



**ERITREAN ORTHODOX TEWAHDO CHURCH
DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA**

Sunday School Curriculum
for
Grades 6 and 8

Compiled by the Educational Branch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church,
Diocese of North America

Adopted from the Coptic Orthodox Church, Diocese of Southern USA

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PREFACE

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God Amen.

The Children's Sunday School Program within our churches provides an opportunity to fulfill the command of our Lord Jesus Christ: "... *One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, 'Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.'* Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them" (Mark 10:13-16). It is a venue where they learn their Christian identity, enhance their Christian foundation, know their mother church, and acquire godly values through Biblical lessons. It allows children to learn on their level as many young children struggle to understand the word of God when it is taught during regular worship services. Children are divided into groups according to their age and educational grade levels so that they gain a better understanding of what is being taught. Hence, the Children's Sunday School Program is a part and parcel of the church's ministry with the objective of presenting the story of salvation, the christian moral values, the life of the church at the level of the young children, and engaging the kids in constructive conversations that could transform their lives forever.

In this endeavor, Sunday School servants are given the task of not only making the message comprehensible, attractive, and age appropriate for the younger children, but also to be a role model to the kids. Hence, a Christian upbringing is not just an educational curriculum to be taught, but rather it is a life that is acquired through exemplary actions and characteristics. Therefore, apart from the parents of the children, the role of teachers is second to none in achieving the objectives of Sunday School Program.

Besides, the role of textbooks developed under a well thought, planned and framed Sunday School curriculum is very crucial. However, considering the human expertise, the time and resources required to such tasks, it is more practical and efficient to begin the task by adapting the curricula and related resources of sister churches.

Previously, there were Children's Sunday School textbooks compiled by Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church, Diocese of North America, based on

the materials prepared by the Coptic Orthodox Church. Since early 2016, a work has been undergoing to further refine and revise the contents of these textbooks. Much effort was exerted to revise the contents by going through each lesson and making modifications, and at time lesson substitutions whenever necessary. Besides, rearrangement of lessons were done to reflect the Church seasons as well as the flow of the lessons. Apart from making grammatical and spelling revisions, the team strive to put all the lessons in a common structure format. So far, the work has covered Grade 11-12, Grade 9-10, and Grade 6-8, in their respective order. It is the understanding of the team that the work is still a draft and has a lot of things to be done. However, the team believes that it could be used by Sunday School teachers in preparing their lessons.

God willing, the team has every intention to continue the work. It has the following short and long term plans:

1. Promote the textbooks to be used in the Sunday Schools of our churches.
2. Collect feedback from Sunday School servants and keep refining the already started grades.
3. Extend the work to the remaining lower grades.
4. Encourage and facilitate sharing of experiences, lessons, activities, video clips, and other resources among the Sunday School servants.
5. Create a web page within the church website <https://www.tewahdo.org/> for Sunday School related resources.

As the Lord has said in Matthew 9:37-38, “... *The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field,*” the team disparately needs supporting hands to join in the work. Anyone who is interest to join the team in the work, please contact Aboy Keshi Tesfalem Beraki using the address: Fr. Tesfalem Beraki, 8849 Fair Oaks Crossing # 2074, Dallas, TX 75243. Email: frtesfalem@gmail.com.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and always, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

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Part I

Lessons for the Month of September

Week 1

Why do we read the Holy Bible?

Objectives:

- To learn the reasons that make the Holy Bible the most important book to read.

References:

- Psalm 1:1-3

Memory Verse:

Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears. (1 Samuel 3:9)

Introduction

The Holy Bible is the Book of God. When we read the Bible, we read it to hear God speaking to us. So, it is not just a duty or a fulfillment of God's commandment.

Lesson Outline

I. Reasons for reading the Holy Bible:

- a. We read it and study it for the importance of its Author. The writer of the Holy Bible is God the Creator. True the pens used in writing it are used by human beings, but God directed them in writing it. This is evident from the verses "*Speak Lord for your servant hears*" (1 Samuel 3:9), and "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*" (2 Tim. 3:16).

- b. The Holy Bible reveals our duties towards God: *“Therefore you shall obey the voice of the Lord your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today”* (Deuteronomy 27:10).
 - c. In the Holy Bible, God announces to us our fellowship with people: When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we speak to God as a plural not as single person *“Our Father Who art in heaven . . . ”* (Matthew 6:9). God also commands us *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matthew 22:39).
 - d. In the Holy Bible, we find the proper way to deal with other people. For example, we must respect our parents. *“Honor your father and your mother, . . . ”* (Exodus 20:12). We must respect and do good to all people. The Ten Commandments mentioned in Exodus 20:2-17.
 - e. In the Holy Bible, we find how to deal with our family members: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loves the church. . . . ”* (Ephesians 5:22-33). And Ephesians 6:1-4 *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, and you fathers, do not provoke your children.”*
 - f. In the Holy Bible, we find answers on how to deal with the authorities: *“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers . . . for all men, for kings and all who are in authority . . . ”* (1Timothy 2:1-3).
 - g. In the Holy Bible, we learn how to deal with our enemies: *“But I say to you, love your enemies . . . ”* (Matthew 5:44).
 - h. We read the Holy Bible because it reveals to us the cause of sins and the solution given by God. This is the most important reason for reading the Holy Bible. It is the book of eternal life. *“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).
- II. Our relationship with the Holy Bible: Our relationship with the Holy Bible is concentrated on acquiring the Bible, adhering to it, reading, understanding, contemplating, studying and learning it by heart. And, above all, you should behave according to it and train yourself to follow its commandments. The important thing is to receive a spiritual benefit from reading.

- a. To acquire the Bible does not mean to keep it as a rarity on our desk but to have it for our continual use. We take it with us wherever we go, in our pocket or in our hand bag. That makes it easy for us to read it at all times.
- b. It is better to read the Bible on regular basis, this must be daily. It is better to read extracts every morning so that they might be the subject of our thoughts and meditations during the day and fill our mind as we get in and out.
- c. Let our reading in the Bible be with understanding, depth and contemplation. It would be better if accompanied by prayer, so we would say with David, “Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your Law.”
- d. Let our reading be with a solemn spirit so we may benefit from it. Remember how we stand at Church in great reverence to listen to the Holy Bible. Never slacken in reading or be negligent or thoughtless.
- e. What is important is not the amount we read but the depth in reading. That comes when the Lord’s words penetrate deep into our heart touching our feelings
- f. Try to learn some verses that give certain principles or impressions or some of God’s promises and answers to matters that bother us.
- g. Repeating these verses in our heart many times with enjoyment makes them stick to our spirit and depths.
- h. Deal with these verses practically. Make them the subject of our spiritual exercises. Thus we turn the Bible into life and it becomes part of us.
- i. In our reading do not focus on the letter but the spirit. And if we need help, do not hesitate to ask

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. The Holy Bible provides solutions for all the problems of our lives. It also tells us, more importantly, about our eternal life and the salvation made by the Lord Jesus.
- b. Our relationship with the Holy Bible focuses on: having it, reading it, understanding it, and applying it in our daily lives.

WEEK 1. WHY DO WE READ THE HOLY BIBLE?

Applications:

- Do you have your own copy of the Holy Bible? If not, save money with the help of your parents and buy one.
- Read Psalm 1 once a day for a week.

Exercises:

1. Who is the source of the Holy Bible?
2. Give two reasons why we need to read the Holy Bible?
3. Give two points regarding our relationship with the Holy Bible?

Week 2

How do we read the Holy Bible?

Objectives:

- To learn the proper methods of reading the Holy Bible so that we get the benefit from it.

References:

- Psalms 143:10

Memory Verse:

Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. (Heb. 3:7-8)

Introduction

Since the Holy Bible is not an ordinary book, we must then give great importance to the method of reading it.

Lesson Outline

- I. The proper ways to read the Holy Bible are:
 - a. We must read the Holy Bible with full respect.
 - b. When the Bible is read in the church, all people must be standing. A good practice, actually, is to stand during all the readings of the Bible (not only the Gospel) if possible. When we read the Holy Bible at home, we must read it with full respect while we are completely alert, hopefully standing as well.
 - c. We must read the Holy Bible with the intention of understanding and benefiting.

- d. If we do not understand any portion of it, we must ask and research about it. The mere reading of the Bible, without understanding, is not very beneficial.
 - e. We must read the Holy Bible with great joy.
 - f. The Holy Bible is a message from our Heavenly Father, who loves us, therefore, we must read it with great joy, Ps 1:2 *“But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.”*
 - g. We must read the Holy Bible day and night:
 - h. Let the voice of the Lord be in our ears as long as possible, at least twice a day in the morning and at night. *“And in His law he meditates day and night”* (Ps. 1:2).
- II. In the Holy Bible, we should search for answers to our everyday problems. If we need help in our duties, we read that God can open our eyes to understand more. When we are sick, we read that God is the true doctor. When we are sad, we read that we can have the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.
- III. We must read the Holy Bible mixed with prayers. When we read the Bible, we must ask God to open our hearts to accept the word of God. As He speaks to us when we read, we also speak back to Him. Example: Suppose I am reading about the paralyzed man carried by the four men, and then I turn this into prayers saying I am also like this paralyzed man because of my sins. Please heal me dear Lord. Or better still, I remember my sick friends and pray for them.
- IV. We must read it with full intention to turn it into action. *“Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock”* (Matthew 7:24). *“... Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”*
- V. We must read the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit inside us. This is the most important factor. The Holy Spirit inside us guides us to understand and apply the Holy Bible. The Lord Jesus said, *“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come He will guide you into all the truth”* (John 16:13). And St. Paul said, *“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual”* (1 Corinthians 2:13).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. When we read the Holy Bible, we are reading and listening to the King of Kings. We must have full respect and attention.
- b. When any one of us is reading the Holy Bible, he or she is listening to a message from God to him or her personally. The Bible is the clearest source to hear the voice of God.
- c. In every reading of the Holy Bible, one must get spiritual benefit.

Applications:

- How many minutes or hours do you spend studying the Bible?
- Do you take notes as you study your Bible?
- Have you ever been intentional in trying to get to know you Lord?

Exercises:

1. What do you do if you don't understand the parts you read in the Bible?
2. What are two example you should do before reading your Bible?
3. How and what do we benefit from reading our Bibles regularly? Give two points.

Week 3

The Holy Bible is one unit

Objectives:

- To show that the Holy Bible is “one unit” although it was written as several books in different places by different people at different times.

References:

- Ezekiel 3:3

Memory Verse:

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (Luke 24:27)

Introduction

Since the Holy Bible is not an ordinary book, we must then give great importance to the method of reading it.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Holy Bible is One Unit:
 - a. The Holy Bible is one unit although it contains many books grouped as Old Testament and New Testament.
 - b. The author is God, the writers are 40 people.
 - c. The writers wrote the Holy Bible in different cities of the world: Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, Rome, etc. The writers were of different nationalities as well: Jews, Greeks, etc.
 - d. Some of the writers were very well educated, some had medium education, and some had no education at all.

- e. These books were written over a period of about 1600 years. Now the important fact is that when you read the Holy Bible, you feel you are reading ONE BOOK and this is something unparalleled in any other book, You feel that you are reading one book with one theme and under the influence of one pen. This is because the actual author and writer is One “GOD.” God inspired His people to write what He told them to write and hence the Holy Bible came without any discrepancies, errors or conflicts.

II. The One Message and the One Personality in the Holy Bible:

- a. In the Holy Bible, there are several writings: Events, history, teachings, praising of the Lord, proverbs and prophecies. However, when we look carefully at all these writings, we find that they have one message: Salvation of the fallen man as it has been accomplished by the Holy Trinity.
- b. In Genesis, we find the first picture of the fall of Man and we follow this picture to see the Lamb prepared by God instead of Isaac, then we continue to see in the book of Leviticus and Numbers the offerings in the Altar until the fullness of time has arrived. At fullness of time, St. John the Baptist came and prepared the way for the Lord Jesus saying, “*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29).
- c. In many parts of the Old Testament, we read about the symbols of the process of Salvation. In the New Testament, all the books focus on the completion of Salvation as accomplished by the love of God the Father, the grace of His only begotten Son and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. We must fully trust the Holy Bible as it is the Book of Life which is written by God, It was produced without any errors or discrepancies.
- b. As we grow up and read the Holy Bible more and more, the Lord will open our eyes to understand more and more. Our faith will also grow as we read more.

Applications:

WEEK 3. THE HOLY BIBLE IS ONE UNIT

- How often do you read your Bible?
- Has the central message of the Bible become the central message of your life?

Exercises:

1. Give two examples why is it important to read the Bible?
2. What is the central message of the Bible?

Week 4

Prioritizing Spiritual Life

Objectives:

- To learn that nothing should delay us from growing in our spiritual life, and we should strive for growth.

References:

- Luke 10: 38-42, John 11:1-44, John 12:1-8, Matthew 26:6-13

Memory Verse:

Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus. (John 12:3)

Introduction

Lesson Outline

- I. Mary and Martha Worship and Serve:
 - a. There once was a small family composed of three members Lazarus, Mary and Martha, two sisters and one brother. Jesus loved the three of them and used to sleep over many times in their house.
 - b. When Jesus visited them, Martha was serving and was too busy in the kitchen. Mary was sitting by his feet listening to his teaching. Martha was a good example of people serving God.
 - c. Mary was a good example of worshipping God, an act based on love.
 - d. Mary was very attentive to Jesus and she loved to sit at His feet to hear His words *“I sat down in his shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste”* (Song of Solomon 2:3).

- e. Martha represents the model of people who are serving God, while Mary represents the model of worshippers. Both are acceptable in the church. *“But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her”* (Luke 10:42). Therefore the greatest thing we can do in this world is to praise the name of the Lord, worship Him and glorify His Holy Name. But serving is not rejected provided that it is without complaining or confusion or pride. It is very essential that first we sit at the feet of Jesus and then afterwards we can go out and serve Him.

II. Lazarus Died and the Two Sisters were Very Sad:

- a. The two sisters sent to Jesus saying “He whom You love is sick”. The two sisters did the right thing. They just let the Lord know their problems. This teaches us that in situations where we cannot offer any help to others in trouble, we must pray to our Lord Jesus and present their problem to Him, *“Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick”* (John 11:3).
- b. Jesus went to their village and by the time He arrived, it was already four days after the death of Lazarus.
- c. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died, but even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You”. Jesus answered her, “Your brother will rise again”. Jesus also told her “I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die” “Take away the stone” . . . “Lazarus, come forth!”
- d. From this miracle we learn that: Jesus is the Son of the Living God and that He is the Resurrection and Life. There is a Resurrection for the dead, and whoever lives in the life of faith conquers death. Also that God, even if He allowed troubles to happen to us, He gives the outlet as He Himself comes and comforts us. *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; 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

III. Thanksgiving by Mary and Martha Six Days Before the Passover:

- a. *“Then six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, who had been dead, whom Jesus had raised from the*

dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair” (John 12:1-3). In this occasion Martha offered the supper (which was needed) and Mary offered her love. The Lord preferred the love of Mary.

- b. When Judas Iscariot complained about what Mary did, our Lord Jesus praised her and said, *“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” (Matthew 26:13).*
- c. This family represents a model of a thankful family who is admitting the gratitude of God.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Mary had love. She translated love into the worship of the Lord. This is the sound basis for worshipping God. *“ But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:42).*
- b. Martha served. This is good. But better still was if she sat and enjoyed the words of our Lord Jesus. That is why she was quick to complain to Jesus saying, *“Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” (Luke 10:40)*
- c. Even up to the last moment, Mary expressed her thankfulness to Jesus. Mary was very poor but she sold all what she had to express her thankfulness to Jesus.

Applications:

- Serving the lord is Good, but it must incorporate worshiping, just like Mary’s love to Jesus Christ.
- Our love to God and to other people is manifested by deed. Remember, Mary showed her love to the lord by anointing his feet with oil and using her hair which shows deep love and humility.
- We have to believe in God in our times of trouble and pray without ceasing. If we see people who are troubled or sick, we need to pray

for them and offer our help. If we see someone losing a loved one, we should console and pray for them. If we see someone who is sick, we should visit them and pray for them.

Exercises:

1. What did you learn from today's lesson?
2. Can you describe the difference between Mary and Martha as described in the lesson? Who did Jesus like and praise?
3. Have you ever prayed for someone other than yourself? Can you share that with the class?

Part II

**Lessons for the Month of
October**

Week 1

You shall be my Witnesses

Objectives:

- To learn that the Apostles were witnesses of God to other people through the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- To remind that we shall be witnesses of Christ our Lord in our lives.

References:

- Acts 1:1-8

Memory Verse:

You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Introduction

When our Lord Jesus started His ministry, He chose for Himself twelve Disciples (who became also Apostles). The Master Christ chose His Disciples to be His friends. He sat with them and talked to them. This was an expression of God's love to people and His fatherhood to man. He chose them to be with Him always and to teach them so that they become His witnesses and teach other people. "*He who hears you hears Me . . .*" (Luke 10:16). He chose them so that they become Apostles to carry the message of salvation to the whole world. "*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15).

Lesson Outline

- I. God does not leave Himself without a witness in all generations:

- a. Before the flood, it was Noah who witnessed to God and saved the world from ending.
 - b. When the people went back to worship idols (after the flood) Abraham was the witness in obeying God in everything even to offer his son Isaac.
 - c. Joseph also (who was son of Jacob) was witness to the life of faith and sticking to God's commandments when he refused to commit the sin with His master's wife.
 - d. In the New Testament, John the Baptist witnessed to the right principle and said to King Herod when he wanted to take his brother's wife "It is not permitted".
- II. The Apostles were the witnesses of our Lord after they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost.
- a. St. Peter: after denying Jesus, he witnessed that Jesus is the Messiah and with one sermon three thousand people became Christians. Also he preached in several places and proved his love when he was crucified.
 - b. St. Paul: who suffered more than any of the other Apostles was an excellent "vessel" of the Holy Spirit. He wrote some of his letters from the prison. The letter to the Ephesians was written from the prison.
 - c. St. Mark: went to fix his shoes and was able to convert the shoemaker and his family to become Christians by healing his hand and witnessing to the power of God.
- III. As Christians, God wants us to be his witnesses in this generation. The witnesses were called by St. Paul "vessels" carrying the name of God and filled with the Holy Spirit.
- IV. The Struggle for the Sake of Witnessing to the Lord Jesus: Our Lord Jesus chose His Disciples from among the simple type of people. None of them was from among the high positioned people, or from among philosophers or from among scientists. When He sent them to preach to the people, He told them, "*Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food*" (Matthew 10:9-10).
- In this way, the Disciples went out to preach with the Lord Jesus Christ without money or human support. But they were able to face

the Jews with all their knowledge, the Greek with all their philosophy and the Romans with all their rulers. They were able to witness and preach Christianity in the whole world. Before the first century was over, the message of the Lord Jesus reached all the known countries at this time. They were able to do this because they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they struggled with fasting, deep prayers, and shed their blood for the sake of witnessing for Jesus.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. If we are true Christians, we must behave as sons and daughters of God. We must show our faith by our actions, if we are truly the witnesses of God.
- b. We have to serve the church and the world that we are living in. Be a good example. Be kind and responsible in helping others to get closer to God.

Applications:

- How are we being witnesses of God every day?
- How easy or hard do you think is to be a witness of God?
- Who enables us to overcome the struggle?
- What do you think you need in order to become a witness of God?

Exercises:

1. What does “being a witness” mean?
2. To whom should we be witness of God? only to our church, friends and classmates or to everyone we come across?

Week 2

Preaching Christianity

Objectives:

- To learn how we can preach Christianity in the society in which we live.

References:

- Matthew 10:32

Memory Verse:

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:32)

Introduction

In this lesson we learn about the ministry of St. Paul and his preaching of Christianity. How can we preach Christianity in the society in which we live?

Lesson Outline

- I. You are my witnesses: The Lord Jesus chose his Disciples to become witnesses for His death and resurrection and to proclaim the gospel of the world. He said to them; *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). So, an Apostle is a witness for Christ. St. Paul preached Christianity in Greece, Jerusalem, Syria, Philippi in Macedonia. He is the Apostle for the gentiles.
- II. St. Paul was a servant filled with the Holy Spirit:

- From the fullness of the Holy Spirit he spoke in tongues (1Cor. 14:18-19).
- His service was supported by powers and miracles (1Cor. 2:4, Acts 14:8-11, Acts 20:7-12)
- He was given wisdom and intelligence to judge in spiritual and administrative matters (1Cor. 5:3-5).
- He was given confidence in the midst of troubles (2Cor. 6:4, Romans 15:3-6).
- He lived in an internal peace of mind despite all the external troubles that were around him (Romans 8:35-39).
- St. Paul was a servant who was trying to only please God (2Cor, 11:2-4).
- He was trying his best to win people to Christ (1Cor. 9:19-23). Hence his ministry was not partial to any specific nation or people.
- Suffering was a daily norm for St. Paul (2 Cor.2: 1, 5:4, Romans 8:35).
- He was beheaded for the sake of Jesus and he was very happy to gain the crown of martyrdom.
- He was only proud of being a servant of God (1Cor. 3:18, 2 Cor. 1:12-14).
- He considered his life before becoming a Christian as inconsequential (Galatians 2: 15-21).
- He was so humble he considered himself as the least among the Apostles (1Cor.15: 18-10).

III. How can we serve Christianity in the society we live in?

- We must realize that this was the request of Christ. We are here in the land of immigration not only for economic and other similar reasons but we are here also for a more important reason. As Christ said, “*You shall be my witnesses*” (Acts 1:8).
- We must make sure that we are serving under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This can only happen if we are humble and persistent in our prayers seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit not ours.

- We must avoid any conflicts or fights or aggressiveness with people because of religion. We only have: first to know our Christianity and become familiar with it, second to present our Christian views in a friendly and honest way.
- Remember that to win people to Christ, we have to be Christ-like ourselves.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. From every aspect mentioned above we can conclude that St. Paul's life was a good example to follow.
- b. Just as the Lord helped Saul, who did not have any love within him, and helped him become St. Paul, he can also help each one of us in the same way.

Applications:

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- What does it mean to be filled by the Holy Spirit and how do we get filled by the Spirit?
- what does it mean to be led by the Holy Spirit and how do we seek leadership?

Exercises:

- 1.

Week 3

Serving God

Objectives:

- To learn why every Christian should serve God.

References:

- John 21:15-17, Mathew 9:36, Mark 6:34, Mark 10:29-30, John 11

Memory Verse:

“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” (John 21:15-17)

Introduction

Love is tested through suffering, tribulation and sacrifice. The one who is not able to sacrifice is the one who does not love. Once he loves, he will sacrifice everything.

Every Christian must serve the church and people in the society. The Lord Jesus Himself said, “Son of man did not come to be served but to serve.” As we love God more, we shall be able to give more of our time to serve him. We must learn from now to give some of our time to God.

Lesson Outline

- I. Incentives of serving God and giving part of our time:
 - a. Our love of God: See the memory verse. Our beloved Jesus showed St. Peter that as evidence of his love to Jesus he should lead the sheep, i.e., to preach the word of God, see also Romans 8:35-36. Hence we must pray that God fills our hearts with love so that this becomes the incentive for us to offer our service to God.

- b. Our love for others: We must love to benefit others and hence offer our aid. *“If someone says, ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen”* (1 John 4:20).

The miracle of feeding the multitude that Jesus did was done when He saw the people as sheep without a shepherd (Read Mathew 9:36 and Mark 6:34). In the miracle of bringing back Lazarus to life, Jesus showed how He loved Mary and Martha (Please see John 11:33).

- c. To love to sacrifice what we have to others: The rich man came to Jesus asking to follow Him. Then Jesus asked him to go back and sell what he has and give to the poor. The rich man went away sad because he could not sacrifice anything for God. Jesus said *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep”* (John 10:11). St. Anthony was very rich but he had the desire to sacrifice for the sake of God. All the Apostles gave up all their conveniences for the sake of God.

- II. The reward of God to us: *“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life”* (Mark 10:29-30).

- III. Some ways we can serve God and the Church: We can start now to think of ways and means to serve God.

- We can organize the books of the church.
- We can collect money for the poor.
- We can visit the sick.
- We can help the needy in the society.
- We can help in the cleaning of the church.
- We can help our parents do housework.
- We can serve as deacons.
- We can give booklets or fliers about our Coptic Orthodox Church to our friends at school.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. We must start now to serve God. A good Christian is a good servant of God at school, at home, in the church and with his or her friends.
- b. A good evidence that we have true love for God is to sacrifice/ give our life, time, wealth, skills...etc; similar to the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Confessors and the rest of the Saints.

Applications:

- Think about the life of the apostles, martyrs, saints of the church. How did they serve God?
- We are all called to serve God. Think about the ways you can serve God at every aspect of your life? At home, school, church..etc?

Exercises:

1. What have you sacrificed for Jesus?
2. Why should we serve God? And what is our reward for serving God?
3. List the different ways you can serve God?
4. What did you learn from today's class?

Week 4

Dealing with People

Objectives:

- To learn the Christian way of dealing with people.
- To learn that to deal with people effectively, one should listen more and speak less.

References:

- Roman 12:9-21, Proverbs 10:19, James 1:19, Luke 23:34, Psalms 141:3; Proverbs 10:19

Memory Verse:

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. (Rom. 12:15)

Introduction

It is not easy to deal with various people and be in peace with them. Be a good example and be firm in keeping your values. The Holy Bible is an excellent guide to help you achieve effective relationships with people.

