



My Church

Grade 9-12

Spirit & Life



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HIS HOLINESS POPE TAWADROS II



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



Spirit and Life

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

Spirit and Life



St. Mark's Festival 2020 Anthem

My precious Church

Heaven on earth

A fortress in the world

A refuge for all. (x2)

Since Adam humanity's fallen

Separated from our calling

But Christ came, died and rose

And through Him we were restored. (x2)

My Church you are my strength

Treasury of heavenly wealth

(Sound doctrine, living rites

Leading us to the light) (x2)

House of God, a fruitful vine

My Church, spirit and life (x3)

My Church... Spirit and Life

My Church

1- The Coptic Church:

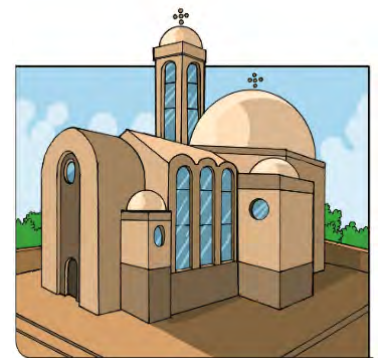
- The Church of saints and martyrs.
- The Church of theologians like, St. Athanasius, St. Dioscorus, and St. Cyril.
- The Church of monks like, St. Anthony, St. Macarius, St. Shenoute, and St. Pachom.
- The Church of martyrs. The Church offered many martyrs throughout the ages and until this day.
- The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

We are one Church in rites, doctrine and history.



2- Orthodox:

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



3- The Church is the body of Christ

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

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



4- Blessings of Eucharist:

- **Abiding in Christ:**

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

- **Uniting with the heavenly:**

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

- **Uniting with each other:**

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

- **Receiving forgiveness:**

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

- **Receiving salvation:**

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

- **Eternal life:**

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

- **Proclaiming the faith:**

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



My Church is Spirit:

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

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

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

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

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

- The Holy Spirit descended on the disciples on the day of **Pentecost** after the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the Church was established, and they preached Christianity all over the world and built churches.



- **The work of the Holy Spirit in the Church Sacraments:**

The Sacraments give us an unseen grace by the work of the Holy Spirit in seen matter.

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

My Church is Life:

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

1- Personal life:

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

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

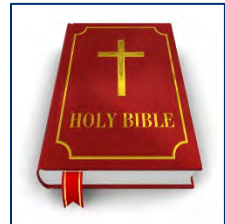


- b. **Prayer:** It is our relationship with God through which we are fed spiritually. We have:



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

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



- d. **Spiritual gatherings:**

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

- e. **Fasting and asceticism:**

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

2- Serving others:

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



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

Study of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians

Carry the Armor of God



This epistle is one of the 14 written by St. Paul the apostle. He wrote it to the churches of Ephesus in Asia Minor, present day Turkey. St. Paul reminds us that we were on God's mind since the beginning of time. He chose us and united us with Him and we became His body (the Church) and Christ is the head.

In the second half of the epistle, St. Paul tells us how to live a Christian living befitting the sons of God. At the end, he teaches us how to be ready to fight our spiritual war to gain the eternal joy and inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Ephesus:

St. Paul preached to the Jews in Ephesus in the year 54 A.D. on his way to Corinth (Acts 18:19).

He went back and established the church (Acts 19:1) and stayed there for 3 years preaching and teaching the people.

The church of Ephesus is one of the 7 churches mentioned in the book of Revelation.



The Epistle:

St. Paul wrote this epistle around the year 62 or 63 A.D. from the prison in Rome, along with 3 other epistles: to the Colossians, the Philippians and to Philemon.

The theme of the epistle is that "**the Church is the Body of Christ**"; and it goes along with the epistle written to the Colossians with the theme "**Christ is the Head of the Church**". For this reason, he asked them to read both messages.



Chapter 1: Christ Blesses and Fills His Church

St. Paul starts his epistle by giving praise and thanks to God for all His blessings and gifts He has given us.

The phrase "In Christ" was repeated many times in this epistle, confirming we have no salvation without the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Christ...

- the Father chose us since the beginning
- we became children of God
- we received salvation
- heaven and earth were united. The Jews with the Gentiles were united and together will share in the eternal inheritance
- we received redemption and forgiveness of sins and received the Holy Spirit



St. Paul prays for the believers, **“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”** Ephesians 1:17-18

Are we ready to strive to receive our inheritance?

Chapter 2: Christ Unites Humanity in His Church

St. Paul explains that we received salvation by grace in Christ. This grace was a gift summarizing God's love and mercy to us. Therefore, we need to strive and abide in our Lord through Communion, so we can have a place in His kingdom. The grace of God will work when we sin, only if we are ready for the spiritual war and to strive for the salvation of our souls.

He explains the reconciliation between God and man, and between the Jews and Gentiles and how they became one body united in Christ. **"In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."** Ephesians 2:22

In this chapter, we see the Cross with its two parts: vertical and horizontal.

Vertical: Signifies our reconciliation and unity with Christ - we rise with Him and go to heaven with Him (verses 6, 16)

Horizontal: Signifies the reconciliation and unity between the members of the Church (verses 14-16)

We receive reconciliation and unity through the Holy Cross.



Chapter 3: The Great Love of God in the Salvation of the Gentiles

St. Paul confirms that the Spirit revealed to the apostles is the mystery that has not been revealed in the Old Testament to the prophets; that is the salvation of the Gentiles and their sharing the inheritance of the kingdom.

God revealed this mystery to the Gentiles by preaching the faith to them.

St. Paul prays for...

- 1- The believers to be strengthened with might through His Holy Spirit, so that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith.
- 2- The believers to be rooted and grounded in love, so that they may be able to comprehend the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

This love of God that appeared on the Cross is unlimited, for God is love and God is unlimited. For this reason, St. Paul described it with width, length, depth, and height. The love of God encompasses us all and is above the comprehension of man.

Have we reached this love? Are we ready to tire for others and care for their salvation?



Chapter 4: Renewal and the Christian Behavior

The Christian behavior includes...

- 1- Living according to the commandments of Christ in gentleness, lowliness, longsuffering, and love.
- 2- Keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- 3- Each one has a gift given by God for the ministry and the edifying of the church that we may come to the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.
- 4- Standing firm in faith and not believing false teachings.
- 5- Stay away from the way of the world which is sin and uncleanness.



It is not enough to escape from sin, but we should also acquire virtues. Do not just stay away from lying, but always tell the truth. Do not steal, but also give to those who are in need. Escape from anger, acting in meekness and forgiveness

Let us always hold on to God's commandments and strive to obtain virtues.

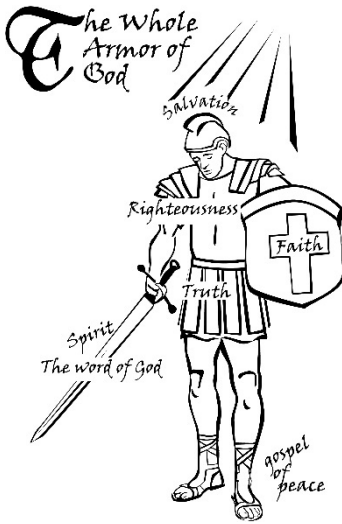
Chapter 5: Christian Behavior in the World

In an evil world, Christians should be...

