



Live in peace



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## **HIS HOLINESS POPE TAWADROS II**



**118<sup>TH</sup> POPE OF ALEXANDRIA AND  
PATRIARCH OF THE SEE OF SAINT MARK**



# Live in Peace

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



# Live in Peace

## St. Mark's Festival 2022 Anthem

**When we're planting love and goodness  
Peace is what we'll always reap  
We're not worried if days are evil  
The Lord won't slumber nor sleep x2**

**Church is an Ark where souls are saved  
No matter what hardships we face  
Her Sacraments will help us always  
Grow in faith and dwell in grace x1**

**At His word I'd walk on water  
Strong in faith and firm in Doctrine x2  
I will follow His commands x1**

**With God joy will never cease  
And His Spirit gives us peace. x2**

**And His Spirit gives us peace. x1**

# Live in Peace

In the last two years the whole world had to deal with a big challenge, the Coronavirus Pandemic, which caused major losses in lives, affected the health of many, and caused long term challenges to the world economy and general human activity. This big challenge caused some to lose their inner peace and comfort.

Many of us imagine peace in a life without challenges. However, peace does not mean a place with no worry, challenges, or hardships. True peace is to maintain our inner stability and calmness in the midst of life's various storms as St. Paul described:

**“peace of God, which surpasses all understanding.” (Philippians 4:7)**

## **Our Lord Jesus Christ Commanded us to Live in Peace:**

- ❖ **“But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’” (Luke 10:5)**
- ❖ **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9)**
- ❖ **“Do not worry about your life” (Luke 12:22)** Worrying is a sign of exaggerated fear of challenges we face without faith in the ability of our God who is Pantocrator, all-loving, and able to help us overcome any hardship.
- ❖ **“Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.” (Psalm 34:14)**

- We use ‘peace’ even as the topic of our personal greetings as we say, “peace and grace”.
- The Lord Jesus Christ spoke to us about a special grace coming from Him, His peace, when He said, **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27)** It is obvious that the peace which our Lord Jesus promised to give us is different and surpasses peace obtained by any other means.
- Peace is also one of the fruits of the Spirit: **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23)** In our relationships with others, **“the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:18)**



## **Our Lord Jesus Christ is the King of Peace**

- Our Lord Jesus is the King and the God of peace; eight centuries before His birth, Isaiah the prophet prophesied about Lord Jesus Christ saying: **“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)**
- ‘Peace’ was the melody which the angels sang on the day Christ was born, **“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Luke 2:13)**
- He was called Prince of Peace because He brought peace unto the earth; He peacefully spread His message of peace.
- The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was not only a peacemaker, but He was our peace through His redemptive work on the cross. **“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation” (Ephesians 2:14)**

## Peace on a Personal Level

Inner peace is connected with God's work inside the person, He **"guides our feet into the way of peace."** (Luke 1:79) For anyone to always live in peace, He must have peace with the following:

### 1. Peace with God:

- After Adam's sin, peace was no more. Sin entered into the world, and everyone inherited the original sin. Worry, tribulation, hatred, and war entered into the life of mankind. Even between brothers!
- Only through the Lord Jesus Christ's incarnation and redemptive work on the cross was the reconciliation achieved between the Father and mankind.
- Peace with God is achieved by obeying His commandments and living a life of virtue and righteousness. Those who live according to the desires of the flesh are in enmity with God.  
**"There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked." (Isaiah 48:22)**
- The only way to achieve peace again with God is through the sacrament of repentance and confession.

### 2. Peace with Oneself (Internal Peace):

- Internal peace begins with keeping oneself away from the sources of worry and fear initiated by sin. **"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."** (Galatians 5:16-17)
- Inner peace comes with self-control which is exercised through the periods of fasting and asceticism when we maintain our focus on spiritual matters like prayers, metanoias, and spiritual meditation, forcing the body to be aligned and subdued to the spirit struggling on the way to the heavenly kingdom.



### 3. Peace with Others:

- The priest always begins liturgical prayers with "peace be with all", several times during the prayers. He prays that peace reaches the hearts of all the believers.
- Scripture also commands to care about others and live in peace with them:

**"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink;..."  
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:20-21)**

**"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)**

## Peace on a Church Level

- **"God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved" (Psalm 46:5)** This was God's promise at the time of King David and His congregation before and after him. **"God is in her midst"** He is her heart, the source of her existence, and her protector.
- The Church is the Body of Christ and shall not be shaken forever. The gates of hades shall not prevail against her, God is her Protector until the end of the ages.
- One of our most repeated prayers is **"Remember O Lord the peace of Your one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church."** We say it at the beginning of the minor litanies, at the beginning of the major litanies, in Vespers and Matins raising of incense, and every time the priest does a procession of incense around the altar.
- During the offertory, the priest says: **"Peace and edification to the one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of God, Amen."** In the Liturgy of St. Cyril, we also pray for the peace of the church in the litany of the leader:

**"Speak to his heart concerning the peace of Your one holy catholic and apostolic Church."**

## Peace for the Whole World

Peace is an important element in the life of the people; without peace society can never advance or enjoy stability. All nations and countries desire to achieve peace and live in a peaceful, worry-free environment. That desire is according to the will of God who said, **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27)**



Christian peace is not a “peace because of...” but rather a “peace in spite of...”; we have peace in spite of the pandemic, inflation, war, and anything else. We have faith in our Savior who is our fortress and refuge. **“The name of the Lord is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe.” (Proverbs 18:10)**

### How can we make peace with our brethren?

- By paying attention to the poor and those who are persecuted or in need.
- By extending a helping hand to the sick and those who are in captivity.
- By being supportive of those who are handicapped.
- By hosting those who have lost their homes, feeding the hungry, and being a refuge to those who need it.

### How can we live in peace?!

Many reasons could cause some to get worried and lose their inner peace; whether it is fear, illness, pandemic, the unknown future, or even unknown life challenges. In the midst of all these worries they do not remember God’s protective grace, which gives peace and comfort!

### To always live in peace we must:

1. **Recognize that our God is Pantocrator**, creator of everything, and in control of everything. He is the origin of life and the sustainer of every living being. **“The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.” (Psalm 121:8)**
2. **Believe that our God is more powerful than any challenge**; He is able to deliver us from hardships or tribulations, and He is stronger than all the powers of evil **“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Ephesians 3:20)**
3. **Be sure that our lives are in the hand of God**; no one has authority over our lives except for God. He is the lover of mankind, who does not wish the death of the sinner but rather he returns and lives.

Being assured of these facts imparts comfort and peace into our hearts so we can sing with King David saying, **“The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1)**, **“The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (Psalm 118:6)** and **“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me;” (Psalm 23:4)**

### Final thoughts

We often pray asking God to **“Spare the world from death, scarcity, plagues, devastation, the sword of the enemies”** and we have confidence that God, as a loving Father, hears our prayers, and uses any and all hardship or tribulation for the good of everyone.

Therefore, we must always rejoice and say with St. Paul:

**“Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Corinthians 13:11)**

# The First Epistle of St. Peter



## Chapter 1

### Greeting to the Elect Pilgrims (1 Peter 1:1-8)

- St. Peter sent his letter to the Jews who became Christian and were scattered all over Asia Minor. He also sent it to all the believers in the world who were suffering persecution because of their faith.
- God may allow tribulations to reach His servants for a specific purpose. Trials purify the believer as fire purifies impurities. The Lord does not allow anyone to be tried above their ability. He shows Himself to those who are facing tribulation, supports, and comforts them.
- This is how the believer shares in the cross of Christ; we carry our cross with the crucified Christ and share the joy in Christ when He carries our cross.

### A Heavenly Inheritance (1 Peter 1:9-12)

- Salvation does not only mean eternal life in heaven, but in receiving a holy nature while we are on earth. We live a life on earth which prepares us for our life in heaven.
- This salvation which the Lord completed on the cross is attained within the church through the holy mysteries and the means of grace.
- The prophets understood that they will not see that salvation with their own eyes, but we are blessed to live in the New Testament to see and enjoy the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ.



