



# Spiritual Thoughts

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## Reflection (1)

May 21, 2018

### Is Priesthood a Divine Scheme?

Is priesthood for a select group of people or for everyone?

Is there priesthood in the New Testament?

- ❖ The Priesthood is a system established by God Himself since the beginning of humanity after the fall of the first man.
- ❖ Priesthood is a mediator to obtain atonement and forgiveness of sins through sacrifice, for ***"without the shedding of blood there is no remission"*** (*Hebrews 9:22*).
- ❖ The earliest signs of sacrifice are seen in the garments of skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve, and in Abel's offering.
- ❖ The head of the family or tribe was considered the priest of the household, offering sacrifices, as seen with Noah, Abraham, and Job.
- ❖ God established the Aaronic priesthood with all its detailed laws and regulations during the time of Moses and the Israelites.
- ❖ However, it was clarified beforehand that the eternal priesthood is according to the order of Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High, who offered bread and wine, as it says in Genesis (*14:18*) and Hebrews (*6:20 - 7:1*), then the prophecy concerning the priesthood of Christ followed: ***"The Lord has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'"*** (*Psalms 110:4*)
- ❖ The Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted the Sacrament of Priesthood when He became both the Priest and the Eternal sacrifice. He chose twelve disciples and later the seventy Apostles. He breathed on them and said to them: ***"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained"***. (*John 20:23*). It is unthinkable that God would command everyone to forgive under threat of withholding His own forgiveness; this command was given to all believers as a call to personal forgiveness. However, the authority to forgive and retain sins was specifically entrusted to the holy apostles as a treasure for the Church, the Body of Christ, to safeguard her purity and holiness. This authority also serves as a loving guidance for every soul, bringing the lost back from spiritual death, so that Christ may shine upon them.



- ❖ He commanded them to offer “Eucharistic Sacrifice”, that is His most holy Body and Blood with bread and wine. "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.”*** (Luke 22:19).
- ❖ After the ascension of the Lord of Glory, the Apostles ordained Matthias to take his place among them, receiving the same grace.
- ❖ The apostles appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23).
- ❖ There is leadership in the Church through the fathers, just as St. Paul did when he called for the elders of the Church (Acts 20:17).
- ❖ The Sacrament of Priesthood is conferred through “the laying on of the hands”, the breath, the calling, and the agreement of the congregation. ***“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away'”*** (Acts 13:2-3).
- ❖ As our teacher St. Paul the Apostle says to his disciple Timothy, the bishop: ***“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.”*** (1 Timothy 4:14). The Beirut’s translation used “The term “Presbytery” which is derived from the Greek "Presbyteros", meaning “Priesthood”.
- ❖ He also advised him to be cautious before granting this sacrament: ***“Do not lay hands on anyone hastily”*** (1 Timothy 5:22).
- ❖ Saint Paul the Apostle outlined the qualifications of a bishop in (Titus 1:7-9) and (1 Timothy 3:1-7), and the qualifications of deacons in (1 Timothy 3:8-12).
- ❖ Finally, we see the story of Simon the Sorcerer, who after believing, noticed that Saints Peter and John the Apostles were unique among the rest of the believers as they bestow the Holy Spirit and the gift through the laying on of hands, so he attempted to buy it from them, as recounted in (Acts 8:18).
- ❖ **Priesthood has not ceased throughout the history of the Church:** from Saint Mark, who was taken from the altar while celebrating the Divine Liturgy on the eve of the Resurrection Feast and dragged to martyrdom, to Saint John Chrysostom, the Patriarch of Constantinople (4th century), who authored a famous book on priesthood, and Saint Athanasius the Apostolic, known worldwide for his teachings, who was the Patriarch of Alexandria and the 20th Pope of the Coptic Church.
- ❖ When the Holy Spirit mentioned that we are “kings and priests to God” (Revelation 1:6), He meant the general spiritual sense of “kingship” as we are the children of the King of Kings, not the literal sense since there are kings and rulers in every nation.
- ❖ Also, the “lay Priesthood” is granted to every Christian anointed with “Chrism”, and becomes a priest through prayer, lifting hands, offering the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of giving, and presenting his body as a living holy sacrifice, to God.

❖ This is different from the Sacramental priesthood which is conferred through selection, consecration, laying on of hands, and the breath that is entrusted with performing the priesthood acts such as Baptism, confession, Communion, performing the sacrament of marriage, anointment of the sick, praying for the departed, and ensuring sound teaching, and ecclesiastical guidance by invocation of the Holy Spirit.



## Reflection (2)

May 29, 2018

**Why did Our Lord Jesus say:**

**"O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done" (Matthew 26:42).**

**"O My Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).**

**and He prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him (Mark 14:35)?**



- ❖ The Lord Jesus Christ is one with the Father in His divinity and will, and thus we praise Him saying: "For by His will the good pleasure of His Father and the Holy Spirit, He came and saved us."
- ❖ Here He spoke from His "humanity": He took on the fullness of our humanity including body, emotions, psychological feelings, and a human spirit.
- ❖ For who, in their humanity, would willingly endure injustice and suffering when they have done no evil, becoming a curse for our sake? And who would willingly bear the sins of the world when He is holy and blameless?
- ❖ He clarified that the sufferings He would undergo were real, and that His unity in divinity with the Father did not lessen the intensity of these sufferings.
- ❖ He did not ask for the suffering to be removed, but to overcome them and endure them.
- ❖ There is a difference between desire and decision. Humanly, the desire is to avoid pain, but the unified decision in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is for the Son to endure it all for our sake.
- ❖ Christ stands as the mediator\*\* between our rebellious will and the will of the Father.
- ❖ He taught us that our true help is in prayer, and that we should also submit our will to God, the "Beneficent".

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## Reflection (3)

June 5, 2018

### Is God of the Old Testament a Harsh and Violent God?

- ❖ *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)*  
*"With whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." (James 1:17)*
- ❖ If "God is love", then love necessitates the presence of justice. There is no true love without justice, and there is no true justice without the foundation of love.
- ❖ At the dawn of time, humanity was very primitive and constantly engaged in violent conflicts with one another. Corruption and wickedness were extensive, surpassing even animals in ferocity. Thus, a just reaction from God was necessary.
- ❖ God is not inherently violent and never initiates violence. This is evident in the stories of Cain, the Flood, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, where God showed great patience and gave numerous warnings before His judgment. He was even willing to withhold punishment if a small number of righteous people were found in a place.
- ❖ In Leviticus 18 and Deuteronomy 18, it is mentioned that the land will spew out its wicked inhabitants as sin is a definite cause of people's destruction. Divine judgment, wherein one nation destroys another, happens because of the overwhelming sinfulness, even to the extent of sacrificing children in fire to appease gods.
- ❖ A clear example of God's mercy and compassion is seen in His dealings with the wicked people of Nineveh, who repented after His warning, and how He showed pity on them.
- ❖ The New Testament and the new nature in Christ shifted our behavior from earthly instinct of survival to seeking eternal life. Our perspective is summed up in: *"I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." (Philippians 1:23)*





## Reflection (4)

June 25, 2018

### Is Speaking in Tongues a Gift of the Holy Spirit?

#### Does it still exist today?

#### Are there tongues for prayer? And angelic languages?

- ❖ Our Orthodox Church believes that speaking in tongues is a gift of the Holy Spirit as mentioned in the Book of Acts, Chapter 2 when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles. About 15 human languages were spoken by our Apostles fathers, for the purpose of evangelism and edification of the Church.
- ❖ As evangelism spread and the number of believers in each country grew, the need for this gift diminished.
- ❖ The practice and purpose of the gift deviated as early as the “Apostolic Age”, where it became a means of boasting and confusion within the church. This was not in line with the “Spirit of Christ”. Therefore, our teacher St. Paul the Apostle set many precautions around the practice of this gift in the church, clarifying that the foundation and goal of every gift is to edify the church in Christ as a community. He emphasized that understanding is the key for repentance and turning people to God, he insisted on the presence of an interpreter to ensure what is said is comprehended and all done in proper order. (1 Corinthians 14).
- ❖ In the history of the Church, starting from the second century, we have never heard of any saints who preached or prayed in tongues.
- ❖ Saint John Chrysostom (a saint recognized by all churches worldwide from the 5th century) explained in his interpretation on 1 Corinthians that the Church no longer needs this gift.
- ❖ There is no mention of an angel speaking in a strange language in the Bible.
- ❖ When our teacher St. Paul the Apostle described what he heard in paradise, he said it was something which **“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard” (1Corinthians 2:9)**.
- ❖ Heavenly angels do not have vocal cords and sound waves, yet they are spiritual beings with a language of spiritual love.
- ❖ When the Apostle referred to the tongues of men and angels without love, he meant figuratively that performing something extraordinary without love is both meaningless and aimless.
- ❖ St. Paul explained the situation in Corinth where one might speak mysteries to God and the others do not understand. He disapproved of this, explaining that the mind of the person praying is unfruitful even if he outwardly is engaged with the spirit within him, thinking that by this way he is building himself, yet it does not edify the Church.