Lesson Outline

- I. Take the Lord Jesus as your example: See what He did with people when He was on earth and behave in kindness and love to others as He did. This can be detailed in: Do not compete with others, tolerate others, praise, respect, and encourage people, do not criticize them, excuse them, and give generously. Be humble with people, understand them and share their feelings.

- II. Be selective: If you want to get a good result from talking to people, one has to select the proper timing to talk, to select the proper words to say things in a proper voice and respect the people in front of you.
- III. Dealing with personal conflicts when they arise:
- a. Be assured of God's love: "*all things work together for good to those who love God*" (Romans 8:28, John 3:16).
 - b. God gives us strength to face all conditions. "*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; 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, Philippians 4:12).
 - c. Return good for evil. "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*" (Romans 12:21). Also read Matthew 5:38-48 and Luke 6: 27-36.
 - d. Settle conflicts in a loving way:
 - Settle differences privately as friends/brothers. Jesus also teaches us that insulting or angering our friends/brothers will put us into judgement. He also teaches us about the importance of forgiveness (Matthew 5:21-26).
 - Do not judge others' motives. (Matthew 7:1-6).
 - Help restore wrong-doers to the fellowship/ church. (Galatians 6:1-5).
 - e. If we deal in a Christian way with other people, we are actually glorifying God's name, as He said "*That they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*" (Matt 5:16). Everytime you forgive your brother/ friend, you are showing him the love that Jesus Christ showed you. Everytime that you help a friend/ brother who did you wrong, you are glorifying God and showing your that person the love of God. Please remember how Jesus reacted when the jews accused him of things he did not do; he never opened his mouth to the amusement of King Herod. Even when they cruxified him on the cross, he said, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*" (Luke 23:34).
- IV. If we want God to be kind to us, we have to be kind to other people. "*For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged*" (Matthew 7:2).

- V. Put yourself in other people's situations and think from their point of view, and then you will understand them more and learn to treat them nicely without conflicts.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. It is important to dealing with people in a Christian way. To achieve this, one has to constantly pray and try hard by the grace of God. We need to follow the examples set by our lord and saviour Jesus Christ. *"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps"* (1 Peter 2:21).
- b. Talk only when it is proper to talk. Remember that "listening is loving" *"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"* (James 1:19).
- c. Try your utmost best to avoid a conflict with anyone. *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."* (Romans 12:18).

Applications:

- Practice to be patient and to live in peace with everyone. The bible teaches us that we are called to love even our enemies (Matthew 5:44). We should pray to God everyday saying, *"Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips."* (Psalms 141:3).
- It is important to understand the effect our speech on our relationship with people. Too much talk leads to sin, so avoid talking too much (Proverbs 10:19). As Christians, *"every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"* (James 1:19).
- It is also important to learn from the life of our lord Jesus Christ and the disciples/ saints.
- The way we deal with people should reflect our love to our neighbor. After loving God, loving our neighbor is the second most important commandment (Matthew 22:36-40).

Exercises:

1. What did you learn from today's lesson?

2. How can we avoid conflicts with our friends or siblings?
3. Do you think the friends we hangout with have influence on our speech or behavior? Explain? *“Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.”* (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Part III

**Lessons for the Month of
November**

Week 1

The Christian Family

Objectives:

- To learn about the Christian family and the function of every member in the family from the Epistles of St. Paul.

References:

- Colossians 3:20, Exodus 20:12, 1 John 4:20

Memory Verse:

Children, obey your parents in all things for this is well pleasing to the Lord. (Colossians 3:20)

Introduction

St. Paul in his letters talked about the Christian family as a “church at home” “. . . *To Philemon our beloved brother . . . and to the church in your house*” (Philemon 1:1-2). This means that all the members of the Christian family pray together, love one another, cooperate and live together in peace.

Lesson Outline

- I. St. Paul in his letters talked about every member of a Christian family:
 - a. He asked husbands to love their wives (Colossians 3:19, Ephesians 5:25).
 - b. He asked the elders to be wise with faith and love (Timothy 2:3)
 - c. He asked the women to obey (in love) their husbands (1 Cor. 11, 2 Timothy 2:11-12).
 - d. He asked the youth to be good (Timothy 2:6).

II. St. Paul talked about the work and the behavior of every member in the family:

- a. He asked the parents to bring up their children in the faith of God (Colossians 3:21, Ephesians 5:4).
- b. He asked the children to obey their parents (Colossians 3:20, Ephesians 5:1-3).
- c. He asked the masters to be just in their treatment of their servants (Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 4:1).
- d. He asked the servants to obey their masters (1 Timothy 6:1-2, Romans 3:1-7).

III. St. Paul talked about the formation of the family:

- a. He said that marriage is a great Sacrament (Ephesians 5:31-32).
- b. He asked the family to welcome visitors with love (1 Timothy 5:10).
- c. He asked the family not to fall in love with money (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. As children of Christ, St. Paul asks us to obey our parents, even if we are not convinced with what they tell us to do. We will be rewarded handsomely from God for our obedience. It is also one of the 10 commandments given by God. *“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.”* (Exodus 20:12).
- b. As a Christian family, we must pray and read the Holy Bible together. We must also love every member of our family. *“If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can[a] he love God whom he has not seen?”* (1 John 4:20).

Applications:

- The main think is love. As a family we need to love each other. We also have to respect our parents, regardless of whether we agree with them or not.

- Think about your relationship with your family. Compare your life with what you have learned today. Are you being a good Christian? Are you loving and respecting your family members? Think about how you can be better.
- Always pray to God about your family members. Ask God to protect them and bless them.
- Do something good to your family members to show them that you love and appreciate them.

Exercises:

1. Why should we respect our parents? Do we have to respect them even if we don't agree with what they are telling us to do/not do?
2. Can we love God without loving our siblings or parents?
3. Mention the good things you did to your family members? Now mention the good things they did for you?
4. What did you learn from today's lesson?

Week 2

Christian Characters I: Helping the Needy

Objectives:

- To learn that it is a golden opportunity for us to be able to help the needy.

References:

- Matthew 25:31-36

Memory Verse:

For I was hungry and you gave Me food. (Matthew 25:35)

Introduction

Spiritual behavior is considered as an evidence of being firm in God. The Apostle, expects a very high level by saying, “*He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*” (I John 2:6) Therefore, we are also expected to act according to the spirit, by taking the behavior of the Lord Jesus as an example to follow ... The importance of Christian behavior is shown in God’s saying, “*You will know them by their fruits.*” (Matthew 7:16)

Lesson Outline

- I. Blessed are the merciful: When we read Matthew Chapter 5, we find that the sermon on the mountain indicates that in order to gain eternal life, one has to be humble. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. This sometimes appears to be difficult. In

the lesson at hand, which is taken from Matthew Chapter 25, we learn that there is something that maybe relatively easy that will help us gain eternal life. If we help the needy, it is as if we help Jesus himself. And He is able to pay us back as He said in Matthew 5:7 “*Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy*”. He will give us a share in eternal life. “*Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom . . . in as much as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me*” (Matthew 25:34-40).

II. What kind of help would the needy require?

- a. The needy may require materialistic things, clothes, food . . . etc, to meet the necessities of life.
- b. The needy may require spiritual guidance to cope with the temptation of this world.
- c. We do not have to wait until a person in need asks us for help. We must take the initiative to help.
- d. We must give to the needy with complete happiness because the Bible says, “For God loves a cheerful giver”. Remember that the money that we have is granted to us from God, therefore we must give part of it back to our poor brothers and sisters in Christ.

III. Is there anyone in need in our neighborhood?

- a. Yes there is. We must help them. Also we can help the needy in Egypt and there are so many of them.
- b. In return for helping the needy the Lord will give us joy here on earth and build for us a treasure in heaven.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Remember the good Samaritan helped to the man who fell into the hands of robbers.
- b. We have to regularly practice giving money to the needy from now. Even from the small allowance that our parents give us.
- c. Helping the needy is an expression of love. When we love we give.

Applications:

- We need to help others as we expect others to do the same thing for us
- Imagine you are the good Samaritan, what would you do?
- When we help the needy person it is counted as we did for the lord

Exercises:

1. What did we get from the lord when we help other people?
2. What kind of help would the needy require?
3. How do people know us we are the followers of Jesus Christ?

Week 3

Christian Characters II: Forgiveness

Objectives:

- To learn that forgiveness is .

References:

- Matthew 5:23-24, Mark 11:25-26, Ephesians 4:31-32, Colossians 3:12-13.

Memory Verse:

Leave your gift there before the altar and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother. (Matthew 5:24)

Introduction

We must be in peace with people even if they try to hurt us. If we forgive people who do bad things to us, God will forgive us as well.

Lesson Outline

- I. As Christians we must love everyone. GOD IS LOVE. So, as sons and daughters of God, we must also love.
- II. Forgiveness is not easy, especially when other people have tried to hurt us. It is difficult only if we depend on ourselves. We must pray to God to help us love other people and let us forget about how they hurt us. The Holy Spirit inside us will help us to achieve this level of love, i.e. forgiveness of people who hurt us.

- III. If we are attending the service in the church, we must not take communion if we are not at peace with others. We must forgive and forget.
- IV. There are several examples in the Holy Bible of forgiveness. The most important example is of Jesus Himself when he forgave those who crucified him by saying, “My Father, forgive them.” Please mention this in details.
- V. David also had a forgiving heart towards king Saul. He used to play music for him when he had an evil spirit. Saul wanted to kill David. David had many chances to kill Saul but he did not. David had a heart full of love. Please mention this in details.
- VI. St. Stephen prayed for the forgiveness of the people who were stoning him saying “*Lord, do not charge them with this sin*” Acts 7:60. Please mention this in more details.
- VII. When we pray the Lord’s prayer, we say, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” Do we do this? We can only love our enemies by the help of God. We must pray to God and ask Him to bless us with enough strength to love and forgive all people. For, God forgave us our sins, only when we forgive the sins of others. Please read Luke 7:40-48.
- VIII. Can we forgive friends at school when they say bad things about us? Yes we can with the help of God. The least we must do is not answer the bad words with bad words, because we are sons and daughters of God.
- IX. Sometimes, we think that other people are hurting us and the truth is they are not. So, before we say that we should forgive them we have to reconsider the matter. Maybe, we are the ones doing wrong.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Let us pray for other people when they do something to hurt us. Pray to God to help us forgive them and also try to deal with them in a Christian manner that is filled with love.
- b. We must behave in a spiritual way. We have to be Christ-like. The Lord Christ forgave the people who tried to hurt Him. We must treat people

gently, trust that nobody can actually hurt us and forgive those who actually try to hurt us.

Applications:

- How do you express your hurt to the person who hurt you?
- Have YOU ever hurt anyone? Did you ask them to forgive you?

Exercises:

1. Why must we forgive?
2. What is the biggest and most important example we find in the Bible that teaches us about forgiveness?
3. We mustand forget.

Week 4

Thanksgiving to God

Objectives:

- To learn that we should be thankful to God at all times because He is beneficent.

References:

- Luke 17:11-19, Psalm 103

Memory Verse:

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. (Psalm 103:2)

Introduction

Let us be thankful to God at all times because He is beneficent. Even when we go through problems we should continue to thank God because He can change bad things to good things for us.

Lesson Outline

- I. Let us thank, not Complain:
 - a. Our Lord Jesus Christ established Thanksgiving, as an element in our relationship with God. As He established the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2-4), He also established thanksgiving when He said, "*Father, I thank You that You have heard Me*" (John 11:41).
 - b. Please read here Luke 17:11-19 and Psalm 103.
 - c. In our Church, the Thanksgiving Prayer commences every service: Vespers, Matins, Divine Liturgies, Weddings, Baptisms, etc.
- II. We Thank the Beneficent:

- a. God is the Beneficent, therefore, we thank Him. Whoever does not believe that God is the Beneficent cannot be thankful. Therefore, it is necessary for us to live a life of thanksgiving to believe that God is the Beneficent.
 - b. God always does good. He does not do anything except good. St. Paul said: *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God”* (Romans 8:28). A person, who lives in the love of God, sees, meets and accepts everything for good.
 - c. We thank the Beneficent. He did good with us in the past, He is doing good with us now and He will do good with us in the future. He does good with us in our righteousness and in our sinfulness. He does good because of His love and mercy, not because we deserve goodness.
 - d. The goodness that God works for us is emanating from Him even if it does not appear to be so. If you go to a doctor and he/she prescribes medicine that tastes sour, you accept it, believing that it is good for you because it is given by the doctor. In the same manner, there are things that appear difficult or bad, but in fact God turns it to be good. Remember Jonah inside the great fish. Who can believe that while Jonah was inside the great fish that that was good? But it turned out to be good for Jonah and for the people at Nineveh (Please mention the story in more detail).
 - e. We may often have experiences in our lives that do not agree with what we like. We become sad and frustrated. But if our lives are with God, He will turn everything to be for the good of us.
 - f. Let us be thankful to God because He gave us the Holy Spirit: *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you”* (John 14:26).
- III. The Prayer of Thanksgiving: Let us give thanks to the Beneficent and merciful God, the Father of our Lord, God, and Saviour, Jesus Christ, for He has covered us, supported us, preserved us, accepted us unto Him, had compassion on us, sustained us, and brought us to this hour. Let us then ask Him, the Almighty Lord our God, to keep us in all peace this holy day and all the days of our life.
- O Master, Lord, God Almighty, Father of our Lord, God, and Saviour, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee upon every condition, for any condition, and in whatever condition, for Thou hast covered us, supported us,

preserved us, accepted us unto Thee, had compassion on us, sustained us and brought us unto this hour. Wherefore, we pray and entreat Thy goodness O Lover-of-Mankind. Grant us to complete this holy day and all the days of our life in all peace with Thy fear. All envy, all temptation, all the workings of Satan, the intrigue of wicked people, the rising up of enemies, hidden and manifest, do Thou cast away from us and from Thy people, and from this, Thy holy place. Whereas of things that are good and useful do Thou grant unto us, for Thou art He who gave us the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and every power of the enemy: and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Through the grace and mercies and love-of-man of Thine only Begotten Son, our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ, through whom is due unto thee glory and honour power together with Him and the Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver, who is consubstantial with Thee now and ever, and to the age of all ages. Amen

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. In our daily lives we must be thankful to God at all times. The worst thing is for a person to be a complainer about anything good or bad, large or small. If we love God, we must trust that He will do good for us, as He has been doing all along.
- b. We must never lose hope, but should thank God even at difficult times. During the difficult times we should look ahead and know that God will change these difficulties for the better. Thus we should rejoice and be thankful at all times.

Applications:

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Exercises:

- 1.

Part IV

Lessons for the Month of December

Week 1

The Preparation for Christmas

Objectives:

- To learn the Christian way of preparing for Christmas in our church.

References:

- Luke 1; John 3:16; Luke 2

Memory Verse:

“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst” says the Lord. (Zechariah 2:10)

Introduction

When we prepare to celebrate for the happiest occasion in Man’s life, the birth of Christ, we must rejoice and be exceedingly glad. The birth of Christ is not just a historical event that happened about 2,000 years ago. The birth of Christ was the beginning towards His birth in your/our heart(s) and in your/our life. Our Lord Jesus said, *“I am the bread of life”* (John 6:35).

Lesson Outline

I. The Coming of Christ was the Desire of All Nations: The Israelites’ keen desire about the coming of Christ and His salvation of mankind was expressed in the prophecies in several verses of the Old Testament:

- *“You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up your strength, and come and save us”* (Psalm 80:1-2).

- *“Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, we have waited for You; the desire of our soul is for Your name and for the remembrance of You. With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isaiah 26:8-9).*
- *“My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning - Yes, more than those who watch for the morning” (Psalm 130:6).*

In addition to the previously mentioned prophecies, Our Lord Jesus expressed the same keen desires of the Old Testament Fathers by saying *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56)*. In another verse he adds saying, *“Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; 24 for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.” ” (Luke 10:23-24)*. Therefore, all nations were waiting for the Saviour to come. Even the three wise men, non-Isralites, were so overjoyed when they saw the star that guided them to find the baby Jesus. (Matthew 2:10).

- II. Our Church also celebrates this job in all it’s prayers and hymns before and during Christmass.Our Church’s Liturgy for the Month of Keiahek:
- a. The church in its celebration before Christmas aims at emphasizing the important events of the occasion and to refresh the memory of the people of these events that happened before the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. This positively affects our feelings, prayers, and spiritual life to thank God for his wonderful gift to humanity, his only begotten son. *“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).*
 - b. The Gospel readings in the four Sundays before Christmas are taken from the gospel according to St. Luke Chapter 1, which focuses on the events before the birth of our Lord Jesus.
 - c. The Hymns are selected to focus on the joyful events before Christmas. Let us look into some examples:

III. Before the Reading of Acts: “Hail to you O Gabriel the great Archangel. Hail to the announcer of the good news to the Virgin Mary”. (LUke 1:26-38).

IV. After the Gospel: For the first and second Sundays “We greet you with Gabriel; the angel saying: Peace be with you O filled with grace; the Lord is with you. This is why we honour you; O mother of God; pray to the Lord; to forgive us our sins”.

For the third and fourth Sundays “You deserve to be honored; with your cousin Elizabeth. Blessed are you among women; and blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus. This is why we honour you; O mother of God; pray to the Lord; to forgive us our sins”.

V. Part of the Fraction for Advent is: “You sent your Only Begotten son Who abides everlastingly in your bosom, Jesus Christ, the Word and True Light. He was conceived immaculately in the Virgin Womb and was born of the ever-virgin St. Mary (Isaiah 7:14). The angels praise Him and the heavenly hosts chant unto Him, saying: *“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men”* (Luke 2:14).

VI. The Keiahek Nights Known as “Seven and Four Praises”: During the Keiahek month, which is the month just before Christmas, the church celebrates on Saturday nights for several hours, the Keiahek special prayers, songs and hymns.

This is composed of: Midnight prayers, the four canticles, “Howces” and the seven “Theotokias”. The word “Howce” is a Coptic word, which means “Praise”. The word “Theotokia” is from the Greek word, “Theotokos” which means “the mother of God”. The seven “Theotokias (wdasie Mariam)” of the seven days of the week are all used on the Saturday Keiahek night. So, the Keiahek night is a night of prayers and joyful hymns most of which are for the Virgin Mary who gave birth to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. We must learn to spend our nights in both prayers and praise. *“pray without ceasing”*(1 Thessalonians 5:17). This will help us to grow in our relationship with the Lord.

- b. The spiritual way of preparing for Christmas is distinctly different from that of the world. We must not participate in the materialistic type of celebrations that precede Christmas. This day was a happy day for the world. “ *Then the angel said to them,* “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” ” (Luke 2:10-12). Don’t you think God’s best gift to humanity, the birth of Jesus Christ, is much better than any materialistic gift?

Applications:

- Even if you didn’t get a present during Christmas or if you didn’t get the present you were hoping for, please remember that the birth of Jesus Christ is much better gift than anything else we could hope for.

Exercises:

1. What makes you happy or excited about celebrating Christmas? What do you think is the right way to celebrate Christmas as a Christian?
2. What did you learn from today’s lesson?
3. Do you think Christmas is all about exchanging gifts and Christmas tree?
4. Encourage your students to learn to give rather than just passively receive presents during Christmas, Encourage them to volunteer with or donate to the poor or orphans.

Week 2

The Birth of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ

Objectives:

- To learn about “the fullness of the time”.

References:

- Luke 1:5-38; Psalms 40:1

Memory Verse:

But when the fullness of the time has come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Galatians 4: 4-5)

Introduction

Lesson Outline

- I. The Birth of John the Baptist is Announced: When the fullness of the time became near and the time has come for God to incarnate and it was necessary for someone to come before Him to prepare the way in front of Him, the Lord sent Gabriel the angel to preach the good news to Zacharias. Zacharias and his wife were described as: “. . . *righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*” (Luke 1:6). Do we accept all the commandments of God? Or do we select only what we think is suitable for us? We must walk in all of the commandments of God. Please review briefly the story of the birth of John the baptist from Luke 1:5-25.

- II. The Birth of Christ is Announced: At the fullness of the time, God sent Gabriel the angel to St. Mary to tell her “you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shall call His name Jesus . . . will be called Son of the Highest”. Mary answered “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” Unlike the older and more experienced priest, Zacharias, Mary was quick to surrender herself for the will of God, and this has earned her a blessing from God to be the Mother of God. Observe the greetings of the angel to St. Mary and her modesty “Behold the maidservant of the Lord”.
- III. The Fullness of the Time: The subject of the “fullness of the time” has its meaning in the events leading to the birth of Jesus Christ and has its meaning also in our lives and our relationship with God and people. Salvation is what God promised Adam and Eve. But this salvation has been fulfilled at the fullness of time. God was preparing everything for the birth of His Son Jesus Christ. He had to prepare the pure Virgin who was humble and can withstand all these glories. He had to prepare John the Baptist who was like an “angel” to prepare the way in front of Him. He had to prepare the people to accept the incarnation (And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us; John 1:14), and the salvation foretold by several prophecies and symbols that were mentioned in the prophets’ books. The people would be able then to accept both the idea of salvation and the death of a pure person on behalf of a sinful person. The people can then accept a statement like this “*The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). Therefore, all the preparations for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ were necessary and had to be done gradually to suit the understanding of the people. Then all the events happened in a fully coordinated manner according to God’s amazing plan to save us from eternal death (John 3:16). God in His wisdom selects the time that He finds suitable. We cannot comprehend His wisdom but we must accept it “*It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority*” (Acts 1:7).
- IV. The principle of the fullness of time is also clear in nature. When we put a seed in the ground, it must take its time and go through various phases until it becomes a plant. We cannot rush it. Also the baby in his mother’s womb has to take his or her time until the right time comes for him or her to be born. God also has his own time, and when the fullness of the time has come, God sent forth His Son to the world.
- V. In the story of Joseph we find a good example for the fullness of time

in our lives. His brothers insulted him and threw him in the well. Joseph was sold as a slave and was very honest in Pharaoh's palace. With a false accusation he was put in jail. Years went by and God did not interfere to help Joseph. Joseph asked the chief butler saying *"But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me, make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house"* (Genesis 40:14). *"Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him"* (Genesis 40:23). He forgot Joseph for two years. Then at the fullness of time which was selected by God sent help and saved Joseph. It was the best timing, in the best occasion that transferred Joseph from jail to rule all over Egypt and became the second man in authority after Pharaoh.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. The suitable time for things to happen is not according to our understanding, but according to the Divine wisdom that is unlimited. We must not rush things. We must patiently wait for God, just like Joseph.
- b. We have to abide with all of God's commandments and not just the ones that suit our needs.
- c. When the event is great, the preparation for it must be great. The coming of the Messiah to our world is very great and took ages of preparation. Then, Jesus came to save us, born from the virgin Mary.

Applications:

- Learn to be patient in life. Always pray to God so that he can give you the grace to be patient. Also be patient when your prayers are not answered.
- Learn to trust and obey God in all parts of your life. Don't be stubborn like Zacharias, rather be humble like St. Mary, the mother of God.
- It is important to appreciate, and be thankful for God's amazing plan to save us.
- 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).

Exercises:

1. What did you learn from today's lesson?
2. What can we learn from Joseph regarding patience?
3. Can you name other people in the bible who were patiently waiting for God? (Examples: Abraham, Hanna, Job..etc).

Week 3

The Incarnation of the Word of God

Objectives:

- To understand the meaning of the incarnation of the word of God, and its effect on man.
- To learn that it is an honour and obligation to be a Christian.

References:

- Matthew 2: 1-12, John 1: 1-5

Memory Verse:

And the Word became flesh. (John 1:14)

Introduction

Lesson Outline

- I. Definition of the "WORD": The Greek expression for the "WORD" is "LOGOS" and it has no correspondence in other languages. LOGOS is the correct word and it means mind or wisdom or doctrine. The Gospel of St. John used the "Word" with this meaning about 36 times. Therefore, the "Word" is the image inherent in God who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, as St. Paul explained (Hebrews 1:3). Also St. John said, "*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men*" (John 1:3-4). The Word has the same Divine nature, for He is eternal from the beginning "*In the*

beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

- II. The Word became flesh: *“...great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16).* God sent his only begotten Son the true ”LOGOS” born from the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit. Therefore Jesus is not a prophet but He is God Himself appearing in the flesh. He came and took our flesh, announced His love for Adam and for ourselves and then He brought us to the kingdom of God. Through the Incarnation we have met God. When Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus answered “Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father”.

- III. The Incarnation is a declaration of God’s love: As God loved man and created him to enjoy happiness, love, and the Divine glory He came and took man’s flesh and was incarnate to bring back to man the holy life, which he lost, and to give him Resurrection from the dead. *“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).*

- IV. The Incarnation and man: As human nature was corrupted, St. Athanasius the Apostolic says that repentance could not satisfy the justice of God for Adam’s sin. In addition, repentance cannot change the nature of man, *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22).* *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:14-18).* Since death was intimate to Adam’s flesh, therefore, it was necessary for life to become intimate to the flesh so that when the flesh is clothed with life, death is then cut off.

- V. The meeting of man with God: Through the Incarnation of God, man was able to meet God and this will continue to be so. St. Paul said *“...by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh . . .” (Hebrews 10:20).* Through Christ we can

reach the Father. In Jesus Christ, man looks and sees God and the Father looks and sees man.