**How wonderful is it to keep your personal salvation before your eyes; abiding in Christ, avoiding sin, and closing all the doors leading to it.**

### Our Duty Towards our Salvation (1 Peter 1:13-17)

We must have a role in our salvation; St. Peter gives commandments to follow in order to work on our salvation:

- **Readiness:** We must prepare our thoughts, senses, and our abilities for spiritual struggle.
- **Confidence:** Do not be disturbed by the temporary sufferings of this life but hold fast to our hope in God's deliverance and reward for enduring hardships.
- **Repentance:** God's children must obey His commandments and live a true life of repentance.
- **Holiness:** The Lord is inviting us to consecrate our hearts to Him which will be evident in our conduct.
- **The Fear of the Lord:** Just as we are sure of God's love, we also know that He is just and does not tolerate sin.

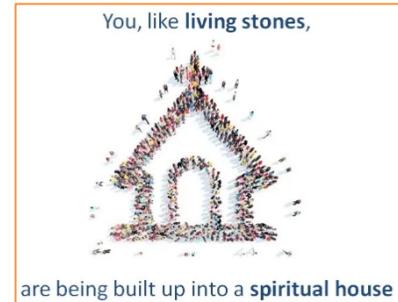
### The Greatness of Salvation (1 Peter 1:18-25)

- St. Peter explains the greatness of the Lord's salvation, which is bestowed on all the believers of the New Testament without a physical price. Only through the shedding of our beloved Lord Jesus, our true Passover, who purchased us with His holy blood.
- Therefore, our conduct should be worthy of the blood that was shed for our sake.
- The least we can offer to the Lord in return is living our lives in purity and righteousness through the sacramental life of the Church.

## Chapter 2

### Living Stones (1 Peter 2:1-8)

- St. Peter describes the believers as living stones, united together to build a house for the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is a living stone attracting to Himself dead stones and giving them life.
- Christ is described as the “cornerstone”, connecting the Old Testament with the New Testament. Those who lean on Him will not be let down whether on earth or in eternity.



In 1 Peter 2:9, we see some descriptions of the believers. What are they? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In 1 Peter 2:10, knowing all the blessings we have as believers, what is expected from us? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Christians are Unique in Character (1 Peter 2:11-12)

- St. Peter advises us to live as strangers to the world, not consumed by earthly pleasure, but rather by what is heavenly.
- This is what differentiates Christian believers from non-believers; when others see our unique and inspiring conduct, they glorify our Father who is in heaven.

### Submission as a Christian Virtue (1 Peter 2:13-25)

St. Peter introduces submission as a true Christian virtue; he discusses this virtue from two different aspects:

- **Submission to authorities for the sake of being good citizens**, but most importantly, for the sake of the Lord.
- **Submission to masters**; those who have authority over us. Not only when they are kind, but also in their injustice. Knowing that our suffering for the sake of obeying the commandment gives us fellowship in Christ’s suffering.

## Chapter 3

### A Commandment to the Wives (1 Peter 3:1-6)

- St. Peter commanded the Christian wives to submit to their husbands out of love.
- He says that if the husband of a Christian is a non-believer, he may be inspired by her humility, submission, and desire to follow Christ.
- He asserts that being adorned with virtues is much more valuable than being adorned with jewelry and apparel.
- He gives examples of virtuous women who adorned themselves with humility and gentleness, being submissive to their husbands in the Lord like Sarah, Abraham’s wife.



### A Commandment to the Husbands (1 Peter 3:7)

- Similarly, he gives a command to the husbands to honor their wives, being gentle and understanding with them.
- In which liturgical prayers are these commandments read? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Blessing of the Christian Conduct (1 Peter 3:8-12)**

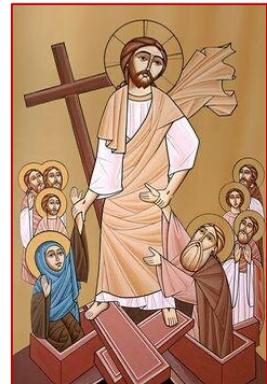
- As members of the Body of Christ, we ought to be of one mind and constantly seek the greater good for the whole community of the believers.
- St. Peter lists the code of conduct by which we should deal with one another; to be compassionate, loving, tenderhearted, courteous, etc... to receive the blessing of the Lord.

### **Give Defense (1 Peter 3:13-17)**

- St. Peter encourages the believers to not be afraid when suffering for righteousness' sake, but rather we will receive blessings for this suffering.
- He commands us to know our faith and understand it well to be ready to give a defense to anyone who questions us.
- He tells us to be courageous and not be troubled if the world tries to attack us or defame us because of our witness to the faith.

### **Christ's Suffering and our Salvation (1 Peter 3:18-22)**

- St. Peter explains how the Lord's suffering on the cross was for the sake of all humanity; saving those who lived in the Old Testament and were righteous but had no way of salvation because of Adam's sin. Until Christ was incarnate, died on the cross, and descended into Hades to save all who were captured by the devil.
- He explains to us that saving Noah and his family from the flood was a symbol of Baptism, which frees us from the original sin, renews us, and opens the door to our salvation.
- There is no salvation unless through Baptism by which we die and resurrect with our Lord Jesus Christ.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Following Christ's Example (1 Peter 4:1-6)**

- St. Peter encourages the believers to endure suffering for the sake of Christ.
- He confirms that those who do not live according to the Lord's commandments will be judged on judgment day.

### **Serving for God's Glory (1 Peter 4:7-11)**

- St. Peter introduces love as a key virtue among the believers.
- Those who serve in the Church of God ought to serve for the glory of God and not for any other reason.
- Every member of the Body of Christ has a talent. God gave talents to each one to serve one another.

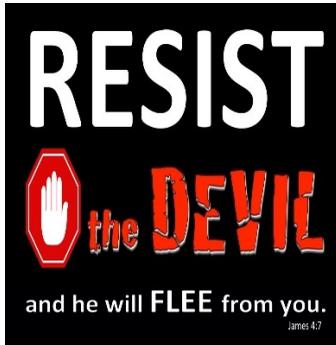
### **Suffering for God's Glory (1 Peter 4:12-19)**

- The Lord told us that in the world we will have tribulations. Facing trials is not strange for the faithful.
- The world will despise God's children because they are not of the world.
- The Lord uses these trials to purify His children, like fire purifies gold and silver, and to make them grow in virtue.
- Despite having no reason to rejoice in tribulation, St. Peter asks the believers to be joyful towards the trials they face in the world as these trials give them fellowship in Christ's sufferings.

## Chapter 5

### Shepherd the Flock (1 Peter 5:1-4)

- St. Peter speaks to the shepherds of the Church: the bishops and the priests. He speaks to them humbly by referring to himself as “a fellow elder” and not as their master.
- He encourages the shepherds to lead by example without looking at any personal gain from their ministry.
- He encourages them to be gentle with the flock for the sake of Christ the Lord.



### Submit to God, Resist the Devil (1 Peter 5:5-11)

- St. Peter encourages young people to submit to their shepherds and those who care for their souls encouraging them to love, cooperate, and submit.
- He commands us to put our trust in the Lord and His power, all our needs, and challenges.
- He invites us to be watchful, vigilant, and resist the evil who is our enemy, the devil, and tries to bring us down at any moment.
- He reminds us of the heavenly reward for those who preserve in their spiritual struggle.

### Farewell and Peace (1 Peter 5:12-13)

- Silvanus (or Silas) (Acts 15:22) accompanied St. Paul on his second missionary trip (Acts 15:40)
- He wrote this letter for St. Peter because he was fluent in Greek and was commended by St. Peter for his faithfulness.
- St. Peter calls St. Mark the Apostle “My Son” due to the age difference between them and St. Peter’s wife was the cousin of St. Mark’s father.
- St. Peter concludes his epistle by sending peace to all the believers.

