. Another criticises her husband. And another has a problem with unforgiveness. God knows how we all smell, but He still loves us. Won’t you come?”

The stunned woman understood. She began to laugh even while crying a little. “Yes, oh, yes, I’ll come. Thank you. Thank you.”

She was accepted as she was, but once accepted, she did not remain the way she was. In Christ, and in that group of people who accepted her, she found the power to overcome, to become a new person in Christ Jesus.<sup>22</sup>

- Anthony M. Coniaris

“Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”  
**(Matthew 9:10-13)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“Love sinners, but hate their works, and do not despise them for their faults, lest you be tempted by the same. Remember that you share the earthly nature of Adam and that you are clothed with his infirmity.”*

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 27:1-41; Is 14:24-32;	
	Job 16:1-17:16	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 55:1, 27:7-8
	Gospel	Luke 14:7-15
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 8:12-26
	Catholicon	James 5:16-20
	Acts	Acts 11:2-18
	Psalm	Ps 55:16-17
	Gospel	Luke 16:1-9

# My Lord Jesus Christ, You came not to be served but to serve; help me Lord to serve You willingly and to be honest and faithful in my service.

## CHOOSE THE BEST

This is a story which often repeated itself on many occasions. Fr Pishoy Kamel used to telephone some of the deacons at night and would say, "Choose the best icons, crosses, service equipment, utensils to take with you..." The servant would ask "Why Father?" Fr Pishoy would answer, "We are going to open a new church!" He would say it with great excitement and joy, as if he was organising a wedding feast.

In opening the new church he would choose his best servants, and invite them to serve in the new church, and he would tell them, "I do not want to see you here again... but you are to concentrate all your energies on serving the new church".

In this manner Fr Pishoy's heart used to rejoice at the opening of a new church as a new centre of service. No matter how close or how far it was from St. George's church in Alexandria. He fulfilled the word of St. John Chrysostom, "O priest, you are a father to all humanity". His heart was open to everybody, whether friend or stranger. His fatherhood knew no bounds and everyone had a special place in his heart.

He was not concerned over the number of servants or worshippers in St. George's church, but rather that every soul was being served by a church. His efforts were near incredible in establishing churches, some being in the vicinity of St. George's church and he would often repeat, "The success of the service in the other churches is a success for our church".

On this point, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III said of Fr Pishoy that one of the strangest requests that received as a patriarch from a priest is to appoint another priest to assist him. For it is often said and thought by the older priests that when a new one is appointed that they will take away their authority, their areas of competences, their services, the people who follow them and those who confess to them or even their control over financial matters.

Fr Pishoy represented a new way of spiritual thinking and a good example to be followed by the fathers who came after him. His level was above the ego reaching the level of the Kingdom of God. He did not care about concentrating everything in his person. He opened the way for others to serve. He gave them the chance to build with him as he realised there was too much to accomplish alone. He requested one priest after another to be appointed, such that four priests were appointed after him – Fr Tadros, Fr Luke, Fr Matta and Fr Michael.

His Holiness says, "We used to wonder about St. George's church in Sporting, that it was letting go of so many people to other churches being established around it and yet at the same time requesting an increase in the number of its priests... This church became characterised by a special spirituality...she became a mother to all the services which developed out of her... and a special beacon in Alexandria."

Fr Pishoy carried in him the spirit of his Master and the big heart which loved everybody.<sup>23</sup>

- www.suscopts.org

## SERVICE

Day 23

Tuesday, 2 April 2024

**"So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.'"**  
(John 13:12-15)

### ***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"You do not serve a tyrant, but your service is to a kind Lord, who, taking nothing from you, He has given you all."*

### **4th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 28:10-22; Is 25:1-26:8; Job 18:1-21; Sirach* 8:1-10:1	
Matsins:	Psalm	Ps 17:1
	Gospel	Matt 21:28-32
Mass:	Pauline	Eph 4:1-16
	Catholicon	2 Pet 2:2-8
	Acts	Acts 27:1-3
	Psalm	Ps 17:6
	Gospel	Luke 9:57-62

\* Second Canonical Book

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Light of the world;  
help me Lord to be a bearer of Your light to all those  
around me.**

**LIGHT OF THE  
WORLD**

Day 24      Wednesday, 3 April 2024

**SAINTS ARE NOT BORN TO IT**

Saints are not born to it, except most rarely,  
Nor by default do they come to God  
Having no other choice;  
But rather like sunflowers growing outside my door,  
Do they grow and turn,  
Following the course of God with upturned faces,  
Growing each day  
Taller, stronger, more resistant to the wind of the world,  
And even in the times without sun,  
They wait, turned toward dawn,  
Knowing the promise of Light in their holy simplicity,  
The saints of God remember what I forget too easily -  
That having found the sun, the source of life,  
Just once, all other light however strong,  
Is not enough.<sup>24</sup>

- Anonymous

**“Then Jesus spoke to them  
again, saying, ‘I am the light of  
the world. He who follows Me  
shall not walk in darkness, but  
have the light of life.’”  
(John 8:12)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“O Jesus Christ, the resurrection  
and light of all worlds, place  
upon my soul’s head the crown of  
knowledge of You; open before me  
all of a sudden the door of mercies,  
cause the rays of Your grace to  
shine out in my heart.”*

**4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 7:14-8:18; Joel 2:28-32; Job 1:1-22; Is 26:21-27:9	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 18:37-40
	Gospel	Luke 14:16-24
Mass:	Pauline	Eph 4:17-32
	Catholicon	James 3:13-4:4
	Acts	Acts 11:26-12:2
	Psalm	Ps 18:17-18
	Gospel	Mark 4:35-41

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Just Judge but  
You came to earth not to judge but to save; help me  
Lord not to judge so that I may not be judged.**

**JUDGE NOT**

A monk of a large monastery, negligent in spiritual things, fell gravely ill and the hour of his death arrived. The abbot and all of the brothers gathered around him, to give him courage in his last moments. To their surprise, however, they observed that the brother was facing death with great quietude and calmness of soul.

So the abbot said, "My child, all here know that you were not so diligent in your duties. How is it that you leave for the other life with such courage?"

"It is true, Abba," murmured the dying monk, "that I was not a good monk. I have, however, observed one thing with exactness in my life: I never judged anyone. Because of this, I intend to say to the Master Christ, when I present myself before Him, 'You said, Lord, not to judge, in order not to be judged,' and I hope that He will not judge me strictly."

"Go in peace on your eternal journey, my child," the abbot told him with wonderment. "You have succeeded, without toil, in saving yourself." <sup>25</sup>

- The Ancient Fathers of the Desert

**JUDGING NOT**

Day 25

Thursday, 4 April 2024

**"When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.'"**  
(John 8:10-11)

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"Spread your cloak over those who fall into sin, each and every one, and shield them. And if you cannot take the fault on yourself and accept punishment in their place, do not destroy their character."*

**4th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophesies:	Gen 32:1-30; Is 28:14-22; Job 20:1-29; Dan 6:1-27	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 12:7
	Gospel	Mark 3:7-12
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 12:31-14:1
	Catholicon	James 4:11-5:3
	Acts	Acts 4:19-31
	Psalm	Ps 48:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 18:35-43

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You lived a life of righteousness; help me Lord to live righteously, especially when it is difficult to do so.**

**RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Day 26

Friday, 5 April 2024

**IN SPITE OF...**

To do good in spite of obstacles in one's way, shows a deep fund of goodness in the heart and the triumph of the will to do good, and that has a great reward.

As examples of this we have:

+ The one who gives in spite of having needs of his own, like the widow who gave her two small coins (Mark 12:42); and the widow who gave the prophet Elijah food during the famine, and the poor man who paid his tithes in spite of being in need himself.

+ To enter by the wide gate and the broad road is easy, but the one who enters by the narrow gate in spite of its difficult path, he is the one who will receive a blessing from the Lord.

+ Likewise the one who is forgiving in spite of being deeply offended, and the one who forgives, though it is seventy times seven. (Matt.18:22)

+ And the one who succeeds in spite of the difficulty of the test, as our father Abraham did in his test to sacrifice his only son, the son promised by God.