- 1- Following the example of Christ in love, sacrifice, and kindness.
- 2- Fleeing uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, and foolish talking.
- 3- Not deceived in believing happiness comes from sin.
- 4- Walking as children of light and displaying fruits of the Holy Spirit.
- 5- Not having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but exposing them.
- 6- Walking in circumspection, redeeming the time before this life ends. Use your time wisely in prayers and spiritual works.
- 7- Filled with the Spirit and obtaining the real joy, which is a fruit of the Spirit, through the means of grace: praise, repentance and abiding in Christ through communion, and reading the Holy Bible.



St. Paul gives instructions to the married. As Christ is the Head of the Church, the husband is the head of the wife. The husband should lead the family in the fear of God, and the wife should submit to her husband in Christ. The husband should love his wife as his own self and give himself up for her, just like Christ gave His Blood for the



Chapter 6: The Armor of God

This chapter begins with instructions for parents and children, and to masters and servants. The second part of this chapter is about the spiritual armor.

The whole armor of God mentioned in Ephesians 6:10-14 is given to us in the 36 anointments in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The armor signifies the state of readiness: the continuous strife and holding on to Christ; and the Christ in us is the one who will conquer.

This whole armor is based on Christ and we will conquer in Christ. Therefore, we need to give the glory to God and not to our efforts.

Weapon	Usefulness	Spiritual weapon	Anointing in the Sacrament of Confirmation	Spiritual Usefulness
Helmet	Protects the head and face	Salvation	1-8	Protects our minds and thoughts from the false teachings and evil/sinful thoughts.
Breastplate	Protects the chest and heart	Righteousness	9, 10	Righteous behavior protects the heart from lusts and sin.
Girded waist	Supports the back	Truth	11, 12	Truth is knowing Christ and the commandments and holding fast to them. This will strengthen us.
Footwear	Walking forward towards the goal	Gospel of peace	25-36	Always ready to walk according to the will of God and preaching the gospel of love and peace.
Shield	Protects the whole body	Faith	9-36	Protects us. Without it we would be open to the fiery darts of the wicked one.
Sword	Only weapon of attack	The Word of God		The word of God strikes the devil. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" Hebrews 4:12 The Lord Jesus Christ used the Word of God while He was being tempted. "But Jesus answered him saying: It is written..." Luke 4:4

Let us always be ready, carrying the whole armor of God; holding on to our faith and the word of God; and caring for our daily repentance to win and conquer in order to receive the crown of life and the heavenly joy awaiting us.

The Holy Liturgy- A Bond of Love

The Holy Liturgy is the center of prayer and congregational worship. The time spent in the Liturgy is a time spent in heaven on earth with God, the angels, and heavenly powers who are present with us. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the bridegroom to the human soul. He offers His love to us every day in the Liturgy.

The Liturgy is made up of 10 parts:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. The Raising of Incense. | 6. The Consecration |
| 2. The Offering of the Lamb | 7. The Litanies |
| 3. The Readings | 8. The Commemoration of the Saints |
| 4. The Prayer of Reconciliation | 9. The Fraction |
| 5. The Anaphora (“Lift up your hearts”) | 10. The Prayer of Submission and Communion |

Activity: Match the verse with the corresponding prayers from the Liturgy:

Revelations 4:11	1 Timothy 3:16	1 Timothy 2: 1 -2	Revelations 5:8	Psalms 119:105	Matthew 5:24
Revelations 6:11	Hebrews 11:40	Isaiah 6:3	John 6:56	Matthew 26:26-28	1 Corinthians 11:26
The Great Mystery of Godliness	You Proclaim My Death	He gave Himself for us	Guidance on the Road	Preparation by Repentance	Meet and Right
The Commemoration of the Saints	Unity with God	Holy Kiss	The Incense	Consecration of the Offerings	
	Prayer for the President and Army		The Praise of the Cherubim		

1. The Raising of Incense:

It is an introduction to the Liturgy because it includes different prayers: offering thanks, praises, and asking for the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Liturgy must have the Raising of Incense of Vespers and Matins (except the Liturgies during the Great Lent, Vespers is not prayed because the Liturgies end late).

- **Thanksgiving Prayer:** The Church begins all the prayers with it. In either Vespers or Matins, the Church offers thanks to God for all His works.
- **The Mystery of Incense:** The priest puts five spoons of incense and says, *“In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”* This signifies that the incense is consecrated for the Trinity. The five spoons refer to 5 men in the Old Testament who offered acceptable offerings to the Lord: Abel, Noah, Melchizedek, Aaron, and Zachariah.
- **The Prayer of Efnoti Nai Nan (Have Mercy):** In this prayer, the priest asks for God’s mercy, and the people respond saying Kyrie Eleison (Lord have mercy) three times.
- **The Litany of the Gospel:** In it, the Psalm and Gospel are read.
- **The Small Litanies:** The priest prays the five small Litanies: peace, fathers, the place, the waters, and congregation.
- **The Absolution:** The priest reads the absolution and dismisses the people after the benediction.



Understand: The priest processes around the Altar, and this symbolizes the preaching of the Trinity in the four corners of the world. In the procession of the priest, he turns counterclockwise. This means that there is no relationship between time and eternity, and our relationship during the prayers of the Liturgy is with heaven.

Live: The incense is a declaration of the presence of God. Therefore, we say, *“Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,”* while the priest circles raising the incense. During this time, we should put our head down and offer repentance and confession and ask for the Lord’s forgiveness.

2. The Offering of the Lamb:

The Church stresses its relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb. We pray the Psalms before the Offering of the Lamb because they represent prophecies about the incarnation of Christ. The Church prays the prayers of the third and sixth hours on the days of feasts, Saturdays, and Sundays. On the fasting weekdays, the Church also includes the ninth hour. In the Great Lent and Nineveh's Fast, the Church also includes the prayers of the eleventh and twelfth hours.



The priest examines the offerings to choose the best one. While choosing the Lamb, the priest lays his hands on the oblations in the shape of the cross and says, "The Lord chooses for Himself a Lamb without blemish."

Know: The number of holy breads to be chosen must be an odd number: 3, 5, 7, etc. Ask your servant why.

Understand: The priest chooses the Lamb while facing the congregation, and this declares that no one is worthy of facing God. But there is an intercessor between us and God the Father, His Son who offered His life on behalf of us all for the remission of our sins.

Live: While confessing our sins, we place our hope in Christ; and at this point we can do nothing but beg for mercy and therefore we chant "Kyrie Eleison." While offering the Lamb, it's time for offering repentance; raise your heart asking for forgiveness and asking for God's mercy.

Understand: The priest wets his fingers with water then washes the Lamb from top to bottom, representing the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ where He was submerged in the water by the hands of St. John the Baptist. Then the Priest says, "Glory and Honor," while standing at the door of the Altar, then processes around the Altar. He then places the Lamb in the *Paten* (tray) and with it the *chalice* (cup). Then they are both covered with the *Prosphorine* (large sheet covering), representing the death and burial of Christ after His crucifixion.

Do you know the meaning of the word *despotikon*? Ask your servant.



3. The Readings:

The readings are a guide for us to understand our position towards God and His place in our lives, allowing us to achieve our goal.