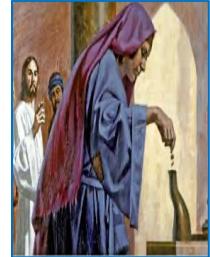


# Giving

## The Widow's Two Mites

**“And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, “Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.” (Luke 21:1-4)**

In the Holy Bible, we read about a widow that our Lord Jesus Christ observed in the temple while He was with His disciples. They saw many rich men proudly putting a lot of money in the donation tray/box, while a poor widow donated the only two mites that she had, leaving her with nothing. The Lord commended her over all the others.



### **Giving is a Commandment**

- Giving is one of God's early commandments to mankind
- Before the law was given Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek

**“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave him a tithe of all.” (Genesis 14:18-19)**
- Jacob also made a vow and gave tithes

**“Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, ... I will surely give a tenth to You.” (Genesis 28: 20-22)**
- Later we see that tithes and firstfruits were introduced as part of the law

**“The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God” (Exodus 34:26)**

**“And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord.” (Leviticus 27:30)**

**“You shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother” (Deuteronomy 15:8)**
- Many other examples can be found in the books of Wisdom as well

**“Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase” (Proverbs 3:9)**
- A commandment with a steep consequence

**“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” (Malachi 3:8-10)**

**Notice here the Lord describing those who do not offer their tithes as robbers of Him. This is also the only commandment where the Lord says, “do it and try Me!”**

## Why almsgiving?

In the New Testament, our Lord renewed this commandment while explaining the reason behind it.

### 1. Giving is an act of mercy; we give out of our love to God

- **“for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in” (Matthew 25:35)**
- **“He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given” (Proverbs 19:17)**
- By giving our tithes and first fruits, we show how much we love the Lord over our possessions and comfort. It might be easy for me to give some time to the Lord but very hard to give from my money!

### 2. When we give to the Lord we actually receive more than we give

**“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38)**

### 3. Giving brings blessings

St. Paul also reminded us in the book of Acts with the words of the Lord Jesus, **“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)**

## Types of Giving

### 1. Tithes

- Tithes are the tenth of everything we have (i.e. income, time, effort, energy, etc...)
- The Lord’s portion must be set aside first
- The fathers also explained that tithes are the bare minimum of your giving. The Lord said, **“Give to him who asks you” (Matthew 5:42)**, meaning it is limitless.



*Tithes and offerings*

### 2. First fruits

- The first fruits are the first of everything you own; we see how Abel gave to the Lord the firstborn of his flock.
- The commandment that God gave in Exodus is to dedicate any first born or first fruit to the Lord: first child, first crop, first born of the cattle, everything!
- This is applied to us today also (i.e. your first paycheck, your first bonus, your first profit share, your first production of anything)

### 3. Vows

- Vows are different from tithes and first fruits; you vow to offer something to the Lord when He helps you with a certain problem or challenge, etc.
- It is very important that when we vow something to the Lord, we fulfill this vow

**“When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed— Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.” (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5)**

- Vows can be of materialistic nature (money, offering, etc...) or someone may vow their life to the service (priesthood) or vow of celibacy (monks and nuns).
- It is also important to exercise wisdom when we vow something to the Lord and be sure that we are able to pay it or do it **“Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.” (Ecclesiastes 5:2)**

The fathers advise that before vowing hastily to the Lord, put your request before Him, tell Him, **“this is what I need O Lord, if You see it beneficial for my life and my salvation, grant it to me and help me accomplish Your will in my life.”**

## Offerings

- Offerings are things we offer to the Lord as a sign of appreciation and gratitude. The Church lists all kinds of offerings in the litany of the oblations: oil, incense, coverings, reading books, altar vessels, etc. We ask God to remember those who desire to offer to Him but have none.
- It is advised when we desire to bring offerings to the church to ask for the needs of the church so you can bring what is beneficial and useful.
- Similarly, when you are serving, when you buy supplies for your service it is considered offerings to the Lord.



### It is important to note two things as we conclude this section:

1. All kinds of giving can be done in a materialistic and non-materialistic form, but one does not fulfill the other; so I cannot say I can't pay my tithes (from my income) but I will give the tithes of my time instead. You need to tithe both your time and money.
2. All kinds of giving do not replace each other; I cannot say I will give my first fruits but not tithes, or I will offer supplies to the church but not give first fruits, etc.

## Blessings of Giving

### 1. Inherit the kingdom of heaven

The Lord Jesus Christ advised us to focus on the heavenly treasure, not the earthly one; the more we give on earth, the more we gain in heaven. **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (Matthew 6:19-20)**



### 2. It will not be forgotten

God never forgets a generous giver; even when days and years have passed your generous attitude towards the Lord will never be forgotten. You will see the blessings even after many years.

**“Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days.” (Ecclesiastes 11:1)**

### 3. It helps us in our life

- It helps us in our life challenges and troubles; the Lord sees your love and sacrifice and helps in the day of trouble.
- Psalm 41 starts with **“Blessed is he who considers the poor; The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.”** During the Great Lent, we sing this to remind us about the importance of giving.

### 4. Abundant blessings

As we mentioned previously, the Lord Jesus Christ explained that the more we give, the more blessings we gain in our lives. We actually benefit more when we give. Look at the example of the widow who hosted Elijah. **“He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” (2 Corinthians 9:6)**

## How should we give?

The Lord Jesus Christ observed how those who gave offerings in the temple offered and did not look at how much they offered. God cares about our attitude while giving rather than the quantity of giving. He looks at the giver rather than the giving.

### 1. Know that you are giving back

When you give to the Lord, keep in your heart and mind that you are only giving some back from what God already gave you; He is the one who gave you the money, health, time, and energy. Say with King David, **“For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You.” (1 Chronicles 29:14)**

## 2. With a spirit of love

**“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)**

- Love should be the moving factor for anything we give to the Lord; whether it is money, gifts, time, effort, or energy.
- Out of my love for my church, when I see there is a need for something, I donate to that cause.
- Out of my love for those who I am serving, I buy things and spend time and effort preparing, etc...  
**“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:18)**



## 3. Willingly

- The acceptable giving is that which is done willingly without compulsion or while complaining. For example, I finally got a job and received my first paycheck and I am very excited! But this money does not belong to me, it belongs to the Lord. Even if I really need the money, I am happily giving it to the Lord, to whom it belongs.
- See what St. Paul said about the churches in Macedonia: **“that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.” (2 Corinthians 8:2)** Even though they were in need, they still gave willingly.

**“It happens with most people that they give indeed, but they do not do so freely and readily, which is a greater and more perfect thing than the mere act of offering itself.”**

**St. Gregory the Theologian**

## 4. With Self-denial

- Present your offerings to the Lord in humility and secretly (without a prideful attitude)  
**“Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.” (Read Matthew 6:1-4)**
- The Lord here does not prevent us from giving in front of people, but He is commanding us not to give for the sake of vainglory.

## 5. Generously

- When we give to the Lord, we do not do it by nickel and dime. We give to Him generously following His own example **“who gives to all liberally and without reproach” (James 1:5)**
- Again, following the example of the churches in Macedonia St. Paul says, **“And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” (Read 2 Corinthians 8:3-5)**

## 6. Joyfully

**“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)**

**“It is a righteous thing to give of your bread, and of those things which are necessary for the support of man's life.” St. Gregory the Wonderworker**

## 7. From a Godly source

- The Church canons teach us that the Church does not accept offerings from an unlawful or an ungodly source (i.e. gambling, drugs, cheating, etc...)
- God does not accept offerings from gains out of sin: **“God abominates and refuses those alms which is furnished to him at the cost of another’s tears.” St. Augustine**

# My Relationships

In our journey on earth, we form relationships; these relationships affect the present and future of each of us, and some may even affect our eternal life!