+ And the one who sticks firmly to his faith or attains a firm faith despite doubts or struggles, like the thief who believed in the Lord when he was crucified beside Him and taunts and provocations were all around them.

+ Likewise the one who retains his sincerity and devotion in the midst of difficulties, at a time when many stumble and fall, like the beloved John who followed his Master even to the cross, and like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who were not afraid to be joined in crucifixion, and Saint Julius El-Akfehas who took care of the bodies of the martyrs...

Anyone can do something good if it is easy to do, but to do good when one is surrounded by difficulties and dangers is real proof of righteousness and saintliness.<sup>26</sup>

- H.H. Pope Shenouda III

**"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last. So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, 'Certainly this was a righteous Man!'" (Luke 23:46-47)**

**St Isaac the Syrian:**

*"These are the works of righteousness: fasting, alms, vigil, holiness, and the rest of such works performed with the body. Love for one's neighbor, humility of heart, forgiving those who have sinned, recollection of good things, investigation of the mysteries concealed in the holy Scriptures, the mind's occupation with good works, the bridling of the soul's passions, and the rest of such virtues, are performed in the soul."*

**4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 10:12-11:28; Is 29:13-23; Job 21:1-34; Dan* 14:1-42	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 28:6-7
	Gospel	Luke 4:31-37
Mass:	Pauline	Heb 13:7-16
	Catholicon	1 John 4:7-16
	Acts	Acts 22:17-24
	Psalm	Ps 28:2
	Gospel	Matt 15:21-31

\* Second Canonical Book

# My Lord Jesus Christ, You are my compassionate Saviour; help me Lord to have a heart full of compassion.

COMPASSION

Day 27

Saturday, 6 April 2024

## DOES HE CARE?

How did Jesus handle the interruptions of life?

One day He was making a beeline through a crowd to help the critically ill, only daughter of the president of the synagogue. It was a crisis moment, and just at that point a sick woman touched the hem of His garment. How did Jesus respond to the interruption? He stopped. He searched the crowd until He found the woman who had touched Him. He took time to show His concern for her, to speak to her, and to assure her that it was her great faith that had healed her.

At another time Jesus was preaching a sermon to a houseful of people when suddenly He was interrupted by a thud of falling mud which dropped to the floor in front of Him. Everyone's eyes went to the ceiling. They saw a hole, and some men were making the hole bigger. When it was large enough, they carefully lowered a sick man on a litter and dropped him at the feet of Jesus. Far from resenting this interruption of His sermon, Jesus expressed admiration for the great faith of these people and He healed the sick man.

It is only those who do not know Jesus who say, "I hate to bother God with my problem. He is so great, and has so many billions of people to look after, why should He be concerned about me?" But God is concerned. He was concerned about Jairus' sick daughter. He was concerned about the sick woman who reached out to touch Him in the crowd. He was concerned about the blind beggar who called out to Him from the gutter of a street. He was concerned about mothers bringing their little babies to Him to be blessed. Even though He was busy at each moment, Jesus did not consider even one of these encounters as an interruption but as an opportunity to show His compassion and love.<sup>27</sup>

- Anthony M. Coniaris

**"Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed."**  
(Mark 1:40-42)

### ***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"As the flame of a fire cannot be prevented from ascending upwards, so the prayers of the compassionate cannot be held back from ascending to heaven."*

### **4th Saturday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 142:5,7
	Gospel	Luke 16:19-31
Mass:	Pauline	Phil 4:4-9
	Catholican	James 3:13-4:6
	Acts	Acts 24:24-25:12
	Psalm	Ps 61:1,5
	Gospel	Matt 21:33-46

### THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS (PART IV)

“...The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom, and do you seek rest and enjoyment for yourself? You deceive yourself, you are mistaken if you seek anything but to suffer, for this mortal life is full of miseries and marked with crosses on all sides. Indeed, the more spiritual progress a person makes, so much heavier will he frequently find the cross, because as his love increases, the pain of his exile also increases.

Yet such a man, though afflicted in many ways, is not without hope of consolation, because he knows that great reward is coming to him for bearing his cross. And when he carries it willingly, every pang of tribulation is changed into hope of solace from God. Besides, the more the flesh is distressed by affliction, so much the more is the spirit strengthened by inward grace. Not infrequently a man is so strengthened by his love of trials and hardship in his desire to conform to the cross of Christ, that he does not wish to be without sorrow or pain, since he believes he will be the more acceptable to God if he is able to endure more and more grievous things for His sake.

It is the grace of Christ, and not the virtue of man, which can and does bring it about that through fervour of spirit frail flesh learns to love and to gain what it naturally hates and shuns.

To carry the cross, to love the cross, to chastise the body and bring it to subjection, to flee honours, to endure contempt gladly, to despise self and wish to be despised, to suffer any adversity and loss, to desire no prosperous days on earth—this is not man’s way. If you rely upon yourself, you can do none of these things, but if you trust in the Lord, strength will be given you from heaven and the world and the flesh will be made subject to your word. You will not even fear your enemy, the devil, if you are armed with faith and signed with the cross of Christ...”<sup>28</sup>

- Thomas a Kempis

Feast of the Annunciation

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

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“The Cross is the door to mysteries.  
Through this door the intellect  
makes entrance in to the knowledge  
of heavenly mysteries.”*

#### **Feast of the Annunciation**

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 144:5,7
	Gospel	Luke 7:36-50
Prophecies: -		
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 72:6-7
	Gospel	Luke 11:20-28
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 3:1-31
	Catholicism	1 John 1:1-2:6
	Acts	Acts 7:23-34
	Psalm	Ps 45:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 1:26-38

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You kept the Commandments so that I may learn how to keep the Commandments; help me Lord to write them on the tablet of my heart.**

### THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

**I.** You shall have no other gods before me.

**II.** You shall not make for yourself a carved image...you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.

**III.** You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

**IV.** Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

**V.** Honour your father and mother, that your days may be long upon the land...

**VI.** You shall not murder.

**VII.** You shall not commit adultery.

**VIII.** You shall not steal.

**IX.** You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

**X.** You shall not covet your neighbour's house...nor anything that is your neighbour's.

- Exodus 20:3-17

*"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"*

*'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.'*

*'And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'*<sup>29</sup>

- Matthew 22:36-40

## KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS

Day 29

Monday, 8 April 2024

**"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."  
(John 15:10)**

### **St Isaac the Syrian:**

*"God's commandments excel all the treasures of the world. A man who has gained inward possession of them finds the Lord in them."*

### **5<sup>th</sup> Monday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 3:5-18; Is 37:33-38:6;	
	Job 22:1-30	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 88:2-4
	Gospel	Luke 12:16-21
Mass:	Pauline	Phil 2:1-16
	Catholicon	1 Pet 3:10-18
	Acts	Acts 10:25-35
	Psalm	Ps 86:3-4
	Gospel	Luke 9:12-17

# My Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Word of God; help me Lord to be united with You through Your word.

## LIVING THE SCRIPTURES

Day 30

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

### THE EFFECT OF THE BIBLE ON OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

The Christian should study the word of God regularly as a fulfillment of God's commandment, "... search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life" (John 5:39).

#### + The Holy Bible is the word of God.

When God speaks, man must listen. When He speaks, He reveals His holy secrets, His purposes in the creation and in history, and His works with His children who obey His commandments. Through the word of God, we even know His beloved and blessed Person, His honest and truthful promises, and His valuable advice that leads to our salvation. Who could possibly live without the word of God? It is truly 'spirit' and 'life;' it is the food of the spirit- "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matt 4:4). It is a light to our path - "*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*" (Ps 119:105). It is the sharp sword through which we dismember all false teachings - "*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword*" (Heb 4:12). It is the secret of cleanliness and purity, as the Lord says, "*You are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you*" (John 15:3).