- ❖ The Apostle encouraged praying both in the spirit and in mind, clarifying that he would rather speak five words with understanding rather than ten thousand words in a tongue (without comprehension).
- ❖ Tongues are a sign for unbelievers, not for believers, and their purpose is for evangelism and the edification of the Church.
- ❖ If an unbeliever enters a scene of confusion, they might accuse those in the Church of madness. However, if they understand, they will repent, return, and believe, saying, "Truly, God is among you."



## Reflection (5)

July 12, 2018

**"But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)**

*"Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."  
(Psalm 19:4)*

*"And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'"  
" (Romans 10:15).*

*"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8).*

- ❖ God can perform wonders through you and use you for the salvation of many souls despite your weakness and sin, despite the difficulties of your surrounding circumstances, despite anything.
- ❖ He is holy and Glorious.

*May you always be filled with every grace in Christ Jesus.*



## Reflection (6)

July 22, 2018

### The Constitution of Christianity: The Sermon on the Mount

- ❖ The Incarnate Word of God opened His mouth directly to teach His followers the words of eternal life with all tranquillity and humility.
- ❖ It was on a high mountain: for the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Him b glory, transcend human thoughts and earthly matters.
- ❖ His disciples approached Him: for by drawing near to the presence of God, we can grasp His words and learn His commandments.
- ❖ He began with the Beatitudes and not with prohibitions, to encourage and motivate us to receive the reward after a victorious spiritual struggle by the Grace of God.
- ❖ The first Beatitude is for the humble: for humility is the foundation of all virtues and the beginning of acquiring them.
- ❖ Holy sorrow is joyful and comforting... It is the sorrow of repentance and returning to the embrace of our Heavenly Father.
- ❖ The meek will gain everyone's favor and be beloved by all; they will inherit the earth, but the earth will not inherit them.
- ❖ Hunger and thirst for God (righteousness) lead to true inner satiety of divine peace and joy that do not fade away.
- ❖ Mercy in Christianity goes beyond material and emotional giving and forgiveness. for it is, in its essence, a true feeling for the suffering of others.



***"Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also." (Hebrews 13:3).***



## Reflection (7)

July 27, 2018

### The Mystery of Christ for Little Children

**"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes.'" (Luke 10:21).**



- ❖ Understanding the divine mystery of Christ as the Savior of the world, the treasure of eternal life and the salvation of my soul relies primarily on the purity and simplicity of heart (like the hearts of children) rather than intellectual knowledge. Thus, our Savior said, *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"* (Matthew 5:8).
- ❖ Our teacher St. Paul the Apostle clearly explained this by saying, *"For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe"* (1 Corinthians 1:21). This means that the preaching of the Gospel to the world was carried out by simple apostles who, in the eyes of the world were considered foolish because the Kingdom of God belongs to the simple.
- ❖ The more a person relies on their wisdom, intellect, or material abilities without depending on God, the more divine grace and assistance withdraw from them. *"Do not be wise in your own eyes"* (Proverbs 3:7). *"Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"* (Isaiah 5:21).
- ❖ Divine wisdom and true knowledge of God come mostly to those who seek them diligently and in faith, considering themselves as nothing without God's grace. *"If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise."* (1 Corinthians 3:18).
- ❖ As the Psalmist Asaph said in the Psalms, *"I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless, I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."* (Psalm 73:22-24).



## Reflection (8)

July 28, 2018

### Introduction to the Divine Liturgy (Part 1)

- ❖ The Divine Liturgy is the backbone of the Church; indeed, it is the backbone of Christian life.
- ❖ Christianity, in short, is that Christ, the Divine Word of God, incarnated to redeem us, and this is practically realized in the Liturgy where the presence of the Divine Body and Precious Blood is made manifest on the altar for the redemption and forgiveness of sins.
- ❖ The Liturgy has associated with all the acts of worship in the Church since its inception as the command of our Lord Jesus. Every Church's occasions, feasts, and sacraments are associated with the prayer of the Divine Liturgy.

### Names of the Divine Liturgy:

- 1) It is called "Liturgy" because the presence of the Holy God among us sanctifies the place, everything in it, the time, the humanity, as well as nature, plants, grass, rain, and air. The pinnacle of sanctification occurs in the transformation of bread into the Body of Christ and wine into the Blood of the Lord Jesus.
- 2) Liturgy: A famous Greek word, even before Christianity, and means "communal worship" or "collective work," where most of our worship is centered around the Divine Liturgy.
- 3) Anaphora: Meaning "offering," as the Liturgy is essentially a Thanksgiving (Eucharist) to God from the fruits of the earth (flour, water, and wine) offered with repentant, prepared hearts and this offering is lifted. God accepts this offering, descends into it by His Holy Spirit and transforms it into a grace and gift of immeasurable magnitude: the Body and Blood of Christ, a free gift for the entire world granting forgiveness and eternal life.
- 4) The prayers of the Divine Liturgy are written in a book called "the Kholagy", a Greek word derived from "Euchologion," which means "holy prayers." The Liturgy, in its essence, is a collective holy prayer offered with one accord, as our Savior commanded us to always pray.



## Reflection (9)

August 10, 2018

### The Virgin Mary, My Mother

- ❖ When the Virgin Mary gave birth to our Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh, she swaddled Him in clothes made from her own garments.
- ❖ When the Lord of Glory was crucified, they divided His garments among them, but His seamless tunic could not be torn, for it was woven all in one piece from the top, thus they cast lots for it.
- ❖ The Church tradition tells us that the Virgin Mary herself wove this tunic.
- ❖ The Virgin Mary cared for the body of Christ from His birth until His crucifixion.
- ❖ The Body of Christ is His holy Church, for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.
- ❖ Through her motherhood and overwhelming tenderness, the Virgin Mary cares for each member of the body of Christ with the same love, attention, and compassion that a mother has for her children.



**Do you feel her tender care, dear one?**

**Do you have a strong relationship with your loving mother who cares for you?**

**Do you share in her tenderness and her overflowing maternal heart for you and for your sake?**





## Reflection (10)

August 12, 2018

### Christ Healer of Our Diseases and Pains

- ❖ The Lord Jesus, as a true physician, differs in His work from any other Physician who diagnoses diseases and prescribes medicine.
- ❖ The Lord Jesus takes our diseases and pains upon Himself because He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, as the prophecy of Isaiah says.
- ❖ The Lord Jesus is not merely a healer of bodies, for all those whom He healed or raised from the dead eventually died again in the flesh.
- ❖ All the miracles of healing from various diseases are recorded in the four Gospels for our healing and salvation.
- ❖ Every physical and psychological illness has its counterpart in spiritual diseases:
- ❖ Who is the leper but I, when I am defiled by sin and need to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb? \*\*
  - Who is the leper but I, when sin defiles me, and I need to be cleansed by the Blood of the Lamb.
  - Who is the demoniac but I, when I pursue my desires without restraint?
  - Who is the madman but I, when I lose the wisdom of God and stumble in my human thoughts?
  - Who is the bleeding woman but I, when I walk in the path of sin and lose daily, like a hemorrhage from my being?
  - Who is the man with the withered hand but I, when I lose the ability to do good and serve Christ?
  - Who is the paralytic but I, when I lose my will and inclination to repent within me and cannot resist sin on my own? ... and more.
- ❖ O my Lord, I consider myself afflicted with all these diseases to varying degrees. I believe, O Lord, that all these pains and ailments will fade away with a touch from You upon my being. Touch me with Your grace and raise me up... for I am in great need of You.



## Reflection (11)

September 2, 2018

### Meaning of Martyrdom

Outwardly, martyrdom is the shedding of blood for the testimony of faith. However, its spiritual and internal meaning is the foundation, whether there is bloodshed or not:



#### 1) Victory over the World:

- ❖ The true Christian is a witness to overcoming the world. *"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33).
  - ❖ Victory over fear like (Martyr Saint Abanoub, Pope Athanasius and Saint Basil...).
  - ❖ Victory over the desires of the world (as seen in the lives of Potamiana, Barbatios, Saint George, Simon the Tanner, and Moses the Black).
  - ❖ Victory over the love of worldly glory (as demonstrated by Maximus, Domadius, Saint Anthony, and Pachomius).
- 2) **Victory over Sin:** It is the struggle against sin until the end, even unto bloodshed.
- 3) **Victory over Self:** *"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."* (Galatians 2:20). The more I decrease and diminish, the more the presence of Christ increases in me and reveals Himself to the world through me as a witness (martyr) for Him.
- 4) **Obedience to the Lord Jesus' Commandment:** With enthusiasm and love until the end...



## Reflection (12)

September 6, 2018

### Dear Christian... Be a Christ

❖ The world and people today are in desperate need to see in every person bearing the name of Christ, Christ of love, with His wide embrace, the service of washing feet, His gentle touch, and joyful smile.