There are three aspects of relationships that we need to pay attention to:

1. My relationship with thoughts
2. My relationship with others
3. My relationship with materialistic things

## My Relationship with Thoughts

### What is a thought?

A thought is an idea or opinion produced by thinking or occurring suddenly in the mind. When I think about something, I can be moved by that thought. Thoughts are often the last thing that occurs before actions. Therefore, thoughts are the foundation of actions and building habits.

It is good to think about various things, especially when we think about our life and how to live it. Like a person who puts in his mind to live according to God's commandments and strives in his life to fulfill that thought, it becomes a good strategy for his life. On the contrary, if someone has corrupt thoughts they can lead him to perish.



### Thoughts are a Reflection of One's Heart

It is important to watch one's thoughts as they represent a true reflection of the heart. The importance of thoughts does not only come from the actions they lead to but also because they reflect one's inner conscience. **"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."** (Luke 6:45).

The origin of any thought is the heart. In the Coptic language, the word "Ⲓⲏⲧ" means both heart and thought at the same time. Therefore, the heart that is filled with the love of God leads to holy and positive thoughts.

### Thoughts Control Boundaries

Since my thoughts affect my emotions, it means that they also affect my behavior and the way I set boundaries in my relationships with others.

### The Magnitude of Thoughts

- Anything we do begins with a thought; if you decide to pray, you think about it first. If you decide to forgive someone, you think about it. All virtues and all sins start with thoughts. Many are blessed with holy thoughts, and many people are troubled by their thoughts.
- We can be judged by many sins we did not commit by action but committed by our thoughts. They are the origin of actions, lusts, anger, love of money, and much more. Therefore, we must always review our thoughts and expose them to the father of confession.

### Thoughts are the Core of Man

When the thoughts are holy, the senses and the actions will be holy. This means that one's destiny is directly connected with his/her thoughts. In the Old Testament, God was dealing with people in their spiritual infancy. He put a lot of emphasis on the sins of the actions, what to do and what not to do. However, in the New Testament our Lord Jesus wanted to elevate us and make us live virtuous lives. He put emphasis not only on the actions, but also the internal and unspoken thoughts. He said: **"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28)** Notice here, that the Lord Jesus Christ said, "in his heart". We need to be watchful with our thoughts as the famous quote says, "Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny."

### The Dangers of the Idle Mind

The fathers of the Church often warned us of the dangers of the idle mind. The idle mind is when we are not keeping ourselves occupied with school, work, service, or anything productive. Satan uses this opportunity to fight you with boredom and little by little, you may fall into the nets of sin.

To overcome the idle mind, we must keep ourselves occupied with good things all the time; fill your downtime with reading, listening to hymns and liturgies, learning a new craft, and playing sports. Develop yourself in your free time rather than infinitely scrolling through social media threads and opening the door of sin to yourself.



**Discussion question:** What is the difference between a spiritual war on thoughts and falling in sin with your thoughts?

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## Different Ways of Thinking

There are a variety of ways of thinking among people. We will focus on two of them: positive and negative ways of thinking

- Negative thoughts: those who are fought with negative thoughts often have a negative attitude toward everything. They evaluate situations from a negative perspective. The upbringing of every individual has an impact on their general perception of life's various situations.
- Even history shows that people had an understanding of human and scientific limitations that was proven wrong by individuals who pushed the limits and introduced the world to life-changing inventions and accomplishments.

**Discussion question:** What are the reasons behind negative perceptions or negative interpretations?

**Activity:** Read Numbers 13 and discuss the people who had negative perceptions. Then read Luke 15 and discuss how having a positive attitude affects one's life. Fill in the boxes below.

Negative Perception	Positive Perception	Holy Bible Perception
I am not smart	I have intelligence	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>(Daniel 2:___)</p>
		<p>"Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, and I have loved you, Therefore I will give men for you, and people for your life" (Isaiah 43:4)</p>
I am a failure	I can succeed	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>(Nehemiah 2:___)</p>
		<p>"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13)</p>
I am scared	I am courageous	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>(Jeremiah 1:___)</p>
		<p>"Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of his countenance." (Psalm 42:5)</p>
		<p>"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)</p>

### How can I acquire the thought of Christ (holy thoughts)?

1. **Means of Grace, prayer, living the sacramental life** of the Church by participating in the sacraments which fills you with the Holy Spirit and abide in Christ and Him in you
2. **The Holy Bible: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Colossians 3:16)**
3. **Spiritual readings** enrich the mind with holy thoughts and give you the opportunity to learn and gain wisdom from the fathers of the Church.
4. **Daily self-examination:** Self-examination helps you be alert to the fights of the devil and helps you to offer daily repentance and confession to the Lord.
5. **Consistent confessions:** Your father of confession can identify certain sins that you may not know about yourself. With the guidance of the spiritual father and being his disciple, you can learn to keep your thoughts holy and how to stop bad thoughts.



### My Relationship with Others

#### Discussion questions:

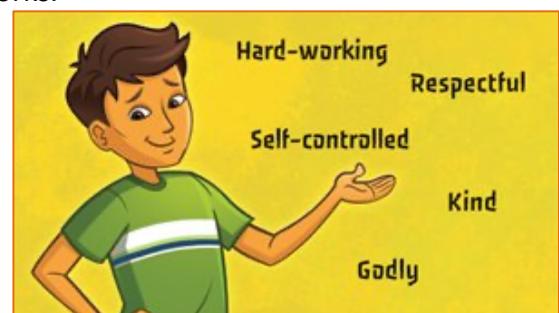
- How can we direct our relationships with others so that they can lead us to the kingdom of God?
- How can we establish wise relationships and win everyone without being negatively influenced by anyone?

- Your choice of friendships today has an impact on your present and your future. **“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20)**
- The Holy Bible shows a number of people whose friendships were a source of either: **Success** (1 Samuel 19) or **Failure** (1 Kings 12)

**Therefore, we must pay attention to our friendships!**

#### Healthy Friendships:

1. A healthy friendship is established based on brotherly love between individuals who are close in age, hobbies, culture, and environment.
2. Healthy friendships are those which encourage you to grow spiritually and help you have a positive attitude in life.
3. It is important to value your parents’ opinion of your friendships as they have a lot of life experience and a vision for healthy and harmful relationships.
4. Keep in mind that while you are friends with others, you have your own unique personality. Do not blindly follow others but be a leader in good works.
5. Put God in the midst of all your relationships, avoiding relationships that make you lose your holiness and encourage you to disobey God’s commandments.
6. Avoid dependency on others where all your decisions are tied to their actions and decisions.



## Characteristics of Successful Friendships

1. **Mutual giving:** Any healthy relationship must be built on giving not taking. Each one must be able to sacrifice for his/her friends.
2. **Solid despite challenges:** True friends are the ones who stand by you at the time of tribulation.
3. **Not all friendships are the same:** Many people tend to use the term “friend” loosely. We need to differentiate between who would be considered a friend, a classmate, a coworker, or an acquaintance and the amount of influence each has on us.
4. **True friendship cannot be between the two of the opposite sex:** Since true friendship requires openness and sharing of thoughts and emotions, then true successful friendships cannot be with the opposite sex. Forming friendships with the opposite sex will either be shallow in nature or turn into a romantic relationship which is inappropriate at this stage of life.

5. **True friendships cannot be with non-believers**

The Holy Bible is our source of truth and the foundation of our moral values. Those who do not believe in the Bible do not have the same moral compass as believers. Establishing deep relationships with non-believers may have a deep impact on our moral values and negatively influence our thoughts.