Know: The readings are called the *Liturgy of the Catechumens* because it is the educational part of the Liturgy. The Church has five different readings in the Liturgy. A portion from the...

1. Epistles of St. Paul, called the Pauline Epistles
2. Catholic Epistles, which include the Epistles of James, Peter I & II, John I, II, & III and Jude.
3. Book of Acts, called the Praxis
4. Synaxarium, the Chronicle of the Saints. *Synaxarium* means the news or biography.
5. Psalms and Gospels

What is the meaning of the words Praxis, Katamaros and Spasmos?

Understand: During the Pauline Epistle, the priest processes around the church but during the Catholic Epistle, he processes only in the first rows. Do you know why? Ask your servant.

Live: At the end of the Liturgy the priest says, “*The holies for the holy.*” How will we obtain holiness without the work of His word in us? The words of the Holy Bible require our **acceptance and full submission to God** giving Him our heart and examining our thoughts and deeds. When the priest processes around the church with incense, it is a call for repentance and to accept the word of God with purity and holiness.

4. The Prayer of Reconciliation (the Holy Kiss):

Know: We are created according to God’s image and are able to love. If one is unable to repent and reconcile with God, he won’t be able to offer true love. Sin makes us lose the ability to love; therefore, offering the kiss of love is a true act of repentance.



Understand: Why does the priest raise the *Prosporphine*?

The Priest raises the *Prosporphine* to declare the Resurrection. It was manifested in us by our reconciliation with God through repentance and with others through the Holy Kiss.

Live: “**Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.**”(Matthew 5:23-24). This means that we should reconcile with others and love others as we have reconciled with God.

The priest prays the Prayer of Reconciliation offering thanks to God in two parts:

Part I: Contemplation of God’s creation without corruption then the fall of man by the deception of the devil. Therefore, the Liturgy starts by the Prayer of Reconciliation as a symbol of our reconciliation with God before partaking of the Eucharist.



Part II: The priest asks for the Lord to fill his and our hearts of His heavenly peace. Therefore, the deacon proclaims, “*Greet one another with a holy kiss.*” This is said so the church would be of one mind and one heart to get ready for partaking of the Holy Communion. The priest, then, starts out by saying, “*The Love of God the Father, be with you all,*” meaning that the love of God will dwell in us if we love one another.

*We don’t pray the Prayer of Reconciliation on Covenant Thursday because it signifies that the true reconciliation was obtained only by the crucifixion, which will happen on Good Friday.

5. The Anaphora (Raising of our Hearts):

When we start praying on the bread and wine, the priest and the people start to pray for one another. The congregation prays: “*And with your spirit,*” meaning that we are also praying for the priest. We get ready to raise our hearts to heaven. Therefore, the Church proclaims the reconciliation of God with His people in Jesus Christ, and we respond by reconciling with one another. What does the word *Anaphora* mean? Ask your servant.



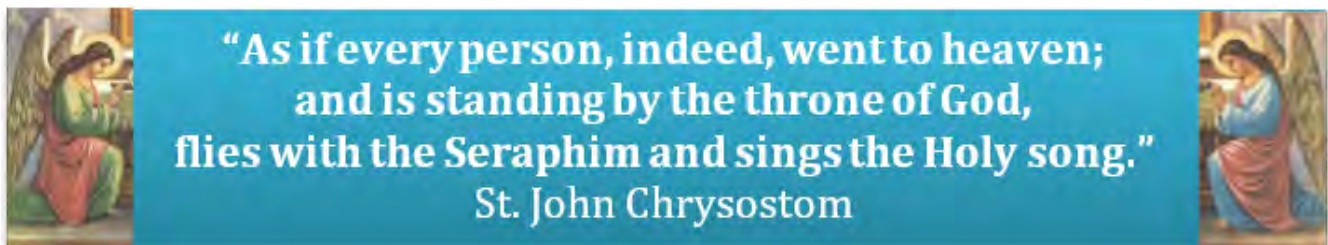
Know: Here everyone is to raise their hearts and answer all together, “We have them with the Lord.” Then the priest answers, “Let us give thanks to the Lord” for His grace that allowed us to stand in His presence. Then the people answer, “It is meet and right” because He is worthy of all thanks and praise.

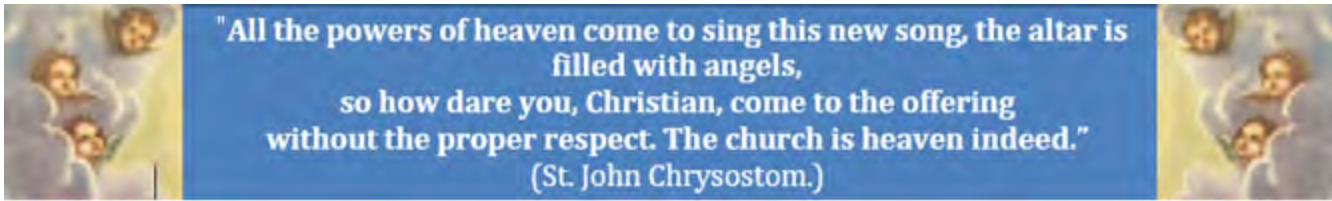
Live: If you truly present your heart to God, you must thank Him by proclaiming “meet and right” because this is truly the grace from Him.

Understand: Then the priest raises his arms and prays “*Agios*” making the sign of the cross three times: the first on himself, the second on the deacons, and the third on the people. When the priest asks the people to lift up their hearts, they feel that they are in heaven and start praising like the angels saying, “*Holy, Holy, Holy.*” We praise the Lord because He was incarnate for us, crucified, buried, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and will return to judge us according to our deeds.

Live: Praise and thank God for all His works with you because we reconcile with Him through repentance, and with our brethren through love. We raised our hearts and thoughts to heaven, so we can become a part of the heavenly choir singing and proclaiming, “*Holy, Holy, Holy.*”

- What is the difference between the word “holy” and the word “saint”? Ask your Servant.
- Why does the priest put incense in the censor when he says, “He was incarnate and became man”?





6. The Consecration: The consecration is the most important part of the Liturgy.

Know: In it, the Holy Spirit descends on the offering and transforms it into the Blood and Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. In it we remember how our Lord gives us His Body and Blood every day on the altar. The priest prays inaudibly and proclaims the transformation of the bread and wine to the Body and Blood of our Lord. The candles are lit around the altar during the sanctification of the bread and wine declaring that the true light has shined on the offering. He calls for the Holy Spirit while kneeling because, it is the Lord Himself who instituted this mystery and He is the one who sends His Spirit onto the offering.

Understand: Here, the priest points to the sacrifice while having his hands covered with the napkins and says, *"He instituted for us this great mystery of godliness."* When the deacon proclaims, *"Worship God in fear and trembling,"* the priest asks the Holy Spirit to join and transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then he makes the sign of the cross on the bread and says *"He gave thanks... He blessed it... and sanctified it."* Then he puts his hand at the edge of the Chalice and makes the sign of the cross three times and says, *"He gave thanks.... He blessed it... and sanctified it."* Each time the people answer saying, *"Amen."* What does the statement *"Do this in remembrance of Me"* mean? Ask your servant.