- VI. The end of the animal offerings: St. Paul said *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins”* (Hebrews 10:4). The body of Christ became the only acceptable Lamb Who entered the Holies and found eternal salvation *“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14).
- VII. Appearances of God in the Old Testament before the Incarnation: God appeared (just as appearances not incarnation) to Abraham (Genesis 18), to Lot (Genesis 19), to Jacob (Genesis 28 and 32), to Moses (Exodus 3), to Joshua (Joshua 5) and to Samuel (1 Samuel 3). But in the incarnation, which is the declaration of Christ about the heavenly Father, happened in the fullness of time when the Virgin Mary gave birth to the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. The incarnation of Christ changed the image that the people knew about God. God became near to man after He was hidden from Him because of the sin.
- b. With the Incarnation of Christ all nature was renewed. God came to our world from heaven to raise us to Him. He took our image to give us His image. He dwelt among us in our land to make us able to dwell with Him in heaven. *“At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you”* (John 14:20).

Applications:

- Tell your friends that God loved us and sent His Son to be a human being.
- Do something that shows that you love God.

Exercises:

1. What does Incarnation mean?
2. What are the benefits of Incarnation to Us?
3. What did God show us by incarnation?

Week 4

He was Called Jesus

Objectives:

- To learn the meaning of the name Jesus.

References:

- Luke 2:21-39

Memory Verse:

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus. (Luke 2:21)

Introduction

Lesson Outline

- I. He was called Jesus: On the day of circumcision (i.e. eight days after Jesus was born) two things happened: Jesus was circumcised and He was called Jesus. When our Father Abraham in the Old Testament was circumcised he was given a new name Abraham instead of Abram. Abraham means Father of a great number of nations. According to Jews' customs, a child is given a name on the same day of his circumcision. He was called Jesus as was told by the Angel to the Virgin Mary before Jesus was conceived with "*... you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus*" (Luke 1:31). As the Angel appeared to Joseph and told him, "*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; and she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:20-21).

- II. The meaning of the name Jesus: The name Jesus was frequently used by the Israelites. The name Jesus in Hebrew is the same as Joshua and the same as Hosea. Joshua in the Old Testament was a symbol for the true Saviour. As Joshua completed Moses' work, our Lord Jesus has completed all the Laws with grace and truth. And as Joshua led the people from the poor land to the promised land, so our Lord Jesus was the only One who carried the church from death to the glorious freedom of the children of God. Also, as Hosea was in the new altar which was built after the captivity, also our Lord Jesus is our great Priest Who intercedes on our behalf in heaven. After the birth of our Lord Jesus, the Christians refused that any man be called Jesus. St. Paul's friend who was called Jesus, was given the name "Justus". Therefore, the name Jesus became dedicated to our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Jesus means Saviour of His people from their sins. The saving from the sins is a complete action consisting of three parts: facing the Power of sin, forgiveness of the sin and freedom from its consequences.
- III. Jesus Saved us from the Power of Sin: Mention the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). *"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). This means that God comes to us (as He came to Zacchaeus) and gives us strength to overcome the sin. The only thing is that we have to do as Zacchaeus did, i.e., run to Jesus and try our best to see Him, know Him and develop a fellowship with Him. *"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed"* (John 8:36).
- IV. Forgiveness of Sin: Complete forgiveness by God the Father is through the blood of Jesus on the cross. When we take communion, we eat and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus, abide In Him, and are accepted in the heavenly kingdom. *"I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside"* (Zechariah 10:6).
- V. Saving from the consequence of Sin: The consequence of sin is death. Jesus saved us from sin and there is no power of death over us. Death became just a passage from this world to a better life. St. Paul said, *"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"* (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. We must follow the head of our salvation who has the glory forever.
- b. No one can gain salvation without the name of Jesus.
- c. We must believe in Him and follow Him even to the cross; and as He defeated death we can also defeat death.

Applications:

- Ask the meaning of the names for 5 of your friends.
- Study the meaning of 5 Saints in the Old Testament.
- Do we find any person whose name has the same meaning as Jesus?

Exercises:

1. How do we relate the meaning of Jesus's name to our life?
2. What are the three parts that the name of Jesus has in saving us from sin?
3. When should we call the name of Jesus?

Part V

**Lessons for the Month of
January**

Week 1

Baptism

Objectives:

- To learn our church's teaching on baptism and the rites of the church in doing it.

References:

- Acts 2:38-39; Mark 10:14; Romans 6:3-4; Matthew 3:16

Memory Verse:

And when she and her household were baptized, She begged us, saying, 'if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.' So she persuaded us. (Act 16:15)

Introduction

Lesson Outline

- I. Why do we allow children to be baptized while they are infants? Do they really appreciate the value of baptism?
 - We urge for the baptism of the little children while they are very young in order to become sons and daughters of God and deserve eternal life.
 - The Holy Spirit dwells inside the little children after their baptism and protects them. The Lord Jesus has blessed the children. "*Let the little children come to Me . . .*" (Mark 10:14).
 - The little children cannot come to Jesus except through baptism.

- In the part about appreciation of baptism by the little children, we say if God gives us only what we appreciate, then our share will be very little. Baptism is a gift from God given freely. The child does not appreciate the value of baptism but his parents do and the child gets all the precious gifts of baptism. Children are not exempted in case of God's anger on people, and therefore, they need the baptism. An example of that, when the people of God sinned, He sent fiery serpents which killed a lot of them (old, young, and children). When they repented God ordered Moses to make a bronze serpent and raise it, so that if anyone (Old, young or child) looked at it was healed. (Number 21:9) In this case it was essential for the children to be healed to take a look at the bronze serpent. So, Children are not exempted from the judgment of God and hence they need the new birth through baptism. Moreover, circumcision, which is the shadow of baptism, was carried out on infant boys aged 8 days old. Those babies don't know the meaning of circumcision and the covenant between Abraham and God, yet they were required to get circumcised.
- Another example, does a child appreciate the value or benefit of a medicine they need? No, but we give them medicine and they benefit of it. Similarly, a child does not appreciate the value of baptism, but he/she takes it and benefits of it.
- We also see children get baptized along with their parents, as mentioned in the New Testament Acts 16:13-15, 1 Cor. 1:14-16, and Acts 10:44. Also St Peter preached to the first believers saying, "*Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.'*" (Acts 2:38-39)

II. Why do we dip the baptized in the water and not just spray him or her with water?

Our church asserts that baptism is by dipping in water and not spraying it on the baptized for the following reasons:

- The word baptism is derived from the Greek word 'baptism' which means 'dying' and to dye is something that occurs when you dip the material inside the liquid.
- Baptism is burial with Jesus and resurrection with Him to a new life. "*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized*

into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). The burial cannot be by spraying water.

- Jesus Christ himself was baptized by being dipped in water (Matthew 3:16)
- Similarly Philip baptized the Ethiopian by dipping them in water (Acts 8:36-39).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. We learn how our Church administers the Sacrament of Baptism to conform with the Bible’s teachings and the holy traditions.
- b. As God can work on the infants in the Sacrament of Baptism and give them new life, we must never lose hope in anything. God can do wonders in supporting us. The grace of God can help you no matter how weak or sinful you are.
- c. Take one step forward. Then move in the right direction and the Lord can work with you with His Holy Spirit to a deeper spiritual level. Never lose hope. Just be committed to God and the church.

Applications:

- Understand why the church allows babies to get baptized
- understand why the church baptises by dipping the person in water.

Exercises:

1. Why did you learn today?
2. What is the importance of baptism? Why do we get baptised? (See John 3)
3. why does the church baptize babies?

Week 2

Life of Repentance

Objectives:

- To learn that true repentance needs commitment.
- To apply the life of repentance now and live with it through next year and the rest of our lives.

References:

- Luke 15:11-32

Memory Verse:

Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. (Hebrew 4:7)

Introduction

In the beginning of a New Year, we need to ask ourselves: What did we do last year? What are we going to do this coming year for the benefit of our souls and for the kingdom of God on earth? What are we going to do for the sake of the day in which we are going to give account in front of God on what we have done? How about our hearts, were they pure? Did we live our lives last year according to God's commandments?

The end of a year and the beginning of a new one is a good time to review our strategy in life. The strategy in life must be based upon developing a strong relationship with God. Step number one in this direction is to repent and the life of repentance becomes our resolution for the New Year.

Lesson Outline

- I. Meaning of repentance: The person regrets his bad actions and knows that these bad actions are not only harmful to himself but they also go

against God's commandments. He must know that he is wrong and not give himself any excuses. He must be ready to stop doing bad things. He must be determined to stand against his lusts in order to remove them from his heart. The word repentance in the Greek language is "Metanias" which means that man leaves his previous thinking and changes his thinking to a new one; as St. Paul said, "... *be transformed by the renewing of your mind* ..." (Romans 12:2).

- II. How can a person repent? First he must know his sins. To know his sins he must sit quietly with himself and review all his actions. Then he will realize that he did so many mistakes. The person is then on the road to repentance and soon he realizes that sin is his enemy. In order to repent, the person must give up depending on his own human ability and depend totally on God who can change him from inside. Coming back to God (i.e. repentance) is the work of God inside us and only the Holy Spirit can cut the evil things from its roots and all the darkness inside us is replaced by the light of God.

There are however, specific steps that one can do from his part to hand himself to the Holy Spirit to do the change:

- Soul searching: The person must start by searching his situation to realize his miserable state and that he needs God badly "*How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger*" (Luke 15:17).
- Thinking of the outcome of sin: The person must realize that sin deprives him from his peace here on earth and from his eternal life as well. St. John Chrysostom said "If you remembered your sin God will not make mention of it. But if you forget your sin God will not forget it".
- Remembering God's Great love to the sinners: God loved me and gave Himself up for me on the cross. Therefore, He will definitely accept me "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you'". So the lost son had total confidence of the love of his father. Now is a good time to review what we did last year and decide on some resolutions.

- III. We must not delay repentance: If the sound of the Holy Spirit came to your heart and you felt anxious to repent, do not delay even for a few minutes. It is possible that the incentive to repent will go away if you waited and you search for repentance and do not find it. Also, if

you delay repentance, the devil will get ready for you and start a big war against your repentance. He will do this because he knows your intention to repent. “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hear” .

Many people who defer repentance never repent at all. Every time you defer repentance it means that you reject to make peace with God and prefer to be away from Him and you do not care about His love for you.

- IV. After we repent we must go and confess: As the sick man needs a doctor to give him medicine, also a sinner (and we are all sinners to various degrees) needs his father of confession to help him get over his sins and prays for him. Also when we confess we hear from God through the father of confession that our sins are forgiven.
- V. How many times do we need to repent and confess? We need to repent every day and review what we did, regret the bad things and ask God to help us to stop. We must confess as frequent as can be seen by the father of confession: once a month or once every three weeks and so on.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Let us make the life of repentance our resolution for the New Year.
- b. The importance of repentance stems from the fact that without it, salvation for us cannot be fulfilled. *“I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3).

Applications:

- Reconcile if there is anyone you fought before.
- Ask for prayer help if you are facing temptation for the same sin.
- Meditate about your daily habits and identify acts which does not honor God.

Exercises:

1. What is repentance?

2. What are the steps in true repentance?
3. God is merciful. Having this in mind, what should we do when we sin?
What do we have to do in order not to repeat the same sin?

Week 3

Confession

Objectives:

- To learn our church's teaching on confession and the way of doing it.

References:

- Matthew 18:18; Luke 15:7; Acts 19:18; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9

Memory Verse:

Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 18:18)

Introduction

Lesson Outline

I. Two steps of confession:

1. Repentance and confession to God. This must be done regularly; preferably daily.
2. Confession to the church represented by the priest to hear from him the word of forgiveness and acceptance (the absolution). This also must be done regularly with a specified frequency as agreed with the father of confession.

The Lord Jesus established His relationship with the church as the relationship of the head to the body. When a person sins, his or her sin is against Jesus (the head) and the church (His body). And the sin causes separation from Jesus - in heaven - and separation from Jesus' body- the church- on earth. Hence, a person confessing his or her sin

is seeking the return of good relationship with Jesus and the Church. The two steps mentioned above are the only ways to accomplish this. As repentance must be followed by confession, whoever repents only resembles to a person who goes to the doctor but does not get the prescription to take it.

II. Examples in the Old Testament about Confession:

- God invited Adam to confess by asking him. *“And He said ‘who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?’”* (Genesis 3:11).
- In Leviticus we read *“And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing”* (Leviticus 5:5).
- When David sinned, God sent to him Nathan the prophet to confess his sin to him. Please read (2 Samuel 12:1-15).
- In Proverbs we read *“He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy”* (Proverbs 28:13).

III. Examples from the New Testament about Confession:

- The people of Jerusalem went out to John the Baptist confessing their sins (Matthew 3:6).
- Our Lord Jesus gave the authority to the priests to bind and to loose matters of the believers on earth (Matthew 18:18). After the resurrection of Jesus, He met His Disciples in the upper room and said to them. *“Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you”* (John 20:21).
- In the book of Acts, St. Luke mentioned *“And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds”*(Acts 19:18).
- St. John also said *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”*(1 John 1:9).

IV. Additional Benefits of Confessing to the Priest:

- The priest has more experience in spiritual matters and he can give us advice by the guidance of the Holy Spirit to him.

- The priest is a very confidential person. When we have any problem we need to talk it over with someone who can keep your matter confidential, we can go to the priest.
- As His Holiness Pope Shenouda III puts it, “Confession gives solution and absolution.”

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. We must confess our sins to God and to the priest on a regular basis. The most important aspect is that we must be accurate in our confession and be obedient to our father of confession.
- b. The father of confession is:
 - your Father, i.e., kind and trustworthy,
 - your reminder of God, i.e., His commandments and His beautiful promises to you,
 - trying too hard to make you committed to God, i.e., not to himself, and
 - the one who takes your sins away from you and puts it on Christ who carries away the sins of the whole world.

Applications:

- It is important to practice a life of confession. The bible says, “*I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.*” (Luke 15:7). Thus, we need to regularly and constantly exercise a life of repentance and confession.
- Repentance and confession to God. This must be done regularly; preferably daily. Confession to the church represented by the priest to hear from him the word of forgiveness and acceptance (the absolution). This also must be done regularly with a specified frequency as agreed with the father of confession.

Exercises:

1. What did you learn today?

2. What is the right way to repent and confess?
3. What are the benefits of confessing to our father of confession?

Week 4

The Love of Christ for Us

Objectives:

- To emphasize the love of Christ for us through all the events described in Luke chapter 1.

References:

- Luke 1:1-80; 1 John 3:18; Matthew 22:36-40; John 3:16

Memory Verse:

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)

Introduction

Perhaps one of the sweetest western Christmas traditions is giving and receiving candy canes. Many who enjoy eating this treat or hanging the canes on their trees are unaware of the symbolism that is rooted in the person of Our Lord Jesus. The shape, like a shepherd's staff, symbolizes the love, guidance and protection of our good shepherd. Upside down, the cane forms the letter 'J' for Jesus. The red color symbolizes the atoning sacrifice of Christ shed blood. The white color symbolizes the Savior's purity and holiness. The candy cane is sweet to represent the beautiful life that an individual lives with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Love of Christ is above the level of speech (Luke 1:8-22): When the angel of the Lord declared to Zacharias that the Lord will answer his prayers with his wife to have a son, he didn't believe God. So

the Angel said to him *“But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time”* (Luke 1:20). This means that the angel was saying to Zacharias that the love of God and His precious gifts is above the level of comprehension and talk. For this reason Zacharias had to be mute until the love of God, is above the level of discussion, was fulfilled.

- II. The Love of Christ was declared by the angel to the Holy Virgin Mary on our behalf (Luke 1:26-38): The Lord chose the Holy Virgin Mary to stand on behalf of the whole human race to receive the message of God’s love through Archangel Gabriel. God chose her because she was humble, simple, and obedient. How did she gain all these virtues? She gained all these things because she was praying and listening to the word of God, as she was in the house of God since she was three years old. The angel told her the most important news that God Himself is coming to take our flesh through her by the Holy Spirit. He blessed our nature by doing that and there is no love more than this. We do not deserve all this love from God because of our many sins.

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).

The Love of Christ was declared by St. Elizabeth in her welcoming of the Holy Virgin (Luke 1:39-56): When the Holy Virgin Mary went to serve St. Elizabeth while she was pregnant at her old age, St. Elizabeth declared the utmost love, which is God was coming for us. *“Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”* (Luke 1:42-43) So, St. Elizabeth was declaring that St. Mary is the Mother of the Lord. There is no love for the human race more than this. The name, Emanuel, means God with us, which shows the amazing love of God to us.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt
among us (John 1:14).

The Love of Christ was declared by St. Zacharias (Luke 1:57-80): After St. Zacharias saw the fulfillment of God's promise to give him a son, he opened his mouth and declared that his son is just an ambassador before the coming of the Lord Christ Himself. He declared this utmost love when he said "*Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people*" (Luke 1:68).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Let us live in God's love for us.
- b. We must keep at His commandments for us as initiated by His love. "*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*" (John 14:15).
- c. We must exchange love with Him. "*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*" (John 15:12).

Applications:

- The two biggest commandments in the bible are loving God and loving our neighbor. Practice loving God and loving your neighbor.

Exercises:

1. What did you learn from today's lesson?
2. Do you think we should love others just by mouth? How do we show our love to our brothers and sisters? "*My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*" (1 John 3:18).

Part VI

Lessons for the Month of February

Week 1

The Mystery of the House of God

Objectives:

- To illustrate the glory of the house of God and that it is a very unique place from all other places in the world.

References:

- Psalm 84:1-7, Genesis 28:10-19

Memory Verse:

How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of Hosts. (Psalm 84:1)

Introduction

Amidst the violent storms of the world, and under the pressure of ceaseless temptations, the Psalmist pauses to think. The sparrow has found a home to settle and the swallow a nest to protect its young but where would she find a place to dwell, and shelter to inhabit!

No other place can compete with the altars of God, the Lord of hosts, to please the heart and comfort the body. There, the ground beneath one's feet escapes; the materialistic world in its total disappears from sight, and the soul emerges to Heaven, her abode. As if by the wings of the Spirit, one is lifted up to the Divine Throne to visualize God, the King and beloved confidant.

Lesson Outline

I. House of God:

- a. Please read Genesis 28:10-19. In this reading we note that it is the first mention of the expression "House of God" in the Holy

Bible: *“Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place . . . How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the Gate of heaven’* (Genesis 28:16-17). From this we realize the essence of the church:

1. It is the house of the Lord.
 2. It is the gate to Heaven.
- b. In Psalm 48, David describes the blessedness of dwelling in the House of God: “Blessed are those who dwell in Your house”.
 - c. Then David describes the feeling of a person going to church “My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord”. Are we anxious to go to church? What do we feel while we are going to the house of God? Are we glad and thankful that the Lord is opening His house for us? David says, *“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord’”* (Psalm 122:1).
 - d. The church is a source of joy, peace and comfort when we come to meet God.
 - e. When we worship God, it should not be out of duty or routine, it should be our voluntary action to gain the free gift of the Holy Spirit given to us by God.
 - f. In the House of God, we assemble with the angels and participate with them in praising the Lord.
 - g. In the House of God we treasure the benefits of the Holy sacraments. For example, in the sacrament of the Holy Communion, we are united with the Lord Jesus through His Body and Blood. Please mention other examples of the sacraments’ blessing that we receive from the Church.
 - h. We must respect the House of God and understand the meaning of the various liturgies prayed in it.
 - i. The Secret behind the Glory of the House of God is the Work of the Holy Spirit.
- II. The Establishment of the Church: The first church was established on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and the Disciples who met in the Upper Room, praying in one spirit. Three thousand people were converted on that blessed day after the sermon of Saint Peter. The number of the faithful increased day after day; so many Jews and Gentiles believed in Christ and accepted the preaching of salvation. So, the birth of the Church was dependent on the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and the Disciples. It was

then natural that the Holy Spirit affected the church, as a whole just as the Apostles and Disciples were affected.

- III. The Effect of the Holy Spirit on the Church: This effect appeared in many forms, some of which are mentioned below.
- a. Life of Sharing: *“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common”* (Acts 2:44).
 - Spiritual Sharing: *“And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). Jesus taught us *“Take, eat; this is My body . . . Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant”* (Matthew 26:26-28).
 - Materialistic Sharing: *“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common”* (Acts 4:32).
 - b. Strength During Persecutions: *“In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33).
 - c. Preaching to the Whole World: *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. We must be thankful to have a church where we gather around God who loves us and whom we love.
- b. In the church, we present to God all our prayers and receive from Him, through the Holy Sacraments, all our needs.
- c. We must take all the necessary steps to maintain full respectability to the house of God.

Applications:

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Exercises:

- 1.

Week 2

The Tabernacle of Meeting I

Objectives:

- To study the tabernacle of meeting and its symbolic, prophetic and spiritual meanings.

References:

- Hebrews 8-10, Exodus 35-40, Leviticus 1-10

Memory Verse:

...I may dwell among them. (Exodus 25:8)

Introduction

The tabernacle of meeting occupied significant parts of the Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament, it occupied Exodus 35-40 and Leviticus 1-10. In the New Testament, St. Paul the apostle referred to the tabernacle of meeting. The tabernacle of meeting has plenty of symbols for the presence of the Incarnate God among His people in the church of the New Testament. So the tabernacle of meeting was a symbol of the church of New Testament. The design of the tabernacle of meeting was not left to any human being to do, but God Himself designed the tabernacle and Moses did it accordingly. This shows us that God cares a lot about his house, the church. St. Paul the apostle explained many of the symbols of the contents of the tabernacle and its parts. He said *“but Christ came as a High Priest of the good thing to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own Blood He entered the most holy place one for all having obtained eternal redemption”* (Heb. 9:11,12). In our church today the midnight praise has many songs and hymns interpreting the contents of the holy place (the sanctuary) and the most holy (the holiest of all) as being God, the Lord Jesus Christ being incarnated and coming from St. Mary the Virgin.

Lesson Outline

- I. From the meeting tent to the tabernacle of meeting:
 - a. The meeting tent: There was a meeting tent mentioned in (Exodus 33:7-11), which Moses had erected outside the camping place of the people of Israel. There are no details about it. When Moses went into that tent, all the people came out and stood, each at the door of their own tent. They would watch the pillar of cloud as it rested at the entrance of the tent of the meeting while God spoke to Moses. Then they would fall on their knees. When Moses returned to the camp, Joshua, the young son of Nun, remained inside the tabernacle and never left it.
 - b. The tabernacle of meeting: God designed the tabernacle of meeting and Moses set it up exactly as God told him in Sinai. On the first day of the second year after the people of Israel left Egypt (Exodus 40:17). It was placed in the midst of the twelve tribes of Israel, whether they were traveling or resting. The glory of God rested and filled the tabernacle of meeting (after it was anointed and sanctified) in the form of a cloud that provided shade during the day and light during the night. When the cloud descended the people rested. When it ascended, they traveled (Exodus 40:34). When the journey across the wilderness was over the people of Israel crossed the river Jordan. They were led by the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant and as their feet touched the water, the water parted (Joshua 3:15) so that the people were able to cross and enter the land of Canaan. There the tabernacle of meeting was set up, first in Gilgal, then in Shiloh.
Afterwards the tabernacle of meeting was transported to other places a number of times. At one point in time, the Ark of Covenant was taken by the Palestinians who kept it for seven months after which they returned it. It then remained in the house of Obed (David's grandfather). It was then taken to the hometown of David (Bethlehem). During the reign of King Solomon, the ark and the contents of the tabernacle of meeting was carried to the altar, which He had built. During the reign of the evil kings of Judah, the ark was removed from the altar, and the Holy Bible does not mention it again. This could be due to its transportation to Babylon during the captivity and it was not returned.
- II. Use of the tabernacle of meeting at the time of Moses: During the days of Moses the prophet, the tabernacle of meeting was a sign of God's

presence in the midst of His people. This gave people a sense of security and confidence that God is dwelling with them. The tabernacle was also a place manifesting God's glory, which the people could come to pray and feel close to Him.

- III. The symbolic nature of the tabernacle of meeting: God Himself dictated all the rites of worship and offering in the tabernacle of meeting. This was exercise of obedience in one hand. On the other hand these rites were symbolic of the incarnation of the Son of God, His appearance among people and the value of the redemption that He offered through His Holy and precious Blood.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. It's a great feeling of an individual he or she would feel God so close. The tabernacle of meeting in the Old Testament was a symbol of the holy church in the New Testament.
- b. The church of the New Testament gets its value, strength and importance from the presence of the Lord Jesus among His people in the church. He is the true Lamb of God. All the sacrifices and offerings in the tabernacle of meeting were symbols of the true sacrifice our Lord and master Jesus Christ.

Applications:

- Do you have a "tent of meeting" of your own?
- What are some ways you know God is with you?

Exercises:

1. In what forms did God show His people (the Israelites) that He was with them?
2. What was the tent of meeting?
3. What is the significance of the tabernacle?

Week 3

The Tabernacle of Meeting II

Objectives:

- To study the tabernacle of meeting and its symbolic, prophetic and spiritual meanings.

References:

- Hebrews 8-10, Exodus 35-40, Leviticus 1-10

Memory Verse:

... *Sins are not forgiven without blood.* (Hebrews 9:22)

Introduction

Start by reviewing the previous lesson. In this lesson we will talk about the various parts of the tabernacle of meeting explaining the various meanings of these parts. The tabernacle of meeting contained two parts, the outer court and the inner court. We will describe the contents of each part and dwell on the spiritual meaning of it.