❖ They need to see the Christ of purity and humility, and the bearer of people's burdens...

❖ They need to see the Christ who brings joy to the hearts of the afflicted... The Christ of goodness and love.

**My Dear Christian.... Please Be a Christ!**



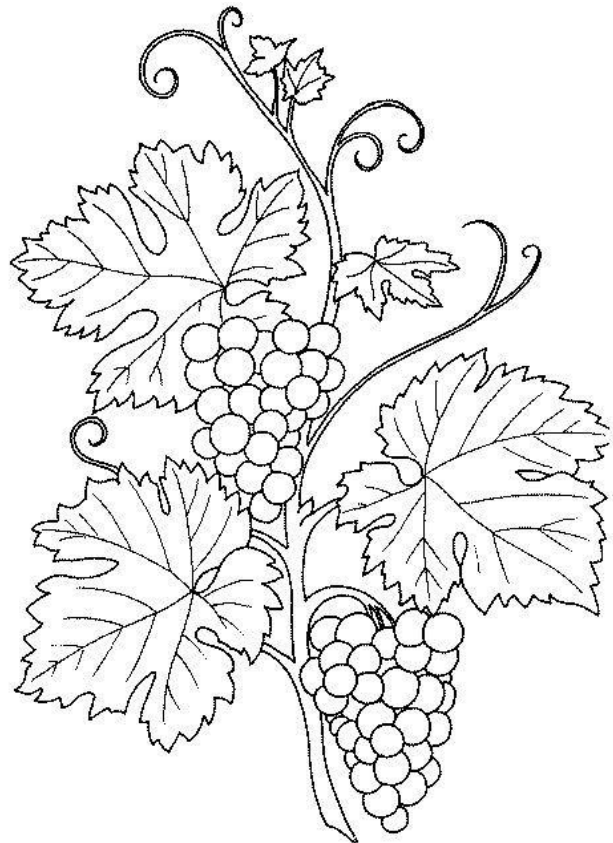
## Reflection (13)

September 14, 2018

### "NEYROUZ"

The meaning of the word "Neyrouz" comes from the Coptic word "Ni-Yarou-ou," which means "the rivers" as the Coptic New Year (ancient Egyptian) coincides with the season of the Nile's flood. (it is similar to the Persian word "Nowruz," which means "new day").

- ❖ The ancient Egyptians were the first to divide time into 12 months in a year, naming the months after their gods, which they associated with climate changes, agriculture, and harvesting.
- ❖ The Church celebrates the feast of St. John the Baptist's martyrdom on 2nd of Tout, his birth on the 30th of Paona, and the appearance of his head on the 30th of Amshir.
- ❖ One of the most famous messages proclaimed by Saint John the Baptist was: "***Bear fruits worthy of repentance***" (Luke 3: 8) for true repentance has clear signs and fruits.
- ❖ The Fruits of Repentance:
  - Confessing the sin to oneself, to God, to the priest in the church, and to those we have wronged.
  - Feeling ashamed, remorseful, humble, shedding tears, trying to correct the mistake, avoid judging sinners, having spiritual zeal, striving to acquire virtues, and living with a pure heart.



## Reflection (14)

October 1, 2018

### The Cross is the Source of My True Freedom

- ❖ Freedom from Self: *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."* (Galatians 2:20)
- ❖ Freedom from Fear: *"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine."* (Isaiah 43:1)
- ❖ Freedom from Time: *"He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings (His cross) you shall take refuge; you shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day."* (Psalm 91:4-5)
- ❖ Freedom from Enslavement to the World: *"You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men."* (1 Corinthians 7:23)
- ❖ Freedom from Sin: *"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."* (John 8:36)
- ❖ Freedom of Washing Feet: *"For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."* (John 13:15)
- ❖ Freedom from Death: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16)



## Reflection (15)

October 7, 2018

### Transformation by the Word of God

- ❖ The effect of God's Word in a person is measured by the degree of transformation it brings about in their life.
- ❖ ***"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12)***, and capable of changing and healing every ailment of the soul, spirit, and inner being. The Word is not a mere information and stories for preaching and analysis, but rather, it is the presence of Christ Himself, and His deeply personal message to you: ***"I have been telling you what I have heard from the beginning."*** (John 8:25)
- ❖ The true place for the Word of God to work and make change is in the heart and inner being of a person, not merely through his ears or in their intellectual understanding.
- ❖ True transformation means a change in nature, personality, way of thinking, features, and behavior, to be like the nature, personality, and features of the Lord Jesus Christ. ***"But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ-".*** (Ephesians 4:15)



## Reflection (16)

November 4, 2018

**“Nor is there salvation in any other”**

- ❖ God is the Pantocrator (Sovereign over all).
- ❖ *Who is he who speaks, and it comes to pass, when the Lord has not commanded it? (Lamentations 3:37)*
- ❖ If this hardship is by God's permission, on the other hand, He is the preserver and guardian of His Church, as His true promise states, *"I the Lord, Keep it" (Isaiah 27:3)*. As for His martyr children, they have been crowned with eternal glory, and for the sorrowful hearts, He is their comforter and healer, who replaces their grief and sighing with eternal blessings and glories.
- ❖ Let us hear the words of the Lord Jesus: *"It is I; do not be afraid. Where is your faith?" (Mathew 14:27)*.





## Reflection (17)

November 26, 2018

### Feast of the Martyrdom of Saint Mena the Wonderworker

- ❖ As time passes, the memory of those who die may fade, but this is not the case in the Church. The memory of the righteous endures forever, and the fame of the saints grow with time, due to their true attachment to God, extending endlessly.
- ❖ There are many kinds of pains and sufferings in this world, but the highest and most noble type of pain is that endured for the sake of Christ's name, as it is a participation in the cross of Christ, His redemptive sufferings, and the eternal glory that follows.
- ❖ The name "Mena" comes from the word "Amen." The defining feature of this hero's life is unwavering faith, which is the secret of the greatness of the saints.



**As the Lord Jesus said, following the commandments is the way to establish eternal life within a person like (a house built on the rock).**



## Reflection (18)

December 9, 2018

### First Sunday of the Coptic Month Koiak/Kiahk

The meanings in the readings are astonishingly interconnected:

- ❖ The Vespers Psalm: *"How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? Consider and hear me; enlighten my eyes."* (Psalm 13:1, 3)
- ❖ As if it is the cry of all humanity, drowning in the darkness of sins over a long time, yearning for the light of salvation, feeling as though the Lord has forgotten them.
- ❖ The Matins Psalm responds to the Vespers Gospel: *"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoners, to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem"* (Psalm 102:19-21).
- ❖ As if in the evening there is weeping, and in the morning, there is joy, declared by the Psalm of the Liturgy: *"You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come."* (Psalm 102:13)
- ❖ The Gospels of the Liturgy announce the birth of John the Baptist, the Forerunner. God does not delay but comes at the appointed time according to His divine plan, in His goodness and gracious will, that are filled abundantly with mercy, grace and life.
- ❖ And the meanings in the names of the characters reflect that:
  - Elizabeth: God has sworn
  - Zacharias: God remembers
  - John: God is gracious
  - Jesus: Savior
- ❖ Putting them together: "God has sworn to remember His grace and send His salvation."
- ❖ This is exactly God's plan in your life, dear one.
- ❖ He comes and shines upon you when you cry out to Him, so you may rejoice in the light and life, enjoy the embrace of the Heavenly Father and experience the mystery of eternal joy.

**May you be filled with grace, joy, and the light of Christ every year!**



## Reflection (19)

December 17, 2018

### DUALITY

*“You Should not be incredulous to the fear of the Lord. And you should not draw close to him with a duplicitous heart.” (Sirach 1:36)*

*“Woe to the duplicitous heart, and to the hands that do evil, and to the sinner who walks the earth by two ways!” (Sirach 2:14)*

*“Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the Lord, but the blameless in their ways are His delight” (Proverbs 11:20).*

❖ The words "title" (لقب) and "heart" (قلب) have the same letters in Arabic: the title of a disciple versus the heart of a betrayer (like Judas, for example). There must be a self-confrontation to reach to the reconciliation with God.

#### **Multiple faces of duality:**

- 1) The sin of hypocrisy: which is acting and showing opposite to the true motives of the heart.
- 2) Double-minded behavior: holding onto the love of the world and wealth while trying to love God.
- 3) Double standards in judgment, treating situations unfairly.