7. The Litanies: Litany means request or supplication.

Know: The Litanies are supplications for many things; as we share one body, we offer supplication for the unity of heart. We pray for our loved ones placing their needs in the presence of the Lord. We ask for the unity of the Church, the safety of our Patriarch, the priests, and servants. We pray for the widows and orphans, strangers and guests, sick and travelers. We also pray for those who are suffering, the president, and the soldiers (Ephesians 2:1-2).

The priest prays the seven small litanies: Litany of peace, the fathers, the priests, the mercy, the place, the waters or plants or the heavens, and the oblations.

Live: Through these supplications, we live in love which is full of care for others' needs. No one can stand in the presence of God alone, but we all ask for one another as we are all members of one body.

8. The Commemoration of the Saints: Unity with the Victorious Church:

Know: After the Litanies, the priest prays the Commemoration of the Saints. It includes the fathers of the Church; then he mentions the names of our beloved who departed. The Commemoration of the Saints is the presence of the whole Catholic Church, not only the living but also the ones who departed. In it, we unite with the victorious church. We ask for their prayers, and we pray for them.

“It is fit that we pray for the believers who passed away and to offer a mysterious sacrifice, so God would have compassion on them.” (St. Cyril the Pillar of Faith).

Understand: On Covenant Thursday, we do not pray the Commemoration of the Saints, why?

Live: During the Commemoration of the Saints, keep quiet and stand to keep your concentration. Contemplate on some of the characteristics of those saints and ask for their intercession. Pray for those who departed, so that God would give rest to their souls.

Pray that you, too, be purified, so that you would be filled with the spirit of love and be freed from all selfishness.

9. The Fraction:

Know: The prayer of the Fraction is offering thanksgiving to God for all His blessings, and giving us His Holy Body and precious Blood. Then we offer praises for Him to grant us the purity of heart, soul, and body, so we can partake of His Holies. There are many types of Fraction Prayers. There are ones that pertain to the feasts like St. Mary, the angels, the fasts, and more that pertain to other church occasions, in addition to the annual fraction prayers.



Understand: The priest breaks the body into 12 pieces around the *despotikon*, (The four central squares form the *despotikon* (the bread of the Lord)) representing the passions of Christ. The priest, then, smears the Body with the Blood in the shape of a cross and this represents that our Lord was immersed in the passions. It also resembles the blood that came out of His side as He was speared on the cross.

Live: During the Fraction, contemplate on the passion of Christ for you. Think about the suffering and the pain He endured for you. Remember that all of this was for your sins, and pray saying, “*Lord forgive me for I am a sinner.*”

10. Prayers of Submission and Communion:

Know: The deacon proclaims, *“Bow your heads to the Lord.”* Then the people answer *“Before you O Lord.”* This is a moment of repentance, and it prepares you to receive the absolution from the priest. When the priest reads the absolution, we have to give repentance. Then the deacon proclaims, *“Let us attend in the fear of God.”* The priest then answers, *“Peace be with you all,”* and the people answer, *“And with your spirit.”* Then the priest proclaims, *“The Holies for the Holy.”* And the people answer, *“One is the Holy Father, One is the Holy Son, One is the Holy Spirit.”* By this the people are proclaiming that we are not holy. We are sinners and unworthy, and no one but God the Trinity is holy. Then the priest says the final confession and each time the people answer, *“Amen.”* Then the deacon says, *“Pray for the worthy partaking of the Immaculate, Heavenly, and Holy Mysteries. Lord have mercy.”*



Understand: The Eucharist is a sanctification of the material creation to regain its original image. It is a declaration of God’s presence and proof of His love and care for man who is created in His own image.

Live: Now we all line up as if we’re all going to heaven with our mouth open resembling the manger that received God incarnate. It is truly a moment of joy and sanctification. We offer praises of joy as a soul that was sanctified by the Body and Blood of Christ.

“One should not prevent himself from partaking of Communion daily because in it is healing for the soul.” (St. Augustine)

Summary:

1. We proclaim that God is in our midst even though we are sinners. (Raising of Incense in Vespers and Matins)
2. The Lamb of God gave Himself for our sake (The Offering of the Lamb).
3. He gave us His word to guide and purify us (The Readings).
4. Reconcile with your brethren (The Prayer of Reconciliation); because if we are reconciled with God, we must be reconciled with one another.
5. We raise our hearts to live in heaven (The Anaphora).
6. He presents His Body to us so we could be in His Body (The Consecration) and if we are His body...
7. We also have unity with one another (The Litanies).
8. We will also have unity with our brethren in Heaven (The Commemoration of the Saints).
9. We also have unity in His passions which He endured for us (The Fraction).
10. And finally, we partake of the Holy Communion. We partake of His Body and Blood so He will always be in us. We also would have unity with our brethren because we are members of His body. Communion makes us one in Him and one with our brethren.

Why and How?

A Relationship with God

If you are convinced of doing something, you would ask how?
If you are not convinced of doing something, you would ask why?

The relationship with God is much deeper than being formulated into words. No one can realize its value unless he has experienced this relationship.



Let's answer these two questions about how and why we should have a relationship with God.

First: Why do I need a relationship with God?

My relationship with God fulfills my humanity:

You can't achieve the reason for your existence on earth without your relationship with God. God has created us in His image, and granted us the mind to be able to talk to Him and build a sound relationship with Him. After St. Augustine studied all the sciences of philosophy and wisdom, he said in his confessions that he had tried everything in life to satisfy his desires. However, in his spiritual experience, he said that God has created us to serve Him. Our souls and hearts will rest only in God. Man can never find his joy and peace away from God.

The presence of God in our life gives a meaning to it.

What is the goal of this connection and relationship?

“Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth” (Isaiah 45:22)

“Look to Me” means that God is asking us to give Him more attention, more time, and more emotions. We are busy with everything except our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is inviting us to come to Him, do you think the Lord needs us? Are we going to add anything? Why does He insist on us coming to Him?

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27) So God gave man His image but left him to strive to gain the likeness. The closer the person is to God, the more he is like Him.

He loves us and wants us to love Him

Find these verses to know what the Holy Bible has to say about loving the Lord our God:

(Deuteronomy 10:12) - (Deuteronomy 30:20) - (Deuteronomy 11:13) - (Deuteronomy 30:6) -
(Deuteronomy 30:16) – (Psalms 12:30) – (1 John 4:19) – (John 13:1)

Our love to God is a consequence to the realization of His great love for us.

“We love Him because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19), “He loved them to the end.” (John 13:1). God loves us because we are His children. He loves us and was crucified for us. The devil wants us to doubt God’s love for us. We have heard about this love, but we may have not experienced it. We might not feel that love, though the Lord Jesus Christ has said **“I have loved you” (Malachi 1:2), “Abide in My love.” (John 15:9)**

The devil wants to increase the gap between us and the Lord Jesus Christ and become doubtful of the word of God. Making us question ourselves by thinking “why did God create us? or why are we here?...”

Know Him and enjoy His gifts:

There is a big difference between knowing a person by name only and knowing them by meeting them and dealing with them. The knowledge of God means that you not only hear about Him but get to know Him personally. Read about the Lord Jesus Christ, talk to Him and realize His love for us.

St Paul said, **“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18)**

This command is necessary for us to implement. We need to know more about our Lord Jesus Christ not only through the Holy Bible but also through prayers and having a strong relationship with Him.

“But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight, says the Lord.” (Jeremiah 9:24).