**“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14)**

**Remember, that being careful in our relationships does not contradict our love for everyone.**

### What would you do?

Discuss with your servant the following scenarios:

1. A friend from school invites you to a dance party
2. Your friends are inviting you to a BBQ during the Great Fast
3. One of your friends sends you inappropriate memes
4. A classmate who is an atheist invites you to a sleepover
5. Someone sends you a DM on social media who seems really genuine in his/her message

### Principles of successful friendships from the Wisdom of Sirach

**Activity:** Find and read the verses below, what are the principles of successful friendships?

Sirach 22:25 \_\_\_\_\_ Sirach 19:13-18 \_\_\_\_\_ Sirach 27:24 \_\_\_\_\_  
Sirach 22:26-27 \_\_\_\_\_ Sirach 7:20 \_\_\_\_\_ Sirach 19:7-10 \_\_\_\_\_

### My Relationship with Materialistic Things

The Holy Bible established for us some principles when it comes to our relationship with materialistic things. Discuss these principles with your servant:

- **“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” (1 Corinthians 6:12)**
- **“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)**

# Abba Pachomius

Synaxarion of the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the Coptic Month of Pashons 14 (May 22)

## Monasticism (Seclusion and Communal)

- **The Great Abba Anthony is the father of all the monks;** he was the first pioneer of the monastic movement in Egypt and the whole world. Many became his disciples who lived in seclusion, such as anchorites in cells or caves in the mountains.
- **Abba Pachomius is the father of communal monasticism;** he is called the **Father of the Kenonia.** He is one of the most prominent fathers in the history of our Coptic Orthodox Church. His life was full of virtues, and he fulfilled God's calling in his life in all purity and righteousness. He was the first father to establish a monastery which includes a group of monks living a communal life in prayers and worship.



## Childhood and Early Life of St. Pachomius

St. Pachomius was born in upper Egypt to non-believing parents around the year 292 A.D. Since his early childhood, he rejected the idols and refused to participate in their worship practices. His parents took him as a child to offer him as a sacrifice to the idols. When the idols' priest saw him, he cried out saying, *"Remove the enemy of our gods from here."*

One time as a youth, he carried food to some shepherds and stayed with them. One of the shepherds had two daughters. One of his daughters asked St. Pachomius to fall into sin with her, and he replied, *"leave me alone, do not let me fall into this sin"* and he ran away from that place blameless.

## Becoming a Christian

St. Pachomius joined the army and followed some of his colleagues to form a revolution against the emperor. They reached a city called "Latopoles" (Asna) where they were surprised by the people of that city who offered them plenty of food joyfully and welcomed them to their homes. When they asked the people for the reason behind their outstanding hospitality, they said it was for the sake of the Lord of heaven, who commanded them to love everyone.

In the morning, St. Pachomius walked around the city mesmerized by its people and their virtuous traits, but that was only the beginning. He stopped at the courthouse and witnessed a judge who was trying to resolve a dispute between two men. One of them bought land from the other and later found a treasure box buried in it. The first (who bought the land) argued that the treasure should go to the original owner of the land, while the second (who sold the land) argued that he sold the land with everything in it, so the new owner should keep the treasure.

St. Pachomius was perplexed by the behavior of the people who live in that Christian city. He wondered if they "Could they be heavenly humans? Or earthly angels?". St. Pachomius then put in his heart that he will live a life like them, uniting with the One true God and offering love to everyone.

A few years later, he established **communal monasticism**.

## St. Pachomius and St. Palamon

The whole village loved St. Pachomius but his heart was occupied with the desire to consecrate his life to the Lord, where the person leaves all to get close to the One. He heard about a righteous monk who lived in a desert close to the village, named Abba Palamon. He went and asked to become his disciple. Abba Palamon showed St. Pachomius how hard the monastic life is and gave him some spiritual exercises to do at home.

The Lord strengthened the heart of St. Pachomius. He was accepted by Abba Palamon to become his disciple. Abba Palamon loved St. Pachomius so much and took him as a spiritual son. St. Pachomius showed a great deal of obedience, strict asceticism, and love of worship.

### Establishing the Communal System

Abba Pachomius was joyful in his anchoritic monastic life and enjoyed God's marvelous work in his life through his spiritual father Abba Palamon. However, he felt sorry when he knew that many desired to live a monastic life but cannot endure the toughness of the life of solitude. He was consistently praying for them.

One day an angel of the Lord appeared to him and asked him to establish a monastery and gave him a list of basic instructions for the monastic communal life, which were easy for many to follow. Abba Pachomius told his father Abba Palamon about his encounter with the angel. Abba Palamon was joyful, and he blessed this new step. Even though he was an old man, he did not mind Abba Pachomius establishing a new monastic system. He accompanied Abba Pachomius to establish the monastery and asked him to go back to his cave in the mountain so they can meet once a year. Abba Palamon departed shortly after.

Abba Pachomius established the first monastery around the year 318 A.D. and the Lord gave him grace in the eyes of many who came and wanted to join the monastery. Shortly after, he established one monastery after the other until he had established over 10 monasteries with over 1500 monks.

His older brother John became a monk under his guidance and helped him in establishing the communal system. His sister also came to him and he encouraged her to become a nun. He established a convent with her on the other side of the Nile, which had over 250 nuns under her guidance.

### Highlights of the Communal System

- By the grace of God, the communal monastic system became widely popular.
- Abba Pachomius from his humility did not want to be ordained a priest; when he heard that Pope Athanasius was visiting, he left the monastery lest the Pope would ordain him. Pope Athanasius told Abba Pachomius' disciples to comfort him and assured them that he will respect his will and not ordain him a priest, but he wanted to take his blessing. Abba Pachomius received Pope Athanasius with abundant joy giving in himself a true example of the monastic who does not desire any priestly order.
- The "Pachomian" monastic order was suitable for many; the monastic would eat only twice per day as well as participate in communal prayers with some elements of handiwork depending on his talent.
- For every monastic community, an abbot was placed who was responsible for the community spiritually and financially.
- Handiwork was an integral part of the communal monastic life, and the monasteries were open to all of those who desire to live a monastic life, including even non-Egyptians like Greeks and Romans.
- The Church appreciated the communal system established by Abba Pachomius and he was praised by Abba Anthony for his great work and described it as a gift from God.
- The biography of Abba Pachomius and the basic principles of communal monasticism were preserved for us in more than one language and dialect (i.e. Coptic, Greek, etc.).



## Abba Pachomius' Character

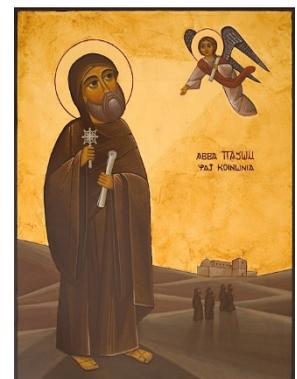
- Abba Pachomius was known to have a unique **leadership** personality which gathered thousands of monks in various monasteries, near and far, caring for them with a spirit of love and guidance, watching for the spiritual growth and personal salvation of every one of them.
- He was also known for his **humble and meek** personality.
  - When some of the brothers asked him if he had seen a vision before, he said *"I am joyful when I see a meek brother, for in him God dwells."*
  - The devil appeared to Abba Pachomius in the image of Christ, with humility, he said, *"I desire to see the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenly kingdom rather than on earth."* The devil immediately vanished before him like smoke.
- Although Abba Pachomius was known for his sincere **love and longsuffering** for his spiritual children, he was also known for his **firmness in guidance and correction**.