#### **Causes of duality (and the opposites provide healing and repentance):**

- 1) Lack of the fear of God in the heart.
- 2) Conforming to society.
- 3) Flattery and opportunism, driven by self-love.
- 4) Worldly temptations.
- 5) *“Friendship with the world is enmity with God”. (James 4:4).*



## Reflection (20)

December 19, 2018

### Life is an Irreplaceable Opportunity

(On the occasion of the New Year) The Holy Spirit says to my soul, *"And I gave her time to repent." (Revelation 2:21).*

- ❖ Time (life) is a gift (present) from the hand of God to you, my soul. I do not own myself, and every breath I take is a gift from the Author of Life, the Beneficent, and the Benefactor of our souls.
- ❖ Here is the truth: God's purpose for the days of my life is my repentance and return to His embrace.
  - *"But exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Hebrews 3:13).*
  - *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2).*
  - *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28).*
  - *"And so, be converted, you sinners, and do justice in the presence of God, believing that He will act in his mercy toward you." (Tobit 13:8).*
  - *"Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." (Jeremiah 3:22).*
  - *"Indeed, we do come to You, for You are the Lord our God." (Jeremiah 3:22).*
  - *"Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." (Zechariah 9:12).*
  - *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19).*

I thank You, my compassionate Lord, that I am still alive in the body, that I may to return to You and live within, renewed.



## Reflection (21)

January 13, 2019

### First Sunday of the Month of Tobi: The Gospel of the Flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-23).

**It is a journey filled with mysteries. Why Egypt in particular?**

- ❖ Egypt was not the closest country to Judea; its road was difficult, full of mazes. It was a tough journey for a mother carrying her infant child and for an elderly man like righteous Joseph.
- ❖ This journey was part of God's plan from eternity and was foretold by the prophets: "*Out of Egypt I called My Son*" (*Hosea*), "*Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and will come into Egypt*" (*Isaiah*). Therefore, the journey to Egypt was not a coincidence or a product of circumstances. But rather, it was God's intention to have an altar and a pillar of testimony for His name at its borders, and His people were blessed; of them it was said: "*Blessed is My people Egypt*" (*Isaiah 19*).
- ❖ The Lord traversed Egypt from north to south, and wherever He placed His foot, spiritual springs burst forth from every place, such as the Mount of Qusqam and Wadi El-Natrun...
- ❖ We believe that God chose Egypt to be responsible for the salvation of the world. Just as Joseph the righteous saved the world from famine with an abundance of grain, so in the New Testament, Egypt is responsible for saving the world from spiritual death and weak faith through the grain of the body and blood Lord, along with the richness of asceticism, the love of God, martyrdom, monasticism, and awareness of the precious faith in Christ the Savior.
- ❖ Our Lord Jesus Christ left us an example of triumph over evil by fleeing from it. Likewise, all kinds of sins such as adultery, love of money, and anger are defeated by fleeing from evil and not confronting it with evil but defeating it with goodness, humility, and peace.



## Reflection (22)

January 17, 2019

### The Effect of Baptism Within my Soul

- ❖ **A New Creation:** It is a new and eternal creation that is born and grows within me, knowing no sin. It is my new self that will remain forever, with features and character like the Lord Jesus, and is able to see the Kingdom of God.
- ❖ **My sonship to God the Father:** and my inheritance of His kingdom and everything therein.
- ❖ **Salvation and Liberation:** Baptism is my passage and salvation from the kingdom of death, darkness, and delusion, defeating the authority of my old self, renouncing Satan, and entering the Kingdom of life, light, and truth by confessing my faith in Christ.
- ❖ **Enlightenment:** It is the illumination by the light of knowledge and the opening of the ears of my heart to God.
- ❖ **Forgiveness of Sins:** Through baptism, my sins are forgiven.
- ❖ **Spiritual Garments and Armor:** It is the donning of the wedding garments and the armor of faith.
- ❖ **Entry into Christ's Body:** Baptism is the gate to enter the body of Christ through His pierced side (water and blood represent baptism and the Eucharist).
- ❖ **Joining the Flock:** It signifies my joining the little flock under the protection of the Good Shepherd.
- ❖ **Eternal Life:** Baptism inscribes my name in the book of eternal life.
- ❖ **Union with Christ:** It is my grafting and abiding in the true vine, forever.
- ❖ **Temple of the Holy Spirit:** it is the preparation of my body as a sanctuary for the eternal Holy Spirit to dwell, and to be filled with the power of God as a pure vessel.
- ❖ **Company of Angels:** It is the beginning of the companionship of luminous angels with me.
- ❖ **Crowns of Virtue:** Baptism bestows upon me crowns of glory, honor, blessing, virtue, righteousness, wisdom, understanding, undefeated faith, justice, and steadfastness.

**Baptism is the womb of the Church..My Mother**



## Reflection (23)

January 29, 2019

### The Great Saint Anthony

How I wish to learn from you today, on your heavenly feast:

- ❖ Holiness is simply walking the path of fulfilling the divine commandments with courage and faith.
- ❖ The joy of fellowship with the Lord Jesus can last a lifetime, renewing every moment.
- ❖ The Gospel is a very personal message from the Lord Jesus Christ to me.
- ❖ Leaving anything for the sake of Christ is, in truth the ultimate gain and eternal profit.
- ❖ The strongest weapon against the tyranny of evil is humility with prayer and fasting.
- ❖ God's care for me is certain, even if I am alone in a barren desert, amid harsh weather, the fear of darkness, or the threat of death.
- ❖ Life with God brings tranquillity to the soul, clarity to the spirit, and a brightness to the face.
- ❖ True fasting is healing for the soul and body, bringing well-being even in old age.
- ❖ My faith is incredibly precious and a valuable deposit that deserves my entire life.



**Peace be upon our father, St. Anthony, the lamp of monasticism, you who left all temporal, earthly things and acquired everything eternal.**





## Reflection (24)

February 18, 2019

### **The Mystery of God, the Might of Love Spiritual Breezes from the Book of Prophet Jonah**

*"You will arise and have mercy on Zion; For the time to favor her, Yes, the set time, has come." (Psalms 102:13).*

The Book of Jonah revealed to us a "great secret" in God, which is the "might of God's love" for humanity. We can summarize it as follows:

- ❖ God's purpose and goal in our relationship with Him is our return to His embrace, safety, and our enjoyment of Him. God lacks nothing that he desires from us; we are the ones who draw life from Him. However, being distant from Him leads to destruction and annihilation itself (which is contrary to the will, compassion and love of God).
- ❖ God truly and without a shadow of doubt, does not discriminate in His call between the believer and the non-believer or between races. Throughout the history of generations, many distant peoples like Nineveh have repented, believed, and returned, while many nations and peoples have rejected the call to salvation and continue to refuse it. Similarly, God deals with us on an individual level without bias or favoritism in His just love. He is the sun that shines upon us all, the absolute love for everyone, and the constant call of love for every soul by every suitable means and in every circumstance.
- ❖ God looks and longs (if we may say so) for any glimmer of hope (a faint smoking wick) in us for repentance and return to Him, rejoicing greatly over it (like the readiness for repentance and change in the people of Nineveh). He even prepares the most impossible circumstances to urge us to return to life in Him.
- ❖ When God's servant (like Jonah the prophet) reaches the level of being the message (meaning he himself becomes God's message to the world), God will certainly use him by any means to fulfil His will and message through him, even in his weaknesses (human ones). The message of divine love is powerful and penetrating, exactly as the might of God Himself, it does get hindered in us, His servants, despite our profound weaknesses, and I dare say even our straying from His path at times (as Jonah fled from the Lord's Face).
- ❖ At the time when we believe that our human solutions to problems (like fleeing in a ship) offer safety and salvation, we find that divine miraculous solutions (like the great fish!!!!) are the only way to escape and be saved. Our Lord is indeed so amazing!!!! ... Who would believe it?
- ❖ This is exactly the secret of the salvation of the cross, the grave (burial), and the resurrection that our Lord has revealed to us in the New Testament.

- ❖ God desires to enter a secret relationship of prayer with us from the depths of the experience; revealing our pains to Him, finding Him in our inner rooms within our homes, hearing the groans of our hearts, mending our brokenness, binding our wounds, comforting us, and lifting us up.
- ❖ The mighty God in His love embrace everyone to His Bosom. He has gathered a lost people who did not know their right hand from their left into His arms and He has gained the sailors who believed in Him and made vows to Him and He has won Jonah when He revealed to him the secret of His abundant compassion and mercy. He has gained our souls and the souls of every generation from the Old and New Testaments until the end of time to glorify His power, grace, and miraculous work.

**It is the Might of Love, My Dear Ones.... Now my beloved:**

- ❖ God loves you very much.
- ❖ God can shake heaven and earth, move mountains, split seas, and perform wonders as a mighty hero to bring you back to His embrace no matter your condition, so you may enjoy safety, forgiveness, life, joy, and eternal love in Him.
- ❖ With the fasting of being preoccupied with His love, and by returning to Him in prayer, and with the tears of joy in His embrace, you unite with Him... when He offers you all that is His, offering you Himself as the true food and true drink for the forgiveness of sins, so that you may abide in Him... there is no greater love than this.

**Be well in the Lord Jesus!**



## Reflection (25)

March 11, 2019

### God Cares for Me

Do not worry or be anxious.