Lesson Outline

- I. The outer court of the tabernacle of meeting:
 - a. The gates of the tabernacle of meeting: The description of the gates of the tabernacle of meetings is in (Exodus 38:18-20). We have indicated that the tabernacle of meeting was intended to signify God's presence in the midst of His people. The person entering, however, needs to pass through a gate. This gate was a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ through whom we can enter heaven. He is the way that leads us into God's presence. The Lord Jesus said, "*I am the door. If anyone enters by me he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*" (John 10:9). Thus the door of the

tabernacle of meeting was a symbol of Christ. The door consisted of curtains, hung up on four pillars. The curtains were made of four kinds of material:

- Blue thread cloth (light blue) as a symbol of Christ's heavenly person
- Purple thread cloth (vivid red) to denote the king of glory purple is a royal color
- Scarlet cloth (dark red) to denote the Lord Jesus who was wounded for us
- White fine linen (twined) as a symbol of our Lord's nature spotless and without sin thus denoting our redeemer.

The curtains were hung up on four pillars made of Acacia wood overlaid with gold. These stand for love of Christ that encompasses the whole four corners of the earth.

- b. The bronze altar for the burned offerings: This is the first thing that meets a person entering the court. It is considered the biggest piece in the tabernacle of meeting. It was in the form of a case that was five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high. It was made up of acacia wood overlaid with bronze. It had four protruding horns at the four corners. The altar was hollow and this became filled with fuel and ashes of the offerings as presented on it.

The fire was never put out so that it continually burned (Lev 6:9). The Lord started this fire in the day of His sanctification and it was the priest's job to add dry fuel only. The bronze altar and all the offerings presented on it were symbols of the Lord Christ who suffered on our behalf "*but He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed.*" (Isaiah 53:5).

The offering presented had to be without blemish. The sinner had to place his or her hand on its head and confess his or her sin. Then the priest would burn it all on the altar. It was the promise that God had made to forgive the sin of those who presented an offering, "*sins are not forgiven without blood*" (Heb. 9:22). Atonement and salvation are indicated by the horns of the altar, which symbolizes the power and efficacy of Christ offering. The horns at that time served as a means of salvation to anyone who sought refuge in them. There, they could be safe until their innocence was confirmed.

The offering was tied to the horns of the altar before it was presented and burned. This symbolizes the tie of love, which made the

Lord look towards Jerusalem and Golgotha. Although the offering was considered a bearer of sin upon presenting it, yet God ordered that its ashes be gathered in a pure pot. These were sprayed over sinners as means of purification (Num. 19:9). If the blood of rams and bulls and their ashes could sanctify, how much more can this offering do the pure blood of the Lord Jesus. It can certainly purify us from all dead acts (Heb. 9:11-14).

- c. The bronze laver: The bronze laver description can be found in Exodus 30:17-21. It was put in the outer court between the bronze altar and the entrance to the sanctuary. It was filled with water and the priests had to wash in its water when they had to present offerings on the altar. Similarly they had to wash before entering the sanctuary, so that they will not die. The bronze laver symbolizes our baptism. It is through baptism that we become qualified to be members in the church. The laver was used as well as by the priests to wash their legs and feet with its water daily before drawing near the altar of burning incense or the holy place. This represents our daily struggle to adhere to purity and holiness for our well-being.

II. The inner court of the tabernacle of meeting: We will describe the following parts:

- a. Coverings: The first layer consisted of fine linen, blue, purple and scarlet silk. This layer symbolizes spiritual virtues, which the Lord grants to the inner soul.

The second layer consisted of coverings made of coarse goat's skins. Their color denoted the hardship believers and the church tolerate due to external persecution. Inwardly, however, they are filled with the grace and consolation granted by God "*I am dark but lovely . . . like the tents of keda, like the curtains of Solomon*" (Song of Songs 1:5).

The third layer was made of ram's skins, dyed red, which reminds us of the leather clothes that God made for Adam and Eve to cover them up.

The last layer was a covering made of dark badger skin (a sea animal) and strongly resistant to weather conditions. It indicates the Lord's protection over His children "*I clothed you . . . of badger skin*" (Ezekiel 16:10).

- b. The contents of the sanctuary (or holy place):

- The table of the showbread: The description of the showbread table, which signifies the presence of God, can be found in Exodus

25:23-30 and 37:10-16. This is the first time in the Bible where the table for serving the Lord is mentioned. It is a symbol of our Lord, who offered Himself as the “Bread of Life”. It is a symbol of the Holy Communion to which the Lord invites us to His Holy Body and Blood as food of life.

- The golden lamp stand: The golden lamp stand description can be found in Exodus 25:31-40 and 37:17-24. Since there were no windows in the tent to give light the lamp stand had the function to give light. It is a symbol of our Lord who is Light of Light. As the Lord is the Light of the world He told us also “you are the light of the world.” We can become the light of the world through the action of the Holy Spirit in us (Eph. 4:30).
 - The altar for burning sweet incense: The description of the altar for burning sweet incense can be found in Exodus 30:1-10 and 37:25. Aaron, the priest, used to burn sweet incense on it every morning and evening when he refueled the lamp stand. The altar for burning incense is a sweet symbol of our Lord who offered Himself as a sweet offering for our sakes, and the smell went up to His Father.
 - The Veil: The description of the Veil can be found in Exodus 26:31-33. The Veil divided the tabernacle into two, the holy place (sanctuary) and the Most High. So there were things inside the Veil like the Ark of the Covenant and things outside the Veil (contents of the sanctuary).
- c. The Holy of holies: The description of which can be found in Exodus 25:10-22 and 37:1-9.
- The ark of covenant: The Ark represented the Presence of God in the midst of His people. It was called the Ark of Covenant (Deuteronomy 31:26) in reference to the blood of the covenant, which allowed the priests once a year to approach the ark to obtain God’s blessing and confirm the promise of mercy and forgiveness. It had the tablets of the covenant on which the Ten Commandments were written, it had the Manna (a sample of the food that God gave them in the wilderness) and it had the budding rod of Aaron.
 - The mercy seat: The mercy seat was made up of pure gold with two cherubim of gold at each end. The cherubim stretched their wings above, covering the mercy seat and facing each other. God told Moses, “*there I will meet with you and I will speak with you ...*” (Exodus 25:22).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. God cares about the ritual aspects of worship. This is clear from all the worship system in the tabernacle. We also have to keep the rites of the church (without being too rigid).
- b. As the Lord filled the tabernacle of meeting with His glory He can also fill our hearts with His heavenly peace and heavenly glory.
- c. We are fortunate in the New Testament as we enter our church and can experience with great joy the holiest place of all places where the Lord Christ Himself comes to us on the altar through His Body and Blood in the sacrament of the Holy Communion.

Applications:

- Tabernacle is a place of encountering God. Do you personally have a specific place you go to to have a one on one with your God?
- We saw that priests had to wash/clean themselves before they enter the sanctuary. How often do we repent and ask God to cleans us as get to His Throne?
- Jesus told us we are the light of the world. Are you truly being a light? How are you being a light?

Exercises:

1. How many parts did tabernacle have?
2. Why don't we now burn offerings such as animals to get pardon of our sins?
3. How many layer are there on the inner court of the tabernacle?

Week 4

Lighting the Church during Liturgy

Objectives:

- To learn that icons in the church aid our memories and provide biblical messages for spiritual growth.

References:

- Psalms 119:105, Psalm 119:10, John 8:12

Memory Verse:

In Your light we see light. (Ps.36:9)

Introduction

How important is light in your life? How would our life be different if there was no light at all. Read Exodus 10:21-23 and ask your students to imagine living in such an environment.

Lesson Outline

- I. Lighting is an order from God: *“You shall make seven lamps for it, and they shall arrange its lamps so that they give light in front of it”* (Exodus 25:37). So in the Ark of Testimony, God ordered lights to be in front of the table of incense and table of showbread. The lights are on day and night. Please read: Exodus 27:20 *“And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light to cause the lamp to burn continually.”*
- II. Our Lord Jesus also made His last supper while lights and candles were on.

- III. In the book of Acts we read that the Disciples were meeting at the beginning of the week and they had many lamps and candles on. *“There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together”* (Acts 20:7-11).
- IV. Lighting also is a sign of God’s glory. *“And from the throne proceeded lightings”* (Rev 4:5).
- V. Lighting is also suitable for the Word of God. Lights are put on around the Bible when the Bible is read in the church as a sign of joy. Remember the word “gospel” means good or joyful news. *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”* (Ps. 119:105). So we have to behave according to the Word of God.
- VI. Lighting reminds us of the promise of God and the Saints who are called as “lights” in their Father’s Kingdom. *“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”* (Matthew 13:43).
- VII. The light reminds us of the Lord Jesus who said, *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life”* (John 8:12). Sin and sinful life are darkness. A true Christian will lead a righteous life away from the darkness of Satan. *“...God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...”* (1 John 1:5-6).
- VIII. The church is an icon of the heavenly Jerusalem. The church in heaven is lit up with the glory of God. *“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light”* (Rev. 21:23.)

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Everything done in the church is for a reason. When we look at a candle which is being burnt for light to us, we remember to sacrifice our efforts and our time for people.
- b. Also we have to review our actions. And make sure that we live in righteousness before God. We must avoid sinful life/actions.
- c. When we look at the lights in the church, we remember the beautiful light which will light the heavenly city.

Applications:

WEEK 4. LIGHTING THE CHURCH DURING LITURGY

- Everytime you go to church and see lights, remember how much light Jesus gave to our lives. *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life”* (John 8:12) *“ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love”* (Colossians 1:13)
- Practice lighting the candles when you go inside the church, and think about what it means.

Exercises:

1. King David said *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”* (Ps. 119:105). How is the work of God light to our feet/path? Try answering this question in relation to the following verse. *“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.”*

Part VII

Lessons for the Month of March

Week 1

Fruits of the Holy Spirit I: Patience

Objectives:

- To learn about patience (long suffering) as a fruit of the Holy Spirit who is inside the heart of the believer that leads his or her life.

References:

- Galatians 5:16-26; Matthew 23:37; Matthew 18:15-22

Memory Verse:

Sir, let it alone this year also. (Luke 13:8)

Introduction

In Galatians 5:19-23, St. Paul compares “the works of the flesh” with “the fruit of the spirit”. *“The works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissension, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*

- a. Love: Love is the basis of all virtues. St. Paul describes the practical side of love: *“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails”* (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

- b. Joy: Christianity is the message of joy. St. Paul said, *“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit”* (1 Thessalonians 1:6).
- c. Peace: Peace comes from love and joy. St. Paul said, *“for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 14:17).
- d. Kindness: Kindness is the opposite of aggressiveness. It is one of the qualities of the saints; St. Paul said, *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering”* (Colossians 3:12).

As Christians, who have accepted the Holy Spirit when we were baptized and have received the sacrament of Chrismation, the evidence that the Holy Spirit is working inside us is to show the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. In this lesson we will concentrate on patience, or long-suffering, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit given to us from God.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Meaning of Patience or Long Suffering: It means to be slow to anger; it is the ability to withstand the false accusations of others. Our Master Jesus Christ gives us the deepest example of long-suffering. At the end of every hourly prayer in the Agpeya, we pray to God, referring to Him as “the Christ, our God, who is long-suffering, plenteous in mercy and compassion.”
- II. God is Patient with Us: Please read Luke 13:6-9. In this parable the owner of the vineyard gives the unfruitful fig tree another chance: one more year. Peter denied our Lord Jesus, but our Lord gave him enough chances to repent. In fact, our Lord Jesus gave Peter special attention to help him, with great patience, to repent and become one of the faithful disciples. Our Lord Jesus was very patient with Jerusalem: *“How often I wanted to gather your children together . . . ”* (Matthew 23:37).
- III. The Result of Not Using God’s Patience: After Jesus tried so many times with Jerusalem and they did not accept He said, *“See! Your house is left to you desolate”* (Matthew 23:38). In the same way, God loves us and He is patient with us but this does not mean that we abuse God’s patience and delay repentance. In fact the patience of God is to lead us to repentance.

- IV. We Must be Patient with Others: If we are patient with other people, we must not get angry at them. When the heart is full of anger or the heart lacks love, then we become impatient and fail to cooperate or even understand people. Think about how much patience God is showing with you!!
- V. Up to what limit we must be patient: Please read Matthew 18:15-22. Peter asked the Lord Jesus *“Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”* Jesus said to him, *“I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven”* (Matthew 18:21-22). The intention here is not the literal numbers, but is meant to signify an almost infinite number. We must have patience in our interaction with others. A Christian person announces his or her opinion in love and kindness. If you have a friend at school or a younger brother or sister at home who is causing troubles for you, you have to be patient with him/her and not get angry. A good example of patience is in the story of Job. He was tempted and lost everything. His wife became impatient and told him to forget about God and to die. But he replied to her: *“you talk like an ignorant; do we accept good things from God and we get angry when we get bad things. Job stayed patient until God gave him back twice as much as what he lost”*.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. In dealing with others we must not get angry. We must practice patience by having an open mind. We must pray that God give us patience as a gift of the Holy Spirit.
- b. If we are passing through difficulties, instead of focusing on them and becoming afraid or sad, let us learn to divert our attention and focus on God and His love for us. This way we will become happy, peaceful and more patient. The bible teaches us *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*(Philippians 4:6-7).

Applications:

- As Christians, who have accepted the Holy Spirit when we were baptized and have received the sacrament of Chrismation, the evidence

that the Holy Spirit is working inside us is to show the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.

- Think about how you can apply patience or long-suffering in your daily life.

Exercises:

1. What does patience or long suffering mean? Give practical examples in which you can exercise this in your daily life?
2. In regards to patience, what do you learn from the life of Jesus Christ?
3. Since God loves us and is patient with us, does that mean we are free to do whatever we please ? (Ecclesiastes 11:9)

Week 2

Fruits of the Holy Spirit II: Kindness, Goodness and Gentleness

Objectives:

- To learn how to deal with people having the fruits of the Holy Spirit working in us.

References:

- Galatians 5:16-26; Luke 10:25-37

Memory Verse:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly ... And whatever he does shall prosper. (Psalm 1: 1-3)

Introduction

As a Christian who has the Holy Spirit inside us, we must “walk in the Spirit”. The Holy Spirit must show real signs in our everyday life “*love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (Galatians 5:22). In this lesson we will concentrate on “kindness, goodness and gentleness”. These three fruits of the Holy Spirit are related. It is important to emphasize here that the personal attributes obtained as fruit of the Holy Spirit (e.g. kindness, goodness and gentleness) far exceeds those obtained from the world.

Lesson Outline

- I. Kindness: Kindness is the reverse of aggressiveness or severity and this is what St. Paul is explaining. “*Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: ‘on those who fell, severity; but toward you;*

goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off” (Romans 11:22). St. Paul also mentioned that kindness is one of the characters of the Saints *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering”* (Colossians 3:12).

In the Sermon on the mountain, our Lord Jesus Christ in the “beatitudes” mentions that the people who are kind or merciful will gain the mercy of God *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy”* (Matthew 5:7). Examples of people who were very kind:

- a. St. Mary was so kind when she visited Elizabeth to help her during her pregnancy.
- b. St. Bishoy, one time while he was rushing with a group of monks towards the monastery to celebrate a feast, they met a very old man who asked them to carry him to the church. All the monks rushed to the monastery leaving the old man except St. Bishoy. St. Bishoy preferred to carry the old man to the church and be late. He carried him and walked slowly to the monastery. When they reached the gate the old man became very light and disappeared. This old man was the Lord Jesus. Our Lord Jesus appears and blesses the kind people. Also think about the the Good Samaritan and his kindness (Luke 10:25–37).

II. Goodness: Kindness results in and is related to goodness. Goodness is the behavior of doing good. St. Paul said, *“Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another”* (Romans 15:14). Judging other people does not correspond with goodness. When we judge other people and look at their sins, this is evidence that we do not love them. One of the monks committed a sin and a council was held to judge him. They invited St. Moses the black. He refused repeatedly but because of their insisting he went and carried a bag full of sand with a hole in it and entered the council room. When they saw him they asked, “What are you doing?” He said I am carrying my sins at my back and coming today to judge other people. On hearing this, they left the monk who sinned and did not judge him. This is “goodness” from St. Moses the black: he taught the other monks a lesson and did not judge another monk. Looking only at my mistakes and sins, seeking God’s help and doing my best against the devil as well as helping others, go hand in hand with goodness.

Examples: The parable of the *“Pharisee and the tax collector”* (Luke 18: 10-14) and the Canaanite woman who won the mercy of Jesus on

her daughter by her good words and her good feelings (Matthew 15: 22-28).

- III. Gentleness: “Gentleness” is related to meekness. A person who is gentle does not get angry with people. The gentle (or meek) individual is quiet. Our Lord Jesus said “*Blessed are the meek. For they shall inherit the earth*” (Matthew 5:5). The Lord Jesus Himself was described that He “does not speak loudly and no one hears his voice in the street”. Jesus also said, “Learn from Me because I am meek and humble in heart.” Our Lord Jesus was very gentle in all his treatments especially with the sinners; for example: with the Samaritan woman when He met her beside the well, He said to her, “you have replied correctly”. When she said that she had no husband, He was very gentle with her. Explain, “Blessed are the meek (or the gentle), for they shall inherit the earth”. A meek individual does not treat other people in an aggressive way. All people feel comfortable to talk or live with a meek individual. When this individual’s journey on earth is completed, his friends and all the people who dealt with him still remember him. Even after he left the world by years and years, his name is still mentioned and remembered by all the people because he was meek. That is what it means by “They shall inherit the earth”. On the reverse an individual who is tough and aggressive with people, they would like to forget about him.. As the Bible said in Proverbs “The memory of the righteous lasts forever.”

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Kindness, goodness and gentleness as fruit of the Holy Spirit must be real and coming from the heart and not just an external behavior done for show. Remember, God sees the heart!

Applications:

- Think of a way you can apply kindness, goodness and gentleness in your daily life.
- If we expect mercy from God, we have to be forgiving. If we seek God’s kindness towards us, we should also be kind to others. It is also important to have patience towards others. Every time you struggle to be patient/kind towards others, think how much patience and kindness God is showing you!

Exercises:

1. What does kindness goodness and gentleness mean to you? Explain in your own words?
2. Give examples of people in the bible that practiced kindness goodness and gentleness in their life?
3. What happens if we are not kind to each other?
4. Read Luke 10:25–37. What do you learn from the Good Samaritan about Kindness?

Week 3

Fruits of the Holy Spirit III: Faithfulness

Objectives:

- To learn about faith as a fruit of the Holy Spirit inside the heart of the believer that leads his or her life.

References:

- Galatians 5:16-26; Matthew 6:30 ;Mark 5:34; Hebrews 11:1; Job 1:21; Acts 5:41

Memory Verse:

And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. (1 John 5:4)

Introduction

A life of faith in God is the cornerstone of a righteous life, leading to a peaceful life here on earth and ultimately to eternal life. Faith is established with full obedience to God and the acceptance of all things from Him, even the unseen. This acceptance is only possible by the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul said “*But without faith it is impossible to please Him*” (Hebrews 11:6).

Please read Hebrews 11:6-40 which shows some of the heroes of faith in the Old Testament. Examples of these faithful people are Noah, Abraham and Moses. Please summarize their lives of faith as mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11. The faith in their hearts showed clearly in their actions.

Lesson Outline

- I. Faith is the Only Solution:

- a. A question is frequently asked, “How can a person overcome the world with all its attractions and influences?” This question was so difficult for the wise and philosophers, but the children of God know the simple answer. Faith is the only answer.
- b. A person who is born from God overcomes the world with his or her faith. Where are then the world’s problems and lusts? These problems disappear by our faith in God and by giving our lives in His hands in full trust that He will take care of it. Faith is passing over from the touchable to the untouchable things. It is passing from death to life.
- c. Faith is the firm belief in God, the kingdom of God and eternity. *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*(Hebrews 11:1) Faith is like the sixth sense that allows us to ascertain God, and his promises.
- d. A man from the world is struggling with the contradiction between earthly and heavenly things. A faithful man has only one priority: heaven and eternity. *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”* (Colssians 3:1-2).

II. Examples of Faithfulness in Our Church:

- a. St. Stephen ”being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55). The people around him wanted to put an end to his life, but the faith inside him was beyond their limited view and he saw his future in heaven.
- b. The church throughout its history has overcome all the persecutions by faith. Thousands and thousands of martyrs defied the sword with their faith. They won their eternal life and also attracted many people to Christianity.
- c. The monks gave a great example of their faith. They left all what they had and possessed nothing. They dedicated all their life for the Savior.
- d. The church in the Apostolic age proved that faith leads to victory over materialistic things. The faithful gave up their money and stood in front of God, free from relying on anything that secures the future. In every generation the faithful were rejected because of the truth and they were persecuted because of the word of God. But they came out with complete joy because they were made worthy to suffer for the Holy name of the Lord (Matthew 5:11).

...and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name (Acts 5:41).

With faith we can gain eternal life, enjoy the salvation of the Lord and the heavenly crown. We hope to have faith so that we do not become like the rich people who rely on their possessions. *“st assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me[a] has everlasting life.”* (John 6:47).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Let us learn from the great multitude of saints in our church to live a life of faith; we must rely on the hands of God to lead us to heaven. *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;”* (Proverbs 3:5).
- b. Let us pray to God to strengthen our faith. Let us be simple and submit our life in God’s hands. *“casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”* (1 Peter 5:7).

Applications:

- Understanding that obedience to God’s call on our lives is in our own best interest.
- Understanding that we are accountable to God for what we do with everything that he has given us. *“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”* (1 Corinthians 10:31).
- Understanding your comparative advantages over people who doesn’t have faith in God. *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ”* (John 14:1). *“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). Those who have faith in God, are not troubled by the things that happen around them. They have peace that comes from believing in God.

- Understanding that God has created us to be what he has called us to be, and to be faithful in everything we do.
- Having faith in God is very important in our prayers. Jesus said, *“all things are possible to him who believes.”* (Mark 9:23).

Exercises:

1. Why do you think those days people are not Faithful?
2. How about you? are you Faithful to God? Are you faithful to people?
3. Worrying is doubting God and his abilities. The bible teaches us this *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:6-7) So ask God to give you faith to trust him in all your situations, just like Job. When Job lost everything he had, including the kids he loved, he didn't betray God. *“He said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.””* (Job 1:21).

Week 4

Fruits of the Holy Spirit IV: Selfcontrol

Objectives:

- To learn that selfcontrol is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- To learn that Christian self-control is deep from inside and not only from outside.

References:

- Galatians 5:16-26; 2 Peter 1:5-6; 1 Corinthians 6: 19-20

Memory Verse:

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge selfcontrol, to selfcontrol perseverance, to perseverance godliness. (2 Peter 1: 5-6)

Introduction

- a. Selfcontrol is not only a good social character but is also a gift of the Holy Spirit. An individual who is full of the Holy Spirit will have the ability of selfcontrol with the help of the Holy Spirit to a much greater extent than a normal man of the world.
- b. Selfcontrol means the ability to say “No” to the things that are not agreeable with the commandments of God. Give examples in our society and how to say no to the various things, like parties, smoking, saying untrue things (lying), and only caring for money and materialistic things. “*And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*” (Galatians 5:24). This means full control of our bodies.

- c. Christian self-control is deep inside and not only from outside behavior
“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” (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20). This means we have to control our desires and our bodies. So, we have *“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”* (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Lesson Outline

How do we achieve selfcontrol?

- I. Realize: First we have to realize that the Lord Jesus Christ is the way and life. We belong to Him, so we have to follow His footsteps in our lives. In addition, without the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we must realize that our own efforts are inadequate. St. Paul said, *“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”* (Romans 5:6).
- II. Efforts: We have to try our best to have self-control. As a first step, we must put in our minds to control our tongues. St. James said, *“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless”* (James 1:26).
- III. Prayers: We must ask God to give us strength, self-control and wisdom. St. James said, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways”* (James 1:5-8). Jesus has lived on earth just like us without a sin, and he knows the troubles and tribulations we go through in our life. *“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”* (Hebrews 4:15-16). So we need to pray constantly to ask God to help us practice self control.
- IV. The Strength of the Word of God: We cry to God in our prayers and God answers our concern in his Holy Bible. St. Paul advised his disciple

Timothy *“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:14-17). King David also understood the importance of meditating God’s words saying, *“Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You”* (Psalms 119:11). He also said, *“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.”* (Psalms 119:9). Thus, reading and meditating God’s word (bible), helps us to practice selfcontrol.

- V. Repentance and Confession: We have to declare our sins to our father of confession and be determined to stop from repeating our sins. Repentance does not mean, for example, that I feel I am lying and I try to stop lying. But repentance in the Christian meaning is standing against one’s desires, getting to the bottom of the causes and the roots of the evil things, and removing it. The father of confession can help a lot in this area with the guidance of the Holy Spirit through Him. The word repentance in Greek is “Metanias” which means that man leaves his previous thinking and rises to a new thinking that is according to God’s will. St. Paul said, *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (Romans 12:2). The bible teaches us, *“He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”* (Proverbs 28:13).
- VI. Communion: Through Communion we receive complete forgiveness and our ability for selfcontrol increases. Our Lord Jesus said, *“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him”* (John 6:56). We overcome everything through our lord Jesus christ who abides in us, just as St Paul said, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*(Philoipians 4:13). Thus, partaking in the Holy Communion helps us practice selfcontrol.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Selfcontrol is evidence of spiritual maturity and it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.
- b. We must cooperate with and heed to guidance of the Holy Spirit inside us so that He works and gives us spiritual maturity and selfcontrol.
- c. We have to exercise our selfcontrol in various situations of anger, emotions, lusts, thought . . . etc. *“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.”*

Applications:

- In what areas do you need to develop for self-control? The disciplines you establish today will determine your success tomorrow.
- But it takes more than just willpower for lasting self-control. It takes a power greater than you ”For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self- control.” (2 Timothy 1:7)
- practice selfcontrol in all aspects of your life. In our speech/anger: *“So then,[a] my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;”* (James 1:19). With our eyes/lust: *“I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?”*(Jobs 31:1).