Second: How do I build a relationship with God?

1- Personal Relationship with God:

Imagine yourself riding a bus, and you were asked to get to know the person sitting next to you. What would you talk about? You will have a general conversation, and it will be short and boring. You can only trust your close friends to talk about your problems. We might know God by reason or from our parents because we were born Christians.

What about the true relationship with God? Meet up with your Lord Jesus Christ, talk to Him, visit Him and He will visit you. Give Him a gift and He will give you plenty. Repeat a verse from the Holy Bible, sing a spiritual song, say a prayer, read the Agpeya...etc. We should be really proud to meet up with God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

The relationship with God is essential but will never grow unless you pray, read the Holy Bible, and experience the presence of God in your life.

2- Building a strong relationship with God:

The disciple whom Jesus loved is not just John or Lazarus but each one of us.

To personally know God, one needs to experience Him through faith and submission to His will; by prayer and continuous repentance, and by participating in the Holy Sacraments and reading His word in the Holy Bible.

Set a spiritual cannon for yourself with your father of confession to guide you in strengthening your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. You should set daily, weekly, and monthly goals for your spiritual life.



How do you spend half an hour with our Lord Jesus Christ?

1. Begin by singing a spiritual song or hymn, **“Serve the Lord with gladness, come before His presence with singing” (Psalms 100:2)**
2. Pray the Agpeya Prayer for the time of day.
3. Give thanks to the Lord for all the material and spiritual blessings. **“In everything give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)**
4. Examine yourself daily. **“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Psalms 66:18)**
5. Read the Holy Bible with contemplation using some verses in your prayers. Contemplate on a verse that touches you and use it as a subject of prayer to God.
6. Pray for others. **“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Timothy 2:1-2)**
7. Pray for your personal needs. **“Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7)**
8. Quiet your mind to hear the voice of God. Say a few words like I love You O Lord, my strength, I want to feel Your presence.
9. Finally, conclude your prayer with a hymn such as one for the saints or your intercessor.



Speak to God openly:

- Tell Him about your joys and experiences so that He blesses what you do.
- Tell Him about your problems so He would help you overcome them and give you peace.
- Tell Him about your wishes and desires so that He purifies them.
- Tell Him about your weaknesses and needs.



That's how you can start a strong relationship with God.

Relationships - Give and Take

God created us as social beings. Therefore, everyone needs to have healthy and fulfilling relationships in order to fulfill God's purpose for our lives. Relationships in one's life can take several forms; such as one's relationship with the Church, the Bible, friends, the other gender, media, and how one handles themselves.

1- Myself: Loving Yourself in a Spiritual Manner

Find these verses that tell you how God wants us to treat ourselves: (Sirach 30:24), (1 Timothy 4:7)

God created each one of us good and unique and loves us as we are; so love and accept yourself as you are, and don't compare yourself to others. Keep close to God, and get filled by Him and grow in Him. Use the talents He gave you to glorify His name and build His kingdom within us.

Teach me O Lord to love myself and offer it to You with love. Teach me to live according to Your will for You are my God and in You I trust. Help me accept myself as You gave it to me, for I am created in Your image and am precious in Your eyes. Lead me in Your way and help me obey Your commandments.

2- My Church:

The Church gives us an image of what Heaven will be like. Therefore, it is important to have a strong relationship with the Church.

Regular attendance in the house of God is the cornerstone in building my spiritual life. It is where I receive the means of grace to support me on my spiritual journey by leading me to continuous repentance and enlightening my understanding with God's word and wisdom.



Church connects me with the other members of the body of Christ and prepares me for eternal life with God and the angels and saints.

No wonder then that the devil tries to hinder my attendance in church. He tries to stop me from going to church in the first place. He tries to stop me from benefiting from my attendance by distracting me from focusing on God.

The Church is the congregation of believers, gathered in the sanctified house of God, led by the clergy, surrounded by angels and saints, around the Holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Church cannot be a place for mere social interactions or non-spiritual fun. It is the place where we meet with our Lord Jesus Christ, hear His word, and receive His Body and Blood.

When in church...

- Arrive early.
- Do not sit when we are supposed to stand.
- Do not be distracted by your phone or talking with others.
- Do not be distracted by looking at others around you. Focus on the prayers you're attending.
- Participate in worship with all your senses.
- Dress modestly, wearing clothes appropriate for church.
- Do not leave until the priest says, "Go in peace".
- Do not move too much, and if needed, walk slowly and quietly.

3- **My Holy Bible:**

My relationship with the Holy Bible starts with owning it and revolves around reading it, understanding it, contemplating on it, studying it, memorizing it, and living its commandments.

- **Own it:**
Everyone should own a Holy Bible and use it all the time, never forgetting to read it.
- **Love it:**
Love the Holy Bible because it's God's message to you that you want to keep reading and re-reading.

Find out why we love the Holy Bible in these verses:

(Psalm 19:10) , (Psalm 119:103) , (Psalm 119:127) , (Psalm 119:140) , (Psalm 119:162),
(Psalm 119:159) , (Psalm 119:40) , (Psalm 119:46) , (Psalm 119:96)

- **Always read it.**
You'll benefit from the Holy Bible when you read it regularly and make it a habit. Regular reading of the Holy Bible will help keep God's word on your mind.

"his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night." Psalm 1:2

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it." Joshua 1:8



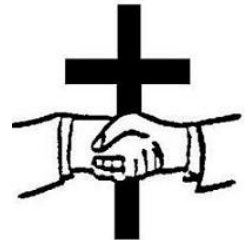
4- My friends:

Your choice of friends today will affect your future. This is what the Holy Bible says, **“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.” (Proverbs 13:20)**

The Holy Bible mentions many people that had friendships. There is one whose friendship saved his life (1 Samuel 19). There is another whose friendships caused his destruction (1 Kings 12).

Friendship is a relationship between two or more people that is characterized by love and serenity and filled with harmony. Therefore, it is important to make sure of the following before choosing a friend:

1. You must choose someone who is compatible with you. Make sure that your friend is close to your age, environment, and education.
2. Look for someone who has common goals, hobbies, and plans.
3. Do not neglect your parents’ opinion about your friends.
4. Obey God in ending any friendships that do not please Him because your friends can either lead you to Heaven or away from it!
5. Start friendships yourself. Do not wait for others to like you, but be the one who initiates friendship with others.



Avoid codependence in friendship. Discuss with your servant.

You must **choose your friends wisely**. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a successful friendship?

1. **Giving must be from both sides.** Giving from one person leads to the loss of the giver, and this leads to codependence. In the Old Testament, one of the feasts celebrated was the feast of Purim mentioned in Esther 9:19. Gifts were given to one another.
2. **Being there in the time of hardship.** During hardships, this is the most important time for your friends to be there, like the friends of Job. (Job 2:11-13)
3. **There are levels of friendship.** It is wrong to get close to others at the same level by opening up to everyone and sharing your deepest secrets. Our Lord Jesus Christ had 12 disciples, but only one of them leaned on His bosom.
4. **There are conditions to friendship.** One of which is to not harm the individual or delay one’s relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord commanded us to cut our hand if it makes us sin (Mark 9:43). He meant in this verse to get away from anyone who would make us sin.
5. **Friendship must be with someone of the same sex.** Since friendship is sharing one’s feelings; if friendship happens between the opposite sex, it can lead to unwanted relationships that will not please God. The Lord asked Moses to “Let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor.”
6. **No friendship with the unbelievers.** The unbelievers have principles that do not coincide with the teachings of our Lord; therefore, they may affect our decision-making and way of thinking. Our teacher St. Paul says, **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” (2 Corinthians 6:14)**



How would you react in the following situations?