**God speaks to us... so let us listen to Him.**

**God reveals His love to us... so let us feed on it.**

**God reveals His purposes to us ... so let us understand them well.**

**God reveals His promises to us ... so let us hold on to them.**

#### + In the Holy Bible, we meet God and are united with Him.

When we sit quietly, meditating upon the word of God, we meet the Lord and, in no time, our souls unite with Him. Studying the Bible, if done in the spirit of prayer and love of God, is compared to Mary's sitting at Christ's feet as she "*had chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her*" (Luke 10:42); for what is this "good part" but the Lord?

The Lord will not be taken away from her because she has become united with Him, loved Him, and turned into His likeness, due to sitting constantly at His feet. Continual reading of the word of God in the spirit of prayer grants the soul union with and steadfastness in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, let us listen to the saying, "There is the greatest hope for the greatest sinner who reads the Holy Bible, and there is the greatest danger for the greatest saint who neglects it." In short, the Holy Bible reveals to us our need for God, and tells us that God is waiting for us. It is the point where the poor sinner meets with the loving heart of God. The single paragraph that St Augustine read was capable of saving his soul and making him a saint - this was the passage in Romans 13:11-14. Open your Bible now and read this passage with awe and meditation, so as to experience the effect of the word of God in your life.<sup>30</sup>

- H.G. Bishop Moussa

**"Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"**

**(Matthew 4:3-4)**

**St Isaac the Syrian:**

*"Do not approach the words of the mysteries contained in the Scriptures without prayer and without asking for God's help. Say, 'Lord, grant that I may receive an awareness of the power that is within them.' Consider prayer to be the key to the understanding of truth in Scripture."*

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Num 10:35-11:34; Prov 3:19-4:9; Is 40:1-8; Job 25:1-6; Job 26:1-14	
Matsins:	Psalm	Ps 86:5-6
	Gospel	Mark 9:14-24
Mass:	Pauline	Phil 2:22-26
	Catholicon	1 John 3:2-11
	Acts	Acts 24:10-23
	Psalm	Ps 86:17
	Gospel	John 8:12-20

**My Lord Jesus Christ, Your kindness touched the lives of many; help me Lord to be a living expression of Your kindness.**

**KINDNESS**

Day 31 Wednesday, 10 April 2024

**KINDNESS**

“Be kind and merciful.

Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier.

Be a living expression of God’s kindness.

Kindness in your face,

Kindness in your eyes,

Kindness in your smile,

Kindness in your warm greeting.” <sup>31</sup>

- Mother Teresa

“Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralysed, waiting for the moving of the water....

Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been in that condition a long time, He said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’”

(John 5:2-3,5-6)

*St Isaac the Syrian:*

*“O the wonderful mercy of God!  
O astonishment at the goodness of God our Creator! O power for which all is possible! O the immeasurable kindness towards our nature which brings even sinners once again to regeneration!  
Who is sufficient to tell His praises?”*

**5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers: Psalm -  
Gospel -  
Prophecies: Ex 8:20-9:35; Is 41:4-14;  
Joel 3:9-21; Job 28:12-28;  
Prov 4:10-19; 1 Sam 1:1-2:21  
Matins: Psalm Ps 55:1-2  
Gospel Mark 10:1-12  
Mass: Pauline Rom 4:14-5:5  
Catholicon 1 Pet 4:12-19  
Acts Acts 11:12-18  
Psalm Ps 86:13-14  
Gospel Luke 13:6-9

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You spread the gospel of the kingdom to all; help me Lord to be a living gospel, through all my words and deeds.**

**SPREADING THE  
GOSPEL**

Day 32      Thursday, 11 April 2024

**EXPLAINING CHRISTIANITY**

A missionary in Africa once had to make a long trip by automobile. To keep him company he invited his neighbour, a [non-believer], to go along with him. The missionary used the trip to explain to his neighbour, what Christianity was all about, but his words seemed to be falling on deaf ears. After they had travelled far away from any settlements, the car developed engine trouble and chugged to a stop beside the road. Soon a truck approached and the missionary waved for help, but the driver sped by without even slowing down.

There was nothing to do but try to repair the car himself. Fortunately for the missionary and his passenger, the problem was not serious, and they soon had it running again.

After several miles, they rounded a bend, and to their surprise they saw the truck that had passed them by the side of the road with its hood up, obviously in trouble. "Honk your horn and wave as you pass him!" shouted the [non-believer]. "This is indeed sweet revenge!" But the missionary stopped his car and proceeded to lend assistance to the man.

When they had finally gotten the truck running again and were headed back to the car, the [non-believer] said quietly, "I think I'm beginning to understand what you were talking about when you were trying to explain Christianity to me."<sup>32</sup>

- Anthony M. Coniaris

**"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people."  
(Matthew 4:23)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***  
*"This is the spiritual passion [i.e. the love of God] with which the apostles and the martyrs were inebriated. With it, the first travelled the world over, toiling and being reviled, while the second, although their members were severed, and although they shed their blood like water and suffered the most dreadful torments, yet they did not grow faint-hearted but endured courageously, and being truly wise, were thought fools."*

**5<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Is 42:5-16; Prov 4:20-27; Job 29:2-20; 1 Sam 3:1-20	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 86:14
	Gospel	Luke 9:37-43
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 10:14-11:1
	Catholicon	1 Pet 1:2-8
	Acts	Acts 21:5-14
	Psalm	Ps 86:17
	Gospel	Luke 13:10-17

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You taught me to love my enemies; help me Lord to turn the other cheek.**

**LOVING HIS ENEMIES**

Day 33

Friday, 12 April 2024

## TURN THE OTHER CHEEK

*“But whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also” (Mt 5:39).*

Father Pishoy Kamel used to always take a particular route from his house to the church on foot and there was a boy (who was not Christian) who lived in one of the houses he would pass on the way to church. This boy would always shout words of insult at Father Pishoy and mock him from the balcony and often he would add to his insults by throwing orange peel at Father Pishoy.

It was open to Father Pishoy to change his route to the church very easily but he continued to walk the same route knowing that the boy would be there every time to throw insults at him and sometimes the orange peel.

Despite the harsh words which were thrown at Father Pishoy, he would not get upset by what was said or shout back at the boy. Instead he would smile and thank God that He had allowed him “to partake in Christ’s sufferings” (1 Pet 4:13).

One day as he was going to the church Father Pishoy noticed that the boy did not appear in the balcony to throw the usual abuse and orange peel at him, so on his return from the church he passed by the house where the boy lived and knocked on the door to find out from his mother that the boy was in poor health and sick in bed.

So he asked if he could be permitted to see him and the mother let him in. He then went to the boy’s bedroom where he sat with him and spoke to him warmly and with the genuine love of one speaking to a close friend.

He told him how much he had missed seeing him, and how he hoped he would get better soon and that he should leave him to rest so that he can get better, and then Father Pishoy said, “If you will permit me I have a present for you. I know how much you like them.”

And then with his warm smile he produced the present for the boy. It was a bag full of oranges.

The boy never said a bad word to Father Pishoy again.<sup>33</sup>

- [www.suscopts.org](http://www.suscopts.org)

**“Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him. And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, ‘Prophesy! Who is the one who struck You?’ And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.....And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’”**  
(Luke22:63-65, 23:33-34)

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“Let yourself be persecuted, but do not persecute. Let yourself be crucified, but do not crucify. Let yourself be insulted, but do not insult.”*

### **5th Friday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 11:29-12:27; 1 Kin 17:2-24;	
	Prov 5:1-12; Is 43:1-9;	
	Job 30:9-32:5	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 86:9-10
	Gospel	Mark 12:28-34
Mass:	Pauline	Heb 12:5-16
	Catholicon	1 Pet 4:15-5:5
	Acts	Acts 15:36-16:3
	Psalm	Ps 138:1-3
	Gospel	John 8:21-27

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You are abundant in mercy;  
help me Lord to be merciful just as You are merciful.**

**MERCY**

Day 34

Saturday, 13 April 2024

### **OUR MERCIFUL GOD**

“Do not lose heart, O soul, do not grieve; pronounce not over yourself a final judgment for the multitude of your sins; do not commit yourself to fire; do not say: The Lord has cast me from His face.