- ❖ **The Past:** Forgiven through the blood of Christ.
- ❖ **The Present:** He is the One who takes care us, so do not worry about money, food, or protecting yourself, for your Heavenly Father knows what you need before you
- ❖ **The Future:** We are created in Christ Jesus good works which God prepared beforehand for us to walk in them.



of  
ask.  
for

**Trials:** All things work together for good to those who love God.

**Sin:** Your sins have been forgiven for His name's sake.

**Do not you worry, my beloved son,  
for I am your God and Father, who cares for you.**



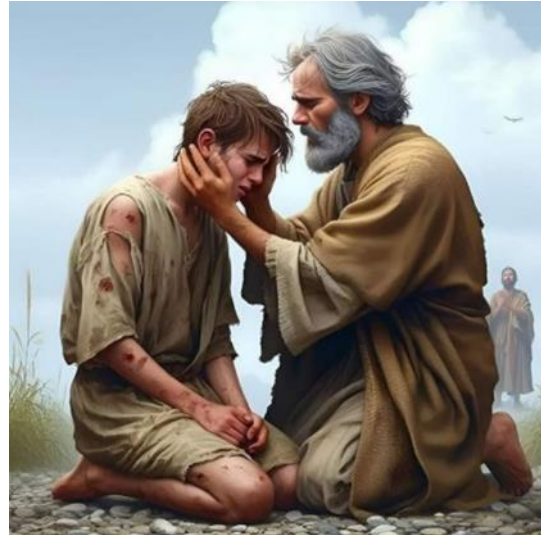
## Reflection (26)

March 24, 2019

### The Sunday of God the Father's Compassion (The Prodigal Son) - Luke 15

This parable reveals to us:

- ❖ The mystery of our relationship with God. is my Father, and I am His son (through baptism), and no power in existence can separate me from Him, no matter how great my sins are.
- ❖ My repentance completely turns things around: sorrows turn into heavenly joy, estrangement turns into the embrace of my Father, ragged clothes become the first robe, the pig's husks become the fattened calf, and the bond of slavery becomes the ring of sonship.
- ❖ In the spiritual sense, the sinner is considered dead, and repentance is life. Repentance is not a human effort but rather the acceptance of the Spirit of resurrection from the dead in Christ Jesus.



He

**"My son was dead and is alive again."**



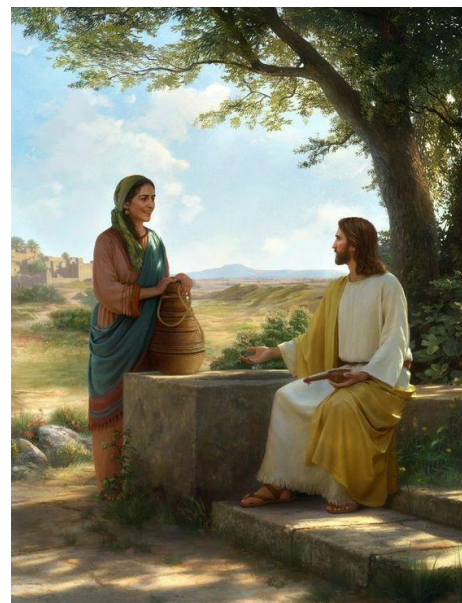
## Reflection (27)

March 31, 2019

### Fourth Week, The Sunday of Inner Healing (The Samaritan Woman)

- ❖ All encounters with God are orchestrated in His mind.
- ❖ He always initiates and seeks us out, even if He travels far and grows weary. He loved us first.
- ❖ The sixth hour is the time of face-to-face encounter between the bridegroom and the bride, it is the time of the cross which reconciled the world.
- ❖ The place of the encounter is by the well, like Rebekah meeting Isaac to marry him, Rachel meeting Jacob to marry him, and Jethro's daughter meeting Moses the prophet to marry him. It is the place of encounter with the Bridegroom of my soul at baptism.

Teach me, O Lord, how to be like You, O Lover of sinners.



- ❖ How can God thirst? He only thirsts for our salvation and love.
- ❖ How can God hunger? He only hungers for our return to Him.
- ❖ What kindness the Lord Jesus has! His covering of sins, His respect for the humbled soul, His appreciation for the despised, His great care for those who have no one, and His patience even with the violent.

**Teach me, O Lord, to be like You, O lover of sinners.**



## Reflection (28)

March 31, 2019

### The Lord Jesus, the Skilled Physician of Our Souls

- ❖ The Author of Life, the true Physician, teaches us the method of attracting distant souls:
- ❖ I am (Jesus) in need (thirsty), not you (humility)
  - Attraction and motivation
  - Positivity
  - Patience
  - Encouragement
  - Respect
  - Explanation and understanding
  - Covering sins

### The question here is for us, my beloved:

- ❖ Do we accept sinners and the immoral among us in the church?
- ❖ Do we respect, value, trust, encourage them, and heal the wounds of their souls with love? Is our church a witness to Christ?

Our good Teacher, the skilled Physician, teaches us the way of healing the soul from within.

He said, *“The harvest is plentiful” (Luke 10:2).*

Thousands upon thousands need just a single word to return to God with such a brilliant approach.

**The fields are white for harvest.**



## Reflection (29)

May 19, 2019

### The Third Sunday of Resurrection: The Living Water

- ❖ The soul of the Samaritan woman rose from within because she heard the voice of the Son of God, bringing life into her.
- ❖ The light of life illuminated her depths and healed her wounds with His skills as the true Creator and Physician.
- ❖ She was freed from the chains of her long, painful past, isolation, estrangement, feeling of guilt, avoidance of people's gazes, and daily concerns (the jar).
- ❖ The old Samaritan woman died, and a new, free, simple, joyful Samaritan woman arose, a well-balanced, pure, and a virgin through repentance, which transforms the adulterous into virgins.
- ❖ She became a social person who loves people and guides them to Christ with immense love. She returned open to others and bringing joy to everyone she meets.

**She found the treasure, found herself, reconciled with herself, and succeeded.**

**How beautiful is this resurrection and how great is the Savior!**





## Reflection (30)

June 4, 2019

### What is Holiness?

- ❖ Holiness is the gift of the Holy God to us in Christ Jesus, bestowed by His grace as His Holy Spirit dwells within us, enabling us to live through Him. Thus, the human body, spirit, and soul are sanctified under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, becoming instruments of righteousness for God, leading us into a living fellowship with the Holy Trinity, and living according to the new creation.

### Holiness is a divine commandment:

- ❖ *"But as He who called you is Holy; you also be holy in all your conduct" (1 Peter 1:15).*

### Who is the Saint?

- ❖ The saint is anyone who enjoys divine sonship, lives according to the Gospel's commandments, and is led by the Spirit of God, revealing the Word of God to the world.

### Are all children of God saints?

- ❖ Yes, certainly, if they live and walk worthy of the divine calling as true children of God, according to the Spirit and the new creation within them.

### Is repentance only for sinners?

- ❖ Repentance is the mystery of the Holy Spirit's continuous work within us, renewing us daily until the last breath. It is the secret of the soul's renewal and its ongoing growth in the love of Christ, gradually transforming from glory to glory, into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Himself within us. This mystery is practiced by everyone who enjoys divine intimacy and is a daily need for the whole church.

Thus, the saints are continuously repenting.

### Does the effectiveness of any person as a living member of Christ's body with the rest of the members cease upon their transition to paradise?

- ❖ The body of Christ does not have non-living or non-interacting members. It is a divine Body whose boundaries are not limited to earth alone. All who transition to paradise remain living members like the rest, praying, praising, and rejoicing in God on a higher level, and feeling with the rest of the body members, even if they have shed their earthly bodies.

*"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:7).*

**Thus, the heavenly ones feel even the acts of our repentance,  
which may not be visible to people.**



## Reflection (31)

June 5, 2019

### If we are all saints, why are there saints known by name and famous to everyone?

Holiness is our new being in Christ Jesus. Some of us live it and let it grow within, so their memory enduring forever according to the words of Scripture (*Psalms 112:6 and Mark 14:9*).

*"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."* where God does not forget their labor and struggle on the narrow path, enduring toil and persecution on many occasions.

- ❖ Some neglect their calling and live according to the earthly body and its hopeless concerns, where their memory ends with the end of their earthly life. For *"Not everyone who says to ME "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven"*, as the Lord Jesus said (*Matthew 7:21*).
- ❖ These saints lived the life of Christ within them, disciplined the body, and offered their being and lives as a love sacrifice to God, like the poured-out anointed oil. They deserved the enduring and immortal memory because they clung to the Eternal who never perishes, fulfilling the words of the Lord of Glory.

### A Question: What is the old man and what is the new man? Are our human bodies the old man?

- ❖ The old man is the desires working within us, the dominion of sin over us, and living according to the flesh, not the human body itself.
- ❖ We received authority over the old man (the old nature) as God's children through baptism, so sin does not rule over us.
- ❖ The new man is the new creation we received in baptism, our new, eternal nature that does not sin, and growing within us through faith, repentance, prayer, communion, and the fellowship with God.
- ❖ When we walk according to the Holy Spirit, the human body, spirit, and soul are sanctified, becoming instruments of righteousness for God.
- ❖ Is it conceivable that the body that fasted, prayed, stayed awake in prayer and service, endured persecution and pain out of love for Christ and for His sake would not be honored or considered by God? God never forgets the labor of love, for He is never unjust.
- ❖ In Christ, we discipline the body for the sake of the Spirit, and we do not despise but honor the body that has been sanctified and has become a temple of God.