- A friend of yours starts using profanity.
- A friend of yours feels that you should dress in a revealing way to gain attention.
- A friend asks you to come with him/her to a party.
- You are fasting on a Friday and your friends decide to go eat ice cream.

Show me your friends,
and I will tell you who you are.



Find the following verses that explain the principals of successful friendships from the Book of Joshua Ben Sirach: **(Sirach 19:7-10)** , **(Sirach 19:13-18)** , **(Sirach 22:25)** , **(Sirach 22:26-27)** , **(Sirach 27:24)**, **(Sirach 7:20)** , **(Sirach 6:14)**

5- **The Opposite Gender:**

Dealing with the opposite gender is an important skill necessary for life. We begin to acquire it gradually starting from the age of maturity. Here are some important guidelines for dealing with the opposite gender.

- Socially:** It must be in a group without placing more emphasis or attention to one person. It must be equal to all as much as possible.
- Treating all with respect:** It must be based on respect to all without ruining the friendship by joking inappropriately or seeking attention by inappropriate attire or conduct.
- Having limits:** There must be limits to the time spent. There are also place limitations. Also, there are topic limitations. There are topics that may not be discussed with your friends of the opposite sex, but the topics must be general topics of common interest.
- In a Christian way:** The Christian way of dealing with the opposite sex is characterized by the simple look in which we view everyone as the image of God. The way we talk should be holy and our conversations should not be full of profanities or attention-seeking or pretending to be someone that you are not. Be respectful when dealing with the opposite sex and avoid joking with your hands (touching). Avoid being loud or pretending you are someone else.

6- **The Media:**

Media can have positive effects; however, they are surpassed by its negative effects. These negative effects are apparent in:

- **Spiritual effect:** Spending too much time on the media wastes the time and drains spiritual enthusiasm. In addition, the media can display profane scenes or ideas that can have a negative effect as well
- **Cultural effect:** Spending several hours on the media turns one's mind into a passive receiver instead of an active critic that chooses what edifies their life and rejects what destroys it. The Holy Bible tells us to pray, **“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.” Ephesians 1:17-18**
- **Behavioral effect:** One can learn negative behaviors from what is presented to them through the media.

Reasons for the great effect of media:

- a. **The vast availability:** Media is readily available via the radio, television, internet, and newspapers.
- b. **Media uses multiple senses:** the eyes to see, the ears to hear, and the fingers to feel the keyboard or screen.
- c. **Internet:** With the internet, it is easy to access movies, shows, books, and news quickly and easily. The cost is usually little or nothing at all.
- d. **Media moves the soul.** Drama, comedy, or action movies speak to the soul and move one's emotions.

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

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

Signs of addiction to the media: Internet

- Wasting too much time on media throughout the day
- Neglecting responsibilities and duties.
- Gradually increasing the time spent on media.
- Lacking communication with others.
- Isolation
- Grumbling and rejection of everything and neglecting a life of obedience.
- Leads to anxiety, depression, and anger.

It becomes a battle within a person that requires great strife and needs the grace of God to support and help them to conquer.

A Hero of the Faith

St. Severus of Antioch

His Early Life:

St. Severus was born in Sozopolis in Asia Minor around the year 459 A.D. Severus the great, his grandfather, saw a vision that he will strengthen Orthodoxy.

He came from a wealthy family and was sent to Alexandria to study. He continued his studies in Beirut where he came under the influence of a group of Christian students. He began to study the writings of St. Gregory of Nazianzen and St. Basil; and at some time during this period, he was baptized.

St. Severus becomes the Patriarch of Antioch:

St. Severus grew in virtue and became a monk in the monastery of St. Romanus. The fame of his righteousness and his ascetic life spread. When the Patriarch of Antioch departed, the bishops had a consensus to ordain him the Patriarch of the city in the year 512 A.D.

The Church was illuminated by his teachings which spread to all the world. He was one of the fathers who attended the Universal Council at Ephesus.



His service and teachings:

St. Severus of Antioch is one of the great fathers of the Oriental Orthodox Church. In the decades after the Council of Chalcedon, in 451 A.D., it was he, more than any other theologian, who expressed most forcefully and clearly the Orthodox Christology of the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

St. Severus affirmed Nicaea, Constantinople, and Ephesus; and explicitly rejected the teachings of Chalcedon, Nestorius, and Eutyches.



Shortly after, Emperor Anastasius died and Justinian, who was Chalcedonian in faith, reigned after him. He called upon this holy father and gave him great honors to persuade him to change his stance and to follow the Emperor's belief, but St. Severus refused. The Emperor became angry, but St. Severus did not fear his anger, and so the Emperor ordered him to be killed.

St. Severus comes to Egypt:

Theodora, the Emperor's wife who was Orthodox in faith, knew about what the Emperor intended to do, so she told the saint to flee from his face.

St. Severus escaped to the land of Egypt and traveled everywhere and visited monasteries disguised as a monk. God made many signs and wonders by his hands.

He strengthened the faith of the believers in the Orthodox doctrine and wrote some of his most important works and corresponded widely and continuously.

In the wilderness of Scetis:

It happened on a certain day, that he came to the desert of Scetis and entered the church in the guise of a foreign monk. He used to hide his identity and pretend he is a regular monk because of his humility.

The priest raised the oblation and went around incensing the people. After the reading of the readings and the Gospel, the priest raised the veil and sought the oblation in the paten, but it was hidden from him. The Holy Bread disappeared from the altar. The priest wept and turned towards the people, saying, "O brethren, I know not whether this is on account of my sin or your sin, that I find not the oblation in its place, and that it is hidden from me." The people wept, and immediately an angel of Lord appeared to the priest, saying, "This is not for thy sin nor for the sin of the people, but because thou hast dared to raise the oblation when the patriarch is present." And the priest answered, saying, "Where is he, O my Lord?" then the angel pointed to the patriarch St. Severus, for he was in a corner of the Church. As soon as St. Severus went into the sanctuary, the Holy Bread appeared again, and they continued the prayers.

His departure:

St. Severus went forth from that place and came to the city of Sakha where he dwelt with a noble and righteous man named Dorotheus. He remained there until his departure in the year 538 A.D.

Pope Severus and the Coptic Church:

The Church recognizes him as one of the heroes of the faith. He is mentioned in the Commemoration of the Saints in the Liturgy of the faithful, and in the daily morning doxology.