Such words are not pleasing to God. Can it be that he who has fallen cannot get up? Can it be that he who has turned away cannot turn back again? Do you not hear how kind the Father is to a prodigal?

Do not be ashamed to turn back and say boldly: I will arise and go to my Father. Arise and go!

He will accept you and will not reproach you, but rather rejoice at your return. He awaits you; just do not be ashamed and do not hide from the face of God as did Adam.

It was for your sake that Christ was crucified; so will He cast you aside? He knows who oppresses us. He knows that we have no other help but Him alone.

Christ knows that man is miserable. Do not give yourself up to despair and apathy, assuming that you have been prepared for the fire. Christ derives no consolation from thrusting us into the fire. He gains nothing if He sends us into the abyss to be tormented.

Imitate the prodigal son: leave the city that starves you. Come and beseech Him and you shall behold the glory of God. Your face shall be enlightened, and you will rejoice in the sweetness of paradise.

Glory to the Lord and Lover of mankind who saves us!”<sup>34</sup>

- St. Ephraim the Syrian

**“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”**

**(Hebrews 2:17-18)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

***“Do you wish to commune with God? Strive to be merciful. A man should first of all begin to be merciful in the measure that our heavenly Father is merciful.”***

### **5<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 65:2-3
	Gospel	Luke 15:3-10
Mass:	Pauline	Gal 5:16-6:2
	Catholican	James 5:7-11
	Acts	Acts 26:1-18
	Psalm	Ps 143:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 23:14-39

### THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS (PART V)

“...Set yourself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear bravely the cross of your Lord, Who out of love was crucified for you. Be ready to suffer many adversities and many kinds of trouble in this miserable life, for troublesome and miserable life will always be, no matter where you are; and so you will find it wherever you may hide. Thus it must be; and there is no way to evade the trials and sorrows of life but to bear them.

Drink the chalice of the Lord with affection if you wish to be His friend and to have part with Him. Leave consolation to God; let Him do as most pleases Him. On your part, be ready to bear sufferings and consider them the greatest consolation, for even though you alone were to undergo them all, the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come...”<sup>35</sup>

- Thomas a Kempis

“Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, ‘See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.’”  
(John 5:14)

**St Isaac the Syrian:**  
*“Do you wish that your fervour should never cool and that your tears [or repentance] should never dry up? Then practice this... fall on your face before the Cross night and day.”*

### 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 39:12
	Gospel	Luke 18:1-8
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 102:1-2, 12
	Gospel	Matt 21:33-46
Mass:	Pauline	2 Thess 2:1-17
	Catholican	2 Pet 3:1-18
	Acts	Acts 26:19-27:8
	Psalm	Ps 33:5-6
	Gospel	John 5:1-18

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You are one with the Father;  
help me Lord to fulfill Your desire to be united with  
You and with others.**

UNITY

Day 36

Monday, 15 April 2024

**THE CARPENTER'S TOOLS**

The following is a fable about a conversation that took place in a carpenter's shop:

Brother Hammer was in the chair. The meeting had informed him that he must leave because he was much too noisy. But he said, "If I am to leave this carpenter's shop, Brother Pencil must also go. He is so insignificant that he makes very little impression."

Little Brother Pencil arose and said, "All right, but Brother Screw must also go. You have to turn him around and around, again and again, to ever get him anywhere."

And Brother Screw said, "If you wish, I will go, but Brother Plane must leave also. All his work is on the surface. There is no depth to him."

And to this, Brother Plane replied, "Well, Brother Ruler will have to go if I go, for he is always measuring other people as if he is the only one who is ever right."

Brother Ruler then complained against Brother Sandpaper and said, "I just don't care. He has to go, too. He is too rough and he's always rubbing people the wrong way."

And in the midst of this discussion the Carpenter of Nazareth walked in. He had come to perform his days' work. He put on his apron and went to his bench to make a table. He used the screw, the pencil, the sandpaper, the saw, the hammer, the plane, and all the other tools.

And after the day's work was over and the table finished, Brother Saw arose and said, "Brethren, I perceive that all of us are labourers together."

There was no accusation against one of these tools that was not absolutely true. And yet the Carpenter used every one of them. And there was not a place where He used any one of them where another one could have been used.<sup>36</sup>

- Anthony M. Coniaris

**"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one."**  
(John 17:20-23)

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep: such is the sign of purity. Suffer with the sick. Be afflicted with sinners. Exult with those who repent."*

**6<sup>th</sup> Monday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 8:1-11; Is 43:10-28;	
	Job 32:6-16	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 38:9
	Gospel	Mark 12:1-12
Mass:	Pauline	1 Thess 4:1-18
	Catholicon	James 4:7-12
	Acts	Acts 18:9-18
	Psalm	Ps 35:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 13:1-5

# My Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Wisdom; grant me Lord the wisdom of knowing You.

WISDOM

Day 37

Tuesday, 16 April 2024

## WISDOM

Any virtue void of wisdom, is not a virtue.

For example, love must be with wisdom, otherwise it will turn to pampering or to a harmful affection.

Wisdom must be incorporated into talking and preaching in order to know what to say, when and how...

Wisdom is a virtue to be fulfilled in all servants, not only in the superiors like the bishops, but even in the deacons. The Apostles said, *"... seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."* (Acts 6:3)

Wisdom gives its possessors a spiritual perception, an enlightened understanding, which leads to selection and distinction.

When St Anthony was asked about the best of virtues he answered, "Discretion..." as virtue without discretion might destroy its possessors.

There is "wisdom that is from above" (James 3:17) and as one of the "spiritual gifts" (1 Cor. 12), and he who lacks wisdom, let him ask of the Father of Light, from the elders, and the spiritual instructors who are gifted with wisdom and understanding.

A person could acquire wisdom through experience, and benefit from his own and others' mistakes. He could attain such wisdom by the continued useful reading, or associating with the wise, learning their ways of talk and action.

Solomon did not ask God to give him wealth or authority, but, sought wisdom to manage his people. God blessed him and granted him wisdom. One of his best sayings is, *"The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness."* (Ecc. 2:14)

Wisdom necessitates meditation and thinking, looking at the matter from all angles, reviewing all its consequences before doing it. Do not act in excitement or rage.

Wisdom needs intelligence and broad-mindedness...

It does not agree with stubbornness, conceit and stiffness of opinion. <sup>37</sup>

- H.H. Pope Shenouda III

**"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men."  
(Luke 2:52)**

### ***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"A swimmer dives naked into the sea until he finds a pearl; and a wise [man], stripped of everything, journeys through life until he finds in himself the Pearl, Jesus Christ; and when he finds Him, he does not seek to acquire anything else besides Him."*

### **6<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 8:12-21; Is 44:1-8; Job 32:17-33:33; 2 Kin 5:1-27	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 35:13
	Gospel	Luke 4:22-30
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 14:18-28
	Catholicon	James 1:22-2:1
	Acts	Acts 19:11-20
	Psalm	Ps 42:1
	Gospel	Luke 9:18-22

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You fled from honour although  
You are worthy of all honour; help me Lord to flee  
from the desire of being praised and honoured.**

**DELIVER ME...**

From the desire...

From the desire of being loved,  
From the desire of being extolled,  
From the desire of being honoured,  
From the desire of being praised,  
From the desire of being preferred,  
From the desire of being consulted,  
From the desire of being approved,  
From the desire of being popular,

From the fear...

From the fear of being humiliated,  
From the fear of being despised,  
From the fear of suffering rebukes,  
From the fear of being calumniated,  
From the fear of being forgotten,  
From the fear of being wronged,  
From the fear of being ridiculed,  
From the fear of being suspected.<sup>38</sup>

- Mother Teresa

**FLEEING FROM  
HONOUR**

Day 38 Wednesday, 17 April 2024

**"Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, 'This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.' Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone."  
(John 6:14-15)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"Honour flees away from the man that runs after it; but he who flees from it, the same will it hunt down, and to all men become a herald of his humility."*

**6<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers: Psalm -  
Gospel -  
Prophecies: Ex 10:1-11:10; Is 44:21-28;  
Prov 8:22-36; Job 34:1-37;  
Sirach\* 10:1-31  
Matins: Psalm Ps 102:17,21  
Gospel Mark 7:1-20  
Mass: Pauline Rom 2:12-24  
Catholicon 2 Pet 1:20-2:6  
Acts Acts 26:1-8  
Psalm Ps 9:11-12  
Gospel Luke 11:45-52

\* Second Canonical Book

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You are our power and our strength; help me Lord to draw on You for the strength that I need each day.**

**POWER & STRENGTH**

Day 39      Thursday, 18 April 2024

### **STRENGTH FOR THE ASKING**

A little boy was having difficulty lifting a heavy stone. His father came along just then. Noting the boy's failure, he asked, "Are you using all your strength?"