## Reflection (32)

June 5, 2019

### The Glorious Feast of the Ascension

#### The Fortieth Day of the Resurrection (Ascension Thursday)

*"When He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up..." (Acts 1).*

- ❖ Heaven had already preceded, carrying the joyful news to the earth of Christ's descent, His incarnation and His dwelling among us.
- ❖ Today, we announce joyful news to the heavenly beings about the Lord's resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven.
- ❖ What thanksgiving and praise can we offer our Savior on this day, who raised our nature and ascended us with Him? He who in His ascension, carried us with Him, passed through the heavens, and was exalted in glory.
- ❖ On this day, forty days after the resurrection, it is necessary that the ascension falls on a Thursday. The readings refer to the events of this day where Christ appears for the last time to His disciples after appearing multiple times during the holy forty days. He then took them to Bethany, blessed them, and from Bethany to the nearby Mount of Olives, where the Ascension took place.
- ❖ St. Epiphanius (320-403 AD) says, "This day is the glory and honor of the rest of the feasts, for the Lord completed on this day the work of the Great Shepherd with love for His sheep."
- ❖ In the reflections of St. John Chrysostom (347-407 AD) on this feast, he explains the prophecy of David the Prophet, "**He flies on the wings of the wind,**", and says: "In the Ascension of the Savior, the ranks of angels and archangels accompanied Him with hymns, surrounded by a great light and indescribable glory. At that moment, the Holy Spirit commanded the heavenly hosts, saying, 'Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.'"

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the victorious King, glorified in heaven and on earth, entered earthly Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Today, in His Ascension, He enters victoriously, the heavenly Jerusalem.



- ❖ On Palm Sunday, He rode a donkey, but today He rides on the cloud. He first entered amidst the praises of the people; today, the angels receive Him with praises. They once cried out, "Hosanna," and today they shout, "You have saved us." He first entered the temple of sacrifices, and today He enters with His sacrifice, the saints. First, He entered to suffer, and today He enters His glory in the heavens.
- ❖ He ascended to open a new way for us to the heavenly realms.
- ❖ He ascended as the first fruits (the holy Christ) at the right hand of the Father (in the power and glory of the Father), giving great honor and value to the rest of the harvest (the children of God).
- ❖ He ascended as the head of the Church to prepare a place for us.
- ❖ He ascended as the forerunner to bring us eternal good.
- ❖ He ascended to perform His redemptive work with His blood as the greatest High Priest, interceding for us with His blood before the Father.
- ❖ He is the anchor of the ship (the hull) that was cast in the heavens, thus becoming our only assurance of salvation like a ship in the midst of a troubled world.

**Let us rejoice in this feast with inexpressible joy and always look to our place prepared for us in the heavens in Christ Jesus.**



## Reflection (33)

June 7, 2019

### Question 1: If the blessing is spiritual, why do we receive it through material means like kissing the Gospel and the cross?

- ❖ The Church believes in the sanctification of matter because the Holy Word of God became incarnate and united with our nature, blessing and sanctifying it. Even His clothes gained the power and ability to heal and sanctify, as the woman with the issue of blood received healing power from the hem of Christ's garment.

Therefore, matter has become a means of blessing and spiritual power. This is why the Church practices kissing the veil of the holy sanctuary as a symbol of the hem of Christ's garment and kissing the altar as a symbol of the cross.

### Question 2: What are the relics of saints (bodies of saints)?

- ❖ The word "relics" comes from the verb "to preserve" or "to keep for a time of need,". From the verb "to preserve" derived from the word "RELIQUIAE" in Latin or "relics" in English, which generally means remnants. Over time, this term has taken on a religious meaning, referring to the remains of saints and anything associated with them: bodies, clothes, and tools.

### Question 3: Do we worship these relics?

- ❖ No, absolutely not. We worship the one God with triune hypostases; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in one nature without separation.

### So why do we sometimes bow or prostrate before them?

### Why do we touch and kiss them?

### Why do we incense before them?

These are very important questions.

- ❖ The doctrine of venerating the relics of saints is based on the belief that their bodies are totally sanctified as temples of the Holy Spirit, bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus' suffering and the sacred wounds for His name's sake.

They deservedly receive the Lord Jesus' words, "*for those who honor Me I will honor,*" (1 Samuel 2:30).

- ❖ In Christ's new creation, the human body becomes "a member of Christ" and "a temple of the Holy Spirit."

***"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).***

- ❖ ***This is a clear call: "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Corinthians 7:1).***
- ❖ **St. Simeon the Theologian says, "The grace of the Holy Spirit, when it dwells in the soul, also dwells in its temple (the body). Therefore, we find the bones of saints and their remains overflowing with healings that cure every weakness."**
- ❖ **Likewise, St. Athanasius the Great says, "The divine grace exists in the souls and bodies of the saints" (Commentary on Psalm 117).**
- ❖ **St. Macarius also says, "Just as Christ's body was glorified on the mountain with divine glory and unfading light, so also the bodies of saints are glorified and shine. Just as the glory within Christ's body shone brightly, so also the power of Christ will shine forth from their bodies on that day" (Discourse 15,38).**
- ❖ **The greater the participation in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the greater the sanctity of the bodies as well.**
- ❖ **St. John Chrysostom also says, "In death, the bodies of saints do not lose the grace they lived with but rather increase in it."**



## Reflection (34)

July 1, 2019

### The Spirit of St. Isidore

- ❖ On the feast of the martyrdom of our strong saint, Abba Moses, we find it necessary to direct our minds and hearts to his spiritual father and teacher, Saint Isidore of Scetis, to learn how to perform successful individual ministry.
- ❖ Father Isidore was known for his unique grace of patience and his concern for the salvation of others. Thus, whenever someone was deemed hopeless and others wanted to expel him, he would embrace him, care for him, and reform him with patience and endurance.
- ❖ Let's reflect on how he embraced and reformed a thief, murderer, adulterer, and highwayman, a person with a rough nature and despicable conduct, allowing God's grace to transform his inner being through love into the image of the Lord Jesus in meekness, service, cheerfulness, humility, and purity.
- ❖ How much patience, long-suffering, a broad heart, discipleship, wisdom, and acceptance of negative results with a spirit of hope that does not disappoint, along with faith in God's grace, and fervent prayer, did this require? How ready he was to walk the extra mile, and even the second, third, fourth, and tenth...
- ❖ We may recall how St. Moses the Black, when violently attacked by temptations, found in Isidore's heart a place filled with love. On one night, St. Moses left his cell on the rock "Petra" eleven times to visit his father's cell near the church, and the father welcomed him each time with a cheerful heart and restored his hope in the Lord.
- ❖ When the temptations were extremely severe on Abba Moses to the point where he almost lost hope, Father Isidore took him to the roof of his cell and asked him to look west, where he saw a multitude of demons in great worry preparing to attack. Then he asked him to look east, where he saw an even larger group of glorious angels and heavenly hosts ready to support the strugglers. This filled Abba Moses with hope.



### My beloved servants,

- ❖ You can fill the church with the testimonies of your ministry if you serve every distant soul with the spirit of Saint Isidore.





## Reflection (35)

August 7, 2019

### Saint Mary's Fast

- ❖ We fast the Nativity Fast to await the Word of God (incarnate and born for us).
- ❖ We fast the Lent to overcome through the Word of God (our Redeemer and Savior).
- ❖ We fast the Apostles' Fast to witness to the Word of God (life for the world).
- ❖ We fast to our God in the name of the holy Virgin Mary to experience the unity with God (how He dwells within us) *“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27)*.
- ❖ In the womb of our mother, the Virgin, we have an example (with the difference that in her womb, there was a union of divinity and humanity in one nature of the incarnate Word of God, while in us, He dwells in us mysteriously, and we abide in Him, and He in us).



**May the blessing of the tender-hearted Mother of Light  
fills you and brings joy to your hearts**

**with the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Be well!**



## Reflection (36)

September 6, 2019

### Fasting on Wednesday and Friday

The church has designated the fast of Wednesdays and Fridays as first-degree fasts (abstaining from midnight until 3 pm, followed by plant-based food free of animal fat and without fish).

The length of the abstaining should be agreed upon with the confessor, depending on their guidance and the individual's health and spiritual growth.

- ❖ This fast has immense importance as a sharing in the sufferings of the Lord Jesus (His mental anguish on Wednesday and His physical sufferings on Friday). We, as His church, are members of His body, of His flesh and His bones, for which He suffered. Therefore, this fast is one of fundamentals of the Christian faith and a cornerstone for enjoying salvation by passing through the cross with the Redeemer.
- ❖ Not fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays implies a decision to separate oneself from the fellowship of the Church as the suffering body of Christ, and thus depriving oneself of the joy of His resurrection on Sunday (the Lord's Day) as a pledge of eternal life.