Exercises:

1. Why do you think some people don’t have self-control?
2. Are you good in controlling yourself?

Part VIII

Lessons for the Month of April

Week 1

Hosanna in the Highest

Objectives:

- To review our faith that the Lord Jesus is the Savior and that the people received Him saying “Hosanna” which means “save us”.
- To review how the Divinity and Humanity of the Lord Jesus were announced in the greetings with which He was received in Jerusalem.

References:

- Matthew 21: 1-11; James 4:10; John 15:12

Memory Verse:

Hosanna in the highest! (Matthew 21:9)

Introduction

Lesson Outline

- I. Our Lord Jesus attended the supper on Saturday Nissan 9, in the village known by the name Bethany, where Mary anointed His feet (John 12:1). On the next day, Sunday Nissan 10, the Jews used to take the lamb of Passover and keep it until Nissan 14 and then slaughter it in the evening (Exodus 12:1-36). On that same day (Nissan 10) our Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, entered Jerusalem and He was going back and forth between the Altar and Bethany.
- II. When they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethpage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “*Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, The Lord has need of them’, and immediately he*

will send them" (Matthew 21:1-3). Bethpage is a small village southeast from the Mountain of Olives. The priests were living in this village to be close to the altar in Jerusalem.

- III. The donkey and the colt represent symbolically the world at this time, which had Jews and Gentiles. So the Lord wants the entire human race, even if their thinking and knowledge of God was as low as the donkey and the colt. St. John Chrysostom said, "The human race was similar to these two animals. The donkey is an impure animal (according to the law) and the donkey is used to carry loads. Similarly, the human race before Christ was impure and loaded with sins." He also said, "The donkey means the church and the new generation which was impure and became pure when Jesus settled in it."

St. Jerome talked about the two disciples whom the Lord sent, saying "Jesus sent His two disciples; one of them to the circumcised and one of them to the gentiles."

St. Amperosius talked about the authority given to the two disciples saying, "It was impossible to loosen the donkey and the colt without the Lord's authority. The Apostolic hand which is given authority from the Lord can loosen them". The man who owned the donkey and the colt did not argue with the disciples. "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: *"Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey'"* (Matthew 21: 4-5).

- IV. Our Lord Jesus announced His love to His bride and appeared very modest to serve her. In His entrance to Jerusalem to give a helping hand to the human race as His bride, He did not take a horse driving a wagon. He is the One who sits on the Cherubim, appeared in Jerusalem riding a donkey and a colt. *"So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them"* (Matthew 21: 6-7).

The disciples gave up the old clothes to enjoy the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as the cloth of righteousness. *"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels"* (Isaiah 61:10). *"And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road"* (Matthew 21:8).

V. The people announced the happiness of the church with its victory with the Lord and the branches from the trees were coupled with the olive branches. St. Augustine said, “the branches of the trees are signs of praise and they mean victory. The Lord came for victory over death, by His death and the defeat of Satan”.

“Then the multitudes who He went before and those who followed Him cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord Hosanna in the highest!’”(Matthew 21:9).

The knowledgeable Origin said, “We can say that who went ‘before’ Him were the prophets who lived before He came and the people who ‘followed’ Him were the Apostles who were attached with Him after the coming of the Word of God. All announced the same thing, in one voice: that the Savior is the incarnate God’.

St. John Chrysostum said, “the people ‘before’ Him announced by their prophecy about the Messiah who was to come and the people ‘after’ Him praised Him announcing that His coming, has been fulfilled”.

The knowledgeable Origin said that “Hosanna to the Son of David . . . Hosanna in the highest” means that the people praised His humanity and His divinity.

“And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, ‘Who is this?’ So the multitude said, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee’” (Matthew 21:10-11). As Jesus enters our hearts to establish His kingdom inside us with His Cross, our hearts shake with love, happiness and peace.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. In order to receive Jesus in our hearts, we must give up our old sinful lives as the disciples gave up the garments for Him to sit on.
- b. Let us be sure that we are benefiting from the salvation that our Lord Jesus have done for us. He is the Lamb of God who carries our sins so that we may gain salvation through His Cross.

Applications:

- Jesus chose a donkey, even though he was the king of kings. This shows his humbleness and love towards us. This teaches us to be humble (James 4:10) and love each other (John 15:12).
- The donkey is an ordinary animal without Jesus mounting on its back. In the same manner, we are nothing without Jesus. Jesus is our king and glory. Also the people chose to put their cloths on the ground where Jesus was passing. We also learn that when we have Jesus in our lives, everything else is trivial. He should be a priority in our life.
- Jesus was going to Jerusalem to die on our behalf. If we truly realize what Jesus did for us on the cross, Hosanna should be a moment of great joy!

Exercises:

1. What does Hosanna Mean? How does that relate to the mission of the Lord in Jerusalem?
2. What did you learn from today's lesson?

Week 2

Christ the Lamb of God: the Maundy Thursday

Objectives:

- To learn that the Lord Christ opened for us the door for the forgiveness of our sins.

References:

- Matthew 26: 17-30, Mark 14: 12-26, Luke 22: 7-30; Matthew 6:22-59

Memory Verse:

For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28)

Introduction

When Christ went up on the Cross, He became our sacrifice. Christ gave His own life so that we may have eternal life. Christ's sacrifice on the cross is the greatest sacrifice; He made it to prove His love for us. "*Greater love has no one than this, then to lay down one's life for his friends*" (John 15:13). Christ wanted His Disciples to remember always this sacrifice of love. He wanted them to remember how He gave His Holy Body to be nailed on the cross and His Precious Blood to be shed from His wounds for the sake of us all. That is why Christ told His Disciples when He gave them the First Communion: "Do this in remembrance of Me". And in order that we do not ever forget this sacrifice, Christ gave us the same Body that was nailed on the Cross to eat, and the same Blood that came down from His wounds to drink whenever we take Communion.

Lesson Outline

- I. In Christ all shall be made alive: *“For as in Adam all die even so in Christ all shall be made alive”* (1 Corinthians 15:22).
 - a. When Adam sinned by disobeying God, he deserved to die and also all the people of the world.
 - b. But God planned for man’s salvation and sent prophets. But man did not listen.
 - c. Then the Lord came Himself - Jesus Christ the incarnate God to save the world.
 - d. The Lord Jesus lived with people, healed them, taught them, forgave their sins and at the end, He was crucified for them by His own will. He declared to His Disciples that He will suffer, be buried, and rise from the dead to grant us salvation.
 - e. On Maundy Thursday we celebrate the feast of the new covenant. On this day, the Lord Jesus, glory be to Him, offered Himself as bread and wine for us to eat, drink and become one with Him. The Lord Christ made this holy table the new covenant for eternal life for whoever is worthy to partake of it.
- II. On Maundy Thursday (Matthew 26:17-30):
 - a. Jesus asked Peter and John to go and prepare for Him and the rest of the Disciples to celebrate the Passover. They prepared everything in St. Mark’s house. St. John Chrysostom explains the question of the Disciples to Jesus “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” We understand from this that Jesus did not have a house or a fixed address. Also we can assume that the Disciples were in a similar situation, or they would have asked Him to eat in one of their houses”.
 - b. Our Lord Jesus and His Disciples celebrated the Passover one day before the Jews celebrated it. This means our Lord Jesus celebrated the Passover on Thursday Nissan 13, then He was crucified on Friday Nissan 14 which was the preparation day for the Passover feast in which the Jews kill the Lamb and on Nissan 15 was the Jewish Passover feast (which was Saturday). Please read the Jewish custom of celebrating the Passover feast as given to them by God through Moses (Exodus 12:1-47).

c. The correspondence between the timing of events in which our true Lamb died and the Jewish Passover celebrations can be shown as follows:

- On the trial of our Lord Jesus on Friday *“Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he (i.e. Pilate) said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King’”* (John 19:14).
- *“Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a holy day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken”* (John 19:31).

III. In the upper room, our Lord Jesus did three things:

- a. First, He celebrated the Passover with His Disciples.
- b. Secondly, He washed His Disciples’ feet.
- c. Thirdly, He offered His body in the form of bread and wine, i.e., He established the Holy Eucharist.

IV. Maundy Thursday in our Church:

- a. Our church on Maundy Thursday does the Liturgy of El-Lakan and the priest washes the feet of the congregation as the Lord Jesus did.
- b. The prayer of the fraction in the Liturgy of Maundy Thursday is the one known by “Fraction for the Slaughtering of Isaac”.
- c. Remember that:
 - The slaughtering of Isaac was a sign of the shedding of the Blood of Christ, the Son of God on the Cross for the salvation of the world.
 - As Isaac carried the wood for the burnt offering, likewise Christ carried the wood of the Cross.
 - As Isaac returned alive, likewise Christ rose from the dead.

Conclusion

On Maundy Thursday Jesus established the Sacrament of Communion. When we take communion we receive the body and blood of Jesus. They are the same body and the same blood with which Jesus was born and with which He was crucified. This is the greatest mystery of the new covenant.

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. *“For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us”* (1 Corinthians 5:7). This means that through the Blood of Jesus we passed from death to life.
- b. We must be ready through repentance and confession to take communion so that we may be washed from our sins.

Applications:

- Understand the love Jesus Christ loved us. He loved us so much he saw it worthy to sacrifice himself to save us from the yoke of sin and eternal death. How should we love each other? Refer Matthew 22:36-40.
- Remember how important the Holy Communion is for a Christian. During every liturgy, we witness an amazing miracle where by the power of the God, the bread is changed to the body of Christ, and the wine into the Holy blood of Christ. That is why attending the Holy liturgy regularly, and participating in the Holy communion is important part of the Christian life.

Exercises:

1. How was the sacrifice of Jesus compared to the sacrifice of Isaac?
2. Why do we wash our feet on Maundy Thursday? What do you learn from that tradition?
3. Why do we take the Holy Communion? How should we prepare when taking the Holy Communion?
4. Why do we need to take the Holy Communion? (Matthew 6: 53-54; Matthew 26:28)
5. What did you learn from Today’s lesson?

Week 3

Christ the Lamb of God: the Paschal Week

Objectives:

- To describe the main events of the Paschal Week and Good Friday and how does our church celebrate the Paschal Week.
- To describe the fact that the sufferings in Christianity are followed by eternal glory.

References:

- John 13:14; John 15:12; 1 Peter 2:21; Luke 23:34

Memory Verse:

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. (Luke 23:34)

Introduction

The Holy Week is the greatest and most spiritual week in our church. Our church follows all the events in this week, which is the last week of the Lord's life on earth, until his Resurrection. This week is called "the suffering week", "the Paschal Week" and "the Holy Week". The word "Pascha" is a Hebrew word which means the "Passover". It refers to the smiting angel's passage over the Hebrew houses that had the blood sign on them (Exodus 12:13). Christ is our Passover.

This week is totally dedicated to worshipping God. The congregation used to take time off their work to spend the whole time in church praying and meditating. All signs of sadness are clear in the church during that week: the hymns are sung with sad tones, all the readings are focused on the suffering of Jesus for us during the events of that week. The entire congregation leads a life away from any signs of pleasure. The church is

participating with the Lord Jesus in His sufferings. Ladies do not wear makeup, no parties, extended fasting, no sweets are eaten and no major cooking. All the prayers from the Agbeya (i.e. the hourly prayers), which offer us various prayers, are stopped. The Agbeya is replaced by the Paschal hymns and readings that focus on Jesus' Cross.

Lesson Outline

- I. Saturday (Lazarus Saturday): Jesus arrived at Bethany six days before the Passover (John 11:55-57). Jesus took supper in Bethany at Mary and Martha's house. Then Mary bought a pound of ointment of spikenard that is very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment (Matthew 26:1-13, Mark, 14:3-9, John 12:2-11).

- II. Sunday (Palm Sunday): The entrance of our Lord to Jerusalem as a victorious King of Peace (Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19 and John 12). The prayers of Palm Sunday start with the Vespers in the evening of Lazarus Saturday, then midnight prayers, the Psalmody hymns and matins in which we have the "procession of Palm Sunday", which is one of the very favorable celebrations in our church. The people carry Crosses made of palm, the priest carries a large Cross made of palm and decorated with flowers, and the procession of the priest and the deacons go around the church singing "Hosanna in the highest, this is the King of Israel".

Prayers for the Dead are carried out at the end of Palm Sunday service. The curtains of the altar are closed and the general prayers for the dead start. The reason for this service is that during the week after Palm Sunday until Easter Sunday, the church does not hold the raising of incense prayers on the dead in the church because the church is only busy with the Paschal Week. This is why these prayers are done at the end of Palm Sunday and the blessing of water is carried out. This water is sprinkled on all the people of the church.

- III. Monday: Jesus Curses the Fig Tree: *"On His way back to the city early next morning, Jesus was hungry. He saw a fig tree by the side of the road and went to it, but found nothing on it except leaves, so He said to the tree, 'You will never again bear fruit'. At once the fig tree dried up"* (Matthew 21:12-19, Mark 11:12-19, Luke 20:1-8)

- IV. Tuesday: Seeing that the fig tree had dried up, Jesus spoke to His Disciples about the faith that can move mountains (Matthew 21:20-22, Mark 11:20-26). The Synagogue authorities question Jesus' actions, miracles and authority, and His answer to them (Matthew 21:23-32, Mark 11:27-33, Luke 20:1-8).
- V. Wednesday: Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve went to the chief priests and betrayed Jesus (Mark 14:10-16). The preparation for the Last Supper (Mark 14:10-16).
- VI. Thursday: *"He that dips his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me"* (Matthew 26:20-25, Luke 22:21-23). Jesus washes the Disciples' feet (John 13:3-8).
- VII. Friday (Good Friday): We follow up the events that happened on Good Friday, hour-by-hour. For every hour, there are special readings from both the Old and New Testaments to suit the events of the hour.
 - a. Trials from 6-9 a.m.:
 - 1. The second trial of Jesus in front of the chief priests
 - 2. The third trial in front of Pilate
 - 3. The fourth trial in front of Herod
 - 4. The fifth trial in front of Pilate for the second time
 - b. To the Golgotha Carrying the Cross from 9 a.m.-12p.m.:
 - 1. The 39 whips
 - 2. The crown of thorns, the insults and mockery
 - 3. The falling of Jesus under the Cross.
 - 4. Simon of Cyrene carries the Cross with Jesus.
 - 5. Jesus eye-to-eye with His mother
 - 6. The Crucifixion and the nails
 - c. The words of Jesus on the Cross from 12-3 p.m.: From location 11 to location 17.

- d. The events from 3-6 p.m.:
1. A soldier plunged his spear into Jesus' side
 2. The tombs opened and the curtain hanging in the temple was torn into two from top to bottom.
 3. The rocks cracked and the land shook
 4. The leader of one hundred soldiers gained faith
 5. The burial of the Son of God

We pray "Lord have Mercy" 41 times remembering: the 39 whips + 1 crown of thorns + 1 the spear.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Let us follow the Lord Jesus in the week in which His sufferings were concentrated. He endured all sufferings because of His love for us. *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."* (John 15:12).
- b. We should live outside the church with the same attitude, characters and feelings as we live inside the church during the Paschal week. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:16).

Applications:

- We should learn from the life of Jesus Christ and follow his lead. He was humble when he washed the feet of his disciples. *"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."* (John 13:14). He was merciful to the people who were crucifying him saying, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"* (Luke 23:34). Remember, *"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us,[a] leaving us[b] an example, that you should follow His steps:"* (1 Peter 2:21).
- We have no excuse not to forgive others, but we have every reason to forgive others, just as Jesus did. We are also called to love each other. *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."* (John 15:12).

Exercises:

1. What did you learn from today's lesson?
2. How did Jesus react towards the people who were crucifying him? What do you learn from this?
3. Why do you think Jesus died on our behalf? What was the motivation behind that? (Refer John 3:16).

Week 4

Resurrection of Christ is a source of Hope

Objectives:

- To learn about the Resurrection in the life of Christ, the Resurrection in the life of the church and the Resurrection in the life of the faithful.
- To learn that one of the most important events in Christianity is the Resurrection.

References:

- Luke 24:1-12; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Isaiah 64:4; Romans 8:11

Memory Verse:

Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us. (Mark 16:3)

Introduction

Man triumphed in hundreds of fields except death. Before death, man stood helpless and hopeless. Then came the Resurrection to give the first victory over death. The Apostle says in a challenge, “*O Death, where is your sting?*” (1 Corinthians 15:55) Then, hope in the eternal life entered man’s heart and filled it with joy, that he would not perish or come to an end. Victory over death gave hope to triumph over all other things, because who overcomes the stronger certainly can overcome the weaker and a whole army of the enemy. Thus, through victory over death, the morale of the children of God was elevated and so St. Paul said, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*”(Philippians 4:13)

Lesson Outline

I. The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ:

- The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is different from any other Resurrection. Therefore, He has been called the “Pioneer of the deceased” because He rose in such a way that there will be no death after Him. He also rose from death by Himself and no one else gave Him Resurrection.
- The power of Resurrection was inside Him and not outside, and the proofs are: His Body did not see corruption, He resurrected with the stone at the gate of the tomb as it was and He resurrected with the cloth and the handkerchief placed in an organized way. *“O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction”* (Hosea 13:14).
- He descended into Hades by Himself, shook the foundation of Hades and freed all the righteous souls which were captured by the devils.

II. Resurrection in the Life of the Church:

- The Lord Jesus had promised His Disciples that they would see Him after His death and that their hearts would rejoice. No one can take away their joy from them.
- Truly the Resurrection had eliminated the sadness of the Apostles and the Marys, changed their despair to strength and hope and changed their fear to courage.
- The Bible talks about the effect of the Resurrection on the Apostles: *“And with great power the Apostles gave witness to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all”* (Acts 4:33).
- The Church lives in a continuous joy for the Resurrection of the Lord waiting for His second coming with great glory. Every Sunday we celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord, so it is a feast for the faithful. When we take the flesh of the Lord and His Blood, we renew the covenant of love with Him commemorating His Resurrection until He comes. Therefore, the church lives in a Passover feast continuously.

III. Resurrection in our Personal Life:

WEEK 4. RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS A SOURCE OF HOPE

- The person, who buried himself in the tomb of sin or in sadness or in caring only about the self, cannot enjoy the Resurrection.
- The Lord Jesus is the King of peace and joy: in Him, we receive victory over sadness. He is the source of eternal joy that flows to defeat all the fears and sadness of the world.
- Lack of faith is the factor that prevents our joy “*Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?*” (Mark 16:3). Let us look and find that the stone was rolled, the angel of the Lord is ready to prepare our hearts to meet the risen Lord and the angel is also ready to scare away the guards of Satan who are guarding the stones of sin in our hearts.
- The lights of the Resurrection enlighten the darkness of our hearts and uncover its bad sins.
- The entrance of the Lord Jesus to the upper room while the doors were closed, is a sign of the feasibility of His entrance in our life even while our senses are closed. He enters to enlighten and to grant peace above every imagination. Let us seek Him to reign over our hearts.
- Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:20).

IV. How do we celebrate Easter?

- “*For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).
- Let us remove the “old man” and be dressed with the “new man”.
- Let us seek what is above “*if then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God*” (Colossians 3:1). We should seek heavenly things, not earthly.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Let us pray and seek that the Lord grants us a life of joy and victory.
- b. Let us pray that He grant us to continuously praise him in our hearts and to serve His Holy name and preach His Resurrection.
- c. Christianity is a religion of joy, even death which is the worst enemy is defeated.

Applications:

- Realize how important Resurrection of Jesus Christ is in our life. Without resurrection, there wouldn't be a religion called Christianity. Christ defeated sin and eternal death to grant us the hope of Eternal life. Just like he rose from the dead, he will come again to resurrect us to be with him, and inherit the kingdom of God. This shows that our hope is not just on this earth, but in heaven. *“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”* (1 Corinthians 2:9).
- Easter is a happy and joyful day. We should celebrate this happiness everyday, not just during Easter.

Exercises:

1. Why do we celebrate Easter? Why is resurrection of Jesus Christ important to all Christians? *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you”* (Romans 8:11).
2. What do you think God has prepared for us in heaven? What does heaven look like? (Ans: We can't even imagine it, refer 1 Corinthians 2:9).

Part IX

Lessons for the Month of May

Week 1

The Holy Tradition in the Apostolic Age

Objectives:

- To understand the meaning of tradition, and how it worked in the Apostolic Age.

References:

- Acts 1:1-8; Deuteronomy 4:9-10; Luke 2:1-4

Memory Verse:

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (*2 Thessalonians 2:15*).

Introduction

For a long time some writers looked to “tradition” as a blind obedience to the past and a mechanical transmission of a passive deposit. In their point of view, tradition is a precise catalogue of a set of ancient doctrines, canons and rites, or it is a museum for antiquity. Therefore, the traditional Church, in their view, seems to be a solid obscurant and retrograde one, attached to what is old simply for its antiquity.

In this lesson, we would like to explain our concept of “tradition”, through the Holy Bible, the patristic thought and our practical church life.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Meaning of “Tradition”: The word “tradition”, in Greek, as it is mentioned in the New Testament, is “Paradosis” which does not mean

“imitation”. Its cognate verb is “paradidomi” which means “handing over or delivering a thing by hand”. The closely associated verb is “paralambano”, which means “receiving a thing or taking it”. In Hebrew there are two terms corresponding to these two Greek verbs: “masar” (hand or deliver) and “qibbel” (receive).

Thus, the word “tradition” does not mean “imitation of the past”, but it means, biblically, “delivering a deposit and receiving it”. A generation delivers the faith and another receives it.

- II. God instructed the people of Israel to teach their kids about God, and what he did for them. This shows how important tradition was in the Old Testament. *“And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, 10 especially concerning the day you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, when the Lord said to me, Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.”* (Deuteronomy 4:9-10).

- III. What is the Precious Delivery which the Church Received and Preserved through the Successive Generations? Jesus did not deliver to His Disciples a written document, but rather He prepared them to follow Him and to accept Him dwelling within their hearts. They saw and heard everything Jesus did. *“Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach”* (Mark3:14).

The letter of Jude defines tradition as *“the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3), or the Gospel written in our lives and engraved within our hearts. The precious delivery is the “faith”, a living thing received by the Apostles who delivered it to their Disciples by the Holy Spirit. For example St. Luke wrote the books of Luke and Acts as an eyewitness account of the events to help Theophilus know the story of Jesus.

- IV. Tradition in the Apostolic Age: In the Apostolic age, the New Testament books were already in existence, but these were not canonized officially. The New Testament books were only canonized in the middle of the second century. Tradition was the only source of Christian faith, doctrines and worship.

Tradition in the Apostolic Age from Eye-Witness St. John said, *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life . . .”* (1 John 1:1). St. Luke said, *“Just*

as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us” (Luke 1:2).

When the eleven Apostles wished to fill the place of Judas, they determined to choose only one. *“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His Resurrection” (Acts 1:21-22).*

- V. Tradition in the Apostolic Age by the Holy Spirit: St. Paul was not an eye-witness, but he delivered “the tradition of Christ” to the Church by receiving a special commission from the Holy Spirit. *“Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)” (Galatians 1:1).* *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread” (1 Cor. 11:23).*

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Tradition is a living faith received from the Apostles delivered to us from generation to generation. We must honour it, be proud of it, and live according to it. Thus, church traditions are not antique or irrelevant, rather, it is important to learn about it.
- b. Life is not just reading and writing things. But life is filled with emotions, feelings and actual commitments.

Applications:

- Try to pay attention to church traditions and how they relate to our faith. Remember, tradition is a living faith received from the Apostles delivered to us from generation to generation. Keeping this faith with good conscience and dedication is very important. The bible teaches us, *“ Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).* St Paul advises us to *“ Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 1:13).*

Exercises:

WEEK 1. THE HOLY TRADITION IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE

1. What did you learn today?
2. Why are church traditions important? How did the apostles first preach about Jesus?

Week 2

The Holy Tradition, the Gospel and the Church Life

Objectives:

- To learn the Gospel is not separated from tradition, but the first is part of the latter.
- To learn that the Holy Tradition must conform totally with the Holy Scriptures.

References:

- 2 Thessalonians 2:15 ;1 Corinthians. 15:1-3; 1 Thessalonians. 2:13

Memory Verse:

I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. (3 John 13:14)

Introduction

Our faith in the Messiah, the Saviour, that is “the gospel of the church”, is the core of the Holy tradition and its message. In more than one place, St. Paul the Apostle told his people that he had delivered the tradition of the “gospel of salvation”, the “word of hearing” or the “saving deed of God” which he had received from the Church.

He says, “*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand . . . For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*” (1 Corinthians. 15:1-3). “*When you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it*

not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians. 2:13).

The Apostles received this “Gospel of Christ”, which is “the Gospel of the Church”, not written on paper but received it by the oral tradition as well as by the written one.

Lesson Outline

I. The Holy Tradition and the Gospel: The Apostles received this “Gospel of Christ”, not written on paper but orally, in order to deliver it unto the Church by the oral tradition, as well as, by the written one. Hence, Christian preaching was founded on the New Testament and on the living tradition of the Lord Jesus, passed from mouth to mouth. This feeling for personal witness was very strong in the early Church. By tradition, the fathers usually mean doctrine which the Lord or His Apostles committed to the Church irrespective of whether it was handed down orally or in documents. This can be supported by the Bible itself:

- *“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand”* (1 Corinthians 15:1).
- *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in those who believe”* (1 Thessalonians 2:13).
- Also please see 2 Thessalonians 3:6, Colossians 2:8 and 3 John 13:14.