"Yes, I am," the boy said impatiently.

"No, you're not," the father answered. "I'm right here waiting, and you haven't asked me to help you."

When we are faced with a problem that seems unsolvable or a burden that is too heavy, we might ask ourselves, "Are we using all our strength?" Our Father, too, is waiting to help.<sup>39</sup>

- Author unknown

**"But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."**  
(1 Corinthians 1:23-24)

#### ***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*"O Christ, who are covered with light as though with a garment, who for my sake stood naked in front of Pilate, clothe me with that might which You caused to overshadow the saints, whereby they conquered this world of struggle."*

#### **6<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers: Psalm -  
Gospel -  
Prophecies: 2 Kin 4:8-41; Is 45:1-10;  
Prov 9:1-11; Job 35:1-16;  
Sirach\* 11:1-10  
Matins: Psalm Ps 9:13  
Gospel Luke 20:9-19  
Mass: Pauline 1 Tim 2:1-3:4  
Catholicon Jude 1:19-25  
Acts Acts 27:16-20  
Psalm Ps 9:13-14  
Gospel John 6:47-71

\* Second Canonical Book

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You surrendered to the Father to grant me salvation; help me Lord to surrender my life to You and to live according to Your will.**

**SURRENDER**

Day 40

Friday, 19 April 2024

### **WHATEVER, LORD, WHATEVER!**

Patti Mansfield, a spiritual writer, has coined what she calls the “whatever” prayer. It goes like this:

THE “WHATEVER” PRAYER  
Whatever You want, Lord, I want.  
Whatever You choose, I choose.  
Whatever You say, I’ll do.  
Whatever You give, I’ll receive.  
Whatever You withhold, I’ll accept.  
Whatever You plan, I’ll rejoice in.  
Whatever, Lord, Whatever!

This prayer represents an attitude that the saints call abandonment or total surrender to God. It’s giving God permission to do with us whatever He pleases. If I’m really allowing Jesus to be the Lord and Master of my life, I’ve got to be ready to give up my will for His will, my plan for His plans, and my timetable for His timetable.

Jesus Himself prayed the “whatever prayer” as He was agonising in the Garden of Gethsemane just before His crucifixion: “My Father,” He prayed, “if this cup cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done.” God’s will was done. The crucifixion led to the resurrection, and as a result those who are baptised, truly believe in Jesus, and follow Him, have eternal life and go from death to life.

There is no limit to what God can do with someone who prays the “whatever” prayer - the prayer of total surrender to God. A simple virgin named Mary became the Mother of God when at the Annunciation she said “whatever” to God, that is, “Be it done to me according to Your will.” Simon Peter the fisherman became Simon Peter the rock on whose confession of faith that Jesus is Lord, the Church was built. A tax collector named Matthew became an evangelist who wrote [one] of the four Gospels. Mary Magdalene, a [woman possessed by seven demons], became the first to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus. A persecutor named Saul became Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles. And the list goes on. “Whatever, Lord! Whatever!” is a prayer that gives God permission to do glorious things with our lives.<sup>46</sup>

- Anthony M. Coniaris

**“And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’”**  
**(Luke 22:41-42)**

#### ***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“If God is slow to grant your request and you do not receive what you ask for promptly, do not be grieved, for you are not wiser than God.”*

#### **6<sup>th</sup> Friday of the Holy Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
Vespers:	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 22:1-18; Is 45:11-17; Prov 9:12-18; Job 36:1-33; Job 37:1-24; Tobit* 1:1-3:23; Tobit 3:24-9:12; Tobit 10:1-14:15	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 51:7-8
	Gospel	John 3:14-21
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 10:1-13
	Catholicon	1 John 2:12-17
	Acts	Acts 8:9-17
	Psalm	Ps 34:5,4
	Gospel	John 3:1-13

\* Second Canonical Book

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You taught us how to give thanks; help me Lord to give thanks on all occasions and in every condition.**

**THANKSGIVING**

Day 41

Saturday, 20 April 2024

### **THANKFUL IN EVERYTHING**

One day a man was robbed and that evening he made the following entry in his diary:

Let me be thankful -

- \* First, because I was never robbed before.
- \* Second, because although they took my wallet, they did not take my life.
- \* Third, because although they took my all, it was not much,
- \* And fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed. <sup>41</sup>

- Author Unknown

**“And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’”  
(Luke 22:19-20)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***

*“Always keep in mind the grievous afflictions of those stricken with sorrow and tribulations, that you may render due thanks for the small and insignificant adversities, which may happen to you, and be able to bear them with joy.”*

#### **6<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 79:8-9
	Gospel	Matt 9:1-8
Mass:	Pauline	Eph 4:1-7
	Catholican	1 Pet 1:13-21
	Acts	Acts 27:9-26
	Psalm	Ps 32:1-2
	Gospel	Mark 10:46-52

### THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS (PART VI)

“...When you shall have come to the point where suffering is sweet and acceptable for the sake of Christ, then consider yourself fortunate, for you have found paradise on earth. But as long as suffering irks you and you seek to escape, so long will you be unfortunate, and the tribulation you seek to evade will follow you everywhere. If you put your mind to the things you ought to consider, that is, to suffering and death, you would soon be in a better state and would find peace.

Although you were taken to the third heaven with St Paul, you were not thereby insured against suffering. Jesus said: “I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” To suffer, then, remains your lot, if you mean to love Jesus and serve Him forever.

If you were but worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus, what great glory would be in store for you, what great joy to all the saints of God, what great edification to those about you! For all men praise patience though there are few who wish to practice it.

With good reason, then, ought you to be willing to suffer a little for Christ since many suffer much more for the world.

Realise that you must lead a dying life; the more a man dies to himself, the more he begins to live unto God...”<sup>42</sup>

- Thomas a Kempis

“Then he said, ‘Lord, I believe!’  
And he worshiped Him.”  
(John 9:38)

**St Isaac the Syrian:**

*“The more our participation in  
its sufferings, the greater the  
perception we gain through the  
cross. For, as the Apostle says, ‘As  
the sufferings of Christ abound in  
us, so our consolation also abounds  
by Christ.’”*

### 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 17:3,5
	Gospel	Luke 13:22-35
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 26:2-3
	Gospel	Matt 23:1-39
Mass:	Pauline	Col 3:5-17
	Catholican	1 John 5:13-21
	Acts	Acts 27:27-37
	Psalm	Ps 143:7,1
	Gospel	John 9:1-41

# My Lord Jesus Christ, You showed what it means to be just; help me Lord to defend the truth and to be just in all that I do.

JUSTICE

Day 43

Monday, 22 April 2024

## THE SEVEN MONKS

At Easter time in 1936, Fr Mina (Pope Kyrillos VI before ordination) went to the Monastery on Lazarus' Saturday. He noticed some commotion around the Monastery and he saw that the Abbot had brought in some officials to expel seven elderly monks from the Monastery. He knelt in front of the Abbot, and said, "Father, I came to welcome you back, ask about your health, and about the truth regarding the dismissal of the seven monks." The Abbot told Fr Mina, "My son, these are the Pope's orders, and I came to execute them." Fr Mina said, "It would be sad and painful for the Pope if these monks were expelled on the blessed Palm Sunday evening...I plead to you, in the name of the Lord and these blessed days, that you postpone this order until the monastery Fathers appeal to His Holiness ..."