**The great patriarch, our father Abba Severus, whose holy teachings,
enlightened our minds.**



The Church commemorates a feast for him 3 times a year:

- **His coming to Egypt** - the 2nd of Paope (October 13)
- **His relics relocated to the Monastery of Al-Zugag** - the 10th of Koiahk (December 20)
- **His departure** – the 14th of Meshir (February 22)

Atheism

Introduction

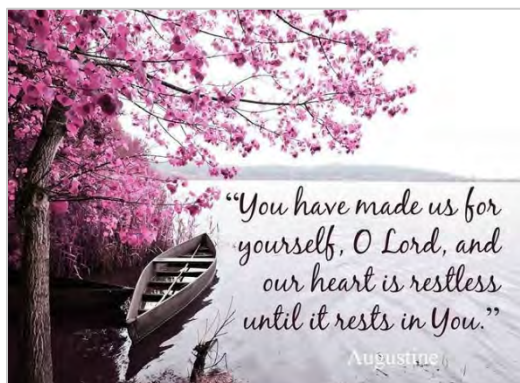
Atheism is the rejection or the lack of the belief that God exists. Atheists believe that God is a man-made myth or legend. The word “atheism” comes from the negative “a” which means “no” and “theos” which means “God”. Hence, atheism in the most basic terms means “no God”. Studies show that there are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

Brief History

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

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

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



Atheism arguments

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

1. Intellectual arguments

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



2. Scientific arguments

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

3. The flaws of the religious community

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

4. Other misconceptions about God

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

God's existence is proved by His revelation

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

1. God is revealed through His creation

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

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

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

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

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



2. God is revealed through His communication

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

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

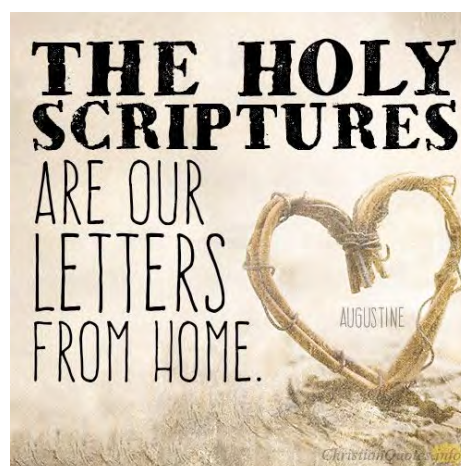
God also spoke to many through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God revealed Himself by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit to 40 authors and prophets over about 1500 years to write a series of books that later were collected which we now call "the Holy Bible"!

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

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

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

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



3. God is revealed through the incarnation of Christ

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

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

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

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

4. God is revealed through our own consciences

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

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

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

Memorization

1. Second Watch of the Midnight Hour of the Agpeya- The Gospel according to St. Luke (Luke 7:36-50)

Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went unto the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And, behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat to eat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke within himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is who touched Him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he said, "Master, say it." "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he freely forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave more." And He said unto him, "You have rightly judged." And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered into your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman since the time I came in has not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil you did not anoint, but this woman has anointed My feet with ointment. Therefore I say unto you, `Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.'" And He said unto her, "Your sins are forgiven." And they who sat to eat with Him began to say within themselves, "Who is this who forgives sins also?" And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Glory to God forever. Amen.



2. Sayings of the Fathers:

- ❖ "When we converse of spiritual things, let there be nothing secular in our souls, nothing earthy, let all such thoughts retire, and be banished, and let us be entirely given up to the hearing the divine oracles only." – St. John Chrysostom
- ❖ "By Scripture we may disprove what is false, be corrected, be brought to a right understanding, and be comforted and consoled." – St. John Chrysostom
- ❖ "The Spirit, the Comforter, is sent by the Son, not as Angels, or Prophets, or Apostles are sent, but as the Spirit must be sent which is of one nature with the Divine wisdom and power that sends Him." – St. Didymus the Blind
- ❖ "Pride extinguishes charity: therefore, humility strengthens charity; charity extinguishes sins. Humility goes along with confession, the humility by which we confess ourselves sinners: this is humility, not to say it with the tongue, as if only to avoid arrogancy, lest we should displease men if we should say that we are righteous." – St. Augustine
- ❖ "That Spirit reveals all things. He is going to set forth the mysteries of God. Now the knowledge of the mysteries of God, the Spirit alone comprehends, who also searches the deep things of Him." – St. John Chrysostom



Coptic



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

THE COPTIC ALPHABET

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

The Coptic Alphabet has 32 letters

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



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

Last 7 letters from Hieroglyphic through Hieratic and Demotic Alphabets

Pronunciation

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

The (**Ι**) is pronounced “Y”
when it is either before or after
any other vowel

ΙΑ ya **ΑΙ** ay **ΙΕ** ye **ΕΙ** ey

ΙΟ yo **ΟΙ** oy **ΙΩ** yo- **ΩΙ** o-y

ΙΑΛ Mirror

ΑΙΑΙ Grow, Increase

ΙΕ Or

ΙΩΙ Wash

ΙΟΥ Sea

(**ΦΙΟΥ** The Sea)

ΙΩΤ Father

(**ΦΙΩΤ** The Father)

ΩΙΚ Bread

(**ΠΩΙΚ** The Bread)

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

ΟΥΙ (owwi) such as in **ΝΙΦΗΟΥΙ**

ΟΥΑ (owwa) such as in **ΕΘΟΥΑΒ**

ΟΥΗ (owwee) such as in **ΟΥΗΒ**

ночы

hi

ночы пенннв

Hi Sayedna

ночы пеніωт

Hi Abouna

оухаі



Bye

оухаі
ден ꞑбоіс

Bye
(in the Lord)

The possessive Pronouns (1)

	For s.m. nouns e.g. Father (אב)	For s.f. nouns e.g. Mother (אם)	For plural nouns e.g. Books (ספרים)
	אב	אם	הם
My	אבא My father	אמא My mother	ספרים My books
Our	אבאנו Our father	אמאנו Our mother	ספרים Our books

Practice with some words **MY OUR**

Masculine	Feminine	Plural
אב God	אם Sister	אמה Mothers
לחם Bread	כוח Power	אבות Fathers
אדני Lord	בת Daughter	אחיהם Brothers
ספר Book	עיר City	אחות Sisters
אח Brother		

The possessive Pronouns (2)

	For s.m. nouns e.g. Father (אב)	For s.f. nouns e.g. Mother (אם)	For plural nouns e.g. Books (ספרים)
	אב	אם	הם
Your (s.m.)	אבאך Your father	אמאך Your mother	ספרים Your books
Your (s.f.)	אבא Your father	אמא Your mother	ספרים Your books
Your (pl.)	אבאנו Your father	אמאנו Your mother	ספרים Your books

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

Masculine	Feminine	Plural
אב God	אם Sister	אמה Mothers
לחם Bread	כוח Power	אבות Fathers
אדני Lord	בת Daughter	אחיהם Brothers
ספר Book	עיר City	אחות Sisters
אח Brother		

The possessive Pronouns (3)

	For s.m. nouns e.g. Father (אב)	For s.f. nouns e.g. Mother (אם)	For plural nouns e.g. Books (ספרים)
	אב	אם	הם
His	אבא His father	אמא His mother	ספרים His books
Her	אבא Her father	אמא Her mother	ספרים Her books
Their	אבא Their father	אמא Their mother	ספרים Their books

Practice with some words **His Her Their**

Masculine	Feminine	Plural
אב God	אם Sister	אמה Mothers
לחם Bread	כוח Power	אבות Fathers
אדני Lord	בת Daughter	אחיהם Brothers
ספר Book	עיר City	אחות Sisters
אח Brother		