II. Was the oral tradition cancelled by the appearance of the books of the New Testament? No, the Apostles themselves in their letters to the early Christian communities, often reminded the believers of the verbal tradition, from which they may gain an understanding of the Christian truth. By tradition we received the Holy Gospels; we know that they are true and we know that they relate the deeds and the words of Christ (but not all His deeds and words, see John 21:25).

St. Irenaeus, who is called “the father of the Ecclesiastical Tradition” summarized his thoughts as follows: Tradition which originates from the Apostles is guaranteed by the unbroken succession of presbyters in the Church.

The tradition is preserved in the Church by the Holy Spirit, Who renews the Church's youth. The Apostolic tradition is not something secret but it is within the power of all who wish to accept the truth to know it. It is manifested in every church throughout the whole world. The heretics misinterpreted the scripture, as they seized isolated passages and rearranged them to suit their own ideas disregarding the underlying unity of the scripture. They made use of the texts, but since they do not read them within the content of the Church, they do not read them according to the tradition of the Apostles.

- III. The Holy Tradition and the Church Life: The Church tradition is the a continuous stream of the church life in Jesus Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit. This life is not limited to our "faith", but also embraces the church spiritual and ethical scheme.
- IV. Tradition and Ethical Teaching: St. Paul delivered to us the tradition which contains the spiritual and ethical scheme. "*Withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us*" (2 Th. 3:6). Also please see Colossians 2:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 4:1 and Philipians 4:9.
- V. Tradition and Church Worship: Through tradition we accept our "church life in Jesus Christ", not only through the Christian beliefs, doctrines, Holy Scriptures and ethical scheme, but also through the church liturgies, rites, canons and all that belong to our worship.
- VI. Preserving the Church Tradition: This has been achieved by: the church councils (against heresies and wrong teachings), and the writings of the church fathers. The decisions of the church councils and the writings of the church fathers are insufficient in preserving the church tradition. The laymen also have an essential role in keeping the tradition alive, by practicing it in their daily lives, and their worship.
- VII. Tradition and Liturgy: Tradition is the source of our church Liturgies of Baptism, Eucharist, Marriage, etc.
- VIII. Tradition and Rite: Rite is an essential element of the liturgical, family and personal worship, for it meant the participation of the body and spirit in worshipping God. The rites we received by tradition, and are not accidental in the life of the Church. They are real entrance to the mystery of worship.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Our Coptic Orthodox Church preserved more than others the Holy Tradition in its details as in its spirit. It is because our Church did not interfere in politics, and did not exercise any worldly authority, so she can live in her spirituality far away from the spirit of the world. The appearance of the monastic movement has kept the tradition of the church in a humble, evangelic and ascetic spirit.

Applications:

- Remember how important church traditions are in all aspects of our Christian life. It is important to know and practice those traditions. The bible says, *“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle”* (2 Thessalonians 2:15).
- It is also important to note that the Holy Tradition must conform totally with the Holy Scriptures.

Exercises:

1. What do we learn from this lesson?

Week 3

Icons in the Church

Objectives:

- To learn that icons in the church aid our memories and provide biblical messages for spiritual growth.

References:

- Exodus 20:4; Joshua 4:6-7

Memory Verse:

Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified. (Gal 3:1)

Introduction

Icons in the church are not placed to decorate the church but they have a theological and spiritual meaning attached to them. They are not pieces of artwork to reflect certain cultures or to express the spiritual feeling of an artist.

When we look at the icons we remember, otherwise man always forgets. We remember the Saint in the picture, what he or she has done in his or her life and how he or she gained victory over the devil and gained eternal life (Hebrew 13).

So, icons give a biblical message for educational and spiritual purposes. The icon transfers us from the materialistic world into the spiritual world.

Lesson Outline

We love, respect and kiss the icons for the following reasons:

- I. According to the Coptic rites, veneration may only be given to consecrated church icons. These icons receive consecration by a Bishop and are anointed with the same Chrisma oil that is used in Baptism. Thus, upon accepting some power of the Holy Spirit, they are qualified to receive incense, be kissed, or receive other form of veneration. They are no longer memorial frames, but - as consecrated icons - have become God's possession and bear effective spiritual power that is capable of attracting the hearts to heaven and have a positive contribution to the Church's life.
- II. Our love to the Saints leads us to kiss the icon. For example, if your father went away for a long time and he sent you a picture, you would kiss it because you love him.
- III. Our respect and kiss of the icons do not mean that we worship the icons. We only worship God. However, respecting and kissing icons is an open declaration of God's glory in the life of the Saints.
- IV. Icons were found in the very early churches and in the writings of the early fathers of the church. Icons are mentioned in the New Testament as well. (Gal 3:1)
- V. Last but not least, when we look at the Saints' picture in the icon, we seek their prayers on our behalf. Please take a picture of St. Mary or St. George, etc., and discuss with the students. They are closer to God than us and as a result God loves them and does what they ask of Him to do. The Saints pray on our behalf. We have seen many miracles happen as soon as a person comes to take the blessings of a Saint by kissing his or her icon. The icon in this case has the power of God through the prayer of the Saint in the icon and through the power of the Holy Oil "El-Mayroun."
- VI. A wise individual will always search for spiritual benefits. Even looking at the birds of heaven can be beneficial. The Lord Jesus said, "consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?"

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Icons are not pieces of artwork. We respect, love and get blessings from the consecrated icons.
- b. We must look at the icons to remember the Lord Christ, the Saints and follow their footsteps. Everyone must have pictures of the Saints in his or her room.
- c. Whoever wants to benefit, searches for it. The church offers to us through the grace of God various sources of spiritual benefits: prayers, hymns, sermons, sacraments, spiritual books, the Cross and icons.

Applications:

- Everything you look at a church icon, think about the life of the saints, and yearn to follow the steps of the saints who honored God in thier life.

Exercises:

1. What did you learn from today's lesson?
2. Do we worship icons in the church? What are the benefits of the church icons?

Week 4

The Twelve Apostles

Objectives:

- To study the lives of the Apostles.
- To learn from the lives of the Apostles something beneficial for our spiritual lives.
- To learn that they are excellent examples for working with God.

References:

- Mark 3:13-18, 6:7-13, Luke 10:1-7

Memory Verse:

... and gave them power over unclean spirits (Mark 6:7)

Introduction

???? When our Lord Jesus started His ministry, He chose for Himself twelve Disciples (who became also Apostles). The Master Christ chose His Disciples to be His friends. He sat with them and talked to them. This was an expression of God's love to people and His fatherhood to man. He chose them to be with Him always and to teach them so that they become His witnesses and teach other people. "*He who hears you hears Me . . .*" (Luke 10:16). He chose them so that they become Apostles to carry the message of salvation to the whole world. "*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). ?????

Lesson Outline

- I. The Choice of the Twelve Apostles: Our Lord Jesus Christ chose His twelve Disciples and provided them with authority to heal the sick and

cast out the demons. This means He provided them with His own authority to do miracles. Hence, they became like ambassadors or representatives for His will. He chose their number to be twelve to be similar in number to the twelve tribes of Israel. These twelve were "Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter, James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder". Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him (Mark 3:16-19).

- II. The Fields of the Apostles' Preaching: The twelve Apostles started their preaching first to the Jews, especially in Jerusalem because it was necessary that they witness for the Lord in front of their own people. After they established the church in Jerusalem, the Apostles preached to the Jews in different cities of Judea and Samaria, and then they preached to the gentiles. They did it in this sequence as the Lord told them "*You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*" (Acts 1:8).
- III. The Preaching to the Jews: When the Apostles preached to the Jews, they emphasized to them that Jesus Christ whom they crucified is the Messiah, whom the prophets wrote about, and whom the Jews were waiting for as their Savior and that He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and will come again at the end to judge the living and the dead. They asked the Jews to repent, believe in Jesus Christ and gain salvation. An example of this preaching is the sermon of St. Peter the Apostle in the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36).
- IV. The Preaching to the Gentiles: When the Apostles preached to the Gentiles, they discussed with them their beliefs and explained to them that the idols which they made by their hands will not benefit them and they should not worship them. The Apostles preached to the Gentiles that the Only god is God, the Lord, Who created heaven and earth. He gave life to mankind and sent His Only Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world: Jews and gentiles. An example is the preaching of St. Matthias to the Greeks.

Please read the attached material for the life of each twelve apostles. It may be a good idea to give a copy of the attached material to each student. Make sure to mention that St. Matthias was selected instead of Judas. He was one of the seventy Apostles.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16). The twelve Disciples did just that. Let us behave as true Christians with our own principles, life style, and to let our light shine before men. Above all, we must have our true love for Jesus by witnessing for Him through our good deeds.
- b. In our own life as well as in our missionary work, we have to work with God.

Applications:

- Do you think Jesus is telling you to do something until He returns?
- We need to always talk about our salvation. What does salvation mean to you and how does one obtain salvation?

Exercises:

1. How many were Jesus’s Disciples and who were they?
2. Why did Jesus give his Disciples the power to heal the sick?
3. What did Jesus tell his Disciples to do until He comes back again to earth?

Part X

Lessons for the Month of June

Week 1

Symbols of the Holy Spirit in the Bible Part I

Objectives:

- To learn that studying the symbols helps us to learn about the Holy Spirit and His action in the formation of our personalities and our daily lives.

References:

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Memory Verse:

... the heavens were opened to Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. (Matt 3:16)

Introduction

First, please review with the students all the events that happened on Pentecost (Acts 2). Then proceed to explain saying that the reader of the Holy Bible will find various symbols for the Holy Spirit. Each symbol will give us some insight into the actions of the Holy Spirit in forming the Christian personality as well as His action in the daily life. We will discuss five symbols.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Wind: In reality the word “*Epnevma*” in Greek means wind and it means spirit as well. So we say “*the wind blows where it wishes ...*” (John 3:8). Or we can say the same verse as “the spirit blows where it

wishes.” The descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was described as *“and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting”* (Acts 2:2). Also in the book of Ezekiel the resurrection of the bones was described by saying *“Also he said to me, prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, thus says the Lord God: ‘come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain that they may live’. So I prophesied as he commanded me and breath came into them and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army”* (Ezekiel 37:9-10).

We also observe that the Lord Christ granted the Holy Spirit to His disciples in the authority of the priesthood through blowing in their faces and saying, *“receive the Holy Spirit”* (John 20:22). This blow of air is wind. This is what is being done now during the ordination of a priest. The bishop blows wind in his mouth and says to him receive the Holy Spirit and the priest replies by saying *“I open my mouth and received the spirit for me”* (Psalm 119).

- II. The Fire: It is clear from the events of the Pentecost that the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples as tongues of fire (Acts 2:3). Then *“and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance”* (Acts 2:4). And this is not strange as the Holy Bible says, *“for our God is a consuming fire”* (Heb. 12:29) and *“God is spirit”* (John 4:24).

The descent of the fire on the offering in the Old Testament was to signify that God accepted the offering as it happened when Elijah the prophet presented his offering in front of the false prophets, the Bible said, *“then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burned sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust”* (1 Kings 18:38). We observe here that the fire never departed from the house of God entirely. The fire was always on the altar of offering to signify the acceptance of God to these offerings *“and the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order on it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the piece offerings, a fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.”* (Leviticus 6:12-13). In the censer the fire represents the Divinity and the charcoal represents the humanity.

- III. The Dove: The dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit came in the event of baptizing the Lord Jesus Christ, glory be to Him. St. John the Baptist *“and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon*

him” (Matt 3:16). Similarly it was mentioned in (Mark 1:10) and (Luke 3:22). Therefore the church gives the human soul, which is filled with the Holy Spirit the title of a dove. This is clear from the book of the Song of Solomon in which the Lord says to the church “*open for me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one . . .*” (Songs 5:2). The dove also reminds us of the calm and meek spirit (1 Peter 3:4). The Lord Jesus said about the spiritual people to be like doves when he said “*be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*” (Matt 10:16). There is also another symbol for the action of the Holy Spirit in Noah’s dove, which came to him with the peaceful news carrying the olive leaf.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. The Holy Spirit working in the individual would formulate his or her personality.
- b. The Holy Spirit would make the person peaceful as a dove, powerful as fire and effective as wind.
- c. The Holy Spirit works only on a person who is obedient and humble to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Applications:

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Exercises:

- 1.

Week 2

Symbols of the Holy Spirit in the Bible Part II

Objectives:

- To learn that studying the symbols helps us to learn about the Holy Spirit and His action in the formation of our personalities and our daily lives.

References:

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Memory Verse:

He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water, but this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:38-39)

Introduction

Please start this lesson by reviewing the previous one. Then continue with the rest of the symbols of the Holy Spirit as mentioned in the Holy Bible. The emphasis here is on the effect of the Holy Spirit in forming the Christian personality as well as His action in our daily lives.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Water: The water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit from the point of view that it brings life or that it is an important nutrition that is necessary for life. The first psalm mentions about the righteous individual saying, *“he shall be like a tree planted by the river of water*

...” (Psalm 1:3). This water gives life. This is why the psalm continued saying *“that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper”* (Psalm 1:3). God likened Himself to the source of the living water. He said in the book of Jeremiah *“... They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water and hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water”* (Jeremiah 2:13). God is truly the source of the living water because from him the Holy Spirit proceeds (John 15:26). The Lord Christ in his talk mentioned this living water with the Samaritan woman when he said, *“if you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you ‘give me a drink’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water”* (John 4:10). Then He said, *“whomever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life”* (John 4:13-14).

The symbol is very clear also in the saying of the Lord *“He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water, but this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified”* (John 7:38-39). Therefore our fathers the Apostles were likened to the rivers because they carried the living water to the people. They gave them the Holy Spirit who gave them the spiritual nutrition that leads to eternal life.

Also the water as a symbol for the Holy Spirit appears clearly in baptism when we are born from the water and the Spirit (John 3:5). The Holy Spirit descends on the water and it does not continue to be regular water but it becomes living water that enables the person to be born again (Titus 3:5). From baptism the person gets purification and sanctification as St. Paul the Apostle said *“... but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Corinthians 6:11).

- II. The Oil: The oil is clearly a symbol of the Holy Spirit from the Sacrament of the Holy Chrismation (the Sacrament of Mayroun). The prophets in the Old Testament used to anoint with the holy ointment three categories of people: priests, kings and, prophets so that the Holy Spirit would give them His gifts and talents. The Lord asked Moses the prophet to make the oil of the ointment from the pure olive oil with a collection of ointments (Exodus 30:22-24). And He said to Him *“and you shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded*

according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil. With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony; the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense; the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base. You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy” (Exodus 30:25-29). As this ointment is used to sanctify the house of God with all its altars and vessels, it is also used to sanctify the priests as well and in this the Lord said to Moses *“and you shall anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them, that they may minister to me as priests” (Exodus 30:30).* God repeated the same thing again in the book of Exodus 40:9-13. Then Moses did as the Lord ordered him (Lev. 8:4) and he anointed Aaron (Lev. 8:12) and he had also anointed the house of God and all its altars. Which oil was this? Which ointment was this? So that whoever anointed with it becomes sanctified and becomes a priest. In the anointment of Saul it was said *“Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said: ‘Is it not because the Lord has anointed you commander over His inheritance?’” (1 Samuel 10:1).* God gave Saul a new heart and the Spirit of God came on him and he prophesied. And it was said, *“Is Saul also one of the prophets?” (1 Samuel 10:9-11).* About the anointment of David the Holy Bible mentions *“Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward . . .” (1 Samuel 16:13).*

We also read about Elijah the prophet when he anointed two kings and one prophet who was Elisha (1 Kings 19:15-16). Those who were anointed were called “the anointed of the Lord”. When David refused to kill Saul the King he said *“the Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master the Lord’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord” (1 Samuel 24:6).*

The olive symbolizes the church since it is filled with oil. St. Paul the Apostle talks about the church of the Old Testament and says that it is “the original olive” and he says the church of the New Testament is a new olive cultivated on the old olive. (Romans 11:17,24). Zechariah the prophet prophesied and said *“what are these two olive trees at the right of the lamp stand and at its left?” (Zechariah 4:11).*

We find both symbols the oil and the fire of the Holy Spirit together in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. *“And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually” (Exodus*

27:20). These lamps were prepared by Aaron and his sons from evening until morning before the Lord (Exodus 27:21). So we find here both symbols of the Holy Spirit (oil and fire) together.

In our church today we see candles. In these candles we see oil and fire. Also in the so-called kandiel we find oil and fire. We do the same thing in the apocalyptic night in which we have seven candles oil and fire. When we sing about this rubric we can understand the wisdom in it. The same kandiel i.e. oil and fire is found in the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick in which the Holy Spirit works.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. There are deep spiritual lessons that we can learn from the oil and the fire together as we look at candles in the church or in the kandiel in the rubric of our holy church.
- b. We see in those things the action of the Holy Spirit on the personality of the believers i.e. purity, light, sanctification, and warmth (Romans 12:11, Psalm 9:1).

Applications:

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Exercises:

- 1.

Week 3

Part I: Christ in the Eucharist

Objectives:

- To introduce the divine liturgies and their importance.
- To describe terms related to divine liturgies.

References:

- Luke 22:19-20

Memory Verse:

For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. (John 6:55)

Introduction

This is lesson one of a three-lesson series about “Christ in the Eucharist”. In this lesson, we learn to appreciate our precious divine liturgies that kept for us our faith, doctrine and traditions.

Lesson Outline

I. Glossary of terms used in this series:

- a. **El-Koddas:** It is a Hebrew-Syrian word entered into the Arabic language in the 10th century.
 - It means ‘makes holy’ and it refers here to the prayers which are held during the Divine Liturgy to make Holy the bread and the wine.
 - It also means the reading from the scriptures and the sacraments.

- The word “El-Koddas” is used to refer not only to the Eucharist (i.e. the offering of the bread and the wine) but also to other services, for example El-Koddas of Baptism or El-Koddas of El-Lakan.
- b. **Liturgy:** It is a Greek word and it has the same meaning as the word “Koddas” but it is more popular. In general, the word Liturgy means the service in which a priest, a deacon and congregation are participating.
- c. **Mass:** This is used by the Catholic Church to refer to the principle part of the service of the Liturgy.
- d. **Doxology:** It is a prayer of glory to God. The Doxologies are in the Psalmody book.
- e. **Anaphora:** It means “lift up” for the church is ascended to heaven through the celebration of the Eucharist. The Egyptian liturgy is the oldest in the world. The majority of our liturgies have not changed since the 5th century. Our Egyptian liturgies kept the Apostolic and patristic spirit of the liturgies.

II. The Coptic Church uses three liturgies:

- a. The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great: It is by far the most frequently used in the normal service.
- b. The Liturgy of St. Gregory: It is often reserved for the festive occasions. Some presbyters use it throughout the year. Its Eucharistic prayers are addressed to the Son.
- c. The Liturgy of St. Cyril (St. Mark): It was originally written by St. Mark the Apostle. Then it was recorded and shortened by St. Cyril of Alexandria whose name is associated with it.

III. Major Outline of the Coptic Liturgy: This has two major classifications:

- a. The liturgy of time: This includes the daily prayers (Vespers, Matins, etc.), the weekly prayers (Doxologies, Theotokions, etc.), monthly (as the monthly feast of the Virgin Mary, Archangel Michael etc.) and yearly (as in the yearly feasts and feastings).
- b. The Eucharist: It consists of three services: the offertory, the catechumens and the anaphora. These will be explained in more detail in the rest of the series.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Our Coptic Divine Liturgy did not get affected by all the recent world ideas and the materialistic changes that are happening from generation to generation. It kept the Apostolic and Church Traditions.
- b. Hence, it is the best service that the church can offer for us and we must honor it, abide by it and benefit from it.

Applications:

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Exercises:

- 1.

Week 4

Part II: Christ in the Eucharist

Objectives:

- To learn that the Eucharist is a trip to Heaven for us.

References:

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Memory Verse:

Acts 2:42

Introduction

Lesson Outline

- I. The liturgy as referred to in the Book of Acts: From the Book of Acts we find that the main components of the liturgy are: teaching, sermons, prayers and breaking of the bread. *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). *“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight”* (Acts 20:7).

The mentioning of these components of the Liturgy in a clear way in the Book of Acts, makes us certain that these are the main parts of the Liturgical service since the Apostolic age. Note that teaching is different from delivering sermons and is more general. Teaching comes before delivering sermons and prepares people to accept the faith. St. Paul puts teaching before delivering sermons when he said, *“Or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation”* (Romans 12:7-8).

With regard to what was called “the breaking of bread”, it is certainly the Lord’s supper as St. Paul said, “*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*” (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Therefore, we can emphasize from the Book of Acts that the basic Apostolic liturgy had two parts:

- a. The part dedicated to teachings, sermons and prayers.
- b. The part dedicated to the breaking of the bread or the Lord’s supper.

II. The Divine Liturgy of our Coptic Orthodox Church today:

1. The Divine Office (also called the Liturgy of Time): It consists of public ecclesiastic prayers that are distinct from the Eucharistic and Sacramental prayers. Through these prayers we praise the Lord, honor His saints and pray for the salvation of the whole world. Through these prayers, which start with Vespers in the Evening before the Eucharist service, we can begin the service of the sacraments with a concentrated mind and a zealous soul towards the fellowship with God. So, our Coptic Orthodox Church holds the Divine Office as a liturgical worship, as a preparation for celebrating the Sacrament, but it is not a sacramental service.
2. The Eucharist Service: In the Eucharistic Service, the church offers the single sacrifice of her Bridegroom to God and at the same time it receives the same sacrifice as a divine gift. In addition to the Offertory, the Eucharistic Service is divided into two main parts: the Liturgy of the Catechumens and the Anaphora.
3. The Liturgy of the Catechumens: This is also known as the “Synaxis”. The Synaxis is a Greek word which means a meeting. The Catechumens (people who are trying to know about and enter into Christianity) listen only to a part of it: the elections, the sermon and some prayers which the church offers on their behalf, so that God grants them an understanding, wisdom and faith. The Liturgy of the catechumens has three parts:
 - Lections: A Pauline lesson, Catholic epistles (a part of the Catholic letters), a part from the book of Acts, a reading from the

Synaxarium for the Saint of the day and the Gospel reading (preceded by a Psalm).

- The Intercessions: these are special prayers for the peace of the church, prayers for the Pope and the Bishops and prayers for the meetings and fellowship of the church.
 - The Pre-Anaphora: the word “anaphora” is a Greek word and it means “lift up” or “offer-up”. The phrase “offer-up” was used in the Christian church since the Apostolic age to refer to the offering of Christ on the cross. St. Paul said, *“Who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself”* (Hebrews 7:27). The pre-anaphora prayers is the prayer of reconciliation between God and man in Jesus Christ. These prayers also remind us about the need for reconciliation with one another. The faithful in response declare their reconciliation by the “Spasms” (i.e. the Apostolic kiss).
4. The Anaphora: This is also called “The Liturgy of the Faithful” or “The Eucharist”. The Anaphora starts when the priest says “Lift-up your heart”. It includes all the prayers until the people depart. Through the Anaphora, the church is ascended to heaven by the Holy Spirit in the presence of God, in Jesus Christ. Please review portions of it from the church liturgy service book.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. The Divine Liturgy is a journey towards heaven. We enjoy it through our fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ, as we are united with Him.

Applications:

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Exercises:

- 1.

Part XI

Lessons for the Month of July

Week 1

Part III: Christ in the Eucharist

Objectives:

- To learn about the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

References:

- Bible

Memory Verse:

(1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Introduction

Lesson Outline

- I. Institution of the Lord's Supper: Our Lord Jesus Christ established this Holy sacrament and delivered it to His Apostles. St. Paul said, *"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me'. In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me'. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes"* (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- II. Why did the Lord Jesus offer Himself up in the last supper?

- a. Because the Utmost Love is to Give Oneself up to Death: *“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world He loved them to the end”* (John 13:1). The love of the Lord became very clear when He broke His own Body. Therefore, the key benefit of our attendance of the Eucharist becomes very obvious when we realize the secret of God’s love in the offering. Then our hearts must receive this unparalleled love by keeping love and desire to partake of the Holy Sacraments.
- b. For the Secret Body of the Lord to Appear: Our Lord Jesus lived with His disciples as a companion. Now the Lord will disappear with the visual body from the life of the disciples so that they to become his non visual body, i.e., His secret Body. Therefore, it was necessary that the Lord’s supper be the last work of the Lord in which He offered Himself as an offering. Then His Body disappeared from His disciples and became for them His secret Body. His is not a visual Body but a secret Body which is the church. Remember, the “church is the Body of Christ”. Every time we have a Eucharist, the Body and Blood disappear totally from the altar so that He can live in our lives because we are His secret Body.

III. The Symbols of the Eucharist in the Old Testament:

- a. The Pascha: In Jesus’ “Uniting” with us, He joins us together with Him to pass from the power of darkness to the kingdom of light, from the death of this world to the Resurrection of the world to come.
- b. The Manna: Jesus showed that the manna had no unusual effect, for their Fathers ate it and died, but who receives the true Manna, the body and the blood of the Messiah will have eternal life as a reward.
- c. Melchisedech’s Sacrifice: Melchisedech, offered bread and wine as a symbol of the Eucharist.
- d. The Banquet of Wisdom: Solomon declared that the wine is mixed, that is, he announces prophetically the chalice of the Lord mingled with water and wine.
- e. Song of Songs: “Song of Songs” is the book o the spiritual marriage union between Christ and his church, or between Him and the soul. For it is, as a whole, a true prophecy of the sacramental deed of God in His church. Our fathers found the sacrament of Eucharist in the

“Song of Songs”, as he offers the wedding feast to his Bride in order that she can be fed and calls others to participate with her in the heavenly banquet.