... the Abbot became angry. How could a new monk, and in front of this crowd, object to his orders while the other monks who were with him did not utter a word? He said to him, "Listen my son. Do not object to what I want to do, otherwise, you will be disobeying His Holiness. Besides, you are a hermit and this is not your business." Fr Mina told him again, "In the name of Christ who sacrificed Himself for our sake, I ask you, my Father, to proceed slowly and in a manner that would please the souls of our Fathers, the saints. They teach us to intercede for the wrongdoers and lawbreakers, and to give each one his punishment without causing him to lose his hope." The Abbot became furious and ordered the soldiers to expel the monks by force... Fr Mina answered by saying, "My Father, I will devote myself to serving these Fathers who were expelled by force and with no mercy. I will be their slave until they come back safely to their monastery through the power of God....."

An accurate picture of this kind, shy, quiet monk, who was filled with God's grace, can now be seen. His appearance showed modesty and weakness, but he was brave and defended the truth relentlessly.

When Fr Mina went to the Cathedral, the Patriarchate, to meet His Holiness, some people in the Patriarchate were rude to him because they supported the Abbot. This, however, did not bother him. He went into the church to thank God and to leave everything according to His will. The Pope was praying in the small church. Fr Mina went to see him after the Divine Liturgy.

The Pope started harshly by saying, "You are still at the first steps of worshipping. Did the devil deceive you and want to lead you away from the way of salvation?" Fr Mina answered, "My Lord Jesus Christ is honest and just. He does not leave those who seek Him. He shelters them with His angels." The Pope asked, "Did the teachings of Christ allow you to interfere in what is not your business?" Fr Mina replied, "God taught us to struggle for honesty, even if it means shedding one's blood. One who does not defend the truth is similar to the devil. I am the son of the Monastery. How can I see things that are not according to the monastic laws, that spoil its name and yet remain silent? ..."

After some further discussion, the Pope said, "Fr Mina, you have my blessings. I forgive those monks. Tell them to come to receive the blessing and to return safely to their Monastery."<sup>43</sup>

**"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation."**  
(Zechariah 9:9)

***St Isaac the Syrian:***  
*"Someone who speaks in defence of a person who suffers injustice will find an advocate in his Creator."*

### 7<sup>th</sup> Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 10:1-16; Is 48:17-49:4; Job 38:1-38	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 32:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 16:19-31
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 14:10-15:2
	Catholicon	James 2:5-13
	Acts	Acts 9:22-31
	Psalm	Ps 86:12-13
	Gospel	John 5:31-47

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You sacrificed Your life for me, so that I may have life; help me Lord to sacrifice the temporal things of this world and to seek the eternal.**

## SACRIFICE

Day 44

Tuesday, 23 April 2024

### SACRIFICE THE TEMPORAL FOR THE ETERNAL

There was once a king who had [many wives], was very handsome and loved to eat and have a good time. One day he visited a monastery. There he met a monk. He looked at him with great compassion. "What a great sacrifice you are making," he said to the ascetic. But the monk objected, "Your sacrifice is greater," he said. "How's that?" asked the king. "Because I have renounced that which passes, while you have renounced the eternal." Truly, that alone is important which endures forever. <sup>44</sup>

*"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)*

- Anthony M. Coniaris

**"I am the good shepherd.  
The good shepherd gives  
His life for the sheep."  
(John 10:11)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***  
*"Let yourself die in striving  
rather than living in laziness. For  
those who die trying to keep the  
commandments are martyrs just as  
those who died for Christ's faith."*

#### **7<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers: Psalm -  
Gospel -  
Prophecies: Prov 10:17-32; Is 49:6-10;  
Job 38:37-39:30; Sirach\* 5:1-15  
Matsins: Psalm Ps 38:18-19  
Gospel Luke 17:1-10  
Mass: Pauline 1 Cor 14:5-17  
Catholicon 2 Pet 3:8-15  
Acts Acts 22:17-24  
Psalm Ps 51:2-3  
Gospel John 12:36-43

\* Second Canonical Book

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You were strong in spirit;  
help me Lord to attain the spiritual fervour which  
characterised the lives of the saints.**

**STRONG IN SPIRIT**

Day 45 Wednesday, 24 April 2024

### THE EXAMPLE SET US BY THE HOLY FATHERS

Consider the lively examples set us by the saints, who possessed the light of true perfection and religion, and you will see how little, how nearly nothing, we do. What, alas, is our life, compared with theirs? The saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in work and fatigue, in vigils and fasts, in prayers and holy meditations, in persecutions and many afflictions. How many and severe were the trials they suffered - the Apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and all the rest who willed to follow in the footsteps of Christ! They hated their lives on earth that they might have life in eternity.

How strict and detached were the lives the holy hermits led in the desert! What long and grave temptations they suffered! How often were they beset by the enemy! What frequent and ardent prayers they offered to God! What rigorous fasts they observed! How great their zeal and their love for spiritual perfection! How brave the fight they waged to master their evil habits! What pure and straightforward purpose they showed toward God! By day they laboured and by night they spent themselves in long prayers. Even at work they did not cease from mental prayer. They used all their time profitably; every hour seemed too short for serving God, and in the great sweetness of contemplation, they forgot even their bodily needs.

They renounced all riches, dignities, honours, friends, and associates. They desired nothing of the world. They scarcely allowed themselves the necessities of life, and the service of the body, even when necessary, was irksome to them. They were poor in earthly things but rich in grace and virtue. Outwardly destitute, inwardly they were full of grace and divine consolation. Strangers to the world, they were close and intimate friends of God. To themselves they seemed as nothing, and they were despised by the world, but in the eyes of God they were precious and beloved. They lived in true humility and simple obedience; they walked in charity and patience, making progress daily on the pathway of spiritual life and obtaining great favour with God.

They were given as an example for all religious, and their power to stimulate us to perfection ought to be greater than that of the lukewarm to tempt us to laxity.

Today, he who is not a transgressor and who can bear patiently the duties which he has taken upon himself is considered great. How lukewarm and negligent we are! We lose our original fervour very quickly and we even become weary of life from laziness! Do not you, who have seen so many examples of the devout, fall asleep in the pursuit of virtue! <sup>45</sup>

- Thomas a Kempis

**“And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.”  
(Luke 2:40)**

***St Isaac the Syrian:***  
*“Ease and idleness are the destruction of the soul and they can injure her more than the demons.”*

### **7<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 10:32-11:13; Is 58:1-11; Job 40:1-41:34	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 57:1
	Gospel	Luke 14:28-35
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 10:4-13
	Catholicon	James 1:13-21
	Acts	Acts 19:23-26
	Psalm	Ps 51:2-3
	Gospel	John 6:35-45

# My Lord Jesus Christ, You bore ridicule, insults and criticism, yet You opened not Your mouth; help me Lord to accept any false accusations joyfully.

## ENDURING FALSE ACCUSATIONS

Day 46

Thursday, 25 April 2024

### BEARING RIDICULE AND CRITICISM

When Father Pishoy Kamel was serving in one of the churches in America, one day he approached the church committee and asked for an increase in his salary by \$100 a month.

This matter proved to be extremely controversial, with some supporting Father Pishoy and saying that he deserved the increase, whilst other more vocal objectors on the committee ridiculed Father Pishoy and accused him of all sorts of things. They said things like, "Father Pishoy is greedy... he wants an increase in his salary today and tomorrow he will ask for another increase... there will be no end to his requests for more money." etc...

What is somewhat interesting about this whole incident (and may have been forgotten by the committee at the time) was that ten months earlier when Father Pishoy first came to serve in this church he was asked how much he wanted to be paid, and he asked, "What is the lowest salary in this country?" The answer was "\$300 per month" so Father Pishoy said, "then \$200 will be enough." This caused great amazement amongst the people at the time, for how could someone survive on so little.