One time he asked the brother responsible for the kitchen at the monastery to cook the meals for the fathers the monks and the brothers in the monastery, but he didn't. A few months later, a novice told Abba Pachomius that he hadn't been served any cooked food for a long time. Abba Pachomius went to the brother responsible for the kitchen and asked him why he hadn't been cooking the food. The brother said that when he cooked the meals the monks did not eat them due to their high asceticism, so he stopped cooking and started making baskets instead. Abba Pachomius asked him to bring all the baskets he made, and he did so. He then ordered for all the baskets to be burned before all the monks to teach them a lesson on the importance of obedience. He said: *"I would rather you cook every day and the food spoils than one of your new brothers stumble for not finding anything to eat."*



## Sayings of Abba Pachomius:

1. Do not let your heart forget the Lord. Be watchful lest your enemy overcomes you.
2. Do not delay your repentance lest your hour may come while you are not ready.
3. Listen to your spiritual father and accept correction. Love those who rebuke you in the fear of the Lord. Be like Isaac in his obedience.
4. Keep the purity of your body and the peace of your heart.
5. Fight against all evil thoughts so that you may receive the Lord's promises.
6. Let your heart be like a lion's heart, saying with St. Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"
7. Keep yourself from prideful thoughts which make you despise your brethren.
8. Do not despise or judge anyone, for judgment comes from a prideful heart.
9. Make peace with your brethren so that the Lord may dwell in your heart.
10. The humble person sees everyone better than himself.
11. Be consistent with your fasting and prayer without boredom; be patient through tribulations until the Lord lifts them up from you.
12. Be patient and persevere, for the saints were patient and received the Lord's promises.
13. My son, if you depend on God, He will become your refuge and will save you from all hardships.



# Alternative Lifestyle

- The practice of homosexuality and the acceptance of it as an alternative lifestyle is becoming widely prevalent in our society nowadays. Nearly every day we read or hear more people, companies, and organizations are accepting homosexuality as normal behavior.
- More ordinances are being passed to grant homosexuals equal rights to practice and promote their lifestyle.
- Unfortunately, even among Christians, many are supporting and encouraging this lifestyle by their acceptance. Some “churches” are calling themselves a “Gay church” and some denominations have ordained priests who are homosexual, even among the mainstream denominations.
- Some churches claim that the spirit of God led them to accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle. God is not an author of confusion! It is impossible for God to say in the scriptures that homosexuality is a sin and then reveal to others that homosexuality is not a sin.
- In fact, it is not the Spirit of God who revealed this “alternative truth” that homosexuality is not a sin but rather it is the human spirit that yielded to the societal pressure.

## What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

### • First, let us establish some fundamentals:

- The truth does not change. There are no versions of the truth. Anything that varies from the truth is considered an opinion.
- As Christians, the word of God is the foundation of our truth. The Lord Jesus Christ said, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life”**.
- The word of God and His commandments also will be the measure by which all will be judged.

### • Evidence from the Old Testament

- Homosexuality was clearly considered a sin in the Old Testament. In the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, God was angry with them, and He burned down that city because of homosexuality.
- Some argue that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was not homosexuality but lack of hospitality and that their homosexuality was only a sin when it was done outside of marriage.
- 2 Peter 2: 6-7 clarifies that this was not the case, **“and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked.”**
- And Jude 1:7 **“as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”**
- Homosexual conduct was considered a capital crime, under the law of Moses.



**“If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman,  
both of them have committed an abomination.” (Leviticus 20:13)**

**“And You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22)**

### • Evidence from the New Testament

The Lord talked about the people who rejected Him. He said that the people of Sodom will be more tolerable, but they will still be condemned more than other cities. **“But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.” (Luke 10:12)**

In Luke 17:28, **“Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;”** When God talked about the days of Noah, He said they were married and given in marriage, but in the day of Lot, God talked about those who were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, and building, meaning that God doesn’t accept that homosexuality would be called marriage.

- Luke 17:29, **“on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.”** These verses show that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is a sin of homosexuality.
- In Romans 1:18 **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,”** Those who are saying homosexuality is not a sin and is an alternative lifestyle are suppressing the truth.
- **“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)**

### **Why does the Church not accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle?**

- First let us make a distinction between “homosexuality” as a sin condemned by God, and the “homosexual” as a person who is struggling with same-sex attraction and relationships.
- We must also distinguish between a person who acknowledges homosexuality as a sin, is struggling to overcome it and offers sincere repentance, and another who is advocating for that lifestyle, resisting the word of God, and rejecting the correction of the Church.
- The Church accepts homosexuals but does not accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle. Therefore, the Church tolerates the sinner but not the sin. It is from the Church’s love for everyone that she declares the truth that homosexuality is a sinful lifestyle and puts one’s salvation at high risk.
- Unfortunately, often we see those who advocate for homosexuality also share atheistic ideas and beliefs. Once a person denies the existence of God, he/she denies the authority of the scriptures. Then homosexuality – in their eyes- can be an alternative lifestyle.

### **Genetic or Environmental?**

- Many of those who accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle claim that homosexuality is genetic; they claim that “God created them that way” which is far from the truth. Until today, there is not one medically approved research that supports that homosexuality is genetic.
- How can God create something that contradicts His own plan for humanity and design for human sexuality? God does not contradict Himself.
- On the contrary, there are **environmental factors** that have a negative effect on the development of individuals, which contributes to the development of a predisposition towards homosexuality.
  - **Lack of adequate parental relationship:** Rocky child/parent relationships may lead children to have same-sex attraction.
  - **Permissive childhood training:** Permissive parents lack any form of discipline towards their children, defending even the wrongdoing of their children. This contributes to the child’s lack of tolerance and acceptance of correction.
  - **Insecurity of social identity:** Some parents do not deal with their children properly according to their gender; allowing boys to have long hair, try on makeup, etc. which causes the boy to be confused about his social identity and vice versa.

### ▪ Childhood sexual trauma

- Being exposed to sexual ideas or actions from a young age
- Exposing children to alternative sexuality in schools
- It is important for parents to maintain an open line of communication with their children's daily life to offer adequate support to them when needed.

### ▪ Early interest in sex

- Allowing children access to a smartphone from an early age (early elementary) without parental control puts them at risk of being exposed to pornographic and over-sexualized content, leading to a multitude of sins related to sexual immorality.
- Early sexual experiences with friends will, later on, lead to getting involved in pleasurable sins and opens the door to sexual deviation.

The above-mentioned factors do not turn an individual homosexual automatically, but rather act as factors that influence one's attitude toward sex and sexuality to be more carnal rather than spiritual.

## The Dangers of Homosexuality

### Health Problems

- Most of those who adopt homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle have multiple sexual partners.
- Studies also show that homosexuals are more likely to be sexually active and have concurrent partners at an earlier age than heterosexuals.
- The CDC reports an all-time high cases of STDs and HIV, especially among the LGBTQ+ community.

**Emotional Problems:** By far the most severe consequence of multiple relationships is loneliness in the absence of Godly monogamous relationships within the confines of matrimony. Loneliness also significantly increases as individuals get older without a lifelong partner and children, missing the true meaning of family as God intended it.

**Mental Problems:** Some international studies reported various mental disorders significantly occurring among homosexuals, including anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, alcoholism, and drug dependence.



### Is it possible to overcome homosexuality?

- God will not give us a commandment knowing that it is impossible to follow.
- We recognize that there is a great deal of difficulty for those dealing with the sin of homosexuality to repent. However, through the grace of God, everything is possible! As St. Paul said, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)** Through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, this sin **WILL** be forgiven and this person **WILL** be sanctified.
- The Church offers love, acceptance, support, and prayers to those who are willing to repent and pursue a life of holiness.

### How can we as Christians react to this issue?

- We ought to speak the truth with love and out of love **“But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head- Christ-” (Ephesians 4:15)**
- Correct (when possible) with humility and not with a prideful or condescending attitude. **“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth” (2 Timothy 2: 24-26)**
- Pray for those who are struggling with same-sex attraction for God to fill them with His grace and empower them to fight the good fight and offer true and sincere repentance.