I sincerely say that as a father, it deeply saddened me to see a considerable number, even among the servants, relinquish the principle of fasting to satisfy their gatherings, trips, and parties, citing reasons like it being a weekend or lack of food choices, or out of compassion for our children and their health, or other reasons.

We feel that we have no connection with Him who was crucified for us and died for our life and the life of the world. Here He is, hanging by nails on the shameful cross, bleeding profoundly, with a torn body from the sole of His feet to the top of His head, whereas He is in the depths of His joy and delight for our salvation from death, even if He Himself dies because His soul is not precious to Him, for He loved us to the end. Yet, we discuss the type of food and the variety of choices, and we easily compromise to please ourselves, our desires, our friends, and unfortunately our children.

#### ❖ **Where are your hearts... We have them with the Lord.**

**This is a phrase we say in every Liturgy, but is it truly reflected in our lives?**

- ❖ We live in a time where knowledge has increased, but love has diminished. Rationality and logic have multiplied, but faith has decreased. Some among us grumble and shy away from the narrow path that leads to life, seeking instead the broad road, only to wander aimlessly.
- ❖ Yet among us remain faithful witnesses, clinging to the cross of our Lord Jesus, bearing their crosses behind Him even to the grave. These are the ones who cross over to the new life, rising with Christ and enjoying eternity and heaven while still on earth.

- ❖ Our ministry derives its strength and impact from fasting, prayer, and supplication. It is the power of God that works, reigns, influences, and bears fruit. We have no other power in our ministry besides this.
- ❖ Our children need us most to show them our life in Christ practically. Personal prayers in own chamber, family altar, fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, the love of hymns, going early to the Liturgy, serving the needy brothers of the Lord, and caring for strangers, the sick, and the needy are the fundamentals of any Christian's daily program.
- ❖ So, at the end, let us my beloved, listen to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans saying:  
*"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." (Romans 8:12-13)*



## Reflection (37)

September 12, 2019

### (1) Trials in Human Life: What is a trial?

We all know it is a tribulation, hardship, or affliction, whatever the terms may be, regardless of its causes.

#### **But do you know the taste of a trial?**

Surely, only those inside it truly know and feel the pain, or anguish of a trial.

- ❖ The fundamental rule that seems obvious to everyone is that no human being on earth, regardless of their gender or belief, is immune to the trials of time.
- ❖ The common denominator in most, if not all, trials is that there is no trial or hardship without the question "Why?" and "What is your purpose?" and "Why me?" or "What is the fault of...?!!!"

#### **And often, if not always, there is no immediate answer to those questions.**

From observations of time or from reading history, we find that although God is the God of the impossible, His judgments are far beyond human understanding and natural logic, as God's mind and reasoning and His governance are far beyond our thoughts as the heavens are high above the earth.

- ❖ Despite the obscurity of divine causes and judgments, and despite our lack of understanding, and despite the excruciating pains that may be prolonged,

#### **God, through His Holy Spirit, has revealed to us the following:**

- ❖ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man" (within the capacity of weak humans).
- ❖ *"But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).*
- ❖ *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12).*



### (2) Trials in Human Life

**First, we must distinguish between two matters about human trials:**

- ❖ **The First matter:** is that there are trials that a person brings upon themselves due to their misdeeds or sins. These, although occurs with God's prior knowledge, yet He does not intrude upon the greatest gift bestowed upon humanity, which is the free will that follows human intellect and thought, elevating it above other creations.
- ❖ For instance, if someone steals, bribes, or commits forgery, they are caught, judged, and imprisoned, and their wife and children are deprived of them during their imprisonment. This is a difficult trial for the family, but who caused it? And what is God's role in it? Certainly, God (to whom be all glory) is not the cause of it, but He plays the role of the healer, the comforter, the sustainer, the one who nurtures and cares for the children by His providence and stands at the door of the heart of the imprisoned father, knocking and seeking his repentance and return.
- ❖ In this example, the cause is the person's poor behavior and sin. As St. Peter the Apostle says:  
*"For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently?" (1 Peter 2:20).*
- ❖ Similarly, if someone contracts a physical disease or AIDS due to sexual immorality or hanging out with bad friends, becomes addicted to alcohol or drugs, and their liver or immune system is affected, these illnesses or afflictions are natural consequences of sin or poor behavior done by the person with their free will.
- ❖ In all these cases, as St. James the Apostle says:  
*"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:13-15).*



### The Psalms

- ❖ They are words of prayers written by the Holy Spirit in the Holy Bible, they are part of the Holy Scripture - the living and effective Word of God, sharper than any double-edged sword.
- ❖ They express human emotions in their relationship with God in all circumstances, providing what one needs in their life with God, whether in joy, repentance, reproach, love, sorrow, solitude, thanksgiving, or praise.
- ❖ In our assemblies, the Gospel advises us to pray the Psalms: *"Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm"* (1 Corinthians 14:26).
- ❖ When the disciples asked the Lord Jesus, *"Lord, teach us to pray,"* He told them, *"When you pray, say: Our Father"* (Luke 11:1-2), instructing them to recite a set prayer together.
  - Simply reciting the Psalms frightens demons as it carries the power of the Holy Spirit within.
  - However, in the order of prayer, we should not read the Psalms as a routine or without understanding or awareness; otherwise, our prayers become literal and superficial, lacking spirituality, and we gain nothing from them.
  - Praying the Psalms begins with understanding and awareness in the inner mind, and it is also beneficial to write and memorize them so that the words come from your inner heart, while you understand and feel every word emanating from your depths.
  - You may find yourself longing to deviate from the Psalm's text to express your feelings to God in your own words, then return to complete the Psalm to find another word that takes you into distant realms with God, pouring out your emotions in complaint, gratitude, or seeking wisdom or comfort.
  - The Psalm is a sea of emotions mixed with the Holy Spirit, containing within the power to change, protect, and shield from evil one, it is a source of grace, comfort, and real support for the wandering soul.
  - It is well known that the prayers of the Psalms in the Agpeya (in Coptic means "hour", referring to the book of the Hours). **is a great school that has graduated all the saints and martyrs who filled the world with holiness and grace.**

*"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him' I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him My salvation" (Psalm 91: 14-16)*

- These seven prayers are arranged to bind the mind and being of the worshiper with the life and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ: His crucifixion, death, descent from the cross, burial, resurrection, the descent of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

The Agpeya sanctifies time to connect it with salvation and eternity, allowing the kingdom of God to dwell within the entirety of our lives.

This is the acceptable time, my beloved, to embrace the holy Agpeya... it is a great grace and true support in the hostility of our days, helping us to cross over the sea of this world... praying constantly to be fortified against the trials of time, crossing them as a bridge to eternal joy.





### The Divine Liturgy

- ❖ The Divine Liturgy is the backbone of Christian life. We cannot imagine a church without the liturgy, because Christianity is summarized in the incarnation and redemption, which is practically realized on the altar, through the Body and Blood of the Only Son for the forgiveness of our sins, our salvation, and eternal life.
- ❖ In the Liturgy, there is neither past or future, but an perpetual eternal present. Without the Liturgy, everything that connects us to Christ our God becomes mere historical stories; but through the Liturgy, we proclaim, "Emmanuel, our God, is in our midst now."
- ❖ The Divine Liturgy is a celebration of Nativity, Epiphany, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Second Coming, all combined. This is what we call "anamnesis", a term that is inaccurately translated as "remembrance," but it means to bring forth the same act with the same person as an extension of His work without repetition.
- ❖ The paten is the Manger, the cross or the tomb is the throne on which the Lord of glory will come in His second coming.
- ❖ The veils are the swaddling clothes of the Manger, the shrouds of the tomb, and also, the clouds surrounding the throne of Christ in His second coming.
- ❖ Among the names of the Liturgy are also the anaphora: which means the offering, and the Liturgy: which means communal worship (work).
- ❖ In the Liturgy, we offer the Prosphora (a Greek word meaning offering), which consists of bread, wine, and water. We offer them in the manner of the Anaphora (i.e., we lift them up), saying, "***We offer it to You, O Lord, with thanksgiving, from Your hand, we have given You.***" The Father accepts it and sends His Holy Spirit to transform it into the real Body and Blood of the Only begotten Son, offering it to us as a gift and grace at the highest level, granting us forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life.
- ❖ The white tunic, the white veils, the washing the priest's hands, and the psalms' prayers, "Lord have mercy", all remind us of the necessity of our repentance and purity of our heart so that we may offer to the Father an acceptable sacrifice.



❖ **The liturgy begins with the proclamation of glory to the Trinity,**

"Glory and honor," which achieves "Peace and edification," with the priest, deacon, and congregation participating in glorifying the Holy Trinity (for the glory of God is in the salvation of man through the cross).