Despite all of this, one of the close servants who knew Father Pishoy well found this to be a very strange request and at such an odd time. He went and asked Father Pishoy why he was asking for an increase at this particular moment having survived so long on such a small wage without complaint or even mentioning it. Father Pishoy answered him with his gentle smile,

*"My son, my service is complete here and I am going back to Egypt, and of course a new priest will come to serve you instead of me. However it would be very difficult for the new priest to survive on the salary being paid, particularly as he would have a family. He would face the embarrassment of having to go to the committee from the beginning to ask for an increase in his salary, and this will cause him to be ridiculed and criticised and misunderstood as you see. It will lead to all sorts of misunderstandings and will be damaging to him and such a bad start to his service must not be permitted to happen.*

*Rather than allow him to face such ridicule and criticism I decided to ask for the increase, at least if people misunderstand me I am departing back to Egypt and this will not affect me, but if he were to ask for the increase then it would affect him from the beginning of his service and for a long time there after."*

Here is a wonderful lesson my brethren in not only looking out for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and our fellow servants in the service, but to go further and ask the question. How many of us are willing to go as far as to set aside our personal honour and bear the ridicule and criticism which might come upon others for ourselves? <sup>46</sup> - www.suscopts.org

**"And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!' But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled."**  
(Mark 15:3-5)

**St Isaac the Syrian:**  
*"The man who endures accusations against himself with humility has arrived at perfection. He is marveled at by the holy angels, for there is no other virtue so great and so hard to achieve."*

### 7th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 11:13-26; Is 65:8-16;	
	Job 42:1-6; 2 Kin 6:8-7:20	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 63:1
	Gospel	Matt 20:20-28
Mass:	Pauline	2 Cor 4:5-18
	Catholican	1 John 3:13-24
	Acts	Acts 25:23-26:6
	Psalm	Ps 122:1-2
	Gospel	Mark 12:18-27

# My Lord Jesus Christ, through Your resurrection, You have given us victory; help me Lord to be victorious over sin, the devil, self and death.

VICTORY

Day 47

Friday, 26 April 2024

## VICTORY OVER WHAT?

Because of Christ's resurrection, every baptised Christian who has committed his life to Jesus as Lord can say: "Christ lives; therefore, I too shall live. Christ lives; therefore, I too have passed from death to life. Christ lives; therefore, I too have at my disposal the same power that raised Him from the dead. Christ lives; therefore, I too have the victory."

**1. Victory over sin.** Sin has the power to enslave, the power to bury us alive in the tomb of guilt and despair. Christ alone has the power to break open this tomb and set us free.

**2. Victory over demons.** The Gospels often portray Jesus as casting out demons. He does the same today granting us victory over the demons that plague us and make life a veritable hell: hatred, envy, lust, greed, etc. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* (2 Cor 5:17)

**3. Victory over self.** Christ offers us victory over self. The real war is always within. It is here that we must have victory before any outer victory will have meaning. Yet many church-going Christians are not victorious, but defeated. Defeated by circumstances, defeated by sin, defeated by loss, by pain, by suffering, by worry. They are Christians in name only. They have a form of religion but they deny its power. They have never got up above the lowlands of self-centered living; they have never climbed the heights of faith and total commitment to Christ. They have yet to claim for themselves the victory of Christ: victory over sin and self.

**4. Victory over death.** The final victory Christ offers us is over our last and greatest enemy: death. *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."* (1 Cor 15:20-22)

What most people want today is anything that will help them *escape* from reality. Yet escape is a temporary thing; it may work for a short while, but eventually reality catches up on us and we have to face it. And herein lies the greatness of our Christian faith. It offers us *not escape but victory*. It enables us not to run away from life, but to conquer it through Christ who said, *"...be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)<sup>47</sup>

- Anthony M. Coniaris

**"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."**  
(John 11:25-26)

**St Isaac the Syrian:**

*"God's recompense to [repentant] sinners is that, instead of a just recompense, God rewards them with resurrection."*

### 7<sup>th</sup> Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 49:33-50:26;	
	Prov 11:27-12:22; Is 66:10-24;	
	Job 42:7-17	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 32:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 16:19-31
Mass:	Pauline	2 Tim 3:1-4:5
	Catholicon	James 5:7-16
	Acts	Acts 15:1-18
	Psalm	Ps 98:8-9
	Gospel	Luke 13:31-35

**My Lord Jesus Christ, You carried the Cross for my sake; help me Lord to deny myself, take up my cross and follow You.**

**CARRYING THE  
CROSS**

Day 48

Saturday, 27 April 2024

**THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS (PART VII)**

Lazarus' Saturday

"...No man is fit to enjoy heaven unless he has resigned himself to suffer hardship for Christ. Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more helpful for you on this earth than to suffer willingly for Christ. If you had to make a choice, you ought to wish rather to suffer for Christ than to enjoy many consolations, for thus you would be more like Christ and more like all the saints. Our merit and progress consist not in many pleasures and comforts but rather in enduring great afflictions and sufferings.

**"So he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him."**

**(John 19:16-18)**

If, indeed, there were anything better or more useful for man's salvation than suffering, Christ would have shown it by word and example.

But He clearly exhorts the disciples who follow Him and all who wish to follow Him to carry the cross, saying: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

When, therefore, we have read and searched all that has been written, let this be the final conclusion - that through much suffering we must enter into the kingdom of God."<sup>48</sup>

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**The Reward of Carrying the Cross**

"Carry the cross patiently, and with perfect submission, and in the end it will carry You."

- Thomas a Kempis

***St Isaac the Syrian:***  
*"As St Peter wrote in his letter, 'When you suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are you, for you will become sharers in the sufferings of Christ'...For this path of God has been trodden from all the ages and through all generations by means of the cross."*

**Lazarus' Saturday**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 49:1-28; Is 40:9-31; Zeph 3:14-20; Zech 9:9-15	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 88:2-4
	Gospel	Luke 12:16-21
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 2:1-8
	Catholicon	1 Pet 1:25-2:6
	Acts	Acts 27:38-28:10
	Psalm	Ps 129:8,2
	Gospel	John 11:1-45

## Palm Sunday

### **Events:**

Our Lord Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem as a King, sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.

### **Rites:**

- Procession of the Cross during the prayers of Raising of Incense (Matins)
- The Liturgy of Palm Sunday in which the four Gospels relating to the entry of Our Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem are read and the praises of the children 'Hosanna to the Son of David' and a hymn 'Evlogemenos' is chanted.
- The funeral service for the departed is conducted after the completion of the Holy Liturgy and Communion. Funerals are not performed during Passion week as the focus is on the pains and sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Monday Eve

### **Events:**

Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany.

### **Rites:**

- The Pascha prayers begin in the second chorus of the Church (outside the camp – Jerusalem) and the Church is decorated with black cloths suitable for the Passion of Christ.
- Every hour includes:
- The Prophecies
- 'Thok Te Ti-Gom' ('To You is the Power and the Glory') 12 times
- The Psalm, the Gospel's introduction and the Gospel in the sad tune
- Commentary introduction and conclusion
- The Litanies
- The Blessing
- 5 hours at night and 5 hours during the day of the Pascha prayers (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).

## HOLY PASCHA

Day 49

Sunday, 28 April 2024

"Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here." So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve."  
(Mark 11:1-11)

- Gospel of the Palm Sunday Liturgy

## Monday of the Holy Pascha

## HOLY PASCHA

Day 50

Monday, 29 April 2024

### **Events:**

- Our Lord Jesus Christ cursed the fig tree that had no fruit, while on His way from Bethany to Jerusalem. He spent the rest of the day cleansing the Temple and teaching.

### **Rites:**

- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).

## Tuesday Eve

### **Events:**

- In the evening, Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany.

### **Rites:**

- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).

“Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, “Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.” And His disciples heard it. So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”

“And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. When evening had come, He went out of the city. Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.”

(Mark 11:12-21)

– Extract from the Gospel of the First Hour of Monday of the Holy Pascha

## Tuesday of the Holy Pascha

### **Events:**

- On the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, the disciples saw that the fig tree was withered.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the day with the disciples in the temple, teaching them by parables, telling them about the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming

### **Rites:**

- In the 'Thok Te Ti-Gom' praise of the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, the words 'My Good Saviour' are added after 'My Lord Jesus Christ.'
- Psalm 45:6 'Pek-ethronos' ('Your throne O God is forever and ever') is chanted.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).