Adapted from a lecture titled "Homosexuality" By His Grace Bishop Youssef in the Faith, Truth, & Life Convention - June 2021 Holmdel, NJ

# Memorization

**I. “Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete.  
Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace;  
and the God of love and peace will be with you.”  
(2 Corinthians 13:11)**

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

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, “Behold, the bridegroom is coming; arise and go out to meet him.” Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said unto the wise, “Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” But the wise answered, saying, “No, lest there should not be enough for us and you, but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.” And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding, and the door was shut. Afterward, the other virgins came also, saying, “Lord, Lord, open to us.

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

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



### III. Litanies of the First Watch of the Midnight Hour of the Agpeya

1. Behold, the Bridegroom is coming at midnight, blessed is the servant whom He finds watching. But he whom He finds sleeping is unworthy of going with Him. Therefore, take heed, O my soul, that you may not fall into deep sleep, and then be cast out of the kingdom. But watch and cry out, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy are You, O God, for the sake of the Theotokos, have mercy on us."
2. O my soul, be mindful of that awesome day, and wake up and light your lamp with the oil of joy, for you do not know when the voice will call upon you, saying, "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming." So, take heed, my soul, not to fall asleep, lest you stand outside knocking like the five foolish virgins. But watch, entreating that you may meet Christ the Lord with rich oil, and He may grant you the wedding of His true and heavenly glory.
3. You are the rampart of our salvation, O Theotokos the Virgin, the mighty and impregnable fortress. Abolish the counsel of the adversaries, and transform the sorrow of your servants into joy. Fortify our city (monastery), defend our kings (governors), and intercede for the peace of the world, for you are our hope, O Theotokos.
4. O heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who is present in all places and fills all, the treasury of good things and the Life-Giver, graciously come, and dwell in us and purify us from all defilement, O Good One, and save our souls.
5. Just as You were with Your disciples, O Savior, and gave them peace, graciously come also and be with us, and grant us Your peace, and save us, and deliver our souls.
6. Whenever we stand in Your holy sanctuary, we are considered standing in heaven. O Theotokos, you are the gate of heaven; open for us the gate of mercy.

### IV. Sayings of the Church Fathers

1. "Holy men ask for peace, not only that which dwells among men in mutual dealings, but that which belongs to ourselves. For oftentimes we wage war in our hearts and are disturbed even when no one troubles us; bad desires also frequently rise up against us." St. John Chrysostom
2. "In truth we should convey the message of peace, and that our very first entrance in any place be attended with the blessing of peace." St. Ambrose of Milan
3. "Wisdom corresponds to the peacemakers, in whom all things are now brought into order, and no passion is in a state of rebellion against reason, but all things together obey the spirit of man, while he himself also obeys God" St. Augustine
4. "To the peacemakers the likeness of God is given, as being perfectly wise, and formed after the image of God by means of the regeneration of the renewed man." St. Augustine

# Coptic



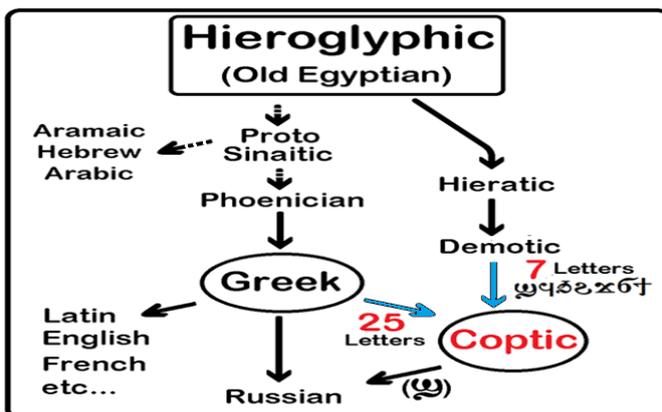
Our Lord spent about four years in Egypt as a baby. He spoke to the people of Egypt in their language, which was Coptic at that time.

## THE COPTIC ALPHABET

	 Alpha A	 Veeta B, V	 Gamma G, N, Gh	 Delta D, Th (the)	
 Eyy E	 Number 6 So-oo The number 6 <small>Not a true letter</small>	 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

**ιω**    Wash

**ιου**    Sea

( **φιου**    The Sea )

**ιωτ**    Father

( **φιωτ**    The Father )

**ωικ**    Bread

( **πωικ**    The Bread )

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

**οιι**    (owwi) such as in **νιφιοιι**

**οια**    (owwa) such as in **εθοιαβ**

**οιη**    (owwee) such as in **οιηβ**

ночри

hi

ночри пенлих

Hi Sayedna

ночри пеніот

Hi Abouna

оухаи



Bye

оухаи  
ден п̆боис

Bye  
(in the Lord)

## The possessive Pronouns (1)

	For s.m. nouns e.g. Father ( <b>ΙΟΥΤ</b> )	For s.f. nouns e.g. Mother ( <b>ΜΑΥ</b> )	For plural nouns e.g. Books ( <b>ΒΟΥΜ</b> )
	<b>Π</b>	<b>Τ</b>	<b>Η</b>
My	<b>ΠΑΙΟΥΤ</b> My father	<b>ΤΑΜΑΥ</b> My mother	<b>ΗΑΒΟΥΜ</b> My books
Our	<b>ΠΕΗΙΟΥΤ</b> Our father	<b>ΤΕΗΜΑΥ</b> Our mother	<b>ΗΕΗΒΟΥΜ</b> Our books

Practice with some words **MY OUR**

Masculine		Feminine		Plural	
<b>ΝΟΥΤ</b>	God	<b>ΒΟΥΗ</b>	Sister	<b>ΜΑΥ</b>	Mothers
<b>ΒΙΚ</b>	Bread	<b>ΒΟΥΜ</b>	Power	<b>ΙΟΥΤ</b>	Fathers
<b>ΒΟΥΣ</b>	Lord	<b>ΒΟΥΠΗ</b>	Daughter	<b>ΒΟΥΗΟΥ</b>	Brothers
<b>ΒΟΥΜ</b>	Book	<b>ΒΑΚΗ</b>	City	<b>ΒΟΥΗ</b>	Sisters
<b>ΒΟΥΗ</b>	Brother				

## The possessive Pronouns (2)

	For s.m. nouns e.g. Father ( <b>ΙΟΥΤ</b> )	For s.f. nouns e.g. Mother ( <b>ΜΑΥ</b> )	For plural nouns e.g. Books ( <b>ΒΟΥΜ</b> )
	<b>Π</b>	<b>Τ</b>	<b>Η</b>
Your (s.m.)	<b>ΠΕΚΙΟΥΤ</b> Your father	<b>ΤΕΚΜΑΥ</b> Your mother	<b>ΗΕΚΒΟΥΜ</b> Your books
Your (s.f.)	<b>ΠΕΙΟΥΤ</b> Your father	<b>ΤΕΜΑΥ</b> Your mother	<b>ΗΕΒΟΥΜ</b> Your books
Your (pl.)	<b>ΠΕΤΕΗΙΟΥΤ</b> Your father	<b>ΤΕΤΕΗΜΑΥ</b> Your mother	<b>ΗΕΤΕΗΒΟΥΜ</b> Your books

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

Masculine		Feminine		Plural	
<b>ΝΟΥΤ</b>	God	<b>ΒΟΥΗ</b>	Sister	<b>ΜΑΥ</b>	Mothers
<b>ΒΙΚ</b>	Bread	<b>ΒΟΥΜ</b>	Power	<b>ΙΟΥΤ</b>	Fathers
<b>ΒΟΥΣ</b>	Lord	<b>ΒΟΥΠΗ</b>	Daughter	<b>ΒΟΥΗΟΥ</b>	Brothers
<b>ΒΟΥΜ</b>	Book	<b>ΒΑΚΗ</b>	City	<b>ΒΟΥΗ</b>	Sisters
<b>ΒΟΥΗ</b>	Brother				