IV. The Ten Rules to Observe in Participation in the Communion:

- a. As in the other sacraments, a priest must administer this sacrament.
- b. Everyone must reconcile with his brother or sister or friend or anyone: *“leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First, to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift”* (Matthew 5: 24). St. Yostine the martyr (150 A.D.) said that the participant in the Eucharist must: believe that the church’s teaching is true, be baptized, and behave as our Lord commanded us.
- c. Everyone must be clean in his heart and his body as well, *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water”* (Hebrews 10:22).
- d. Everyone must come early to the church *“I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me”* (Proverbs 8:17).
- e. Everyone must be fasting for at least nine hours (for the very early Divine Liturgies) or from midnight the night before (for the usual Divine Liturgies for example the usual Sunday Services), whichever is more.
- f. Everyone must enter the house of God with full respect and humbleness.
- g. Everyone must be silent because we are standing in front of God. Anyone talking unnecessarily in the church should not be permitted to take communion on that day. Similarly, of course, anyone who laughs.
- h. Everyone must not leave the service until it is totally finished.
- i. Men and women must wear respectable clothes and ladies must cover their heads.
- j. Last but not least, everyone must concentrate on Christ only, not on other people.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. When we go to church to attend the Divine Liturgy and partake in the communion, we must have a keen desire and all our feelings must be prepared for this most important journey to heaven in which we are raised to the Lord.
- b. When we take communion, coming down from the Lord after the Eucharist is finished, we must carry the great message to the world through Christ who dwells inside us.

Applications:

- The bread and blood represent the actual blood of Jesus Christ
- We must clean our heart when we take the holy communion
- As we take the holy communion we need to proclaim the Lord's

Exercises:

1. Mention the ten rules to observe in participation in the holy communion?
2. What do we learn from this lesson?
3. What are the five Sacraments of the church?

Week 2

The Virgin Mary and the Life of Quietness

Objectives:

- To learn the importance of meditation and we will learn how to achieve it from the life of the Virgin Mary.

References:

- Luke 2:8-19

Memory Verse:

*I have stored up your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.
(Psalm 119:11)*

Introduction

Calmness is one of the beautiful qualities of the spiritual person; it includes calmness of the heart, nerves, thought, senses, behaviour and body. A calm person's heart never gets troubled for any reason. He does not lose his calm no matter how the problems are caused. As the Prophet David says "*Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though men should rise against me, in this I will be confident*" (Ps. 27:3). It is the type of calm that comes from faith.

If one loses ones inner peace, everything will look disturbed in their eyes, and what is simple will seem complicated. This complication is not from the outside but from the inside. When the heart is calm the nerves will also be calm. In this case one would not lose temper but, instead, calmly solve the problem.

Lesson Outline

I. Quietness:

- a. The pure Virgin Mary had seen several great things: she saw the angel announcing great tidings to her; she saw Elizabeth blessing and praising her; she saw the shepherds coming to tell what they saw; she saw the Wiseman coming from the East, guided by the star to worship Jesus and present their gifts to Him and she saw Simon the elder rejoicing because he was waiting to see Jesus and the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation. Despite all what she had seen, St. Luke writes, "*But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart*" (Luke 2:19). This verse indicates a very deep spiritual life. It is a life of quietness and meditation. The Virgin Mary was silent. In her silence she was thinking about God's wondrous acts and meditating.
- b. David said in the Psalms "*Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips*" (Psalm 141:3).

II. How can we achieve quietness? Quietness could be achieved by taking some time off every day and:

- a. Think of God's wonders in the universe, in the life of the saints, in your own life ... etc. Just think how great God is, how loving and how tender and caring God is, how merciful and forgiving God is, how powerful God is ... etc.
- b. Then, praise God and thank Him for what He did and what He does. An excellent example is that of the Virgin Mary when, in her meditation, she said: "*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He has regarded the lowly state of His aidservant ... For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; ... He has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy ... etc.*" (Luke 1:46-55)
- c. Think about your own life ... How pleasing to God are you? How are you responding to His love and His mercy? Think of the good things

which God has helped you to achieve and thank Him for them. Think also of your mistakes, your sins and your shortcomings and ask Him sincerely to forgive you. Then in your own heart, commit yourself to struggle with all your might against these temptations and ask for God's help without which you cannot win the battle.

- d. In your quietness you should read your Bible and meditate on what you read, you should recite or read some of the Psalms or pray the Agpeya . . . You can sing some of the church songs or hymns or some of the praises from the Psalmody . . . You can read the life of a saint or a book that helps you in your meditation, You can even watch a video about the life of Christ or the life of one of the saints or Old Testament prophets. You may stop the video in the middle of the showing and meditate on what you have seen . . . etc.
- e. The more time you spend in quietness and meditation, the more enjoyment you get out of it, and the deeper you get in your spiritual life. This goes on until you reach a point when your satisfaction and your utmost enjoyment would be reached, not in parties and social gathering and activities, but in meditation of God's word.
- f. Quietness could be best achieved also in the quietness of the night or when you enter your room and close your door and away from the noise of the world or the loudness of the worldly music and such. That is why Christ our Lord taught us saying, *"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly"* (Matthew 6:6).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Sometimes we feel that our prayers have become repetitive and are said almost without thinking or understanding. The main reason for this is that we do not spend time and really enjoy our fellowship with God. We are busy with many things of the world.
- b. We gain inner strength not by talking too much but by being quiet, praying and thinking.

Applications:

- Do you purposely allocate time to be away from all distractions and just meditate on God?
- We learned that in our quietness time, we surrender our struggle with sin to God. How you identified at least 1 sin you constantly struggle with?
- List at least 4 things that amaze you about God's wonders. And meditate on how wonderful God is!

Exercises:

1. What is the connection between quietness and meditating God's Word?
2. Why is it important that we have quiet time with God?
3. What are some qualities that are results of having a quiet time with God?

Week 3

Mary's Song of Praise

Objectives:

- To learn from St. Mary's Song of Praise

References:

- Luke 1:39-80; James 4:10; 1 Peter 1:15-16

Memory Verse:

And His mercy is on those who fear him. (Luke 1:50)

Introduction

St. Mary's visit to Elizabeth has a lot of lessons for all generations who are seeking a good example of love and expressing the love in merciful actions. Mary's trip shows that when a person is filled with the grace of the Lord, he or she becomes active and continuously does good. As St. Mary entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth "The baby leaped in Elizabeth's womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit". When the words of St. Mary came to the ears of Elizabeth, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and the baby John the Baptist was also filled with the Holy Spirit. Only few words from St. Mary who was described by Archangel Gabriel as "highly favored one" had this effect. This shows us that whatever we say can have a destructive or constructive effect on other people. We must be careful to say only constructive things. "*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers*"(Ephesians 4:29). When the Archangel Gabriel preached to St. Mary about the birth of our Lord Jesus, he said about Him "... *call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end*" (Luke 1:31-33).

Lesson Outline

The Lord's titles and characters as mentioned in St. Mary's Song of Praise:

- I. *"For He who is mighty has done great things for me . . ."* (Luke 1:49). Our Lord Jesus is "God Incarnate" and He is mighty. He created everything: heaven and earth and everything in them. Everything is easy for Him. St. Paul said *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made"* (Romans 1:20). When we ask God for something, although to us it looks impossible, it is in fact quite easy for him. *"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."* (Luke 18:27).
- II. *" . . . Holy is His name"* (Luke 1:49). God has no sin in Him. St. Paul said *"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens"* (Hebrews 7:26). As our Lord Jesus is Holy, He also wants us, His children, to be holy. He wants us to reject Satan and all his darkness and fill our hearts with the true light of our Lord Jesus.
- III. *"but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'"* (1 Peter 1:15-16).
- IV. *"And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation"* (Luke 1:50). Our Lord Jesus described Himself as "The Good Shepherd". *"The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep"* (John 10:11). Our Lord Jesus during His ministry by flesh on earth was very merciful. He was merciful to the sinner woman who was caught in adultery and the Jews wanted to stone her, He was merciful to the Samaritan woman, he was merciful to the right hand robber and he was merciful in all His miracles. *"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10).
- V. *"He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts"* (Luke 1:51). Our Lord Jesus gives His gifts and declares His mysteries to the humble, *"I Praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babies. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight"*. Therefore, the proud cannot take the blessings of God, because *"He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts"*. *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."* James 4:10).

- VI. *“He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly”* (Luke 1:52). There are several examples in the Bible that show applications of this verse: the Lord accepted David who was a modest king and at the same time rejected the previous King, Saul, who did not obey God. He selected St. Mary who was very poor and very humble and made her the mother of God. He selected His disciples from fishermen and simple lowly people and they were entrusted to spread Christianity all over the world. *“God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble”* (1 Peter 5:5).
- VII. *“He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty”* (Luke 1:53). The people who feel hungry and in need of the grace of God, have been given good things. On the other hand, the people who are dependent on their money and do not feel that they are in need of God, were sent away empty handed. Indeed, their money cannot help them gain peace and happiness here on earth nor gain eternal life.
- VIII. *“He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever”* (Luke 1:54-55). The Lord has established a covenant with Abraham *“I will establish My covenant with him (i.e. Isaac) for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him”* (Genesis 17:19). Also the Lord has promised David *“The Lord has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it: I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body”* (Psalm 132:11). All these promises of the Old Testament, were fulfilled when our Lord Jesus Son of God came and took our flesh to save us. This verse (Luke 1:55) shows that St. Mary had a full realization that the baby she conceived by the Holy Spirit is the Messiah and the Saviour whom God had promised to the fathers.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. St. Mary declared some of the titles and the characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must be humble in all the activities of our lives to gain the blessings of God.
- b. Let us review our thinking and patterns of life whether we are proud and depending on materialistic things or we are lowly and depending on the mercy of God.

- c. Each one of us must try to become Christ-like. We must pray to God seeking that.

Applications:

- Pray to God to help you to be humble in your life.
- Always thank God for his non-conditional love, and non-ending mercy.
- Trust God, don't depend on your understanding, power, beauty, or strength.

Exercises:

1. What did you learn today?
2. We have learned that God is merciful, are you merciful towards others?
3. We have learned that God loves us, do you love your brother/sisters? What is the biggest commandment in the bible?(Answer: love Matthew 22:36-40).

Week 4

Apostle Paul

Objectives:

- To learn that when a person meets the Lord Jesus, he lives with Him and he becomes a new creation.
- To learn that old things of sin and death are out of the life of a christian.
- To learn that christianity is a life of joy.

References:

- Acts 9:1-3, 22:3-21, 26:9-20

Memory Verse:

*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away.
(2 Corinthians 5:17)*

Introduction

None of the Disciples or the Apostles had gained the attention as much as St. Paul did. He wrote 14 letters, St. Luke wrote about him in the Book of Acts (more than 50

Lesson Outline

I. St. Paul's Early Life: His Hebrew name was Saul. He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia from a well-known family. St. Paul said about himself "*I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee*" (Acts 23:6). Saul was well educated in history, languages, law, and psychology. By occupation, he was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3).

Saul had a lot of authority in Jerusalem. He hated the Christians, persecuted them and Participated in witnessing against St. Stephen.

“And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen . . . Saul was consenting to his death” (Acts 7: 58-59, 8:1).

- II. Saul was Called to be an Apostle for Jesus Christ: In the Holy Bible we see clearly that our Lord Jesus invited Saul to become an Apostle. Not only that, but in fact God had selected Saul even before he was born. *“But when it pleased God, Who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles”* (Galatians 1:15-16).
- III. The Stages of Saul’s Invitation: Direct invitation at the doors of Damascus. *“Suddenly a light shown around him from heaven . . . Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? . . . Lord, what do You want me to do? . . . Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do”* (Acts 9:1-9).
- IV. Emphasis of the invitation: Our Lord Jesus appeared in a vision to Saul and told him that Ananias will come to him to emphasize to him the invitation. At the same time our Lord Jesus also appeared in a vision to Ananias and ordered him to go to Saul. *“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear Me name before Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel”* (Acts 9:15). Also read Acts 9:10-19, 22:12-16.
- V. His Invitation to Preach to the Gentiles: *“Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me Depart, for I will send you for from here to the Gentiles”* (Acts 22:17-21).
- VI. The Invitation of the Holy Spirit: *“Now in the church that was at Antioch, there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas . . . and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit Said, ”Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit . . . ”* (Acts 13:1-5).
- VII. When a person meets with Jesus, his life becomes completely different: hatred becomes love, love for money and materialistic things becomes love for God and people, sinful life becomes a Holy life, and a miserable life becomes a happy one.

There are Several Examples in the Bible of People Who have Changed Completely Because they Met Jesus: Matthew (previously named Levi) was a tax collector. Jesus met him and said to him *“Follow Me”*.

Matthew left everything and followed Jesus (Luke 5:27-33). Zacchaeus went on top of a tree to see Jesus. He was also tax collector. Jesus said, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house”. Zacchaeus and all his family were saved and became Christians (Luke 19:1-10).

VIII. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation:

- If anyone is in Christ: means a true Christian and say with St. Paul “I live not, but Christ lives in me”. This means the Lord Jesus becomes everything in his life.
- He is a new creation: It means Adam’s sins are taken off him by baptism. The Holy Spirit is in him. The body and blood of Jesus, which he takes in communion, unites him with the body of Christ. Then death has no power on him. This is why our church says in the Liturgy “no death for your people but it is a departure”, i.e., departure to paradise.
- Old things have passed away: All the old habits and the sinful life are gone.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. If we truly have met Jesus, we must live an intimate life with Him, think about Him and our hearts become filled with His love. He is stretching out His hands calling for everyone. Let us respond to His call.
- b. A good indication if the person has a new life in Jesus Christ is the type of joy that he or she has. A real peace and joy can only be obtained when Christ is in the heart.

Applications:

- Our calling is to bear the Name of Jesus Christ. How are you bearing His name?

Exercises:

1. why was Paul invited by Jesus? = To bear His name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

2. what happens when we meet Jesus? = our life becomes completely new and different from before.

Part XII

Lessons for the Month of August

Week 1

Jacob: God has a Plan

Objectives:

- To learn from the life of Jacob.
- We may judge who is right and who is wrong, but God who looks from above and knows everything may have a different perspective.

References:

- Genesis 25:19-, 27:-, 30:-

Memory Verse:

So he [Esau] swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. (Genesis 25:33)

Introduction

Jacob is the son of Isaac, who is the son of Abraham. He was the twin brother of Esau. *“And the Lord said to her, ‘Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger’”* (Genesis 25:23).

The Lord revealed to Rebecca the secret behind the “children struggling together within her”. He told her that she was carrying within her two groups of people. One group comes from the younger child, Jacob, and this group becomes spiritually stronger than the other group who comes from the older child, Esau. The secret behind the spiritual strength and mastery of the descendants of Jacob was their acceptance and obedience of God’s promises and enjoying His divine blessings. From the descendants of Jacob came the prophets, and the Word of God (Jesus Christ) was incarnated.

The older, Esau, was the first born from the flesh point of view. However, because of the corruption of his heart, he lost his birthright and the

blessings. The younger, Jacob, because of his keen desire for the spiritual blessings and because of his faith, he enjoyed the birthright and the blessings.

Lesson Outline

I. The two nations can be explained as follows:

- a. The Church and the Jew: Some of the Church fathers believe that this statement is referring to the Christian Church of the New Testament. The Christian Church, if compared with the Jews in its knowledge of God, can be considered as the younger since the Christian church knew God at the end of the ages, when Christ came. But the Christian Church became the stronger one spiritually, and picked up the spiritual birthright, accepted the prophecies and the covenants and the heavenly laws for its children. St. Augustine said, “You are Jacob, the young generation which was served by the older generation.”
- b. The spiritual person and the materialistic person: Esau was “*red . . . like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau*” (Genesis 25:25). So, Esau loved the world and the materialistic things, and he was also called “Edom” from the word “Adam” because he was red in colour. He lived aggressively as a hunter, and liked shedding blood. His descendants, “children of Edom”, also came to love the earth and their hearts were aggressive. Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. He was a symbol for the spiritual person who works hard towards spiritual growth.

Esau said, “*Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?*” (Genesis 25:32). And the Bible commented on that saying, “Thus Esau despised his birthright”. But Jacob used this opportunity not to get a materialistic reward in return for the food that he gave to his brother, but rather he asked for something spiritual: “the birthright”. So Esau represents the careless man who does not care about spiritual things and heavenly glory but only cares about the lusts of the body. St. Augustine said, about the fall of Esau, that it was not because of the dish of stew, but because of carelessness.

- II. Rebecca supported Jacob: Rebecca heard what her husband Isaac told Esau. Because of her love to Jacob, she told him what happened. It

is interesting to note that neither Rebecca nor Jacob felt that they did something wrong and Isaac did not blame them for anything after he realized their plan. On the other hand, Isaac emphasized his blessings to Jacob. Probably Isaac knew that Jacob and his mother Rebecca were right although they used a means that was wrong.

We were expecting Rebecca as a wise mother and a good wife to tell her husband Isaac what is in her heart and remind him about the divine voice which blessed Jacob before his birth. Even in these circumstances, God used her weakness to achieve something good. However, she was given the punishments of her rushed actions. *“The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau”* (Genesis 27:22).

This is an interesting and living picture for our Master Jesus Christ. His voice is the voice of the Son “Omonoganies” (i.e. the only one unique in His race) but His hands are our hands because He carried our nature in Him.

III. Esau was deprived from the blessing: Some people may ask: What did Esau do wrong to be deprived from the blessing that was stolen by his brother with the plan of his mother? Didn’t he cry loudly and bitterly when he heard that his father gave his blessings to Jacob? We answer saying that Esau was careless with the talents in his hands to control and hence he lost the blessings that are not in his control. When Esau asked his father *“Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”* (Genesis 27:36), he was thinking about earthly blessings. The actual fact was that it was only one blessing through which Jacob enjoyed that from his descendants comes the Lord Jesus Christ. This blessing could only be given for Jacob, according to the directions from God to him, to whoever deserves it.

IV. Jacob’s Trip to his Uncle Laban: *“Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it”* (Genesis 28:12). He had this dream when he was afraid from his brother Esau on his way to his uncle Laban. God comforted him with the dream and promised him: *“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go”* (Genesis 28:15).

When Jacob woke from his dream he said *“This is none other than the house of God”* (Genesis 28:17). So this dream was referring to the church of God and the angels in it up and down from heaven. Jacob made a vow to worship the Lord his God if he kept him safe and returned

him in peace to his father's house (Genesis 28:20-22). Jacob met his wife Rachel beside the well. He served his uncle Laban for 20 years. After 20 years he took his wives and children and escaped from his uncle Laban.

Conclusion

- a. Jacob was a spiritual person who had a keen desire for spiritual things. Let us tie our hearts with heaven not earth. *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."* Colossians 3:2. Jesus also teaches us *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."* Matthew 6:33.
- b. As Jacob loved the blessing of God and was trying very hard to get this blessing, God gave him lots of blessings and gave him power and comforted him in the time of troubles.
- c. As Jacob deceived his brother Esau, so his uncle Laban deceived him.
- d. God knows the hearts of everyone and may allow things to happen in a certain way that is above our comprehension.

Applications:

- How important do you think are the blessings received from our parents /elders ? Ask your parents to bless you.
- Don't deceive people, God is a just God. Jacob paid a heavy price for tricking and lying to his father and brother when he was deceived by his uncle Laban.
- We should also not be careless about our spiritual life. We should not trade our spiritual life with worldly life. *"...Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."* Matthew 22:21

Exercises:

1. What do we learn from this lesson?
2. Do you desire spiritual things more than the desires of the flesh? How can we prioritize our spiritual life more than the worldly life?

Week 2

Jacob: Use of Good Means

Objectives:

- To learn that by using nice ways of treatment we can win people to be on our side..

References:

- Genesis 31:-, 33:-, Gelatians 6:7, Romans 12:21

Memory Verse:

Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed. (Genesis 32:28)

Introduction

Lesson Outline

I. Jacob's flight to Canaan:

- a. *“Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you”* (Genesis 31:3).
- b. Jacob represented our Lord Jesus Christ who came to our land (i.e. Haran in this case) and He took us from the house of our old father, i.e., Satan (i.e. Laban the idolist in this case). So, He gained us as a bride for Him whether we were from the Gentiles (as Rachel was) or from the Jews (as Leah was). The Lord Jesus took us from the old life (in Haran) going through the baptism (i.e., as Jacob crossed the river with his people) and carrying us to heaven (i.e. the promised land of Canaan).

- c. Laban knew about the escape of Jacob: *“Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days’ journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead. God said to Laban, Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad”* (Genesis 31:23-24).
- d. The war was not between Jacob and Laban, but it was between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Therefore, God interfered and warned Laban not to touch Jacob.
- e. The departure of both teams: Laban went back to Haran, while Jacob went to Canaan representing our return to heaven through our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The preparation to meet Esau:

- a. Jacob with the angels of God: *“When Jacob saw them (i.e., the angels), he said ‘this is God’s camp’* (Genesis 32:2). As Jacob was going to Canaan (which represents heaven), God’s angels met him. Jacob sent representatives to Esau with a letter full of love and humility calling his brother “Master”.
- b. Jacob prayed to the Lord of his father’s saying *“O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac”* (Genesis 32:9). He did not pray to God as He is the God of all nations, but Jacob felt that there was a personal relationship with God as the Father for him and his family. It is beautiful for every one of us to feel that he has a personal and loving relationship with God. Jacob sends a gift to Esau: *“It is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us”* (Genesis 32:18).
- c. Jacob wrestled with God for a blessing: *“Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day”* (Genesis 32:24). Jacob tried his best in all situations to gain spiritual blessings. This reminds us that *“the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force”* (Matthew 11:12).

III. Jacob meets his Brother Esau:

- a. Jacob was wiser when he met his brother Esau. He had a humble heart and called his brother “Master”.

- b. When God saw that Jacob is obedient and fears Him, he comforted him, strengthened him in the night and blessed him. God gave him a new name Israel, because he struggled with God and with people and won. Jacob said to God “I will not leave you before you bless me.”
- c. Jacob had 12 sons and they are called the 12 tribes of Israel. Jacob lived 17 years in Egypt with his son Joseph. Jacob lived for 147 years.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Because Jacob was humble, he won peace with his brother Esau.
- b. He relied completely on the protection of God.
- c. “Whatever one plants he/she will reap.” *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”* Galatians 6:7
- d. We also learn forgiveness from Esau. *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”* Romans 12:21

Applications:

- With humility and love, we can turn people’s negative attitude towards us.
- We should rely on God, not on people or our own thinking. Jacob prayed to God when he was troubled about meeting his brother Esau, and God gave him the strength.
- We should always strive for the blessing of God, just like Jacob. We should always pray to God saying, *“I will not leave you before you bless me”*.
- God uses our situation, good or bad, to make us better Christians. Think about how Jacob’s life has changed from a tricky person to a humble and wise person. No matter what our situation is, we should trust God in all parts of our life. *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope”* (Jeremiah 29:11).

Exercises:

WEEK 2. JACOB: USE OF GOOD MEANS

1. What did you learn from today's lesson?
2. Please read this verse and ask the students how they can apply this in their lives. *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* Romans 12:21
3. Please read this verse and ask the students how they can apply this in their lives *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."* Galatians 6:7 .

Week 3

Job: the Life of Perseverance

Objectives:

- To study that the life of Job and learn from his life.
- To learn that we must be strong and patient at the time of troubles.

References:

- Judges 6-7

Memory Verse:

Gideon said to Him “O my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?” (Judges 6:13)

Introduction

Job is a historical personality. He lived his life between Noah and Abraham and the book of Job is the oldest in the Holy Bible and starts with “*There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job*” (Job 1:1). Job was also mentioned in the book of Ezekiel “*Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in it . . .*” (Ezekiel 14:14).

Lesson Outline

- I. The book of Job can be classified into four parts:
 - a. The sufferings and trouble of Job - Chapter 1 and 2.
 - b. The dialogue between Job and his friends - Chapter 3 and 37.
 - c. The answer from God - Chapter 38:1 to 42:6.

d. The happy ending - Chapter 42:7-17.

- II. Job is a good example of withstanding the troubles and suffering: That is, he was patient. St. James said, *“My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord - that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful”* (James 5:10-11).
- III. Job was leading a righteous life: This is why he was called “Job the Righteous”. He was very rich and had 7 sons and 3 daughters and 7000 cows and 3000 camels, etc. The devil complained saying, *“Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge around him . . . You have blessed the work of his hands . . . But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”* (Job 1:9-11). God allowed the devil to destroy all his belongings of cows, house . . . and even his house was destroyed killing all his children. Even at all these troubles, Job said, *“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord”* (Job 1:21). Then the devil came main and complained and God allowed him to hurt his body to make his faith clear; but not to hurt his mind. Job became very sick and his wife and his friends were insulting him. His wife said to him, *“Do you still hold to your integrity? Curse God and die!”* (Job 2:9). To all these, Job did not say anything against the Lord.
- IV. Why did God allow the temptation of Job? Despite the fact that Job was a good man and righteous as the Lord said, and despite the fact that the temptation was to test his faith and make it clear, Job had some weakness. The weakness of Job was that he was righteous and he knew that he was righteous. Job said about himself, *“I am blameless”* (Job 9:21) and again he said, *“When the ear heard, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw, then it approved of me”* (Job 29:11).
- This is why God allowed the temptation to come on Job to purify him and save him from feeling righteous and perfect in his own eyes. After all this patience that Job had, the Lord lifted up the temptation and blessed him and gave him children instead of the ones who died. He lived after the temptation for 140 years.
- V. Job was a Symbol of Christ: Job was a symbol of Christ for withstanding the severe sufferings and all of these sufferings were with a happy ending. Remember that after the cross there was the Resurrection and

glory. As the friends of Job departed from him also the disciples of our Lord Jesus departed from Him in His trial and crucifixion.