## Wednesday Eve

### **Events:**

- Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany to spend the night there.

### **Rites:**

- The Church prohibits the exchanging of a kiss from Tuesday evening, so as not to share with Judas Iscariot the sign of the delivery of the Lord.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).

## HOLY PASCHA

Day 51

Tuesday, 30 April 2024

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people."

(Mark 13:32-14:2)

- Gospel of the Eleventh Hour of Tuesday Eve of the Holy Pascha

## Wednesday of the Holy Pascha

### **Events:**

- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the day in Bethany.
- A woman poured fragrant oil on Our Lord's blessed head.
- The betrayal of Judas Iscariot who agreed on a price with the chief priests, to deliver Our Lord Jesus Christ to them with the sign of a kiss.

### **Rites:**

- No exchanging of a kiss.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).

## Holy Thursday Eve

### **Events:**

- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the night in Bethany.

### **Rites:**

- No exchanging of a kiss.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).
- In the 3<sup>rd</sup> hour, Psalm 55:21, 'Av-etchee-non' ('His words were softer than oil') is chanted.

## HOLY PASCHA

Day 52      Wednesday, 1 May 2024

"Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people." And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table. But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor." But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him."  
(Matthew 26:3-16)

- Gospel of the Ninth Hour of Wednesday of the Holy Pascha

## Holy Thursday

### **Events:**

- Our Lord Jesus Christ celebrated the Passover with His disciples. The word 'Passover' is Hebrew which means 'to cross over,' indicative of the passing of the destroying angel from the Israelites to kill the first born of the Egyptians.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ washed the feet of the disciples.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ established for us the Lordly Supper, the Eucharist, with His disciples.

### **Rites:**

- The prayer of the Morning (1<sup>st</sup>) hour, the Raising of Incense. Procession of Judas from the southern side to the northern side (the opposite direction) and Psalm 55:21,1 'Av-etchee-non' ('His words were softer than oil') is chanted.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed as usual.
- The service of the 'Lakan' which contains readings concerning Our Lord washing the feet of His disciples.
- The service of the Divine Liturgy (The Catholic Epistle, Acts, Synaxarium, Prayer of Reconciliation, Commemoration of the Saints are not prayed).
- The 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the Pascha prayers are prayed instead of Psalm 150.

## Good Friday Eve

### **Events:**

- Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.

### **Rites:**

- The words, 'My strength and my praise is the Lord who became my Holy Salvation,' are added to the praise of 'Thok Te Ti-Gom.'
- In the 1<sup>st</sup> hour of the Pascha prayers, the Paraclete chapters are read.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed as usual. The four Gospels are read in each hour.

## HOLY PASCHA

Day 53

Thursday, 2 May 2024

"When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it." And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom."  
(Matthew 26:20-29)

- Gospel of the Covenant Thursday Liturgy

### **Events:**

- The trial of Our Lord Jesus Christ, condemning Him to be crucified.
- The Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ at the 6<sup>th</sup> hour.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ's words on the Cross.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ's death on the Cross at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour.
- The piercing of Our Lord Jesus Christ with a spear, water and Blood flowed from His side. The body of Our Lord was taken down from the Cross at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour.
- The burial of Our Lord Jesus Christ in a new tomb at the 12<sup>th</sup> hour.

### **Rites:**

- The 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed in the second chorus.
- In the 6<sup>th</sup> hour, 'Tay-sho-ree' ('This is the pure golden censor') & 'Fay etaf enf' ('He who lifted Himself') are chanted before the Pauline Epistle. The priest prays the segments of the 6<sup>th</sup> hour from the Agpia, then the 'O-mo-no-ge-nees' hymn is chanted. After the 6<sup>th</sup> hour is prayed, the Right thief's creed is read.
- In the 9<sup>th</sup> hour, 'Te-sho-ree' ('This is the golden censor') & 'Fay etaf enf' ('He who lifted Himself') are chanted before the Pauline Epistle. The priest prays the segments of the 9<sup>th</sup> hour from the Agpia, then continues as usual.
- The prayers of the 12<sup>th</sup> hour are prayed in the first chorus, when the veil of the sanctuary is opened and the Altar is decorated with white cloths suitable for the Joyous Saturday.
- In the 12<sup>th</sup> hour, the prophecies are read, Lamentations 3:1-66 and Jonah 1:10-2:7. Psalm 45:6 'Pek-ethronos' ('Your throne O God is forever and ever') is chanted.
- After the 12<sup>th</sup> hour, once the litanies are prayed, 'Lord have mercy' is recited 100 times on each side (East, North, West, South), ending with 12 times towards the East.
- The procession with the icon of the Cross is performed followed by the hymn of Golgotha and the burial.

"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spit on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified. Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name.

Him they compelled to bear His Cross. And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. ... Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land."

(Matthew 27:27-38, 45)

- Extract from the Gospel of the Sixth Hour of Good Friday of the Holy Pascha

## Joyous Saturday (The Apocalypse)

### **Events:**

- Our Lord Jesus Christ descended to Hades and restored the souls of the righteous to Paradise.

### **Rites:**

- The hymns are chanted, half in sad tune and half in joyous tune.
- Many praises are read.
- The Book of Revelation is read.
- The Liturgy of Joyous Saturday (The Pauline Epistle, Catholic Epistle and Acts are read but not the Synaxarium).
- The Psalm and Gospel are prayed, half in sad tune and half in joyous tune.
- The Prayer of Reconciliation is not prayed, the Commemoration of the Saints is prayed, and at the end of the Liturgy, Psalm 150 is not chanted.

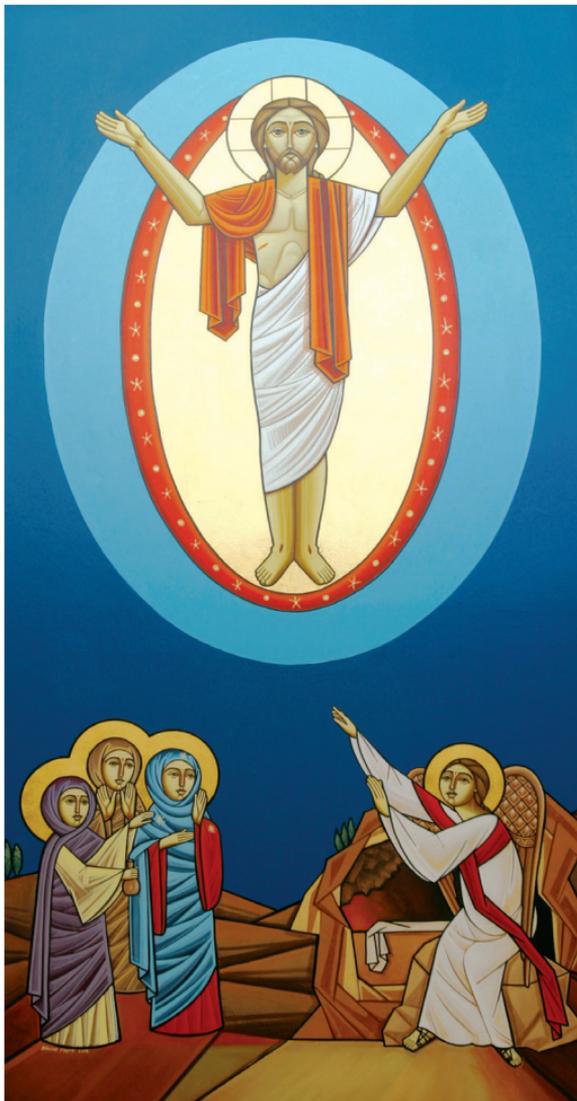
## HOLY PASCHA

Day 55

Saturday, 4 May 2024

“Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.” ... And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth. 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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.”  
(Matthew 28:1-10, 18-20)

- Extract from the Gospel of the Joyous Saturday Liturgy



*Ekhristos Anestee*  
*Alithos Anestee*

*Christ is Risen*  
*Indeed He is Risen*

Icon from  
St Mary & St Mina's  
Coptic Orthodox Cathedral  
Sydney - Australia

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