## The possessive Pronouns (3)

	For s.m. nouns e.g. Father ( <b>ΙΟΥΤ</b> )	For s.f. nouns e.g. Mother ( <b>ΜΑΥ</b> )	For plural nouns e.g. Books ( <b>ΒΟΥΜ</b> )
	<b>Π</b>	<b>Τ</b>	<b>Η</b>
His	<b>ΠΕΚΙΟΥΤ</b> His father	<b>ΤΕΚΜΑΥ</b> His mother	<b>ΗΕΚΒΟΥΜ</b> His books
Her	<b>ΠΕΙΟΥΤ</b> Her father	<b>ΤΕΜΑΥ</b> Her mother	<b>ΗΕΒΟΥΜ</b> Her books
Their	<b>ΠΟΥΟΥΤ</b> Their father	<b>ΤΟΥΜΑΥ</b> Their mother	<b>ΗΟΥΒΟΥΜ</b> Their books

Practice with some words **His Her Their**

Masculine		Feminine		Plural	
<b>ΝΟΥΤ</b>	God	<b>ΒΟΥΗ</b>	Sister	<b>ΜΑΥ</b>	Mothers
<b>ΒΙΚ</b>	Bread	<b>ΒΟΥΜ</b>	Power	<b>ΙΟΥΤ</b>	Fathers
<b>ΒΟΥΣ</b>	Lord	<b>ΒΟΥΠΗ</b>	Daughter	<b>ΒΟΥΗΟΥ</b>	Brothers
<b>ΒΟΥΜ</b>	Book	<b>ΒΑΚΗ</b>	City	<b>ΒΟΥΗ</b>	Sisters
<b>ΒΟΥΗ</b>	Brother				

## Present Tense

	1 <sup>st</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person
(s.m.)	†	κ̂(χ) you	ὅ he
(s.f.)		τε you	ς̂ she
(pl)	τεν we	τετεν you	ce they

## Negative of Present Tense ἀν or ἢ...ἀν

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

	1 <sup>st</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person
(s.m.)	†ὠληλ I pray	κ̂ὠληλ You pray	ὅὠληλ He prays
(s.f.)		τεὠληλ You pray	ς̂ὠληλ She prays
(pl)	τενὠληλ We pray	τετενὠληλ You pray	ceὠληλ They pray

Present Tense	Negative of the present Tense	
†ὠληλ I pray	†ὠληλ ἀν I do not pray	ἢ†ὠληλ ἀν I do not pray
ceὠληλ They pray	ceὠληλ ἀν They do not pray	ἢceὠληλ ἀν They do not pray

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

ἸΝ ΤῆΣ ὈΝΟΜΑΤΟΣ ΤΟῦ ΠΑΤΕΡΟΣ

In the Name of the Father

ΚΑΙ ΤΟῦ ΥἱΟΥ

and the Son

ΚΑΙ ΤΟῦ ἉΓΙΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ

and the Holy Spirit

ἘΝ ἑΝὶ Θεῷ Ἀμήν

One God Amen



ΠΑΤΕΡ ἡΜῶΝ ὁ ὢΣΤΙΝ ἐν οὐρανῷ  
Our Father who art in Heaven

ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἀξιωθῆς εὐχαριστῆσαι  
Make us worthy to say thankfully

ΠΑΤΕΡ ἡΜῶΝ ὁ ὢΣΤΙΝ ἐν οὐρανῷ

Our father who art in heaven

ἁγιασθῆς τὸ ὄνομα σου

Hallowed be Thy name

ἡ βασιλεία σου ἐλθέτω

Thy kingdom come

ὡς ἐστὶν ἐν οὐρανῷ

Thy will be done

ὡς ἐστὶν ἐν οὐρανῷ

On earth as it is in heaven

δός ἡμῖν τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἡμέτερον

Give us this day our daily bread

καὶ ἄφες ἡμῶν τὰ ἑσθλά

And forgive us our trespasses

ὡς ἡμεῖς ἀφίμεθα τοῖς ἄλλοις

As we forgive

τοῖς ἁμαρτάνοις ἡμῶν

those who trespass against us

καὶ μὴ ἐλθέτω ἡμᾶς ἡ πειρασμὸς

And lead us not into temptation

ἀλλὰ ῥῆσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐπιεισοῦ

But deliver us from the evil one

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν

In Christ Jesus our Lord

ὅτι ἡ ἐξουσία

For Thine is

ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα

the kingdom, the power and the glory,

εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα Ἀμήν

forever, Amen

# Hymns & Rituals



## Papal Hymn – Η ἈΣΤΑΠΗ

**Rites:** This hymn can be chanted after the chanting of the Pauline Epistle in its tune, or at any time in the presence of the Patriarch or a Bishop. In this hymn, we pray that the love of God the Father, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion and gift of the Holy Spirit be with our fathers, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II and His Grace Bishop Youssef. This benediction is the same one used by St. Paul at the end of 2 Corinthians (13:14). We also pray for the safety of all the clergy and people, in the Lord.

The love of God the Father,  
and the grace of the only-begotten Son,  
our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ,  
And the communion and gift of the Holy  
Spirit be with the most holy and most  
blessed father, Pope Abba Tawadros.

Η ἈΣΤΑΠΗ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ:  
ΚΕ Η ΧΑΡΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΜΟΝΟΣΓΕΝΟΥΣ ΥΙΟΥ  
ΚΥΡΙΟΥ ΔΕ ΚΕ ΘΕΟΥ ΚΕ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ  
ΗΜΩΝ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ:  
ΚΕ Η ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ ΚΕ Η ΔΩΡΕΑ ΤΟΥ  
ΑΣΙΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ:  
Ι ΗΜΕΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΣΙΩΤΑΤΟΥ ΚΕ ΜΑΚΑΡΙΩ  
ΤΑΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΗΜΩΝ ΠΑΠΑ ΑΒΒΑ  
ΤΑΩΑΔΡΟΣ.

Pope and Patriarch of the great city of  
Alexandria and the whole country of  
Egypt; and the city of our God, Jerusalem;  
Pentapolis, Libya, Nubia, Ethiopia, and  
Africa.

ΠΑΠΑ ΚΕ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟ  
ΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΙΑΣ: ΝΕΜ ΎΧΩΡΑ  
ΤΗΣ ΝΧΗΜΙ: ΝΕΜ ΎΠΟΛΙΣ ΜΠΕΝΝΟΥΤ  
ΙΕΡΟΥΣΑΛΗΜ: ΝΕΜ ΎΤΙΟΥ ΜΒΑΚΙ  
ΜΠΕΜΕΝΤ: ΝΕΜ ΎΛΥΒΙΑ ΝΕΜ ΜΟΥΒΙΑ  
ΝΕΜ ΝΙΘΑΥΩ ΝΕΜ ΔΥΡΙΚΙΑ.

And our holy, blessed, most honorable  
father, Abba Youssef, our Orthodox  
Bishop of this city and its surroundings.

ΚΕ ΤΟΥ ΑΣΙΟΣ ΚΕ ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΥ  
ΕΛΕΣΙΜΩΤΑΤΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΗΜΩΝ  
ΑΒΒΑ ΙΩΣΗΦ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΥ ΗΜΩΝ  
ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΤΑΥΤΗΣ ΚΕ  
ΤΩΝ ΟΡΙΩΝΑΥΤΗΣ.

May the clergy and all the people be safe  
in the Lord. Amen. So be it.

ΜΑΡΕ ΠΙΚΛΗΡΟΣ ΝΕΜ ΠΙΛΑΟΣ ΤΗΣΡ:  
ΟΥΧΑΙ ΞΕΝ ΠΒΟΙΣ: ΧΕ ΑΜΗΝ ΕΣΕΨΩΠΙ.



His Holiness Pope Tawadros II



His Grace Bishop Youssef

# Note

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# Note

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.





Visit the St. Mark Festival's website at

**[www.smfsus.org](http://www.smfsus.org)**

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