The Book of Job refers to the reconciliation between heaven and earth which was to be done by Christ (between heaven and earth). Therefore, our church calls the Wednesday of the Holy Week “Job Wednesday” and reads a number of chapters from the Book of Job.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. We have to be patient and never rush things. We should withstand troubles seeking the help of God.
- b. All things work for the good of the people who love God as St. Paul said.
- c. Let us be joyful when we are tempted by some troubles knowing that these troubles will help us increase our patience and faith.
- d. God did not give us the spirit of giving up. But He gave us the spirit of strength, love and righteousness.

Applications:

- How do you feel if your parent do not have what you need for schooling?
- If your parent will not be able to buy for you a car, how do you feel?
- How do you appreciate your family for what they have invested for you to grow up?

Exercises:

1. How will you compare Job and Stephan's who is in acts 6-7?
2. Philippians 4:4 “ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” how can you compare with the life of Job?
3. Will you be able to say during hard time like Job and Stephan's?

Week 4

John the Baptist

Objectives:

- To learn what made John the Baptist so great.
- To study the features of his personality.

References:

- Matthew 3: 13-17; 11: 11-12, John 1: 18-34

Memory Verse:

Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist. (Matthew 11:11)

Introduction

Describe in detail what happened when John the Baptist baptized the Lord Jesus and the manifestation of the Holy Trinity. The word Epiphany, a derivative from the Greek language, can be translated in Latin by “Manifestation”.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Life Style of St. John the Baptist Versus the Present Life Style:
 - a. The simplicity in his cloth and his food is a blessed model that is totally different in nature from the luxury that we live in today *“Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey”* (Matthew 3:4).

- b. The long solitude in the wilderness is a good model when compared with the troubled and busy life style that we see today. We hear a very common expression “we do not have time, we are too busy” even too busy to pray or meditate or even read the word of God. *“So, the child (John) grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel”* (Luke 1:80). How did he live in the desert since his very early childhood without a helper or someone to talk to? We do not know. All what we know about his life style, we got from the Holy Bible and the church traditions is that, he lived for about thirty years in the desert. He lived in the total and perfect care of God. God raised him up in the desert until the time became due for him to appear to Israel to do his job in preparing of the way for the Lord Jesus.
- c. His courage and clarity can be rarely found in today’s ways of maneuvering, and false communication. John the Baptist came with his message in a strong and clear way *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight”*’ (Matthew 3:3). Remember that John the Baptist stood in front of King Herod when he wanted to take his brother’s wife as a wife for himself, and said to him: It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife. This incident entitled him to gain the crown of martyrdom for the sake of witnessing to the truth.
- d. Him being filled with the Holy Spirit, since he was a baby is a model that is distinctly different from our weak spiritual life. We all have gained the Holy Spirit inside us since we were baptized. If we are giving the leadership in our life to the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit will become active inside us. On the other hand, if we keep disobeying the voice of the Holy Spirit inside us, He is going to be like a quenched fire without any fruits in our lives.
- e. His humility, especially when he was baptizing our Lord Jesus, is a good example for every one of us to be humble and to know his real self, be modest and never get carried away and feel proud.

II. Personality of St. John the Baptist:

- a. John’s personality belongs to the covenants. We can consider him the last prophet of the Old Testament and is one of the major New Testament’s personalities. He came to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah the Son of God.

- b. St. John was Great by the Declaration from Heaven: The angel said to Zecharias *“For he will be great in the sight of the Lord”* (Luke 1:15). And Jesus said that John is the greatest *“among those born of women”* (Matthew 11:11).
- c. He was Considered as an Angel: *“I send my messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You”* (Matthew 11:10). A messenger from God is an angel.
- d. He was Filled with the Holy Spirit Before he was Born: *“He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb”* (Luke 1:15). As a result of this, he leaped with joy inside his mother’s womb.
- e. The Greatest Achievement in St. John’s Life: He baptized the Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan River and saw the manifestation of the Holy Trinity, and the Holy Spirit descending from heaven as a Dove, the Voice of God the Father from heaven saying *“This is My Beloved Son”* and the Son of God standing in the Jordan River.
- f. The Message of St. John the Baptist: In the speech that he delivered to the Pharisees and Sadducees, we find him saying *“Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’ . . . now the axe is laid to the root of the trees”* (Matthew 3:7-10). It is a very strong message to these people who, as John prophesied, rejected and crucified the Lord Jesus. He also warned them to repent.

His message served as a preparation for the hearts of people to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, *“I indeed baptize you with water, but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”* (Luke 3:16). He declared while he was looking at Jesus *“Behold the Lamb of God”* (John 1:36). Indeed Jesus was the Lamb of God who carried on Himself the sin of the world.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. The personality of St. John the Baptist is an excellent model for each of us. He was strong, he said his opinion clearly in every situation, and

his life style was away from earthly lusts. Let us take a step forward today starting by improving our lives through both prayers and having a Christian attitude.

- b. Living in a quiet atmosphere will help us to be peaceful and to grow spiritually through having an effective prayer and meditation. So take time off from the busy world and stay with God alone.

Applications:

- 1. We saw that John the baptist listened and obeyed to the Holy Spirit in him. Do you?
- 2. Are you too busy for God? or do you make time to pray, read and study the Bible.
- 3. Are you growing spritually and showing a Christ like characteristics, i.e humblness.

Exercises:

1. 1. In what senario did we see how humble John the baptist was?
2. 2. What was the main life purpose of John the baptist?
3. 3. Name some reasons why John the baptist can be our role model.

Part XIII
Filler Lessons

Week 1

Lot Chose for Himself

Objectives: To show:

- When we have to make a choice, we should pray and ask God to help us choose the right thing for us.
- When we are given the opportunity to share things with people, we have to be fair and not select the best for ourselves.
- We have to be very smart when choosing friendship or companionship.

References:

- Genesis 13

Memory Verse:

Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:4)

Introduction

Lesson Outline

I. The Call to Abram:

- a. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Abram is one of the descendants of Shem. The word Abram means "the honored father" and God changed his name to Abraham which means, "*Father of many nations*" (Genesis 17:5).
- b. Abram lived in Ur of the Chaldees, where people were worshipping idols. Abram migrated along with his father, Terah, his wife, Sarai, and his nephew Lot. They got as far as Harran when Terah died.

Then the Lord spoke to Abram *“Get out of your country . . . to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you . . . you shall be a blessing.”* (Genesis 12:1-2). So Abram took his wife, his nephew, all their servants and possessions, and came to the land of Canaan. Then the Lord said to Abram *“To your descendants I will give this land.”* And there he built an altar to the Lord, Who had appeared to him.

II. Abram Separated from Lot:

- a. As time went by, both Abram and Lot found that their herds increased so much that there was not enough pasture. Their herdsmen began to quarrel, so Abram said to Lot, *“Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren”* (Genesis 13:8).
- b. Lot had accompanied Abram in his faithful trips. But there was a great difference between their hearts. Abram had a simple heart, full of love for God and people. Lot’s heart had the love of self and the love of the world. Even though Lot was accompanying the greatest father who was full of faith and obedience to God, his heart was closed. Lot’s weakness surfaced when he had the conflict with Abram. Both were rich, but Abram’s heart was with God while Lot’s heart was with the possessions.
- c. Abram wanted peace. Even though he was the elder, he allowed Lot to choose first and So Lot chose first. This shows the faithful heart of Abram and the materialistic heart of Lot. *“And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord”.* (This was the status of Sodom and Gomorrah before the Lord destroyed them).
- d. Lot did not examine the character of the people who were living in this land that looked like *“the garden of the Lord”*. *The Bible said, “But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord”* (Genesis 13:13). This was a big mistake that Lot made. We must examine what type of people we mingle and associate ourselves with. We should be careful of our relationship with people who have no faith in God. If we were preaching then it would be different. But in our daily lives we must be careful not to mix with wicked people.
- e. The precious reward went to Abram who let the Lord choose for him. *“Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are -*

northward, southward, eastward and westward . . . Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you. Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.” (Genesis 13:14-17) Everywhere, Abram was building two things: the tent to live in and the altar to present his offerings and prayers to God. In this same place “terebinth trees of Mamre”, God and two angels visited Abram and promised him the birth of a son (Genesis 18).

- f. Lot departed to Sodom and Gomorrah to live in the rich land with the wicked people. He lost all his belongings as God destroyed these cities because of their wickedness. Lot also lost his wife who became a pillar of salt because she looked back at the wicked area as the angels were rushing them out.
- g. Abram went to the terebinth trees of Mamre to welcome God and two angels and to enjoy a life of sharing with God.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Our lives are in continuous motion: either towards Sodom where there is destruction or towards the terebinth trees of Mamre where God the Giver of Life exists. Therefore asking God for direction in our daily life’s choices would benefit us for the best.
- b. We should always do things in the best interest of others.
- c. We must also be very selective when we choose our friends as they affect our lives to a great extent.

Applications:

- Can you come up with situations where you are looking for the best interest of your companion?
- Have/ do you ever ask God to direct you in your choices? If no, why not?
- Do you think your friends who don’t believe in God influence you in a bad way? If so how do you plan to handle your relationship/friendship with them?

Exercises:

1. What was the biggest difference between Lot and Abraham?
2. What was one of Lot's biggest weakness?
3. What do you learn from Lot's mistakes?

Week 2

I can do all Things through Christ

Objectives:

- To learn that faith is built on the experience of God's support.

References:

- Philippians 4:10-13

Memory Verse:

I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

Introduction

There is nothing impossible in the life with God. There is hope whatever the sin and the troubles may be and however difficult the case is. In the spiritual life, how nice are the sayings about hope in the Bible:

- "... *all things are possible to him who believes*" (Mark 9:23).
- "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Phil. 4.13).

If you are fought with hopelessness about your personal abilities, you should not be fought about God's power

Lesson Outline

- I. The Strength of Faith:

- a. “I can do all things through Christ”. These seven words show that you, the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, can do all things through Him. The seven words can help you to overcome any difficulty.
- b. Never think you as though an individual who dont “have a prayer”. You do have a prayer to carry you through anything and everything. Spiritual commitments are not for odd balls but for “with-it” people.
- c. Confidence and self-trust are by-products of the seven magic words. Let us learn to repeat this verse several times during the day. Let the confidence in Christ knock out any weakness you may have.
- d. In crisis let the seven magic words take over. They will carry you through anything and everything. You are always watched over in time of danger. Live by faith that will never let you down. Faith does not contradict science and logic, but overcomes their levels and boundries. There is logic in science but in faith there are miracles: Jesus walked on the water, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after four days, and Jesus rebuked the winds to stop.

II. Faith Overcomes Fear: (Luke 12:32-40)

- a. *“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”* (Luke 12:32). The Lord call His people “little flock” so that His people do not depend on their own limited human abilities but on God The Father who is unlimited. God takes His “little flock” in His hands.
- b. The world is interested in the large numbers and always thinks that whatever the majority says is correct. On the other hand, the little flock sometimes appears very small and the whole world is against it in its characters, principles and teachings. But now Jesus is saying, “Do not fear little flock” ...and St. Paul is saying “I can do all things through Christ”. St. Athanasius was very strong because he depended on the power of Christ. One time people were saying to St. Athanasius “The world is against you” and he answered, “And I am against the world”. Therefore, no matter how we are viewed in the eyes of the world, lets remember who we belong to and who our provider is and live our lives in awe of Him.

III. Examples of the Little Flock:

- a. An honest youth working in a society full of fake business . . . this man is a little flock (Daniel).
- b. A youth who lives in purity in the midst of a corrupt society . . . this youth is a little flock (Joseph).
- c. A youth who does not love money in a materialistic society . . . this youth is a little flock (St. Anthony).
- d. A youth telling the truth no matter what happens in the midst of false witnesses in the world . . . this youth is a little flock (St. John the Baptist).
- e. A youth living in Christ and His Bible in the midst of the world which is escaping from the Cross of Christ . . . this youth is a little flock (St. Paul).

Please tell the class some of these examples to show God's support. In all these examples: Jesus said "Do not fear little flock". And the flock replies "I can do all things through Christ". When we review the life of the Saints, we find that they lived the lives of faith which eliminated all their fears. This little flock is in fact so big and so strong "*You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*" (1 John 4:4).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Never give up. Never lose hope. It is never too late. Never say "I cannot".
- b. Always say in full confidence "I can do all things through Christ". Never yield to the world opposing your Christian behavior. You are stronger than the world!

Applications:

- Who is a little flock?
- What is the Bible implying by the term "little flock"? Is it literally a flock?
- How do we develop the boldness and confidence to live in faith?

Exercises:

1. Have you ever accomplished something that deep inside you know it was God's grace that inabled you, because otherwise it would be impossible? Tell your story.
2. How many times have you asked God to grow your faith?
3. How are you (who has Christ inside of you) different from those who don't know/have Christ in their lives?

Week 3

The Parables in the Epistles of St. Paul

Objectives:

- To learn the meaning of the parables in the Epistles of St. Paul.

References:

- 2 Cor. 9:6, 1 Corinthians 2:9, John 3:16

Memory Verse:

But this I say; he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (2 Cor. 9:6)

Introduction

St. Paul used several parables to illustrate and simplify some ideas related to our life as Christians and our share in eternal life. Our Lord Jesus also did that. In this lesson please ask the students after reading the parable from the Bible in the class to discuss what they think of its meaning.

Lesson Outline

I. The parable of the plants and harvest:

- The body which the grain has after its death is different. Similarly, we take a different body (illuminated body) after our death and resurrection to meet our Lord in His second coming (1 Cor. 15:35-44).
- Whoever plants and prepares for the worldly things gains only worldly things. But whoever plants for the heavenly things also gains heavenly things (Galatians 6:7-9).

II. The parable of the fruits:

- St. Paul used the word 'fruit' to show the effects of the Holy Spirit on the believers. Fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

III. The parable of the house and the temple:

- St. Paul considered himself and all the preachers as builders who are building on the foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-15).
- Our Master and Lord Jesus is the cornerstone in our lives (Ephesians 2:20).

IV. The parable of the heavenly house:

- St. Paul considered the body as tent (i.e. temporary) that is dismantled with death. But the believers have a house (i.e. permanent) in heaven (2 Cor. 5:1-4).

V. The parable of the salt:

- St. Paul mentioned this parable when he spoke about the good way to speak for a useful purpose (Colossians 4:6).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. When we read a parable we must try to learn the meaning behind it for the benefit of our Spiritual life.
- b. All these parables are important to simplify things related to our shares in eternal life.
- c. The individual who is keen about his or her share in heaven must do everything towards building the heavenly treasure.

Applications:

- Everytime you read the bible, don't rush into interpreting things your own way. Some verses are not meant to be taken literally such as the parables. They represent a deeper meaning.

- Always be humble when reading the bible. Don't say "I know Everything." "*God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.*" (James 4:6).
- Think about how God loved us so much to die on our behalf for our own sins. Also how he gave us hope, an everlasting life with him. How wonderful is that? Read John 3:16.

Exercises:

1. What do you think heaven looks like? Then read this verse "*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man, The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*" (1 Corinthians 2:9) and ask them what the bible says about heaven/eternal life.
2. What did you learn from today's lesson?

Week 4

The Life of St. John Chrysostom

Objectives:

- To study the life of St. John Chrysostom “the golden mouth” and benefit from it. The focus here is on his witness to the truth regardless of the outcome. He had no fear of anyone.

References:

- Luke 14:25-35

Memory Verse:

...whoever does not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:27)

Introduction

St. John Chrysostom was born in 347 AD in Antioch-Syria. He was very well known as a great public speaker. The name “Chrysostom” means the “Golden Mouth.” St. John became the Patriarch of Constantinople. He was exiled many times for his outspoken criticism of the Royal court. He preferred to be exiled rather than to stay on his throne as a Patriarch and compromise his values. He always said the truth regardless of the outcome.

He was born to a very rich family. They raised him very well. His parents sent him to Athens which was the most well-known place for education. He was brilliant. He left the world and became a monk at an early age. When his father passed away he did not take any of the money that was left for him. He left all the money for the poor.

He was given a special talent from the Holy Spirit. He wrote many books. If you go to any school of theology you will find many of his books

still being used as text books for graduate and post-graduate students. Some pursue a Master's degree or a Ph.D. to understudy part of his work.

Lesson Outline

- I. He became Patriarch of Constantinople. He taught his people very well, not only by his writings and sermons but also by his good example in love, sacrifices, and dedication to righteously living with God.

- II. One time Queen Ozeksia (the wife of King Arkdius) took by force a garden that belonged to a poor widow. The widow complained to the Patriarch (St. John) who tried hard to convince the Queen to return the garden. When she refused, he stopped her from entering the church and from taking communion. Then her husband exiled him. The whole congregation came around the palace shouting all night. There was a huge thunderstorm, so that all the people including the Queen thought that it was a sign that he must come back from exile. They brought him back. This indicates how St. John was not willing to compromise with the unjust deed of people of higher power. He had a great fear of the Lord and not of humans. Psalms 118:6 and Hebrew 13:5

- III. Remember that the church authorities treat all people the same way regardless of their jobs or their abilities. The people of the church must be fair as Christ was fair. Also, taking communion requires repentance, confession, and humility. The church has the authority to stop an individual from taking communion if he or she has not achieved the requirements for taking communion.

- IV. After he returned, the same Queen ordered a big statue for her made of silver to be placed in the largest center of the town. After they placed the statue it became a place of dancing. St. John Chrysostom criticized this action. He was exiled again. This time for long time until he passed away. Remember what St. John the Baptist did with King Herod who wanted to take the wife of his brother to be his wife. This type of stand taken by St. John teaches us all about how great of a burn we must have for the Lord's belongings. It should bother us when we see unholy activities taken place on the holy places. Remember Matthew 21:12. Hence we must stand firm and full of confidence for the Lord.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Let us rely on God, do our best, and stick to our values.
- b. We must be careful in all our actions. We must not deviate from the truth. We must also stick to the truth in all our actions.

Applications: Look at yourself; are you always on the side of justice and truth?

- Are all your words true and sincere, whether in what you utter or in what you want your listener to understand?
- Do you favor any of your friends, relatives or beloved ones, and for his sake you do not mind telling the news in a way which is good to him, even if it hurts the others?
- Do you follow the truth in your practical life, principles and beliefs, and not only in your talks?
- Do you restore to the others their rights with you?
- Is the truth lost because of your exaggerations, jokes and justifications?

Exercises:

1. How is St. John Chrysostom a role model to us?
2. St. John Chrysostom had the gift of writing and public speaking. Who gives these gifts?
3. How do you think St. John got to be so confident in standing for the right things? Perhaps by spending time with the Lord and His word.

Week 5

Prophet Elisha

Objectives:

- To show that the Lord plans all things for the individual who depends on Him.
- To learn that we have to be active and desire for more spiritual depth.

References:

- 1 Kings 19:19-21, 2 Kings 2:1-1

Memory Verse:

Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. (Psalm 143:10)

Introduction

In both Judah, the southern kingdom, and Israel, the northern kingdom, the kings and the people drifted away from worshipping the true God. They set up false gods. After a series of evil kings in Israel, Ahab mounted the throne and he was the worst of all. His wife Jezebel was very evil and she tried to have all prophets of God slain.

Lesson Outline

- I. God's Plan for Elijah: At the right time, the Lord sent Prophet Elijah. He was told by the Lord to predict a drought and famine in the land. Accordingly, he warned Ahab the King. As the drought became ever more serious, the Lord sent Elijah to Ahab. Elijah asked Ahab to summon the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred priests whom Jezebel supports to mount Carmel. Ahab did as Elijah asked. All the prophets and priests and people gathered on

Mount Carmel. Elijah then gave the challenge: *“Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord”* (1 Kings 18:23-24). The Baal priests prayed and shouted, but there was no answer. Then Elijah prayed, *“Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word”* (1 Kings 18:36). Immediately the fire came down and consumed the burnt offering of Elijah’s bull. The people then seized the prophets of Baal and they were all killed. When Jezebel knew what Elijah did, she sent a message to Elijah saying that by the same time on the wilderness until he reached Horeb the mountain of God. Then the Lord met him in Horeb and asked him to go back to the wilderness of Damascus; and when he arrives he shall appoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also you shall appoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Saphat of Abel Meholah you shall appoint as prophet in your place.

- II. God’s Plan for Elisha: Elisha was driving a team of oxen up and down a wide field at his father’s farm. He was ploughing the rough, brown earth to make it ready for planting seeds. As Elisha ploughed, he saw a man coming toward him. Around his shoulders he wore a piece of clothing called a mantle. He stopped in front of Elisha, and looked closely at his face. Then the man took off his mantle and put it around Elisha.

Elisha knew that the Lord had given Elijah power to do many wonderful things. And Elisha knew why Elijah had thrown his mantle over Elisha’s shoulders. In those days, it meant that God wanted Elisha to be his special messenger just as Elijah had been. Would Elisha obey? He said, “Yes”. He left his home and went with Elijah. They started a school to teach in it. The two men spent many happy days serving the Lord. They travelled from one city to the next.

Then came the last day when Elijah was about to depart from earth. He made a visit to one of the schools to say good-bye. And he said to Elisha, “Stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the next town Bethel”. Elisha said, “I shall not leave you”. So together they went to the next town. The young men at the school there came out to meet them. “Did you know that the Lord will take Elijah away from you today?” they

asked Elisha. “Yes”, said Elisha sadly . The Lord has told Elisha, that Elijah was to leave him.

Again the same conversation between Elijah, Elisha, and the school people, happened at other places. Before Elijah left Elisha, he asked him “Ask what may I do for you before I am taken away”. He wanted to give Elisha a farewell gift. Then Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me” .

III. The Key to Elisha’s Success:

- a. Elisha was very active and spent many efforts. God likes active people who do His will. Despite the fact that Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, please”, Elisha insisted in walking with him wherever he went despite all the travels. Therefore, Elisha deserved to be utilized by God, as a prophet.
- b. His Interest in Serving the Lord: Elisha knew about the departure of his teacher Elijah. This was clear in his answer to the prophets, when he said, “Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from you today?” He was not troubled but he insisted to stay with him to take a double portion of his spirit to use in serving God.
- c. The Grace and Help of God: God supported Elisha with so many miracles. Some people estimated the miracles that God performed through Elisha, to be double the miracles performed through Elijah.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Let us take Elisha as an example. Let us achieve our best in all circumstances that we are in. Let us pray that God leads our lives, and to depend entirely on Him. God’s plan for us is better than our own because He knows what is good for us, and we do not.
- b. We must desire for more spiritual depth and talents. The desires for more materialistic things are harmful.

Applications:

- We must desire and thirst for the Spirit of God so we can serve him well.

Exercises:

1. what was Elijah's secret when he won against the other prophets? - His love and obedience to the Spirit of God
2. what did Elisha want most from Elijah? - Double the portion of his Spirit to be upon him.

Week 6

Gideon was Given Assurance

Objectives:

- To learn that the Lord is ready to give us all assurances to enhance our faith.

References:

- Judges 6-7

Memory Verse:

Gideon said to Him “O my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?” (Judges 6:13)

Introduction

Lesson Outline

- I. Why were the people of Israel in Median?
 - They did evil things and God wanted to deal with them so that they would come back to Him, and realize that evil things bring misery, and stop doing evil things.
 - When the people of Israel cried for the Lord to help them admitting that they were wrong, the Lord sent them Gideon to lead them to victory.
- II. When Gideon came he wanted to have enough assurance for the following:
 - He wanted to make sure that God was with them and accepted their repentance and was not against them anymore.

- He wanted to be assured of victory over the Medians. The only guarantee for him was that God with His Strong Hand would come to their side. Hence Gideon was not trying to tempt God.

III. Gideon had 3 assurances from God to emphasize that God is with him:

- Acceptance of his offering to assure his call (Judges 6:17-23) *“If I have found favor with Thee”* (Judges 6:17). The fire came out from the rock as a symbol of accepting the offering and ate the offering.
- The Dew on the fleece of wool: to assure his call (Judges 6:36-40) *“If Thou wilt deliver Israel by my hand as Thou hast said”* (Judges 6:36)
- The Median dream: to eliminate all fear (Judges 7:9-15) God told Gideon *“If you are still afraid to go down, go down with Purah your servant and you shall hear what they say and afterward your hands will be strengthened”* (Judges 7:10-11).

Conclusion

What do we learn from this lesson?

- a. Gideon was so keen to be assured that God was with him because, “If God is with us who can be against us.” We have to always seek this kind of assurance that we are at peace with God and He is on our side against the devil. If we follow God’s Commandments, then we are assured that God is on our side.
- b. We have a good relationship with many people around us. But the most important personality we must make sure we have a good relationship with is God. He wants to be our friend. Let us try to enter in a friendly relationship with God and assure ourselves of this as Gideon became so sure of that.

Applications:

- God gives assurance to our prayer to enhance our faith
- God punishes his people because of love so that we will return to him
- How do you feel if your parent does not discipline you properly?

Exercises:

1. Who was Gideon? What kind of personality did he have?
2. How many assurances did Gideon receive from God?
3. What were those assurances and what did they represent?