Present Tense

	1 st person	2 nd person	3 rd person
(s.m.)	†	κ̂(̂)	̂
(s.f.)		TE	̂
(pl)	TEN	TETEN	CE
	we	you	they

Negative of Present Tense AN or Ñ....AN

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

	1 st person	2 nd person	3 rd person
(s.m.)	†̂	κ̂̂	̂̂
(s.f.)		TÊ	̂̂
(pl)	TEN̂	TETEN̂	CÊ
	We pray	You pray	They pray

Present Tense	Negative of the present Tense	
†̂ I pray	†̂ AN I do not pray	Ñ†̂ AN I do not pray
CÊ They pray	CÊ AN They do not pray	ÑCÊ AN They do not pray

Practice the present tense and the negative of the present tense with these verbs			
κωορν	to know	ζεουσι	to sit down
ωψ	to read	ζερδερ	to snore
̂̂	to write	ορωψτ	to worship
†ωοι	to glorify	ναρ	to look at

ΔΕΝ Φ̄ΡΑΝ ἈΦ̄ΙΩΤ

In the Name of the Father

ΝΕΥ Π̄ΩΗΡΙ

and the Son

ΝΕΥ ΠΙΠ̄ΝΕΥΜΑ ΕΘΟΥΑΒ

and the Holy Spirit

ΟΥΝΟΥΤ̄ ΝΟΥΩΤ ἈΜΗΝ

One God Amen



ΧΕ ΠΕΝΙΩΤ ΕΤΔΕΝ ΝΙΦΗΟΥΤΙ
Our Father who art in Heaven

ἈΡΙΤΕΝ ΝΕΥΠ̄ΩΑ ΝΧΟΣ ΔΕΝ ΟΥΨΕΠ̄Δ̄ΜΟΥΤ
Make us worthy to say thankfully

ΧΕ ΠΕΝΙΩΤ ΕΤΔΕΝ ΝΙΦΗΟΥΤΙ

Our father who art in heaven

ΜΑΡΕΥΤΟΥΒΟ ΝΧΕ ΠΕΚΡΑΝ

Hallowed be Thy name

ΜΑΡΕCΙ ΝΧΕ ΤΕΚΜΕΤΟΥΡΟ

Thy kingdom come

ΠΕΤΕΖΝΑΚ ΜΑΡΕΥΨΩΠΙ

Thy will be done

ἈΦ̄ΡΗΤ̄ ΔΕΝ Τ̄ΦΕ ΝΕΥ ΖΙΧΕΝ ΠΙΚΑΖΙ

On earth as it is in heaven

ΠΕΝΩΙΚ ΝΤΕ ΡΑCΤ̄ ΜΗCΥ ΝΑΝ ἈΦΟΥΤ̄

Give us this day our daily bread

ΟΥΟZ ΧΑ ΝΗΕΤΕΡΟΝ ΝΑΝ ἘΒΟΛ

And forgive us our trespasses

ἈΦ̄ΡΗΤ̄ ΖΩΝ ΝΤΕΝΧΩ ἘΒΟΛ

As we forgive

ΝΗΗΕΤΕ ΟΥΟΝ ΝΤΑΝ ἘΡΩΟΥΤ̄

those who trespass against us

ΟΥΟZ ἈΠΕΡΕΝΤΕΝ ἘΔΟΥΝ ἘΠΙΡΑCΜΟC

And lead us not into temptation

ΑΛΛΑ ΝΑΖΜΕΝ ἘΒΟΛΖΑ ΠΙΠΕΤΖΩΟΥΤ̄

But deliver us from the evil one

ΔΕΝ ΠΙΧΡΙCΤΟC ΙΗCΟΥC ΠΕΝΒΟΙC

In Christ Jesus our Lord

ΧΕ ΘΩΚ ΤΕ

For Thine is

Τ̄ΜΕΤΟΥΡΟ ΝΕΥ Τ̄ΧΟΥ ΝΕΥ ΠΙΩΟΥΤ̄

the kingdom, the power and the glory,

ΨΑ ἘΝΕZ ἈΜΗΝ

forever, Amen

Hymns & Rituals



Adam Introduction to the Verses of Cymbals

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

Lord have mercy.	Κυριε ελεησον.
O come let us worship, the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.	Δουινη μαρενοωψτ: ηττριας εθουαβ: ετε Φιωτ νεμ Πωηριγ: νεμ Πιπνευμα εθουαβ.
We are the Christian people, for He is, our true God.	Δνον εα νιλαος: ηχριστιανος: φαι γαρ πε Πεννογτ: ηαληθινοσ.
We have hope, in Saint Mary, that God will have mercy on us, through her intercession.	Ουον ουζεληπις ηταν: εεν θεεθουαβ Μαρια: ερε Φνογτ ναι ναν: ειτεν νεσπερεβια.
All calmness: in the world: is through the prayers: of Saint Mary the Virgin.	Ουον ου μετσεμνοσ: ηερη εεν πικοσμοσ: εβολειτεν πιωληη: ητε τασια Μαρια τπαρθενοσ.
Hail to you O Mary, the fair dove, who has borne to us, God the Logos.	Χερε νε Μαρια: τβρουπι εθνεσωσ: θηετασμιτσι ναν: μΦνογτ πιλοσος.
Hail to you O Mary, with a holy hail, Hail to you O Mary, the Mother of the Holy One.	Χερε νε Μαρια εεν ουχερε εθουαβ: χερε νε Μαρια: εμαν μφεθουαβ.

Group Hymn

Rejoice O Mary

Rite: The hymn Rejoice O Mary is one of the annual Adam Aspasmos hymns. The word Aspasmos is a Greek word meaning “greeting.” This hymn is called “Aspasmos” since while it is being chanted, the Kiss of Peace is meant to be done by all the people.

<p>Rejoice, O Mary, handmaiden and mother, for the angels praise Him who is in your arms.</p>	<p>Οὔνοσ ἄμο Ἐαρία: †βωκι ονοσ †ματ: χε φηετ ζεν πεδμηρ: νιαστελοσ σερωσ εροσ.</p>
<p>And the cherubim worthily worship Him; the seraphim too, without ceasing.</p>	<p>Ονοσ νιχερονβιμ: σερωωτ ἄμοσ αζιοσ: νεμ νισεραφιμ: ζεν ουμετατμοονκ.</p>
<p>We have no boldness before our Lord Jesus Christ apart from your prayers and intercessions, O our Lady, the Lady of us all, the Theotokos.</p>	<p>Ἐμον ἦταν ἰονπαρρησια: ζαπεν Πενβοιοσ Ιησουσ Πιχριστοσ: χωρισ νετωβζ νεμ νεπρεσβια: ὠ τενβοιοσ ἠνηβ τηρεν †θεοτοκοσ.</p>
<p>That we may praise You with the cherubim and the seraphim, proclaiming and saying:</p>	<p>θινα ἠτενερωσ εροκ: νεμ νιχερονβιμ: νεμ νισεραφιμ: ενωω εβολ ενχω ἄμοσ.</p>
<p>Holy, holy, holy, O Lord the Pantocrator, heaven and earth are full of Your glory and Your honor.</p>	<p>Χε χοναβ χοναβ χοναβ: Πβοιοσ πιπαντοκρατωρ: †φε νεμ ἠκαζι μεζ εβολ: ζεν πεκωον νεμ πεκταιο.</p>





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