- ❖ The mysteries are covered by the veil of offering (the Prospharion) because the divinity of Christ was veiled in His Incarnation and was not revealed until after His Resurrection (lifting of the Prospharion). This is because we know very little about the first period of the Lord Jesus' life on earth, and it reflects the burial of the Lord Jesus and the sealing (the triangular veil on the door of the tomb).



## Reflection (41)

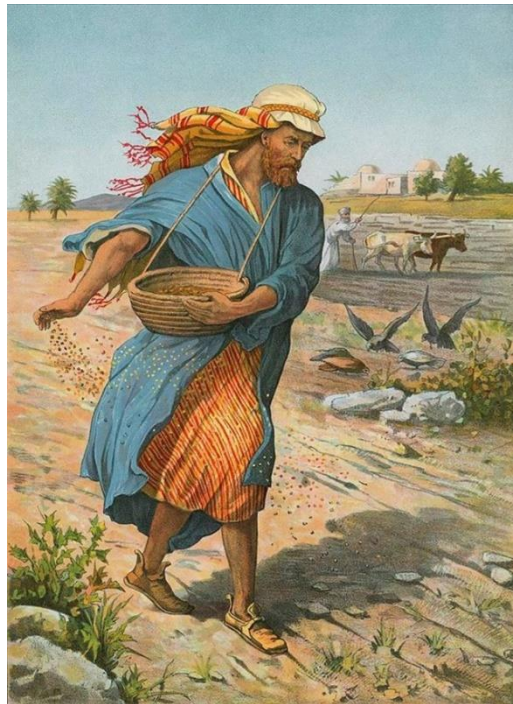
November 17, 2019

### The First and Second Sundays of Hatoor

### The Month of Sowing Seeds and Plowing the Land in Egypt

### The Gospel of the Liturgy, “The Parable of the Sower”

- ❖ Despite the existence of types of land that are unsuitable for cultivation and fruitfulness (like rocky ground or thorny ground or hard ground like the path), the Sower (God) continues to sow seeds (the living Word of God and His Kingdom) in every land (heart), even with the knowledge that it may be of no benefit.



**Because He remains faithful despite our unfaithfulness, and His hope in our transformation never ceases.**

**“He is still out there... sowing.”**



## Reflection (42)

November 21, 2019

### Zechariah the Priest and Elizabeth

*"And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke 1:6).*

How beautiful it is for the Holy Spirit to bear a true testimony to a husband and wife in a line or two summarizing their entire years of life.

- ❖ They were both righteous... before God, for this is what counts for eternal life, not the righteousness before people or according to people's opinion.
- ❖ Walking in all the commandments of the Lord... blameless.

It does not say *"without blemish"* because no one born of a woman is without blemish, but "blameless" in the sight of God.

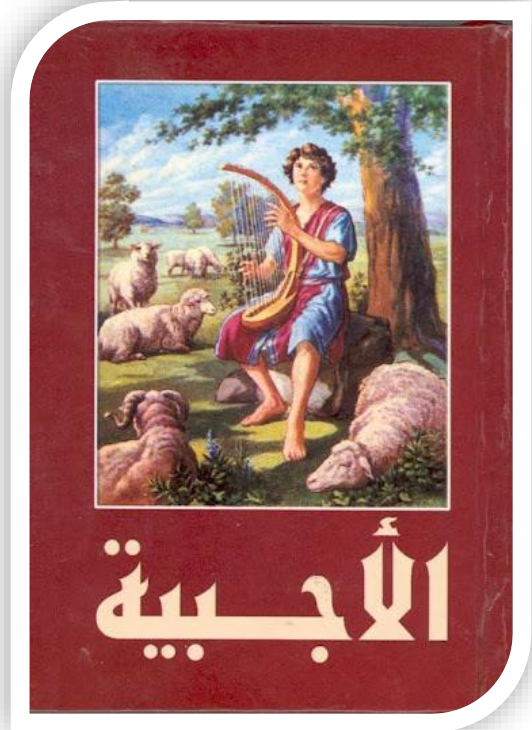
Because God understands and excuses our circumstances and weaknesses, He knows the heart of a person who desires to be as faithful as possible to Him, so He forgives their lapses and falls, showing mercy, so they are counted before God as blameless.

**It is the discerning view of God who searches hearts.**



**The Secret of Meeting with the One My Soul Loves**

- ❖ **"Our Father Who art in heaven"**: The nature of prayer is "the entry of the Son to his Father."
- ❖ **"Let us give thanks to the Beneficent"**: The joy of uniting in the bosom of the loving Father.
- ❖ **"Have mercy on me, O God"**:  
Reconciliation and wiping away the past through the washing of tears of repentance.
- ❖ **The Psalms**: Entry into the depth of prayer and the opening of the treasures of the Holy Spirit's consolations.
- ❖ **The Gospel**: The light of Christ's presence within my heart.
- ❖ **The litanies**: A very personal conversation with the Lord of Glory dwelling within me.
- ❖ **"Kyrie Eleison" "Lord have Mercy" and Prostrations**: Experiencing the death of the old man and my resurrection with Him into new life.
- ❖ **"Holy, Holy, Holy"**: Thanksgiving and praise for His work in me and my return to the rank of sonship through my repentance ("Our Father Who Art in heaven").
- ❖ **The absolution**: The gift of His Grace at the end of the encounter.
- ❖ **The conclusion**: Prostration and gratitude for the transformation of my life after my meeting with Him.



**The Agpeya is the Paradise of encounter and,  
the renewed fellowship with God.**





**Together on the Midnight Prayer Journey**

❖ **First Watch:**

The Service of Lighting the Lamp: *"Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding" (Matthew 25:10).*

❖ **Second Watch:**

The Service of Tears of Repentance and the encounter in the Embrace of the Heavenly Bridegroom, kissing His Feet, and enjoying forgiveness and peace: *"Her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved much" (Luke 7:47).*



❖ **Third Watch:**

The Service of Liberation from the Bonds of the World and enjoying what no eye has seen in the eternal Kingdom (come, follow me):

*"Sell your possessions and give to the poor... Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning... Blessed are those servants... who are watching"*  
(Luke 12:32-40).

*"For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*  
(Luke 12 :32)

**A journey into the depths of the night to the true light,  
that illuminates my inner being.**



**The Practical Test of Love**

- ❖ Love is life, and life consists of situations, these situations are daily tests of love.
- ❖ Love is constantly tested to reveal its authenticity and truth.
- ❖ True love is not just about soft words and courtesies on occasions among loved ones and greetings when meeting.
- ❖ True love is patient with the faults of others and shows kindness;
- ❖ It does not envy others for what they have, it does not boast and does not seek its own.
- ❖ It is not easily angered, it does not dishonor others, nor does it rejoice in the downfall of an enemy.
- ❖ Love overcomes evil with good; it does not seek revenge.
- ❖ Love gives itself to others and takes only from itself to give to others.

*"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but indeed and in truth." (1 John 3:16-18).*

*This is the greatest power in existence because it is the nature of God. "God is love" (1 John 4:8).*

**This is the Love that never fails and never changes.  
Search for it, my beloved, for it is within you.**

**Seek it so that you may grasp it and live it eternally.**



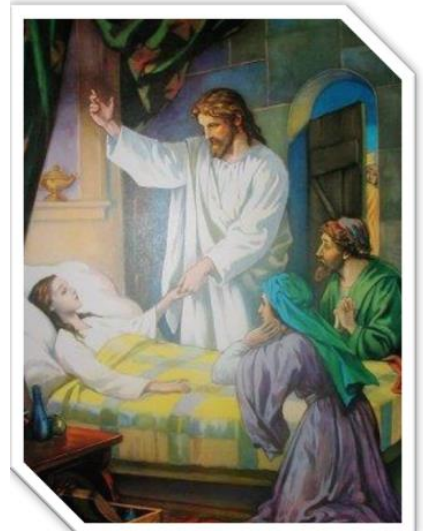


## Reflection (46)

December 13, 2019

### Deep Meanings of Prayer

*“Remember, O Lord, the sick among Your people. You have visited them with mercies and compassions, heal them.” The Prayer of the Sick*



- ❖ There is a beautiful sentence that the priest says in the Prayer of the Sick, which is the word (compassion). This word in Arabic does not fully convey the intended meaning.
- ❖ To understand its meaning in Coptic: The word for compassion corresponds to the Coptic word “**ΜΕΤΨΕΝΖΗΤ**”.
- ❖ The word is made up of three parts:
  - **ΜΕΤ** - is a prefix added to an adjective to form a meaningful noun (infinitive).
  - **ΨΕΝ** - is a form of a verb meaning (to visit) or (to ask about).
  - **ΖΗΤ** - a noun meaning (heart).
- ❖ Thus, the literal translation of the word “**ΜΕΤΨΕΝΖΗΤ**” is (visitation of the heart). So, in the Prayer of the Sick, the priest is not only asking for the physical healing of the body but also for God to visit the heart of every sorrowful, depressed person who is sick with sin.

